

“Untitled”

By Gabriella Lamb

Prologue

Somewhere off in Tennessee, there lived a little girl named Celia Rose Smith who had blue eyes that people would say looked like the Adriatic Sea, and she had wavy, long brown hair. Everyone at her school thought she was crazy because riding a horse in her town was considered unladylike for a girl or a woman. But she liked horses so much because her mother would tell her stories and once even took her to her uncle’s horse farm. But only a month after that exciting visit, while five-year-old Celia was playing with her toys, the door rattled open, and her nanny emerged inside her room, crying.

“What is it?” asked Celia.

“Oh, Celia, I’m sorry to say, but your mother died today of a tragic fall.”

After that, she rarely saw her father because he hid his grief behind his role as a busy college professor. Unlike her deceased mother, her father wouldn’t share his stories, even when she was a wee lass.

Chapter 1 [Eight years later]

“I’m home!” said Celia.

“Good, because a letter from your uncle came in,” said Miss Humphery, her nanny.

Celia hastily took the letter since she had been waiting for a reply for over a month after sending one to ask if she could take riding lessons.

“I wonder what he has to say,” said Miss Humphrey, who had been her nanny since she was just a babe. She looked like what you would say: Beautiful at that time with curly black hair and light brown eyes; she would dress elegantly and simply.

The letter read: “Dear Niece, I was astonished to see your letter and request, mainly because you said that you would walk there every day, and I hope you know that it is about a 12-mile walk. But if your father gives his consent, I will let you come. And I am incredibly sorry for the short letter I have bestowed upon you. Best Regards, Edward Scott.”

A million things were going through my head. But there was one thing that stopped all the words in her mind: the phrase “if your father gives his consent.” It seemed impossible to get him to say yes. Because she never actually heard him say yes to anything she asked, the reply was always “Celia dear, can we talk later, please?” And it was always no to the question I asked. But she was turning fourteen on September 23, in just four days. So he might say yes, and she planned to ask him tonight when he gets home. It was 7:30 p.m., and he would be home in thirty minutes.

But at that moment, she heard the doorbell. Celia rushed downstairs and opened the door, and instead of her father, it was her best friend, Rose Kaitlen.

“Have you asked him yet?” she asked.

“No, he’s not even here yet, but he will be soon,” Celia said. “Oh no! He’s here!”

“What?” Rose said, “Quick, go run upstairs into my closet or something because every time he sees you, I’m ill or something,” said Celia.

Rose exclaimed as Celia's father walked toward the front door, "Wait... which closet do I enter?" Since Celia has two closets,

"Either one, just go upstairs quick."

When her father opened the door, she quickly rushed him into the living room so he didn't see Rose run upstairs.

"Celia Rose Smith, what is the meaning of this?"

But it was too late because when Rose heard her name from the stairs, she almost shouted, "Yes!"

"Shh," said Celia.

"Rose Kaitlen, are you here?" exclaimed the father.

"Yes," said a tiny voice from my room.

"Wait, Celia, are you sick?"

"No, I'm not, but Dad, I have a question."

"Yes?"

"Am I allowed to get riding lessons?" But she couldn't finish her sentence because at that moment, her father's face went stone white, and then he said, "No! It's out of the question."

Once her father was upstairs, Rose said, "That didn't go too well."

Later that night, after she said goodnight to Rose, she went upstairs to think about why her father had so harshly said no, but she was interrupted by her thoughts because she heard a knock on her bedroom door.

"Who is it?" said Celia rather curiously.

“Oh, it’s only Miss Humphery, deary.”

“Oh, come in then,” said Celia.

“What did he say?”

“Well, a little of this and a little of that,” said Celia.

“He said no, didn’t he?”

“Well, yes. But he never minded. Anyway, goodnight,” said Celia with a quick yawn.

“Goodnight, Celia dear.”

When Miss Humphrey awoke the next morning, she decided to chat with Celia’s Uncle Edward Schotson. As she pulled into the dirt path driveway of the farm in her light blue convertible, she saw a young man and quickly gestured for him to come over so she could ask him something. When he came close enough, she saw he was a rather tall young man with dark black hair and green eyes.

She said, “Is Mr. Schotson here?”

“Yes, ma’am, I believe he’s in the barn. I’ll go get him for you,” said the young man with a quick laugh as he ran to the stables, where Celia’s Uncle Edward emerged moments later. Upon seeing Miss Humphrey, he appeared shocked but quickly covered it with a big smile.

“How are you, Sara - Miss Humphrey? I haven’t seen you in like nine years, and you’re married now, I presume?” said Edward.

“I am perfectly well, and never mind that, Edward. I did not come here to talk about my health or marital status. I came on behalf of your niece, Celia,” said Miss Humphrey.

“What about Celia? Is she sick or dead?” Edward asked with a worried face.

“No, Edward, she’s neither sick nor dead. Her father said no to the lessons, which hit her harder than I would have expected for a girl her age. She tried to hide it, but it was evident in her eyes. She has her mother’s love for horses, and I was thinking maybe you could talk to him. You get along better with him than I do... So, will you do it?” asked Sara.

Celia’s uncle hesitated but managed to say, “All right, I’ll come tonight at seven-thirty.”

“Yes?”

“I wanted you to know I’m sorry about the past, and I want you to know I’m doing this also for you,” said Edward, speechless.

Sara quickly got into her convertible and drove away.

Celia looked at her watch. “Oh, it’s only seven-thirty. Wait! Didn’t Miss Humphrey say Uncle is coming right now?” thought Celia to herself. Seconds later, Celia heard the doorbell, but before she could answer the door, Miss Humphrey came down the stairs and said, “I’ll get it!” When Miss Humphrey opened the door, Celia’s uncle stood there and awkwardly handed Miss Humphrey flowers. A minute or two later, Miss Humphrey, quickly remembering her manners, said, “Edward, why don’t you come in?”

“Celia, is your father here?” asked Celia’s uncle.

“Yeah, he’s in his study,” said Celia, looking at her nanny curiously because she did not know why her uncle, whom she had only seen once or twice, was here. Thirty minutes later, Celia’s uncle emerged from her father’s study and said to Miss Humphrey, “He said he wanted to talk to Celia about it,” and then he left.

“Wait, what does uncle mean?” asked Celia.

“Oh sorry, well, we meant to talk about whether you’re getting lessons or not,” said Sara.

“Oh, thank you, Miss Humphrey!” said Celia as she went into her father’s study.

“Celia,” said Celia’s father.

“Yes, father?”

“Well, I wanted to say I didn’t know how much you wanted to learn how to ride a horse. I...I... just don’t want you to get hurt; you’re one of the last people I have, and I don’t want to lose you. Just please, by all means, stay safe, okay?”

“Okay, Dad,” said Celia as she ran to hug her father. “Celia?” “Yes, father?”