

Becoming Me (Diary of a Teenage Girl: Caitlin, Book 1)

By Melody Carlson

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In the fictional Diary of a Teenage Girl, sixteen-year-old Caitlin O'Conner reveals the inner workings of a girl caught between childhood and womanhood ... an empty life without Christ and a meaningful one with Him. Through Caitlin's candid journal entries we see her grapple with such universal teen issues as peer pressure, loyalty, conflict with parents, the longing for a boyfriend, and her own spirituality. Readers will laugh and cry with Caitlin as she struggles toward self-discovery and understanding God's plan for her life. And they'll be deeply moved by her surprising commitment regarding dating.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Melody Carlson is the bestselling author of more than seventy books for teens, women, and children with total sales over 1 million. She has two grown sons and enjoys an active lifestyle of hiking, skiing, and biking. She lives in the beautiful Oregon Cascade Mountains with her husband and Labrador retriever.

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Chapter One

Monday, January 1 (a rather uneventful new year, so far anyway)

I heard somewhere that when you write in a diary you should pretend that you're writing a letter to a really good friend, someone you trust completely, and you know will never laugh at you. So that's what I'm telling myself, because to tell the truth I feel kind of silly writing about my life in this dorky little book. And it's funny because I've actually had this diary for several years now, and suddenly it hits me—like hey, I'm sixteen! According to some people this should be one of the most memorable eras of my whole life. Well, I'm not too sure I even want to remember everything about being sixteen, but on the other hand, things seem to be looking up lately, and it might actually be fun to track how the rest of my junior year goes. Especially considering the first few months have been pretty dull so far.

But first of all, let me say this: Being sixteen is not really that sweet. And furthermore, it's not terribly exciting either—at least not for me (although I'm certain that some kids my age are having a really great time). Take last night, for instance, I wanted to go to a New Year's Eve party with my friend, Beanie Jacobs. But do you think I got to go? Yeah, right! To protest, I stayed up in my room most of the night, until my mom literally begged me (using her famous it's-a-holiday guilt trip combined with the promise of double-dutch brownies) to "come join the family." And then we watched this really lame video about a bunch of stupid kids who got lost in the woods. And then we stayed up until midnight and watched our neighbors shooting off (what are supposed to be illegal) fireworks. Well, big whoopdee-doo!

But back to being sixteen and how it's not so sweet. What some people don't realize is that sixteen comes with its own set of problems. Like, take driving for instance. I was all excited when I got my license the end of last summer (on my birthday, no less!), and I thought for sure my parents would want to get me a car now. Naturally, I
didn't expect a new car (although I wouldn't mind having one of those cool VW Bugs with the little flower vases on the dashboard—maybe in yellow or blue), but I would have settled for almost any old thing with four wheels, as long as it ran decently. But do you think I could get them to spring for a car (even though I patiently explained how they'd never have to haul me around everywhere, and how I would even give my little brother rides to his stupid ball games not to mention run an endless amount of errands for them)? Well, think again! "You don't want to deal with that kind of responsibility yet, Caitlin Renee," Mommy says ever so sweetly. (I'm pretty sure she even patted me on the head!)

Honestly, sometimes my parents treat me like I'm still ten years old! And, of course, they say it's because they love me, but I think the truth is they don't really trust me. They probably think if they give me just the tiniest taste of freedom that I'll run hog-wild, get a tattoo, and start smoking dope or something equally disgusting! Why

can't they believe in me—just a little? I mean, I've never given them a single reason not to trust me (at least nothing of any real significance). It's just not fair. About the only thing they willingly let me do is to go to our church's high school youth group functions—and, man, let me tell you, there are some kids in there who are pretty bad
news. Not exactly a great "influence" as my dad likes to call any teenage kid he doesn't quite get (take my best friend, Beanie, for instance, but I'll get to her later). Anyway, the thing is, I don't even tell my parents about the kids in youth group who smoke and drink and God only knows what else—or I'd never get to go anywhere until I turned twenty-one!

Now I'll try to say something nice about my parents (just in case they're reading this). And if they are—I will take back every single word of it, and never, ever speak to the old snoops again! Okay, for the most part, my parents are pretty cool (and not the kind of people to read other people's diaries!). For one thing, they've managed to
stay married to each other for almost twenty years (a pretty big deal when everyone else's parents seem to be splitting up); and my dad has a pretty interesting job at an advertising firm downtown, while my mom teaches first grade. I guess I could've done worse as far as parents go. Like my best friend, Beanie Jacobs, her dad was a cocaine addict who left her mom with nothing but overdue bills when Beanie was still in diapers. On top of that, her mom's kind of freaky and irresponsible, plus she drinks too much and forgets to pay her bills. I know she got married really young, but it's kind of like she never grew up. But she actually makes Beanie act like the parent
most of the time, which is pretty weird, if you ask me.

Of course, the one good thing about that whole Beanie situation is that she gets to do whatever she wants whenever she wants. And I kind of envy that. Oh, sure, I know it has its down side too. Let me tell you, Lynn Jacobs (Beanie's mom) can be pretty scary sometimes, and I've seen her tear into Beanie like she's a dog or something less than human. As a consequence I try to never get on that woman's bad side (which lately seems to be every side). Anyway, Beanie's been my best friend since sixth grade (when we both discovered we were totally hopeless on the violin). I could tell right off she was really smart, and she had this really dry sense of humor. Plus, I liked that she wasn't afraid to speak up and say how she felt (at least around anyone but her mom).

Now, I'll be the first to admit that Beanie Baby (she goes absolutely nuts when I call her that, which I rarely do, except if I'm ticked at her about something) tends to dress, well, shall I say, outlandishly (I've been reading Jane Austen books lately and sometimes I wish we still talked like that)? But back to Beanie and how she has this rather interesting sense of style (you see, her mom never gives her any money for clothes, so she has to come up with all these creative ways of dressing—and she actually shops at Goodwill, and then she even sews some of her weird stuff together). And sometimes she even dyes her hair some pretty wild colors like magenta or midnight blue. Normally it's almost black and very curly which she says is because her dad was Jewish, although she doesn't practice his religion.

But Beanie's pretty fun to hang with, and I'm glad she's my friend. My parents didn't like her at all at first. But then I got her going to youth group with me. And now they think she's okay but strange, and I don't think they quite trust her. Beanie's actually very pretty (in a sultry kind of way) and one time my mom (trying to be helpful) wanted to give her a complete makeover—but that's another story. Let's just suffice it to say that when Mom was done, Beanie looked like a Mary Kay poster child. Poor Beanie. Well, I guess that's enough for one night. So, now, you can see how my life is just so terribly exciting. Like, wow, maybe they'll make this book into a movie some day! Not!

Wednesday, January 3 (back to school)

I need to say that I read back over my first entry in this diary and had to laugh. I mean, I sound like such a blabbermouth. And in real life I'm not even like that. In fact, some people think I'm rather quiet and reserved. My grandma says that's a good thing because there's a Proverb that says something like "even a total fool can appear wise if she keeps her mouth shut." Anyway, I guess the way we express ourselves in writing isn't always the way we express ourselves in real life (and I notice I use a lot of parentheses too). But that's okay—I think writing is fun. Now back to my life…

Okay, today I'm thinking about the pros and cons of popularity (well, mostly the pros). And believe me, I realize (as much as any sixteen-year-old possibly can) that popularity is highly overrated and it's not like it's ever been my primary goal in life. But I guess I never wanted to be a total geek either! And it's not like I am. Not really anyway. Okay, I'm not popular, but I'm not such a loser. I guess I'm just not much of anything. I mean I'm not in any particular group in school—not a geek or a freak, not exactly an academic, and certainly not a jock! Mostly I just hang with Beanie, and sometimes with some of the kids from youth group (but then they can act pretty geeky at times, and we don't always like being connected with them, not that anyone would really care since we are basically nobodies anyway).

But just because we're "nobodies" doesn't mean that kids who think they are "somebody" should put us down. Does it? I mean, I don't think I put other kids down (even if I think they're total geeks), but I suppose if I was being really honest (which was my original goal in this diary, so I better stick to it)…well, I suppose I might act just a little superior sometimes. I mean, it's not like I really think I'm better than anyone else or anything—but I suppose I might act a little bit snooty, especially when I'm afraid that someone else is going to put me down anyway. I know
that's not very nice, but it's the truth.

So, back to the question of popularity. I have to admit that when I was a little kid I used to think it'd be so cool to be the most popular girl in the whole school. Like my Aunt Stephie—she's my mom's baby sister, but so much younger she could almost be my big sister. Anyway, I remember how Grandma used to complain that the phone
"rang night and day" for Aunt Stephie. She was a cheerleader and had this really cool boyfriend who looked just like Tom Cruise (Tom was more popular back then,
although I still think he's pretty cool).

Anyway, all that popularity stuff seemed pretty great to an eight-year-old kid, and I remember thinking that when I was in high school, I wanted to be exactly like Aunt Stephie. Not that her life has turned out all that great as a grownup, at least not according to my grandma (she's always on poor Stephie's case) and I'd have to admit Steph does have some fairly serious problems (like a baby and no husband plus she freeloads baby-sitting from Grandma). So I guess, in some ways, all that popularity didn't do her a whole lot of good in the long run. But just the same, I still sometimes wish that I was one the coolest girls in high school. Now, how's that for honest?

At the same time, I'd like to think that I'm more mature than that, and I'll admit that Beanie and I sometimes make fun of the "popular" kids (behind their backs, of course!). And like I said, it's not like I'm a complete loser either—in fact, I got my braces off last fall and my skin is almost completely clear now. I got my hair cut in this really cool style during Christmas break, so that it kind of swings back and forth when I walk. And Aunt Stephie said I look just like Gwyneth Paltrow (of course, she wanted me to baby-sit Oliver at the time, and she might've said anything to seal the deal). I've got a magazine with Gwyneth's photo on it, and I studied my face in the mirror, and I do think there is a slight resemblance. And since I got my haircut, it suddenly seems like other people are looking at me differently. Perhaps even some pretty cool people are actually looking my way (unless it's my imagination). But even so, it feels kind of good. I mean all these

years before I just felt kind of invisible (which wasn't so bad; I mean, it was better than sticking out in a crowd).

Now I know I must be sounding all lame and desperate to go on like this (not to mention totally shallow); like all I care about is getting some airhead approval from a bunch of kids who aren't all that nice in the first place. And, like I said, it's not like I don't already have any friends. I mean there's always Beanie. There's a few others too. Okay, I admit it, they're mostly from the youth group! But at least I know they'd stick by me through the very worst. I think some of the nicer ones would. I seriously
doubt if those popular kids would be like that. Not that

I'll ever have a chance to find out. But on the other hand, I guess I'd be willing to find out, if I had the chance.

Okay, is that so terribly wrong? Is it so wrong to want some different friends for a change? To want life to change and become more exciting? Last week our youth group leader said that if we don't have something that we really think we need, we should pray for it. I wonder if it would be wrong to pray to become popular. I guess the worst that could happen is that God could say no. It might be worth a try. I don't know why God wouldn't want me to have more friends; we're always being told to "reach out" to those around us. Hey, I'm willing to do some reaching here.

Well, all this wondering is probably just a big, stupid waste of time, because I'm sure the popular kids don't want to hang with me anyway. I've heard them make fun of the geeks and nerds and freaks before—as if we're all deaf and can't even hear them. Or maybe they think we have absolutely no feelings at all. In fact, now that I think about it, I can't even believe that I've sat here and actually considered hanging with kids like that in the first place. But I'm supposed to be honest here. And the truth is, I would hang with them if only they would let me. But, I ask you, is that so terribly
wrong?

Users Review

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