



The Last Page at Bubby's

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: Before the Last Line

"Don't read it," Miri says.

Bubby's finger stops halfway down the last page.

They are sitting in the small room beside Bubby's kitchen. Bubby's purple tichel covers all her hair. The book rests open on her lap.

Over three visits, they have read about two sisters who live beside a hill and build a pretend village in the grass.

Now the older sister is going away to study. The younger one stands beside their tiny grass houses.

Miri knows what comes next.

If Bubby doesn't read it, perhaps it doesn't have to happen yet.

Chapter 2: A Different Page

"We could make her stay," Miri says.

"We could imagine another ending," Bubby answers. "Do you want to?"

Miri nods quickly.

In her ending, the older sister misses the cart. Then another cart can't come. Then the road is muddy for a whole year.

Bubby listens.

"What about the school she wants to attend?"



Miri makes a school on the hill.

"And who will teach there?"

That is harder. Miri moves all the teachers into the village too.

Soon the little houses have to fit a school, a dining room, and enough beds for the teachers.

Miri doesn't find it funny.

She wants the sisters to stay together more than she wants the new ending to make sense.

Chapter 3: It's Only a Book

Her cousin passes the doorway.

"Did you finish?"

"Not yet."

The cousin sees Miri's wet eyes.

"It's only a story."

She means to be kind. Miri hears, You are crying about something that doesn't count.

After the cousin leaves, Miri shuts the cover.

"I know they're not real."

"I know you know," Bubby says.



"Then why am I sad?"

"You care about what happens to them."

Miri looks at the cover. The sisters smile beside their grass village. They don't know what waits on the last page.

"It's a trick," she says. "They make you like somebody and then take her away."

Bubby waits.

"Would you rather not have read the other pages?"

Miri remembers the day the smallest house fills with ants and the sisters decide the ants must pay rent.

She likes that page very much.

"I don't know."

Bubby lets her not know.

Chapter 4: What the Ending Says

They talk about what the book actually says.

The older sister leaves for a school her parents arrange. She will come home for visits. The younger one will miss her. Their pretend village will be different with one builder.

The ending doesn't say the sisters stop loving each other.



It doesn't say the younger one never enjoys another afternoon.

Miri doesn't want a list of reasons not to cry.

Bubby doesn't give her one.

"Can we finish it slowly?" Miri asks.

"Yes. Or leave it for another day."

Miri chooses slowly.

Bubby opens to the last page again.

This time, Miri doesn't put her hand over the line.

Chapter 5: The Little House

The older sister gets into the cart.

The younger one gives her a tiny grass roof folded into a box, so she can remember their village.

That is the part Miri doesn't expect. It makes her cry harder, not less.

Bubby finishes the last sentence and closes the book.

They sit quietly for a while.

"I don't like that she's gone," Miri says.

"You don't have to."

"I like the roof."



"So do I."

Miri takes a tissue. Nobody asks her to describe the lesson of the ending while her nose still needs wiping.

From the kitchen, Mama asks whether they want their snack now. Her blue sheitel covers all her hair when she comes to the doorway.

"In a few minutes," Miri says.

Mama leaves them a few minutes.

Chapter 6: After the Cover Closes

On the way home, Miri tells Mama about the book.

"It felt sad even though nobody real went away."

Mama listens. They talk about Miri's own older sister, who still lives at home, and how the story makes her imagine a day that hasn't come.

"If something in a book feels too much, you can pause and tell me," Mama says. "You don't have to finish every book simply because you begin it."

Miri nods.

"I wanted to finish this one."

She doesn't need to decide that all sad stories are good or all sad stories are cruel. This book gives her ants, two sisters, and a little roof in a box.

She likes some of it. She feels sad about some of it.



Chapter 7: A Picture, Not a Rescue

At the next visit, Bubby asks which book Miri wants to read.

Miri chooses a funny one about a merchant with three umbrellas and no rain.

She also brings a drawing of the grass village.

"Before the sister leaves?" Bubby asks.

"Yes. Just a picture of that afternoon."

She isn't pretending the final page disappears. She wants to draw a scene she likes.

Bubby sets it beside the bookcase.

Later, Miri tells her cousin that they finished the story.

"It was sad," she says. "The roof was lovely."

The cousin nods. She doesn't have to cry too.

Miri goes back to the merchant and his umbrellas. When he tries to carry all three through one doorway, she laughs.

She can laugh at this book without taking back the tears for the other one.