

Three Sizes



Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18



Chapter 1: The Pen

On Tuesday, ten minutes before the history test, Huvy's pen is gone.

Not a pen. The pen - the heavy blue one with her name engraved, a bas-mitzvah gift from her aunt, the one she writes every test with.

She empties the pencil case onto the desk. Pens, yes - three ordinary pens, a stubby pencil, a dried-out marker. Not the pen. She empties her bag onto the floor. Books, a glove, last week's notice, crumbs. Not the pen.

Her deskmate helps at first, lifting books one at a time. Then she stops helping, because Huvy is snapping at the books.

"Did you borrow it?" Huvy asks her, in a voice that is not a question.

"No," her deskmate says, and moves her chair an inch away.





The test happens anyway. Huvy writes it with a borrowed pen, badly, not because the pen is wrong but because her whole head is still searching her bag.

At home, she cries at the kitchen table. Mama suggests pockets, and pockets are insulting, because a missing pen like this is clearly bigger than pockets. She empties everything again, on the table this time, so the whole family can see the injustice.

Nobody else can eat supper near the search. Her sisters take their plates to the other end. Her little brother asks once, from a safe distance, whether it was a nice pen, and is informed it was a bas-mitzvah pen, which apparently answers everything.

The evening goes the way the afternoon went - no supper conversation, no homework, just the pen, the pen, the pen.





Chapter 2: The Coat

In the morning, Huvy puts on her coat, and the pen is in the coat pocket.

It has been there the whole time, from the walk home Monday, when she stuck it there so it would not get lost.

She stands in the hallway holding it, and the feeling is not relief. Relief comes later. First comes the replay: the desk dumped, the bag dumped, the voice that was not a question, her deskmate's chair moving an inch away. A whole evening, burned down, over a pen that was riding in her coat.

At school, she apologizes to her deskmate before the bell.

"I accused you," she says. "I was wrong. I'm sorry."

"You were pretty sure," her deskmate says. It is not unkind. It is accurate.

I wasn't sure, Huvy thinks. I was loud. Loud isn't sure.





Chapter 3: The Secretary's Question

On Wednesday, Huvy is in the office on an errand when a ninth-grader bursts in about a lost notebook, breathless, at full volume.

The school secretary has seen everything twice. She does not look up from her desk.

"What size is it?" she asks.

The girl stops. "What?"

"In this office, things come in three sizes," the secretary says.

"Small: a two-minute plan, then stop. Medium: a real plan, maybe an hour, maybe a note to a teacher. Big: we drop things and do the big plan now. So - what size is it?"

"A notebook," the girl says, deflating. "With my science notes."

"Notes you can borrow and copy?"

"...Yes."

"Small," the secretary says. "Two-minute plan: retrace, check the shelf, ask the cleaning lady. Then go to class."

Huvy watches the girl do exactly that, and watches the panic drain off her, like the size of the plan gave the panic nowhere to stand.





Chapter 4: Naming

Huvy tries it. Quietly, at first, in her head, because naming sizes out loud feels like something a secretary can do and a sixteen-year-old cannot.

Thursday: she forgets her English folder at home. The old flood starts - and she names it. Medium: fixable with a note to the teacher and the folder tomorrow. The flood does not get a vote.

Friday: her sister takes her good scissors and returns them sticky. Small. A rinse and a sentence, not a trial.

Sunday: the bus is late and the line is long. Small, and not hers to fix. She reviews her spelling list.

It is not magic. On Thursday she names the folder medium and her stomach still knots until the note is written. But the knot and the plan share the afternoon now, instead of the knot filling it.

She is not calmer, exactly. She is sized. The first feeling still arrives at full volume - that is what first feelings do - but now it has to wait while she names the size, and waiting, it sometimes sits down.

The size picks the plan, she writes in her notebook. The volume doesn't. The plan has to fit the problem, not the feeling.





Chapter 5: The Envelope

The next Tuesday, Huvy is holding the class tzedaka money - she is this month's class treasurer - in a labeled envelope in her bag.

Between third period and the lunch count, the envelope is gone.

Eighty-six dollars, in bills, collected for the midwinter drive. Her name is on the treasurer line. Her stomach drops straight through the floor.

This is not a pen. This is big, and she knows it immediately, because she has been practicing.

Big, she names it, out loud, in the stairwell. This is a big one. Big plan, now.

The old storm starts up anyway - the tears, the heat in her face, the urge to dump her bag on the floor and accuse the staircase. She lets it start and does not let it steer.





Chapter 6: The Big Plan

The big plan, it turns out, is mostly speed and honesty.

Huvy goes straight to her teacher and says it flat: "The envelope is gone. Eighty-six dollars. I had it at third period. I've checked my bag twice."

Her teacher does not gasp. "Then we retrace," she says, and they do - classroom, hallway, the shelf by the window where Huvy stood during the count. A classmate checks under the papers on the shelf, on a hunch, and there it is, slid flat between the attendance folder and the wall, where it slipped when Huvy pulled out her notebook.

The whole thing, from gone to found, takes forty minutes.

Her knees are shaking afterward, in the stairwell, because the feeling that waited through the plan now wants its turn. That is the part nobody warns her about: the feeling does not disappear because she behaved well. It just arrives later, to less damage. She lets it have two minutes against the wall. It has earned two minutes.

Then it is done, and she goes to lunch.

"Good that you came right away," her teacher says, and means it. Huvy thinks about the pen. An evening, over nothing. Forty minutes, over eighty-six dollars and her name on a line. The size, named first, had picked the plan - and the plan had ended the problem before the storm could move in.





Chapter 7: The Ledger

That night, Huvy writes the two entries in her notebook, one under the other, like accounts.

The pen: small. Storm: one evening. Found: in her own coat.

The envelope: big. Storm: none - started, not seated. Found: in forty minutes, by a plan.

She looks at the four lines for a long time, tapping the pen - the famous pen - against the page.

The size of the problem had not changed between Tuesday and Tuesday. The pen was always small, even when it was missing, even when it felt enormous. The envelope was always big, even though it turned up fine. What changed was which one got the evening, and which one got forty minutes and a plan.

Her mother calls up the stairs about supper. For the first time in over a week, the answer is not "in a minute" through a search. She closes the notebook and goes down.

The feeling shows up first and loud, she writes. The size decides what happens next. I decide the size.

She underlines the last sentence once. Not because it is pretty. Because it is the whole job.





Chapter 8: The Glove

On Wednesday morning, it is cold, and Huvy cannot find her left glove.

The flood starts - new gloves, a present, her favorite pair - and she catches it by the name.

"Small," she says out loud, at the door, and her little sister looks at her oddly.

Two-minute plan: retrace, pockets, sleeves.

The glove is in her sleeve, where gloves live when they are hiding. She pulls it out, puts it on, and goes to the bus stop, where the line is long and the bus is late, which is also small, and also not hers to fix.

