

The Answer That Would Come on Friday

Four days of not knowing, a question she
wanted to ask a hundred times, and the
week that kept happening anyway

For ages 12-15



Chapter 1

One Overheard Word

Shani was looking for the stapler when she heard it.

"Results should come Friday," Mama was saying at the front door, where someone from the doctor's office had stopped by. "Yes. We'll know more then."

Results. Friday. We'll know more.

Shani stood very still with the stapler drawer open.

Mama had gone for a checkup two weeks ago. Shani knew because Mama had mentioned it the way she mentioned the dentist. Now the word results had grown teeth.

Mama came back to the table wearing her brown sheitel and her ordinary Tuesday face.

"Who was that?" Shani asked.





"Someone from the doctor's office. I had some tests done, and the results come on Friday."

"Is something wrong?"

"They're checking something. Right now, what we know is that we're waiting for information."

Chapter 2

The List in Her Head

By bedtime, Shani had a list.

It was not written anywhere. It lived in her head and grew whenever she stopped paying attention to something else.

What if it's serious? What if Mama needs an operation? What if everything changes? What if Friday comes and the answer is the worst one?

She asked Mama one question at breakfast.





She asked two more before school.

Each answer was the same honest answer: we don't know yet, and the doctor is checking.

The answers weren't broken. Asking again just didn't produce a new one.

Chapter 3

A Hundred Times

On Wednesday, Shani counted.

She wanted to ask about Friday eleven times before lunch. She asked twice. Both times, Mama answered patiently, and both times the wanting came back twenty minutes later, like a song that starts itself over.

At Bais Yaakov, she read the same page of her workbook three times.





Her friend Baila asked if she was all right.

"My mother is waiting for test results on Friday," Shani said. Baila was a good friend, and Shani had told Mama first that morning that she might want to tell Baila.

"That's hard," Baila said. "Do you want to sit with me at lunch?"

It didn't fix Friday. It made Wednesday more bearable, which turned out to be a different and possible thing.

Chapter 4

What Mama Offered

That evening, Shani asked the question again, and then said, before Mama could answer, "I know. We don't know yet."

Mama put down her mending.





"Asking me over and over is you trying to make the not-knowing stop," she said. "I understand it. I do it inside my own head too."

Shani stared at her. It had not occurred to her that Mama was also waiting.

"Here's what I can offer," Mama went on. "If anything changes before Friday, I will tell you right away. So if you haven't heard anything, nothing has changed. You don't have to keep checking the silence."

"And on Friday?"

"On Friday, we'll know what we're dealing with, whatever it is. Dr. Weiss is good, and we'll face it with real information instead of the list in your head."

Chapter 5

What the List Did at Night

The list was loudest at night.





Shani lay in bed and heard it start again: what if, what if, what if.

She was too old to call for Mama every time she was scared. That was what she told herself at first. Then she remembered Mama saying she did it inside her own head too, and she decided being thirteen did not require lying awake alone with a frightening list.

She padded to the doorway.

"I can't make it stop."

Mama sat with her for a few minutes. They didn't discuss the list item by item - Mama said that arguing with each what-if gave it a longer life. Instead Shani described her room: the blue cup, the crack in the ceiling paint, the sound of the radiator.

The list got quieter when it wasn't the only thing in the room.





"Tomorrow," Mama said, "when it starts, you can tell yourself: nothing has changed, Mama will tell me if it does. And then do the next ordinary thing."

Chapter 6

The Next Ordinary Thing

Thursday, the ordinary things kept happening. That was the strange part.

There was a spelling quiz. There was soup for lunch. Baila had a fight with her sister and needed to tell someone about it at recess, and Shani listened, and for twenty minutes her own Friday disappeared entirely.

It came back on the walk home. She let it come, told herself the sentence - nothing has changed - and then asked Baila about the recipe her sister had ruined.





She didn't feel calm. She felt like a girl carrying something uncomfortable while still walking, talking, and passing a spelling quiz.

It occurred to her that this might be what grownups did most of the time.

Chapter 7

Friday

Friday came.

Mama came home in the afternoon with news from the doctor's office. Shani was doing homework at the kitchen table. Mama sat down next to her.

"The results are good. Everything is fine. They want one routine follow-up, which is normal."

Shani cried, which she had not planned, from four days of holding herself together.





Mama held her and didn't say see, you worried for nothing.

"You didn't know," Mama said. "Not knowing for four days is genuinely hard. You carried it well."

Chapter 8

What She Kept

That night, Shani wrote in the notebook she used for school notes, on a clean back page:

Nothing has changed - Mama will tell me if it does. Ask once, not eleven times. The list is loudest at night. Name the room instead. Ordinary things keep happening. Let them.

She didn't write we worried for nothing, because it hadn't felt like nothing, and Mama said it wasn't.





There would be other Fridays. Other tests, other waits - for grades, for letters, for news she couldn't hurry.

She couldn't make the not-knowing disappear. She had learned she could ask once, trust the person who promised to tell her, hold the worry and the spelling quiz in the same day, and be kind to herself at night.

The list in her head still visited sometimes.

It didn't get the whole room anymore.

