

What She Says on Tuesday



Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18



Chapter 1: The Sign-Up

The sign-up sheet for the class party goes around on a Monday.

Drinks. Paper goods. Salad. Two kugels. The list travels desk to desk, and girls write their names in the easy slots first.

Frimet writes her name next to "two kugels" without hesitating. Her kugel is known. There are girls in the class who ask for the recipe and girls who have stopped asking and just take seconds. Last year's party had a line at her tray, and she had to start saying "small pieces" halfway through.

"Thirty-six girls," the organizer says. "Friday, after school, in the lunchroom. If you sign, it's a promise, because I'm counting the food."

Frimet is seventeen. She has made this kugel at least forty times. She signs without a second thought.

On Monday night she checks the pantry: enough potatoes, enough oil, the big pans that each turn out a kugel for eighteen. On Tuesday after school, she turns the oven on to heat before peeling, so the oven is ready when the bowl is.

The oven makes a noise she has never heard it make. Then it makes no noise at all.





Chapter 2: The Repair Man

Mommy calls the repair service. The man comes after supper, a quiet man with a bag that opens like a toolbox and closes like a secret.

He looks at the oven for ten minutes.

"The element is gone," he says. "Easy job. I need the part. If the part comes Thursday morning, you are baking Thursday afternoon. If it doesn't come, you are waiting until next week."

"When will you know?"

"Thursday morning."

He leaves. Mommy looks at the dead oven and then at Frimet.

"The party is Friday."

"I know," Frimet says.

"The man said if."

"I heard the if."

They both look at the oven a moment longer, the way you look at a person who has let you down and might still apologize.





Chapter 3: The Arithmetic of Hoping

That night, Frimet does the arithmetic in her notebook.

If the part comes Thursday morning, the man comes Thursday afternoon. If he finishes by five, the oven heats by six. If she peels fast, the kugels bake by nine, cool by eleven, slice Friday morning, and travel Friday after school.

She reads the plan twice. Some lines are hers to control: she can buy the potatoes tonight, set out the pans, peel fast on Thursday, slice Friday morning, travel carefully. Good. She writes those as their own list - things she can actually do - and does the shopping that evening so Thursday loses no hour.

The other lines hang on one single thing: the part. The part is not in her hands, and neither is the man's schedule. One unchecked point holds up the whole rescue. That is the piece the party cannot afford to hang on, even though she will keep the rescue plan running with everything she controls.





Underneath it all, one true sentence waits: only the telling is fully hers.

She looks at her two lists. The controllable list is a real plan, and she runs it. The rescue as a whole is not a plan yet, because it stands or falls on the part's arrival, which is unchecked and has no fallback behind it. Staying silent would turn the week into a hope wearing a plan's clothes, and the person who pays if the hope fails is not her.

It is the organizer, standing in front of thirty-six girls with two empty trays.

Frimet closes the notebook.

Then she opens it again, because the hope is still in there somewhere, telling her to wait until Thursday and see.

She thinks about what waiting is made of. It is not patience. It is the wish that the part will come and erase the whole question, so that she never has to say the words "I can't promise" out loud to a person who is counting on her. Waiting is a plan to be saved by luck.





Chapter 4: The Thursday Sentence

Frimet rehearses what Thursday night would sound like.

"Hi, it's Frimet. My oven died Tuesday, the part never came, I can't bring the kugels. I'm so sorry. I'm really, really sorry."

She hears it. On Thursday night, the sentence is huge. It arrives with thirty-six plates behind it and one evening to fix them. The organizer would have one evening to find two kugels before Friday after school, or shrink the party, or stand there explaining trays while thirty-six girls wonder where the food is.

And there would be a second sentence hiding behind the first: I knew Tuesday. The organizer would hear it even if Frimet never said it. Sorry, and I sat on it for two days hoping.

On Tuesday, the organizer has three days, a class list, and options Frimet cannot even see from here. On Thursday she has one evening and thirty-six plates.

Frimet closes the notebook. She is not choosing between telling and not telling. She is choosing between handing over a puzzle and handing over a crisis.





Chapter 5: What She Says on Tuesday

Tuesday night, Frimet calls her.

"Hi, it's Frimet. My oven died today. The repair man might fix it Thursday - and that maybe is real, not a dodge, so I'm not going to dress it up as a promise. I want to bring the two kugels I signed for, but I can't promise them anymore. I'm telling you now so the party works either way. Can we split my slot?"

There is a pause on the line.

"Tuesday," the organizer says. "You are telling me on Tuesday."

"Yes."

"Thank you." The organizer sounds as if a weight has been taken off before it finished landing. "If you'd told me Thursday, I would have cried in the grocery store. Hold on."





Chapter 6: The Split

They plan in five minutes, the way you can only plan when there is time. Frimet can hear the difference in the organizer's voice. It is loose. It has room in it. A Thursday voice would be tight and fast and kind in a way that costs the kind person something.

The organizer owns the sign-up sheet, so the offers are hers to make. "There is a girl whose mother runs a kitchen like a small bakery," she says. "I'll ask her tonight about taking both kugels. If she says yes, you're on drinks and paper goods - and I'll ask those two girls whether they'll take the salad slot instead, because they signed for drinks and paper goods and the move is theirs to agree to. If anybody says no, we plan again tomorrow, and we still have days."

"And if my part comes Thursday?"

"Then bake one anyway, and it comes as a bonus. Tentative until the bakery kitchen says yes. I'll confirm by Wednesday night."





"You still get credit for honesty," the organizer says. "That's not a thing I usually get to say."

Frimet laughs. Then she says the true thing.

"I almost waited until Thursday."

"Almost doesn't count," says the organizer. "Tuesday counts."

On Tuesday night, the bakery kitchen says yes. On Wednesday, the organizer asks the drinks and paper-goods girls whether they will take the salad slot instead; both say yes, glad to help, and she confirms the new sheet with every name agreed. Frimet buys the drinks and the paper goods at the store with her mother, which is a strange, light errand for a girl who was supposed to bake. It feels like cheating. It is not cheating. It is the slot she can actually fill.

On Thursday morning, the part does not come. The organizer already knows, because Frimet says so in one short sentence, and it is barely news.





Chapter 7: Thursday Afternoon

On Thursday at four, the repair man calls. The part came after all.

He installs it by six, tests it twice, and leaves. The oven heats. It hums in its old ordinary way, as if nothing ever happened, which Frimet finds slightly rude and mostly wonderful. She tells it so. The oven does not care. Ovens are like that.

She peels fast. Mommy grates the onions, and the little sisters take turns arguing over who gets to grease the pan. One kugel goes in at seven and comes out at eight-thirty, golden at the edges, exactly itself.

Mommy cuts a corner piece and hands it over. "For the baker."

It is good. It is the same kugel as always. That is the nice thing about kugel: it does not know what it survived.

Frimet wraps it for Friday. It will go as the bonus, the third kugel, the extra. Not the rescue. The rescue is not needed, because the rescue happened on Tuesday, in a two-minute call, and nobody had to see it.





Chapter 8: The Party

Friday's lunchroom is loud and good.

The food table fills up tray by tray. The classmate's kugels go fast.

Frimet's bonus kugel goes faster - or so she tells herself, on no evidence whatsoever, and she allows herself the small unverified pleasure for one afternoon.

Nobody knows or cares which kugel is whose. There is no line at any single tray, and no tray sits untouched, which is what a well-planned table looks like: unremarkable. The organizer moves along the table, counting nothing, because everything counted out.

She stops beside Frimet. "Thursday-me is so grateful to Tuesday-you," she says.

Frimet thinks about the sentence she almost saved for Thursday.

"Tuesday-me almost didn't make it," she says.

The organizer gives her shoulder one quick squeeze and moves on to the drinks.

