



Freaks

Brett Riley

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Teenage outcasts have to save their small town from a bloodthirsty monster by teaming up with their bully in Brett Riley's fantasy novel *Freaks*.

Since grade school, Gabby, Micah, Jamie, and Christian have been bullied by B3, a group of big, dumb jocks who get their thrills from making other people's lives miserable. Their only relief from the daily harassment comes in the form of nerding out together over video games and live action role playing. But when the four friends accidentally cast a spell that opens a portal to another dimension, they release a huge vampire beast, and their once innocent games become all too real.

That same night, the foursome discover that they've somehow ended up with superpowers: Gabby shoots beams from her hands, Jamie flies, Christian runs lightning fast, and Micah generates fire and ice. In an interesting twist, Kenneth, one of the B3, obtains super strength. The characters grow and change as they learn about their powers, revealing unexpected emotions and amplifying simmering conflicts.

But obtaining power in a world where you once had none results in an ethical dilemmas: the four muse over whether they will use their powers to seek revenge, or instead for the greater good. The moral responsibility weighs on them, causing tension and rifts where there used to be easy camaraderie. And while most of their group wants Kenneth to help them fight the monster, Micah refuses to work with his tormentor. He'd rather use his abilities to "get even" with the people who bullied him, and those who stood by and did nothing. Still, the teenagers are forced to act following a gruesome attack, leading to an epic, action-packed battle.

In the supernatural coming-of-age story *Freaks*, four friends must do the right thing or perish.

JENNA JAUREGUY (March / April 2022)

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