
A tall, thin girl The Comeback with blonde hair made what can only The Comeback be described as an Entrance. Conversation ceased.

“Who is that?” someone whispered as the girl strode confidently up the aisle.

She The Comeback paused midway. “Is this where The Comeback tryouts for *The Taming of the Shrew* are being held?” She strode onto the stage. “I’m Angie Vogel,” she said. “And I’m auditioning for Katharina.”

She finished her audition to a roar of applause, entirely from the guys in the audience, I noticed, and floated down off the stage.

As she The Comeback walked by with her nose in the air, she said, “Try to top that.” I don’t know how or why, but I was sure she was talking to me. Maybe it was because she was staring straight at me.

The Comeback

BY

MARLENE PEREZ

Thanks to Amanda Maciel, super-editor, who made Sophie shine. And to Stephen Barbara, super-agent, and most of all, to my family, who are super-patient.

To the Mini-Ms.

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[Chapter 1](#)

I hadn't asked to be popular. In the beginning, I hadn't even thought about it. The only thing I'd thought about was the cute boy with the brown eyes and floppy blond hair. He wasn't afraid to

admit he liked chocolate chip cookies, Monty Python movies, and me. Only later did that boy turn into Connor, the most popular guy in the junior class. But when we were freshmen, he was just Connor, who loved cookies, and I was just Sophie, who thought she could love Connor.

We were happy. But then we became popular, and it happened so gradually that I hadn't noticed that, pretty soon, popularity was what our entire relationship The Comeback was about.

Connor and The Comeback I first met at the The Comeback country club where our fathers played golf. My parents had just gotten a divorce and it was my dad's idea of father-daughter time to take me to the country club and then dump me at the pool while he hit the links.

So, I spent my days hanging out there with Monet. Back then, she'd just started calling herself that.

My best friend had interesting theories, one of which was that she had been given the wrong name. We'd agreed that since we'd both be starting high school in the fall, we would reinvent ourselves. To that end, I wasn't allowed to breathe a word of her real name to anybody.

Even back then, Monet and I had big plans. We were going to move to Los Angeles and become famous. She was going to rock the art world with her moody abstract paintings and I was going to become a film star. I was sure Monet was going to make it. She had the talent and drive to make it happen.

It was a little more complicated for me. You could look like a troll and be a character actor (in fact, sometimes troll looks were a plus), but a film star had to be beautiful. I was determined to have a physical metamorphosis and turn my plain old caterpillar self into a butterfly.

Back then, I'd just started to work out on a regular basis and was actually wearing a bikini to the pool for the first time. My braces were off and my hair was behaving. I remember thinking that I might actually be getting pretty. My transformation was well on its way.

Monet's older brother, Dev, was there, too. He splashed around the pool, showing off for a couple of girls in his sophomore class. They ignored him and so did we.

He hauled himself out of the pool to come bug us. "Imogene, can I borrow a dollar? I want something from the vending machine."

She ignored him.

"Imogene," Dev said.

"Don't you dare call me that in public," Monet hissed.

"It's your name," he pointed out.

"It's my *legal* name," she replied, "but I've told you, from now on I'm Monet, like the painter. And just for that, no, you The Comeback *can't* borrow money."

Dev shrugged and dove cleanly into the water.

"He's a good swimmer," I commented.

Monet said, "He made the varsity swim team and it's totally gone to his head."

"He's on the *varsity* swim team?"

I made conversation, but I wasn't really paying The Comeback attention. I was busy looking for someone. I'd had my eye on a gorgeous blond guy, Connor, who was on the swim team, too. We'd joked and flirted, but he hadn't asked me out The Comeback yet.

"Well, it's the *only* swim team at Kennedy," Monet replied. Kennedy High School was an arts magnet school, mostly known for its drama and music departments.

We giggled. I finally saw Connor as he entered the pool area, and my heart sped up. Would he come over and talk to me? We'd met formally a few weeks before. Some loser guy had hassled me in the parking lot and Connor had gotten rid of him for me. But we'd been noticing each other since the beginning of The Comeback that summer.

He took a seat next to his friend Chase. There were a couple of girls nearby, but Connor The Comeback didn't pay any attention to them.

I kept my eyes on him, willing him to look up and acknowledge my presence, but he was absorbed in his conversation.

A few minutes later, Dev came out of the water and flopped down beside me.

"Dev, you're dripping water all over," I scolded, but I didn't take my eyes off Connor.

The Comeback

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