

The Bell at the Other Window

Two schools on the same street, a
friendship off the old timetable, and a
different way to keep it

For ages 12-15



Chapter 1

Ten Minutes Apart

The bell at Naomi's new school rang ten minutes after the bell at her old one.

She could hear the other bell through the upstairs window.

That was worse than not hearing it at all.

For three years, she and Sima had met beside the Bais Yaakov cloakroom at the end of the day. They walked home together, discussed the day's most complicated sentences, and invented reasons why the street's crooked tree leaned toward the bakery.

Now Naomi attended a smaller Bais Yaakov program better suited to what she needed. Her family and teachers had made the decision carefully with her.

Sima stayed at the old school.





The crooked tree was still there. Their shared afternoon wasn't.

Chapter 2

The First Walk

On Monday, Naomi came out to an almost empty street.

Sima had left ten minutes earlier.

Naomi knew why. Sima needed to get home to her little sister. They hadn't arranged to wait.

Knowing didn't stop the street from feeling like a place where she had been left behind.

At home, Mama, wearing her brown sheitel, asked about the first day.

"The new teacher explained the arithmetic in a way I understood."





"I'm glad."

"I missed Sima."

Mama didn't ask her to choose which sentence was the real answer.

Both could belong to the day.

Chapter 3

An Old Timetable

That evening, Naomi wrote to Sima on a small folded sheet that their mothers could pass along.

Could you wait ten minutes every day?

She stared at it before giving it to Mama.

It would rebuild the old walk, almost. It would also ask Sima to rearrange something she already needed to do.





Naomi crossed out every day and wrote sometimes. Then she crossed out the whole question.

She didn't need to find a perfect arrangement alone.

She wrote instead: I miss our walks. Could we find a time to see each other that fits both schools and home?

Mama passed the note to Sima's mother when they met the next morning.

Chapter 4

Thursday's Table

The mothers helped arrange a Thursday visit after both girls' homework.

Sima arrived with the book they had been reading together.

"Your tree has lost another branch," she announced.





"It was leaning too far toward the bread."

They laughed, then went quiet.

There were things Sima knew about the old class that Naomi no longer knew. There were names from Naomi's new class that meant nothing to Sima yet.

The first half hour wasn't the old walk folded into a kitchen.

It was a new conversation with two old friends who had different days to tell.

Chapter 5

One Unkind Shortcut

Sima began describing a funny moment in her classroom.

Naomi interrupted.

"I know what that room is like."





Sima stopped.

Naomi had heard herself trying to close the gap by refusing to listen to anything on the far side of it.

"Sorry," she said. "I felt strange not being there. I do want to hear."

Sima finished the story.

Then Naomi described the new teacher's wooden number board, which had one piece missing and a habit of hiding it inside its own frame.

Sima asked a question.

They didn't need matching school days to be interested in each other.





Chapter 6

The Bell Again

The next week, Naomi heard the old bell through the window.

She still missed the cloakroom and the familiar walk.

Her new class was helping her learn. That didn't turn the old routine into something she had never cared about.

She told Mama how the bell felt. They agreed that missing Sima wasn't proof the school decision had been wrong, and enjoying lessons wasn't disloyal to the old class.

They would keep checking how the new program suited Naomi with the adults involved.

One feeling at a window wasn't being asked to decide the whole arrangement.





Chapter 7

A Shorter Walk

On a Wednesday when Sima's mother had arranged other help at home, the girls agreed to meet after Naomi's later bell.

Sima waited near the school office where the adults had agreed.

They walked past the tree.

It didn't feel exactly like last term. Naomi had a different bag and a story about a different class. Sima was eager to get home before it grew late.

They had twenty minutes instead of the whole old routine.

They used them.





At the corner, they confirmed the next arranged visit rather than promising an everyday walk neither timetable could keep.

Chapter 8

What Stayed

By the end of the month, Naomi could name three girls she enjoyed talking with in her new class.

She told Sima about them.

Sima didn't ask which friendship was winning.

They still shared their book. Sometimes a visit had to move, and their mothers helped them find another time. Sometimes a folded note was enough between visits.

The two bells remained ten minutes apart.





Naomi stopped expecting them to ring together as proof that she and Sima still mattered to each other.

The friendship needed new arrangements, questions about each other's unfamiliar days, and room to miss what had changed.

Those things were more work than meeting beside a cloakroom without thinking.

They were also ways to keep a friend, not signs that the friend had been lost.

