

The Workshop Behind the Blue Door

Two good choices, a finished
registration, and an afternoon she kept
spending somewhere else

For ages 12-15



Chapter 1

The Photographs

The bird was made of wire.

Its feet gripped a tiny wooden branch, and its wings had been filled with blue paper.

Henny looked at the photographs outside the community craft room. This was what the wire workshop had made yesterday.

Yesterday, Henny had been in the cooking workshop down the hall. She had chosen it herself, with Mama's permission, from two supervised activities held at the same time.

She had made a good soup and learned how to shape little rolls.

Now the wire bird seemed like evidence that she had spent the afternoon in the wrong room.





Chapter 2

What She Had Known

When registration opened, Henny had read both descriptions.

She liked trying new recipes. The cooking class was for girls her age, had room for beginners, and would teach things she wanted to use at home.

The wire class had sounded interesting too. The description hadn't shown the bird.

Henny couldn't have known the soup would turn out well and the photographs would look so inviting.

She had chosen using the information she had.

That didn't stop her from judging the choice using a photograph that hadn't existed yet.

She went home and left her recipe sheet beneath a pile of books.





Chapter 3

The Perfect Other Room

At supper, Mama asked whether Henny wanted to make the rolls for a weekday meal.

Mama was wearing her gray tichel, with its corner tucked away from the serving bowl.

"I should have done the wire class."

"You enjoyed the cooking yesterday."

"The other one was better."

"How was it better?"

Henny described the bird.

Mama listened, then asked what Henny knew about the rest of the workshop.

She didn't know whether the wire was difficult, whether she would have liked bending it, or whether





the bird in the photograph was a beginner's first attempt.

In her mind, the other room had become one perfect bird with no awkward minutes in it.

Chapter 4

The Closed Registration

Henny went back to the community office on Tuesday with Mama.

The coordinator, wearing her brown sheitel, explained that both workshops had finished. There wasn't another session they could exchange into.

"We may offer wire work again another term," she said. "You can keep the description if you'd like."

Henny took a copy.

She couldn't use it to enter yesterday.





The coordinator hadn't done anything wrong by closing a class that was over. Mama hadn't chosen for her. Henny couldn't find somebody to argue the lost afternoon back into place.

She folded the description and put it beside her recipe sheet.

Chapter 5

A Question With No Useful Answer

At home, Henny imagined the two rooms again.

What if she had chosen wire?

She could think about it for an hour and still have no answer about how that afternoon would actually have felt.

What could she do with the afternoon she had chosen?





That question had answers.

She could try the rolls. She could tell Mama the trick for shaping them. She could write down the wire class as something to consider next time, without promising it would be perfect either.

Henny took the recipe sheet from beneath the books.

Its soup stain was real. So was the useful instruction beside it.

Chapter 6

The Uneven Rolls

On Wednesday, Mama supervised while Henny made the rolls.

The first three were tidy. The fourth looked like a sleeping snail. The fifth opened along one side.





"Perhaps the wire birds were all perfect," Henny said.

"Perhaps not," Mama answered.

Henny laughed.

She reshaped the fifth roll and left the snail alone.

The dough needed her hands in the kitchen, not in a workshop her mind was rebuilding from a photograph.

When the rolls came out, they smelled warm and familiar. Henny was glad she knew how to make them.

That didn't require deciding the cooking workshop had been the best activity in the world.





Chapter 7

The Bird's Bent Foot

At Bais Yaakov, Henny met a girl who had attended the wire workshop.

"Was it good?"

"I liked it. My bird wouldn't stand up. I bent one foot six times."

Henny pictured the beautiful photograph and laughed.

They talked about the class. It sounded interesting, difficult in places, and ordinary in others.

Henny didn't ask the girl to convince her that cooking had been the right choice. She didn't need the bird to become terrible for the rolls to be worthwhile.

The two activities could both have been good.





Choosing one had meant not doing the other that day.

Chapter 8

Two Sheets in the Drawer

Henny put the wire description and recipe sheet in the same drawer.

One named something she might try. The other held something she could already do.

Next term, she would read the actual choices again and decide with the information available then. She didn't need to make a permanent rule that she must always choose the activity she had missed before.

Sometimes a chosen afternoon would disappoint her. Sometimes another person's photograph would still make her wonder.

Wondering wasn't a way to take two classes at once.





She could keep the useful part of what she had chosen and leave room for later interests.

At supper, her little sister chose the snail-shaped roll.

"This one has a personality," she said.

Henny passed it to her and stayed in the kitchen she was actually in.

