

Author's Note

When I was a little girl, I was fascinated by TV characters, like the obviously Jewish Gladys Kravitz on *Bewitched*. But I knew that she wasn't really a TV star because the stars looked like Samantha—blonde and sleek and charming. Plain women like Gladys were TV's comedic foils or gals Friday.

I knew I would grow up to be a Gladys. It was unfair. Wasn't I a smart girl who could sing rings around any of the Mouseketeers? Yes! Although I wasn't sure that was actually a good thing after my father told me at age eight that I inherited my singing voice from his cousin who was a chanteuse in a whorehouse in Lebanon. (Then he defined *chanteuse* and *whorehouse* and pointed to Lebanon on a map.)

What I was sure about—based on all the evidence—was that I was plump and plain and awkward, and so my fate was sealed.

Or at least it felt sealed for a long time, even though I did sing my way through a stained glass ceiling. Becoming a “first” in a previously all-male career, though, wasn't enough to free me from a quicksand made of fear and anxiety—and the belief that I deserved to go under because I wasn't wonderful enough to be rescued.

But then, well into middle age, I learned how to free myself, and in the process, I discovered what I had known before I learned to judge Gladys and Samantha—and myself.

Catbird is for all daughters—of any generation—and for anyone whose gifts or quirks are underappreciated.

—*Barbi Prim*