



The Sample Box Near the Door

A busy fabric shop, a decision she could
make, and too much happening around it

For ages 12-15





Chapter 1

Three Blues

The blue cloth looked gray beneath the shop lamp.

Miri held it beside another sample and tried to remember which one Mama had chosen in daylight.

They were buying fabric for the Bais Yaakov class banner. Miri had helped draw the design, and Mama was supervising the purchase.

The shop was full. A cutting machine hummed. Two customers discussed curtains. Somebody shook out a length of cloth with a sharp flap.

Miri knew the measurements. She knew the colors.

Suddenly she couldn't keep either in her head.





Chapter 2

The Number Again

"How many meters?" the shopkeeper asked.

Mama looked at the written list.

"Two meters," she answered.

At the same moment, a customer behind Miri said, "Three," and the assistant at the cutting table called, "Five."

Miri heard all three numbers at once and lost track of which one belonged to their cloth.

"Sorry?"

Mama repeated, "Two meters." A customer behind them sighed.

Miri wanted to leave immediately.





Then she felt ashamed. It was a fabric shop, not a frightening place. Other people were choosing curtains perfectly well.

She pressed the sample flat against the counter.

"Perhaps I'm not good at this," she whispered to Mama.

Chapter 3

A Quieter Place

Mama, wearing her gray tichel, leaned closer.

"Not good at choosing blue cloth, or finding it difficult in all this noise?"

Miri looked around.

The machine was still humming. The conversation behind her had grown louder. The light made every blue seem different.





"Too much at once."

Mama asked the shopkeeper whether they could look at the samples near the quieter doorway while another customer was served.

They took the small sample box there. Mama stayed with Miri, away from the entrance itself so they didn't block anyone.

Miri's hands loosened around the cloth.

Chapter 4

The Same Three Blues

Near the door, the daylight was clearer.

There were still three samples. The measurements hadn't changed. Miri could look at one thing without three voices landing on top of it.

"This one," she said, pointing to the middle blue.





"What do you like about it?"

"It matches the drawing, and the white letters will show."

That was the answer she had wanted to give at the counter.

She hadn't found a new skill in the doorway. She had found a better place to use the skill she already had.

Mama checked the sample against the approved design.

They were ready to return when the counter was free.

Chapter 5

One Thing Written Down

Miri wanted to carry the measurement in her head to prove she wasn't confused.





Then she looked at the list.

The list existed so nobody had to do that.

She put the sample number beside the required meters and handed it to Mama.

Mama checked both, then gave the shopkeeper the final choice.

The cloth was cut. The price was checked by the adult making the purchase. Miri didn't have to handle the money or rush the order because a customer behind them looked impatient.

She carried the sample box back to its place.

Chapter 6

The Walk Home

Outside, Miri could hear the quieter sound of shoes on the sidewalk.





"I thought needing a break meant I couldn't do the job."

"It meant you needed a quieter place for part of it," Mama said.

They talked about which things had helped: staying together, moving away from the noise, looking at samples in daylight, and keeping the measurements on paper.

None of those required Miri to become a different girl.

If crowded places often became hard for her, Mama could help plan them or speak with someone qualified for more support.

For today, they had the right cloth and an honest description of what had happened.





Chapter 7

The Class Table

At school, Miri and her classmates laid the blue cloth on the table.

Mrs. Gross, whose brown sheitel was neatly pinned back, supervised the work.

Three girls began asking Miri questions at once.

"One at a time, please," she said.

They stopped and looked at each other.

One girl laughed.

"I asked where the chalk is, not why the world was created. I can wait."

Miri passed her the chalk.

The questions became manageable when she could hear one answer's worth of them at a time.





Chapter 8

The Banner on the Wall

The banner went up on Wednesday.

The white letters showed clearly against the middle blue.

Miri remembered the sample box near the door when she looked at it.

The afternoon in the shop hadn't been a test she had failed. It had shown her something practical about how she worked in a crowded place.

She could ask for quieter space, write down what mattered, or arrange tasks with a trusted adult. She didn't have to compete with the cutting machine for proof that she belonged in the shop.

Her classmates had brought different skills to the banner. She had brought her drawing and her eye for the blue.



Those had been there at the noisy counter too.