

The Walk That Kept Beginning Again

A real unfair moment, two loyal listeners, and a retelling that made the afternoon narrower

For ages 12-15



Chapter 1

The Exact Words

"She said, Move, you're blocking it."

Rivky could repeat the words exactly. Her friend Basya knew because she had heard them too.

At the Bais Yaakov art table, another girl had pushed Rivky's drawing aside while reaching for the ruler. Rivky had objected. Their teacher had intervened, the drawing had been returned, and the girl had apologized for pushing it.

Rivky still felt hurt by the tone.

On the walk home, Basya listened while she described it.

Then Basya repeated the words in a sharp voice.

Rivky nodded.

"Exactly like that."





Chapter 2

A Better Answer, Too Late

At the next corner, Basya invented what Rivky could have said.

Rivky invented a sharper answer.

By the crooked tree, they had imagined five replies, all too late to use and most unkind enough to create another problem.

"I should have said that," Rivky decided.

"She would have gone quiet."

Neither girl knew that. They could still picture it.

The original incident had lasted less than a minute before the teacher stepped in.

Their walk was spending twenty minutes inside it.





Rivky felt loyal to Basya for listening. She also felt angrier at the front gate than she had at the school door.

Chapter 3

The Next Break

On Tuesday, Rivky brought it up again.

Basya repeated the sharp sentence, and Rivky repeated the sharp replies.

A girl asked whether they wanted to look at a book of paper models.

"In a minute," Basya said.

They didn't get to the book before the bell.

Rivky hadn't been pushed again. The teacher was keeping an eye on the art table, as she had promised.





There was no new event to report.

The old one had acquired an audience of two girls who knew how to keep its sharpest part alive.

Chapter 4

An Honest Answer at Home

At home, Mama was wearing her brown sheitel.

"You look unsettled again. Did something else happen?"

"No. Basya and I were talking about it."

Rivky explained the answers they wished she'd used.

Mama listened, then asked how Rivky felt after those conversations.

"Worse. But she understands."





"Being understood matters. What else do you want from the afternoon?"

Rivky thought of the model book, her own drawing, and the funny story Basya had started telling on Monday before the art-table discussion took over.

She wanted those things too.

Wanting another subject didn't mean the push had been acceptable.

Chapter 5

What Still Needed Help

Before changing the conversation, Rivky checked whether anything remained for a grownup to handle.

She told Mrs. Stein, whose gray sheitel was neatly pinned back, that she still disliked what had happened.





The teacher listened. She confirmed the art-table arrangement and told Rivky to come to her if pushing or unkind treatment happened again.

Rivky didn't need to use endless conversations with Basya in place of getting adult help.

For now, the practical response was in place. Her drawing was safe. Her feelings hadn't caught up immediately.

There wasn't another correction they could create by rehearsing a crueler answer on the sidewalk.

Chapter 6

The Uncomfortable Request

At break, Basya began, "Remember how she said move?"

"I remember," Rivky said.





She hesitated.

"Thank you for listening yesterday. I think repeating it together keeps making me angrier. Could we look at that model book for a while?"

Basya frowned.

"I was on your side."

"You were. I know. I'm not asking you to take her side."

Rivky didn't say she should be over it or that Basya was a bad friend.

She named what the repeated conversation was doing to her and what she wanted to try next.

Basya looked toward the book cabinet.

"The houses?"

"Yes."





Chapter 7

A Window That Folded

The first model house had a window made from four folded tabs.

Neither girl could work out the instructions.

Basya held the book. Rivky tried a piece of scrap paper. Their first window opened into what appeared to be a cabinet for a very flat mouse.

They laughed.

For ten minutes, the art-table words weren't the center of their friendship.

Rivky still felt a pinch when the other girl passed their desk. She told Basya she needed a moment, then returned to the tabs.

Basya stayed with her without performing the sharp sentence again.





That was a different kind of being on her side.

Chapter 8

The Walk Home

After school, they passed the crooked tree.

"I thought listening meant talking about it until you felt fine," Basya said.

"I didn't know what would make me feel fine."

They discussed the incident briefly, without imitating voices or inventing punishments. Then Basya finished the funny story she'd begun on Monday.

Rivky listened.

If the treatment happened again, they knew the teacher needed to hear. Changing a subject wasn't a rule to keep real problems secret.





For today, Rivky had been heard, the adult response was clear, and her friend could walk beside her toward something besides the art table.

The walk didn't have to begin with the same sentence at every corner.

There were houses with difficult windows, stories with unexpected endings, and two girls who could care about each other without keeping one bad minute running all afternoon.

