



The Boy Who Gets It

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: Back Where He Starts

The knot comes apart in Pinny's hands.

He stares at the two loose ends.

"Again," Mr. Klein says pleasantly.

Pinny doesn't find anything pleasant about it.

Across the table, his friend Meir ties the same knot. Slowly. With his tongue sticking out a little. It holds.

Pinny looks at the practice cord Mr. Klein gives each boy. It is thick, soft, and brightly colored. A cord that simple has no right to defeat him.

"Perhaps mine is wrong," he says.

Mr. Klein checks it. "It's fine. Let's look at your crossing."

Pinny puts it down before the instructor can see.

"I know the crossing."

He does know what it looks like on the card.

Apparently his fingers do not.

Chapter 2: The Clever One

Pinny solves the riddles at family suppers.



He solves the number puzzles in the children's paper. He can see a missing pattern before most people finish reading the question.

"Give it to Pinny," his cousins say. "He'll get it."

He likes that sentence.

He likes being the person who gets it.

That is why he joined the supervised cord-craft class. The boys learn simple knots and use them to make a small hanging holder for rolled paper. Mr. Klein checked the short cords and explained the safety rules before handing out materials.

Pinny expects a new kind of puzzle.

He doesn't expect to have to copy the first step six times.

When Mr. Klein demonstrates again, Pinny watches the last loop. He wants the finished shape. The movement before it looks too small to matter.

His knot comes apart again.

Chapter 3: A Useful Exit

At break, Pinny asks where the empty cord box should go.

"On the shelf," Mr. Klein says.

Pinny carries it there. Then he gathers loose paper from the table. Then he asks if the display cards need sorting.

"You can leave those. We begin again in two minutes."



Pinny looks at his place. The cord lies there like a question somebody refuses to erase.

"I might do the box jobs instead."

Mr. Klein sits at the end of the table.

"Do you want a different activity, or do you want to avoid that knot?"

Pinny resents how quickly the question finds him.

"I'm not good at it."

"You've just begun."

"Meir has just begun too."

"And his hands find this step sooner today. What happens in yours?"

Pinny cannot explain. He is too busy noticing which kind of boy he appears to be.

The instructor leaves the cord in front of him.

Chapter 4: The Wrong Label

At home, Pinny takes a practice card from his bag.

Tatty looks at the diagram.

"That looks interesting. Will you show me?"

"No."



Tatty waits.

"I can't do it."

"Then show me where you get stuck, if you'd like."

Pinny lets him see the loose cord.

"They think I'm clever."

"Who?"

"Everybody."

"Do you think learning this slowly means all those puzzles become unsolved?"

Pinny knows that sounds ridiculous. It doesn't stop the worry.

"If I have to ask five times, they'll think I only look clever."

Tatty picks up the instruction card, not the cord.

"I need the card too. I don't know this knot. Shall we learn the first part?"

Pinny is startled. Tatty doesn't lower his voice as if confessing something shameful.

He simply doesn't know it.

Chapter 5: One Crossing

They practice only the first crossing.



Pinny holds the loop. Tatty reads the card. They try it once, then check.

Wrong.

Pinny nearly pushes the cord away.

Tatty points to the picture. "This end goes behind, not over."

They try again.

For the first time, Pinny sees what his fingers keep doing. They copy a movement from a different knot he already knows.

He loosens it and makes the new crossing slowly.

It looks untidy. It is correct.

"Can we do the rest?" he asks.

"If you want. But don't race past the part you just found."

They make the crossing twice more. Then Pinny asks Mama to keep the cord with his weekday craft things, away from his little brother. Her brown tichel covers all her hair as she clears a safe shelf.

The whole knot still doesn't hold.

Pinny goes to supper with one small thing learned and the practice cords packed neatly in his bag.

Chapter 6: The Question at the Table

At the next class, Mr. Klein begins with a review.



Pinny waits until the demonstration ends.

"Could you show the turn after the crossing again? My hand keeps going the other way."

Mr. Klein turns the demonstration board toward him.

"This turn?"

"Yes. Slowly, please."

Meir watches too.

Nobody announces that Pinny is no longer clever. Meir asks about the next step. Another boy needs the beginning repeated.

Pinny's knot holds on the third try.

He doesn't hide the first two attempts beneath the table. They are how he finds the wrong turn.

Later, he helps Meir read a number puzzle on the back of the instruction sheet. Meir finds the knot easier. Pinny finds the number pattern easier.

They spend ten minutes over the number puzzle, then return to their cords. This time Pinny doesn't tuck his unfinished one away.

Chapter 7: What the Holder Holds

The hanging holder takes three classes to finish.

Mr. Klein checks every boy's work before sending it home. Pinny's needs one cord shortened, which the instructor does with the cutting tools.



At home, Tatty puts rolled drawing paper into the holder. It hangs from the place the grownups choose.

"Did you work this out yourself?" a visiting cousin asks.

Pinny looks at the knots.

He could tell the short version, the one where a clever boy looks at a card and understands.

"Mr. Klein taught us," he says. "Tatty helped me practice the crossing. That bit was hard."

His cousin tries to follow the cord with his eyes.

"I can't even tell where it begins."

"I can show you on a practice piece another time."

The cousin goes to look at the puzzle book on Pinny's desk.

A page falls open at a number problem Pinny hasn't solved yet.

Usually he turns that page quickly when someone visits.

Today he leaves it open.

"That one's still bothering me," he says.

His cousin pulls up a chair.

Pinny makes room.