



The Page That Isn't a Letter

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: All the Sharp Words

Chani writes, I never want to share a room with her again.

The pencil makes a dark mark under again.

Her sister Ruchy uses their room to practice a reading for school. She has permission for a short practice time. Chani wants to work on her own project at the desk.

They argue about the sound, the chair, and whose paper is on top of whose book.

Mama separates the argument. The room goes quiet after Ruchy leaves to help in the kitchen.

Chani stays at the desk.

On a loose page, she writes the sentences she doesn't say aloud.

Some are very sharp.

For a few minutes, the pencil has somewhere to put them.

Chapter 2: The Sentence Looking Back

When Chani reads the first line again, it frightens her.

Never want to share a room with her again.

Yesterday, she and Ruchy stayed awake whispering about a funny chapter until Mama told them it was time to sleep.



Chani likes those nights. She likes finding Ruchy there when a strange noise makes the dark seem bigger.

Does the page mean she secretly wants none of that?

She writes another line: I am a terrible sister.

That feels worse than the first sentence.

Now the pencil isn't helping. It is making a judge out of the page.

Chapter 3: Mama at the Door

Mama knocks before coming in. Her brown sheitel covers all her hair.

"May I sit?"

Chani says yes and turns the page over.

Mama doesn't reach for it.

"I wrote something horrible."

"Did you give it to someone?"

"No. It isn't a letter."

"Do you want to tell me about it? You don't have to show me the page."

Chani tells her the first sentence and the last one.

Mama listens.



"Were you deciding where everybody should live, or writing what the argument felt like?"

"What it felt like."

"Then a sentence on that page isn't a family plan. It also isn't a complete description of you."

Chani looks at the turned-over paper.

"But I wrote never."

"Did never become more accurate because the pencil could spell it?"

Chani almost smiles.

"No."

Chapter 4: What She Does Mean

Mama asks whether the writing is helping now.

"Not when I keep reading it."

"You can stop."

Chani sets down the pencil.

They talk about the actual afternoon. Ruchy has a practice time. Chani has a project. The room has one desk, and their voices grew sharp before either asked Mama about another space.



Chani doesn't need to show Ruchy every angry sentence to be honest about that.

She does need to apologize for saying Ruchy's reading sounds like a squeaky gate. That sentence was spoken aloud.

The private page and the spoken hurt aren't the same job.

On a new scrap, Chani writes what she wants to ask: Can I use another quiet table during her practice?

That line can be a real request.

Chapter 5: Not Delivered

Chani folds the first page and puts it away where Mama says her private papers can stay.

She doesn't have to burn it, keep it forever, or make someone else read it as a test of how well they understand her.

If private writing ever makes her feel less safe or more upset, she can tell Mama and get help. Today, repeatedly reading the angry lines makes the afternoon worse, so she leaves them folded.

She finds Ruchy.

"I'm sorry I called your reading squeaky. I was cross about the room."

Ruchy looks at her.

"I heard that part."



"I know."

Chani doesn't add the sentence about never sharing. It isn't a fact Ruchy needs or a threat Chani intends to make.

They ask Mama about the tables together.

Chapter 6: The Page She Can Use

Mama arranges a different quiet place for Chani during the next practice. Their room remains shared.

That evening, Chani and Ruchy talk about the book again.

The conversation doesn't prove the argument is harmless. They still need the table arrangement. Chani still apologizes for her actual words.

It does remind her that the darkest line on a loose page isn't the whole history of two sisters.

Later, she decides not to keep the folded page. She puts it in the paper bin herself.

She keeps the little request until Mama settles the times.

There are things a pencil can hold for a moment, things she may want help talking about, and words she chooses to give someone else.

They don't all have to travel in the same envelope.

Chani puts away the pencil and leaves the desk clear for morning.