



A Friend With a Different Face

Ages 6-9



Chapter 1: The empty outing

Rina sits beside Basya with a long sigh.

"We aren't going to the animal farm on Sunday," she says.

Basya puts down her blue crayon. At the Bais Yaakov classroom table, the girls are finishing pictures before break.

Rina's family has planned the visit for weeks. Now the farm is closed while its fences are repaired. Rina's father says they can choose another outing later, but Sunday is not the farm day she wants.

"I want to see the little goats," Rina says.

Basya has never seen those goats. She isn't thinking about Sunday. She is thinking about how carefully Rina draws three tiny bells beneath a goat's neck.

"That sounds disappointing," she says.

Then she notices her own face.

It doesn't feel disappointed enough.

Chapter 2: Making the right face

Basya pulls the corners of her mouth down.

Rina looks at her.

"What are you doing?"



"Nothing."

Basya thinks of the closed farm. She thinks of fences. She tries to feel as sad about Sunday as Rina does.

But she keeps noticing the bells in the drawing. There are two round bells and one shaped like a little cup.

"My brother wants to see the donkey," Rina says.

Basya nearly smiles at the idea of a donkey wearing Rina's tiny bells.

She bites the inside of her lip instead.

"Are you listening?" Rina asks.

"Yes!"

Basya can remember the farm and the goats. She can't remember whether Rina's brother wants the donkey or the cow. She is too busy arranging her face.

Chapter 3: The question at break

Their teacher, Mrs. Klein, has a brown sheitel that covers her hair completely. During break, Basya asks her a quiet question.

"If my friend is sad and I'm not sad, am I being unkind?"

Mrs. Klein asks what happened at the table.

Basya explains the farm, the bells, and the face she tries to make.



At home, her little brother sometimes cries when a block will not fit. Basya can fetch the right block without wanting to cry herself. This seems different because Rina is her friend, not a little boy at the rug.

"Did you tell Rina she shouldn't mind?"

"No."

"Did you laugh at her?"

"No. I wanted to listen."

"And while you tried to make yourself feel exactly the same?"

Basya looks down at her crayon.

"I missed a bit."

Mrs. Klein nods. "You can care about her disappointment without having the same Sunday or the same feeling. What would help you hear what she wants to tell you?"

Basya thinks of Rina looking up from the goat.

"Stop checking my face. Listen to her words."

Chapter 4: Another try at the table

Basya goes back to Rina.

"I was trying to make myself look as sad as you," she says. "Then I missed something. Which animal does your brother want to see?"



"The donkey."

"The donkey. And you want the goats."

Rina nods.

"I wanted to brush one," she says. "Tatty said we'd ask the farm helper whether we could."

Basya listens. Brushing a goat isn't something she wants very much, but it is something Rina wants. She can hear that without borrowing the wish.

"You were hoping to do more than look at them," she says.

"Yes."

They sit quietly. Basya doesn't supply a different farm or promise that Sunday will be wonderful.

Chapter 5: A small laugh

Rina points to her picture.

"That bell is too big. The goat will fall over."

Basya laughs, then stops herself.

Rina laughs too.

"I can make it smaller," she says.

Basya looks at her friend's face. The laugh is real. The disappointment is real too. Rina doesn't have to choose one face for the rest of the day.



"Do you want the blue crayon?" Basya asks.

"For the sky. Please."

She passes it over. It is ordinary help, not a way to erase the closed farm.

When the bell rings, they put their pictures away. Rina still wants the goats. Basya still likes the little bells.

Both girls are ready to begin the next lesson.

At home, Basya tells Mommy, whose navy tichel is tied neatly over her hair, about the two pictures.

"I didn't have to get Rina's feeling exactly right," she says. "I had to hear what she was telling me."

Mommy listens while Basya describes the goat with the enormous bell.

This time, Basya isn't inspecting either of their faces.