

AN AB DISCOVER BOOK

# BECOMING *Baby Rose*



CECILIA BENNET

*Becoming Baby Rose*

# Becoming Baby Rose by Cecilia Bennet

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## *Chapter One: The Crawling*

It was on a quiet Sunday morning that Camille caught Nina staring out the kitchen window, her hands still wrapped around a warm mug of chai, long after it had gone cold.

"You're doing it again," Camille said gently, slipping her arms around Nina's waist from behind.

Nina blinked, startled from her thoughts. "Doing what?"

"Staring into the future. Or maybe the past. It's hard to tell with you."

Nina gave a soft chuckle but didn't turn around. "I just keep thinking about... how it was supposed to feel. We should be watching a little one crawl across this floor, and us taking turns with the midnight feeds. Maybe arguing over whose turn it was to change the smelly ones."

Camille rested her chin on Nina's shoulder. "Are you sure you'd want me near a nappy without gloves and a respirator?"

They both laughed, and for a moment, the sadness lifted. But then it came back, as it always did. It had been almost two years since their last round of IVF. Four tries, one chemical pregnancy, and endless hormone crashes later, they'd quietly closed the door on that chapter. Exploring adoption had followed, until the agency began to subtly question the 'stability' of their "alternative lifestyle" and the lack of male influence. It wasn't said out loud, but the message was clear.

"I just... I don't think that dream's going away, Cam," Nina whispered, finally turning to face her wife. "I still want to be someone's mum."

Camille reached up and cupped Nina's cheek. "I know. I do too. Even if it looks different now."

The doorbell rang, snapping the moment like a dry twig. Their mutual friend Lauren was at the door with her new girlfriend and a

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bottle of bubbly. Sunday brunch was about to begin. It was something of a tradition and guaranteed to blow the blues away.

The four of them sat around the back garden table, sunlight filtering through the eucalypts, with bowls of fruit and buttery pastries spread between them. Lauren's new girlfriend, Sasha, was a chatty midwife with wild curls and a boisterous laugh.

"Honestly, you'd be amazed what people admit to me once they're on gas and air," Sasha said, sipping her mimosa. "One woman confessed she still sucks her thumb before bed."

Lauren giggled. "Well, that's tame compared to Rose."

Sasha blinked. "Rose?"

Lauren glanced at Camille and Nina. "Oh, sorry, you don't know her. She's this... friend of a friend. A quiet girl. Designer, I think. She's lovely, really lovely actually, just a bit odd. Anyway... this is embarrassing... but apparently, she still wears, um... nappies. Like, real ones and not for medical stuff either. She's not incontinent, she just... er...wears them."

There was a flicker of discomfort, like a breeze brushing against the group. Sasha laughed too quickly. "You're joking, right?"

Lauren held up a hand. "Swear on my cat's life. She still wets the bed or something. Always has. Used to sneak off on sleepovers and change into them secretly. Can you imagine?"

Nina opened her mouth, but it was Camille who spoke first.

"Well," Camille said, her voice soft and slow, "maybe she just never had the chance to feel safe enough to stop."

The table went quiet. It was uncharacteristically deep and meaningful at a moment where silliness and alcohol largely held sway.

Lauren cleared her throat. "I mean... yeah. I guess we all have our stuff, I suppose."

Camille smiled politely and sipped her tea. Alcohol was not her preferred buzz. But her mind was elsewhere, running through thoughts and scenarios.

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Later that night, as the stars began to blink into the sky and the garden was dim but peaceful, Camille leaned against the doorframe and watched Nina tuck a blanket over their legs.

"You know," Camille murmured, "I can't stop thinking about that Rose girl."

Nina looked up. "The one Lauren mentioned?"

Camille nodded. "What if there's something there? I mean... not just the bedwetting. But the... need."

Nina gave her a long look. "I'm not quite sure where you're going with this... but do you think she's looking for someone to care for her?"

"I think she might not even know it yet. But yes, I do. Nappies at her age, outside of bedwetting, are more than unusual. To me, it feels like a cry for help."

Nina traced a finger along Camille's wrist. "That's a dangerous hope, girl. I'm over hoping for the impossible."

Camille tilted her head. "But is it dangerous? Or is it just something a bit different? Something mutual? We've been waiting for a child to come to us in a certain way. Maybe that's not the only way love arrives."

Nina didn't answer right away. But later, in bed, her arms wrapped tight around Camille's waist, she whispered, "If we do this... we do it slowly. Gently. With care. It sounds like a plan destined to blow up in our faces, and I couldn't stand a repeat of the adoption fiasco."

Camille kissed her temple. "Of course. We won't just make a baby. But maybe we can find one. One that's already been waiting to be held."

## Chapter Two: A Quiet Stranger

Camille sat curled on the living room floor, knees hugged to her chest, half-listening to a podcast while sketching out the concept for her upcoming gallery show. It was a series of softly layered images with fabric textures, suspended mobiles, and paper lanterns, all meant to evoke childhood wonder and memory. It was as if parenting and the promise of it never really left their world.

The theme was *Liminal Spaces*—transitions, in-betweens, and the places we drift through when we aren't fully one thing or the other. And for two gay women, it spoke powerfully of their own lives of transitions and in-betweens.

Her pencil paused on the page. A phrase had whispered through her mind. *"What if someone lived their entire life in a liminal space?"*

She thought again of the girl, Rose. Lauren hadn't meant to be cruel, Camille was sure. But the way she'd said "still wears nappies" like it was a punchline hadn't sat right with her. It was unnecessarily mean. Camille had a quiet radar for people like that, the quietly hurting ones, who moved cautiously through the world as if too much light might burn them. She hadn't been one of them, but she had seen plenty of them through her journey in life.

She stood, stretched, and walked over to her laptop. It was time to act... at least a little bit.

Subject line: Graphic Design Inquiry – Gallery Project

Hi Rose, Your name was passed to me through Lauren. She said you were a wonderful graphic designer. I'm curating a mixed-media art show next month and looking for someone to design the poster and exhibit booklet. Would love to chat if you're available.

Warmly, Camille V.



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She hit send and then immediately felt nervous. Was this weird? Too obvious? She hadn't even seen a portfolio. She felt like she did in her early dating days as a teenager, where being obvious was always a problem for her. But she had grown over the years to be more subtle, more curious and less pointed and obvious.

But two hours later, her phone buzzed just the same. It was a reply.

Hi Camille, Thanks for reaching out. I'd be happy to discuss the project. I'm free Wednesday afternoon if that suits?

Rose

Camille stared at the message for a moment, then smiled.

The café Rose chose was a quiet spot near the botanical gardens. Camille arrived early and picked the sunniest table. She wore a soft green dress with a fuzzy cardigan and brought along a folder with her sketches, but mostly, she was trying not to feel like she was walking into a first date she hadn't quite admitted to wanting. She'd been through that too many times before.

Rose arrived precisely on time, petite, pale, and dressed in long layers with a grey top, navy skirt, and a satchel that looked slightly too heavy for her slim shoulders. She had shoulder-length brown hair with a natural wave and a shy, uncertain smile as she scanned the tables. Camille waved.

"Rose?"

"Yes. Hi," she said, her voice soft but clear. "You're Camille?"

"I am." Camille stood to greet her. "Thank you for meeting me."

Rose sat down carefully, like she was unsure if she was welcome. Her bag made a quiet thump as she set it on the floor beside her.

"I brought a few sketch ideas," Camille offered, sliding the folder forward. "But no pressure. We can talk style and timelines first if that's easier."

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Rose nodded, flipping open the folder with delicate fingers. As she began looking through the pages, her entire energy shifted. She leaned in, eyes focused. "This is lovely," she murmured. "You have a gentle touch. Are the hanging elements fabric or paper?"

"Paper, cut and layered. But I'm open to ideas if you have better ones."

"I could design something with transparency, like tracing paper overlays. Something that reflects the layering."

Camille smiled. "That sounds beautiful."

Rose blushed slightly and looked down. "Sorry. I get excited. It's easier to talk about work than—"

"Life?" Camille offered, gently.

Rose glanced up, startled, then gave a small nod. "Art is supposed to imitate art, we're told. But I find art is much simpler than life!"

Camille nodded sagely, wondering if Rose had just inadvertently offered up something about her life difficulties.

They ordered tea, and the conversation found a rhythm. Rose was thoughtful, attentive, and spoke with precision. Yet underneath every word was a carefulness, like someone who'd been shushed too often. She was *too* careful. Art and life in general require risks to make either work, and being too careful was the prescription for mediocrity.

About halfway through, Camille noticed something subtle. Every time Rose shifted in her chair, she adjusted her skirt a little too deliberately. Not in vanity, but in habit and once, when she reached for her bag, Camille saw her check the way it sat beside her, almost protectively.

Camille didn't stare. But she filed it away to consider later on.

They agreed on a timeline and an hourly rate, and Rose said she'd send mockups by the weekend. When they stood to leave, Camille reached gently toward her sleeve.

"I hope this isn't too forward," she said quietly, "but I'm really glad we met. I've enjoyed myself this morning more than I expected, more than just work"

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Rose looked at her for a long moment, as if trying to decide whether Camille meant something more than she said. Then she gave the smallest smile Camille had seen all day.

“Me too. I’ve enjoyed myself too.”

That night, Camille sat beside Nina on the couch, feet tucked under a blanket, her heart quietly humming.

“She’s lovely,” Camille said, “and so... closed in. But not frozen. Just like someone waiting to be invited out of hiding.”

Nina raised an eyebrow. “That sounds deep... and you’d like to be the one who invites her to come out?”

“I don’t know,” Camille whispered. “Maybe I’d just like to hold the door open for her.”

Nina smiled softly and kissed her temple. “Let’s just start with that, huh? I really don’t want to get hurt again. The last time was... well, the last time.”