



Spellbound (A Spellbound Novel Book 1)

By Cara Lynn Shultz

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What's a girl to do when meeting The One means she's cursed to die a horrible death?

Life hasn't been easy on sixteen-year-old Emma Conner, so a new start in New York may be just the change she needs. But the posh Upper East Side prep school she has to attend? Not so much. Friendly faces are few and far between, except for one that she's irresistibly drawn to—Brendan Salinger, the guy with the rock-star good looks and the richest kid in school, who might just be her very own white knight.

But even when Brendan inexplicably turns cold, Emma can't stop staring. Ever since she laid eyes on him, strange things have been happening. Streetlamps go out wherever she walks, and Emma's been having the oddest dreams: visions of herself in past lives—visions that warn her to stay away from Brendan. Or else.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Cara Lynn Shultz is the author of *Spellbound* and *Spellcaster*. She's a proud graduate of Fordham University and her work has appeared in *Teen People*, *Alternative Press*, *The Guardian UK*, and countless posts on Facebook (Facebook.com/CaraLShultz) and Twitter (@CaraLynnShultz). She lives in her native New York City with her husband, cat, and eight million other people.

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It's always embarrassing to have someone take you to school. Your dad, your mom, anyone with her hair in rollers.

But for my first day as a junior at my new school—a ridiculously expensive private school on New York's Upper East Side—I was being walked to school by my baby cousin. A *freshman*.

It really wasn't that terrible. Even though we grew up apart, Ashley and I were email buddies. She was a sweetheart, there was no doubt of that, but if my knowledge of the inner workings of my familiar old New Jersey public school, Keansburg High, meant anything, I knew that juniors did not hang out with the lower classes. It was like hanging out with a bunch of vegetarians and wearing a bacon necklace.

Talk about unwelcome.

But it was important to my aunt Christine that I got to school early and she was afraid I'd get lost. My great-aunt had taken me in over the summer, and I'd learned quickly that when she got an idea into her head, you were better off just going along with it. I didn't want to argue with her—I owed her everything. My life, really. She'd been asking me to live with her ever since my mom died a year and a half ago,

leaving me with Henry, my stepfather whose blood-alcohol content hovered somewhere between "wasted" and "how is he even alive?" But after he nearly killed me last June with his particular style of driving (i.e., blasted), I stopped resisting Christine's offer.

Going from my aunt's place at Park and Sixty-eighth Street to the school at Park and Eighty-sixth Street is fairly basic: walk eighteen blocks left. But since she had been pretty cool about everything—stepping in, giving me a place to stay and leaving me with a "You'll talk to me if you need to" instead of hovering over me—I didn't press it.

Ashley was a bundle of excitement as soon as she stepped inside the door of Christine's three-bedroom co-op, her pink cheeks flushed, red curls pushed back by a black-ribbon headband. She's several inches shorter than me—I wouldn't put her past five feet. And that's giving a generous allowance to her curls.

"Hi Emma! Yay, first day! Are you excited? Do you like your uniform?" I smiled back. Her joy was infectious. You couldn't help but like Ashley—the girl never said a mean thing in all of her fourteen years. Then a black thought crept its way in: What if no one did like Ashley, and that was why she was so happy to

have an ally? What kind of evil place was Vincent Academy, where someone could dislike a sweet little munchkin like Ashley? *Calm down, Emma, you're going to give yourself a panic attack.*

My smile got weaker, and I smoothed out my long-sleeved white Oxford shirt and black, blue and green Scotch plaid skirt that mirrored her outfit.

"You tell me, how do I look?" I asked her.

"You look fine," she chirped. "But why the long sleeves? It's soooo hot out. It's going to be like, seventy billion degrees today! Don't you have any short slee—"

Ashley looked at the ground and blushed, her red cheeks now matching her flame-colored hair. "Sorry, I forgot about the scar."

The blazing scar from the car accident had made wearing short sleeves an impossibility. *Thanks, Henry. You're a champ.*

"It's okay. I'm okay," I reassured her. "Don't worry about it. *Really!*" I added when I saw the expression in her eyes.

She had always looked up to me, even though she lived in the city and I lived in the country, so to speak. Being two years older had its advantages.

And now the city mouse was taking the country mouse under its paw.

After Aunt Christine had slipped me a twenty-dollar bill "for emergencies" and sent us on our way, I drew in Ashley conspiratorially and asked, "So what's the real deal on this school? I know the basic stuff, like how practically everyone goes Ivy League after graduation. But what's this place *really*

like?"

How I hoped, prayed, that it was like all those shows about rich, fashion-obsessed, drama-crazy New York teens who dressed like they were twenty-five. All the easier to stay in the background. I just wanted to get through the next two years and disappear to college. Preferably somewhere far away. Maybe Siberia.

"They like to say it's exclusive but that's just a nice word for it being expensive." Ashley giggled, toying with her oversize hoop earring. "It's the most expensive coed school in the city. There's a few girls-only or boys-only schools that cost more. So we're like our own little, I don't know, island, in the middle of it all. Everyone at Vince A more or less stays together."

"Oh." I tried to not sound disappointed.

In my head, I began rehearsing what I would say about the reason behind my move. Ashley didn't understand why I didn't

just say I moved from Keansburg, but then I told her how my high school paper insisted on doing a story on the dangers of drinking and driving, pegged to the incident with Henry. The editor was hoping to use her hard-hitting story as her one-way ticket into the journalism program at Columbia. I figured it doubled as her ticket to Hell. Those who hadn't heard about Henry through the gossip mill read about it, front and center in

the *Keansburg Mirror*.

Google me. Google Keansburg. Guess what your first hit

is?

Alcohol Turns Home Life Tragic and Ride Home Dangerous for Sophomore Emma Connor.

So moving from Philly was the story.

Ashley gave me a cursory rundown of the school and some of the things I'd come to expect from high school. The principal wore horrible suits. The uniforms were itchy in warmer weather. The cafeteria food was comically terrible, but you were allowed out at lunchtime once you were a junior.

We crossed Eighty-fifth Street, racing against the yellow light and slowing our walk as we headed to the entrance.

"Here we are!" Ashley announced, throwing her arms open with a flourish.

I regarded the gray building in front of me. It was an old mansion that had been converted into a high school, and it sure looked the part, with cool stone walls and windows hugged by lavishly scrolled molding. Vincent Academy wasn't too tall—just five floors, no taller than the stately, old-fashioned brick-and-marble buildings on either side—but to me, it seemed massive and imposing, like it was some bully crushing his way through a crowd of old ladies.

I was suddenly very, very nervous. *Maybe the devil I knew was better than the devil I didn't know? Should I have stayed in Keansburg?*

We were early—frozen in an ornate entrance hall where, off to the right, was the office I was supposed to check into as a new student. There were a few kids around—students who looked like they were posing for the Vincent Academy brochure. Girls strewn about here and there, draped over high-backed chairs while they studied from thick textbooks. There were a few boys too, in dark pants, white shirts and mostly undone ties, lounging on a wooden staircase with a scrolled banister, or carrying a basketball and pushing open the double doors in the rear to what looked like a fairly large quad.

Vincent Academy was one of the only coed private schools in Manhattan, a fact, as I looked around, I wasn't sure if I was supposed to be happy about or terrified of. As I looked more closely at the girls, I saw that they matched their pristine uniforms with heels and expensive-looking boots. I looked down at my black tights and scuffed Mary Janes through my overgrown bangs—which were cursed with a cowlick—and grimaced. Big diamonds glittered in the ears of a long-haired, fake-tanned blonde, who was scrutinizing a calculus textbook and managing to look glamorous while doing so. In my ears? A row of three tiny imitation-silver hoops that I got at Hot Topic. On sale.

I decided to be happy. I wasn't looking for a boyfriend, since they tend to do pesky things like asking about your life and all that. I just wanted to be anonymous. And if this chick was any indication of what my classmates looked like, I was zero competition for any of these girls, who probably spent their morning putting on makeup and arriving at school in chauffeur-driven cars.

Ashley walked with me through the palatial hall to the office, her eyes eager to see a little bit of the hero she

used to worship when we were kids. I smiled weakly and made a

lame slit across my throat with my index finger. She laughed and I headed inside.

"You must be Miss Connor." The woman sitting behind the tall wood counter regarded me with iron-gray eyes. They matched her gray hair, pulled into a tight, no-nonsense bun at the nape of her neck. She was even wearing a gray cardigan. I glanced at the nameplate on her desk.

No. Way. Ms. Gray? I blinked and looked again. Mrs. Gary. Close enough! I bet she was wearing gray granny panties, too.

"Yes, um, yes," I stammered. "I'm Emma Connor." *How did she know who I was?* "How did—did you know that?"

She smiled, and a very faint hint of warmth crept into those steely eyes.

"You're the only student I don't know, and there's only one new student due today." She smiled. "Let me get your schedule for you."

I groaned internally. I had forgotten how small Vincent Academy was. Keansburg High had 650 students. How could I hide in a school that barely had 200?

"Here you are, dear," the gray lady said, handing me my schedule. "Your first class today is on the third floor."

But my locker, well, my locker was in the basement, in a row of old lockers so out of the way, they were always the last to be assigned, falling to latecomers like me and unlucky freshmen.

"Stay there and smile," the gray lady instructed as I stood in the same spot, scrutinizing my schedule. "Miss Connor," she snapped, her voice sharp.

"Huh?" I looked up, and she was standing behind some large beige contraption. Suddenly there was a flash. It surprised me—it was too bright, and I saw spots everywhere.

"You can pick up your ID after lunch. In the meantime,

please fill these out." *Oh, great, that's going to be an awesome picture. So sexy.*

The gray lady handed me several small yellow forms, telling me to give them to each teacher as I walked into the room. I realized there was no way I was going to avoid the awkward "Hey, kids, we have a new student here" nightmare.

Please, oh, please, don't make me have to introduce myself. Don't make me tell them something about myself.

Hi, I'm Emma. I'm basically an orphan and my life sounds like a Lifetime Original Movie. My dad left when I was six. My twin brother died when I was fourteen. My mom got sick soon after that, and died when I was fifteen. I lose everyone I love. And this past June, my stepfather wrapped a car around a telephone pole with us in it. So now, I live with my aunt, I have no friends except for my cousin anymore, thanks to my jerk

stepfather, and I still keep a journal with all my hopes and fears in it. Also, my favorite color is purple and I think baby animals are cute.

I finished signing my forms and returned to my cousin, who snatched the schedule from my hands, scrutinizing my teachers.

"Your Monday through Wednesday schedule is almost the same. You have Mr. D for chemistry. He has people call him Mr. D because his name is so long. That's good. He's supposed to be fair," she mused. "Ugh, Mrs. Dell. She suuucks," Ashley said, drawing it out dramatically. "Sorry about that. But hey, we'll be in the same class!"

I looked to see which subject she was talking about. Latin. *Wait, Latin?*

I realized I had been put in freshman Latin.

I never really paid much attention to which classes I'd actually be taking. Christine was on the board at Vincent Academy and pulled some strings to allow me to take the placement exams late—which was why I was starting three weeks after

the school year had already begun. I forgot that the Vincent Academy required students to take two years of Latin. All I knew about Latin was E Pluribus Unum.

I looked down at Ashley and tried to be optimistic about it. "Well, at least I have a friend in class!"

She smiled her billion-dollar smile and showed me to my locker, in a narrow hallway next to the chemistry lab and boiler room. I felt like some goblin, tucked away in the basement dungeon. I would not have been surprised if Freddy Krueger stored his books next to me.

"Okay, now I have to go to *my* locker." She smiled again, giving me an apologetic look. "It's on the second floor. I won't see you until Latin, which is the last class."

"After lunch," I replied woodenly. "Oh, crap!" I moaned.

"What?" Ashley looked alarmed.

I realized I couldn't tell her that I didn't want to go to lunch alone—and here, each grade took a separate lunch period because the cafeteria was kind of small.

"Nothing," I said, throwing on my brightest fake smile. "I thought I forgot to bring something."

"Oh. Okay, well, I'll see you in Latin. You'll hate it," she promised, then added, "but Mrs. Dell has a moustache so it's kind of funny to watch it move as she says anything that ends in '-ibus.' It truly...flutters in the breeze," she added dramatically.

I giggled, and gave her a hug.

"Thank you," I said into her mess of curls, and gave her a bigger squeeze so she knew how much I really did appreciate it.

She bounced back to the stairwell and turned back to face me, looking older than the fourteen years I knew her to be. "You'll be fine." Ashley looked at me solemnly with her

giant blue eyes before skipping up the stairs, her overstuffed backpack bouncing up and down on her hip.

I eyed the emergency fire exit door and considered making a break for it.

"Don't be stupid, Emma," I whispered to myself. "Just two more years of high school. It can't be worse than living with Henry."

I shoved my notebooks into my locker and slammed the metal door defiantly. *Here we go.*

Users Review

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