



Catonsville Middle School
Becoming...
By Meg Cavanagh

We've all seen them. Those lucky ones who everyone deeply but secretly wishes they could be, if only for a second: surrounded by happiness, smiles engraved on their faces with a kind word at their lip—simply good people who wave to anyone. Shyness is invisible on them. No one ever dares to think it spurious. Leaders, or the best ones, anyway, are what others aim to be. I am not saying that over this year I will embody this persona and become one of them, but I won't be someone you take one glance at and forget about for the rest of your life. No. As an attempt at reaching leadership, I strive to be someone worth the while and maybe, just maybe, I'll be looked up to for being nothing but myself.

This year will be different. Be the girl you want to know, I said over and over in my head. I've promised myself to speak up and let the world know who I am, even if I'm still searching. There's no turning your back on a promise. My circle of friends, with its obvious limits, can always grow. Wherever I am, whoever I'm with, I will talk, building confidence with every word, holding nothing back. Voracious to meet people beyond the same old crowd, I joined a choir and started field hockey, both of which I've never done before. As long as I'm the person I want to be, my inner aspiration, no one's opinion of me will matter.

Or so I thought. The path to leadership has been so much rougher than expected, as everything always ends up being. Onerous as it is, I need this. It's discouraging to be giving something my best shot, when everyone around me is better than I'll ever be. My pride suffered from attrition as I continued to push myself. Newly-existent conversations rarely go without a few moments of not-quite-awkward silence. Occasionally they leave me wondering why it turned out this way. *What am I afraid of?* There's too much I haven't said. But sometimes the attention doesn't seem worth it. Every now and then I hear about someone commenting on me, seeing me as arrogant or an outsider. *If only they knew.* Their opinion is theirs, decided and final, but that doesn't mean I won't try to change it. No matter who they are, it still hurts. I get lost sometimes, afraid that I'm becoming a silent nothing, and I just have to stop. I'm scared to death of being someone I hate. There's no way I'm going there, going so low. But I won't be stuck here, either. I won't be an echo in the hall. At least I'll take pride in taking a stand.

Like I said, there's no turning back. All of that is behind me now, and I walk forward, stronger. People are only scary from the corner of the world. Staying far, far away from there, I'll never be intimidated by them again. Never. I am only further encouraged to be the best version of myself, and now, at last, I think I know exactly who that is. Loud and funny and sweet, the real me, at ease. A person I love and never have to fake. This time around, I won't keep myself awake replaying moments, writhing under the pressure to change. Now, it's me or nothing.



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The truth is, I'm not Little Miss Popularity. *Who needs that if you can be happy?* Everything I've done has only created a stronger person in me. Failures and all. The mirror shows me someone who's worth it. I'm out of the shadows and loving the sun.