



The Bookmark That Doesn't Come Home

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: Not Between the Pages

The bookmark isn't in the book.

Hindy turns every page gently, although a bookmark doesn't usually fit inside a sentence.

She checks the folder, the schoolbag, and the pocket of yesterday's skirt.

Nothing.

Bubby made the bookmark two summers ago. It is blue cloth with one little yellow flower. Hindy sat beside her and chose the flower's crooked leaf.

Now the bookmark has somehow stopped traveling with the book.

Mama comes to the doorway. Her brown sheitel covers all her hair.

"What are you looking for?"

Hindy tells her.

"We can work out where you've been with it."

Hindy wants more than a place to begin.

She wants the blue cloth back.

Chapter 2: The Places It Could Be

With Mama, she checks the table at home and the shelf beside her bed. At school, she asks the teacher and librarian about the book she has borrowed.



They look in the places she used. The librarian checks the returned book from yesterday.

The bookmark isn't there.

Hindy doesn't accuse anyone of taking it. She doesn't know that anyone has.

She wants to empty every shelf anyway.

The librarian cannot take apart the whole library. Mama helps Hindy leave a clear description and arrange one later check of the lost-property box.

The search has a sensible place to stop for today.

The missing bookmark doesn't seem to agree.

Chapter 3: A Second Flower

At supper, her sister offers a paper bookmark with a large orange flower.

"You can use this."

Hindy pushes it back.

"That isn't mine."

Her sister looks hurt.

"I know. It's another one."

"I don't want another one."

Mama doesn't force Hindy to take it. Afterward, she asks about the sharp answer.



"She didn't lose the blue bookmark," Hindy says slowly.

"No."

Hindy apologizes to her sister.

"I still don't want to use it today. Thank you for offering."

Her sister puts it on her own shelf.

Hindy uses a plain strip of paper in the book that evening. It marks the page perfectly. That makes her feel almost cross with it.

Chapter 4: Telling Bubby

At Bubby's next visit, Hindy tells her before anybody can ask about the book.

Bubby sits in her floral tichel, all her hair covered.

"We searched. I miss it."

"Was it lost while you were using it?"

"I think so. I don't know when."

Bubby listens to the places she checked. She doesn't tell Hindy it is only a bit of cloth. She knows which leaf they chose together.

"I can make another bookmark if you'd like," she offers.

Hindy's eyes fill.

"It won't be that afternoon."



"No. It won't."

The answer is sad and comforting at the same time. Bubby doesn't pretend a new yellow flower will make two summers ago happen again.

They talk about the old afternoon. Hindy remembers how Bubby threaded the wrong shade first and laughed at a very blue leaf.

Bubby remembers the biscuit that kept getting crumbs on the cloth.

Neither memory needs the bookmark in the room to be told.

Chapter 5: The Box Is Still Empty

At the arranged check, the school lost-property box has a ruler, two gloves, and a pencil case that belongs to somebody else.

No blue bookmark.

Hindy tells Mama the answer.

They can still hear if somebody finds it. There is no new place to search now.

Hindy goes upstairs and takes out her book. The plain paper strip shows where she stops.

She can miss the cloth and read the next chapter. Reading isn't a declaration that the missing thing never matters.

After a few pages, she asks her sister whether she may borrow the orange flower.

"For this book?"



"Yes."

Her sister hands it over.

This time, Hindy thanks her without explaining everything that is different about it.

Chapter 6: A Different Afternoon

A week later, Hindy asks Bubby if they can make a new bookmark together.

"Not the same one. Maybe green."

Mama arranges an afternoon. Bubby handles the sewing tools and prepares the cloth. Hindy chooses a little white leaf for the pattern.

They aren't trying to win back the lost thing by copying it exactly. They are making something they want now.

The green bookmark has a different stitch along the edge. Hindy likes it. She still wishes she has the blue one too.

Bubby doesn't ask her to choose which feeling counts.

At home, Hindy returns the orange flower to her sister. It helped while she needed it. It doesn't need to become her favorite.

She puts the green bookmark between the pages.

The blue cloth doesn't turn up that night, or the next week.



There is a missing thing in Hindy's story. There are also two remembered afternoons, a borrowed orange flower, and a chapter she still wants to finish.

She opens the book.