



The Shelf After the Thunder

A storm outside, a crash she remembered,
and a room that was still here

For ages 12-15





Chapter 1

The Crash

The thunder arrived while Gitty was holding the last book.

She dropped it on the reading-room table.

Outside the Bais Yaakov windows, the sky had turned the color of a used pencil eraser. Inside, five girls were finishing the library shelves with Mrs. Mandel.

"That was close," Shira said.

Gitty heard another crash, one that belonged to last winter.

A heavy wardrobe had fallen in her cousin's empty guest room while workmen moved it. Nobody had been hurt. Gitty had been in the hall, but she remembered the sudden noise and the dust beneath the door.





Now the rain-dark window seemed far away. She could almost smell that dust.

Chapter 2

The Same Room

"Gitty?"

Mrs. Mandel, wearing her brown sheitel, came beside the table.

Gitty tried to pick up the book. Her hands wouldn't settle around it.

"I'm remembering something," she said. "I know it isn't happening here. It feels very near."

Mrs. Mandel didn't tell her that an old wardrobe was a silly thing to think about.

"Come sit with me. You can leave the book."





They sat away from the windows. The teacher had already checked the school's arrangements for the storm: the girls would stay inside, and she would arrange the journeys home with their mothers when it was safe.

Gitty didn't have to decide that part.

Chapter 3

A Different Question

"Tell me about this room," Mrs. Mandel said.

Gitty looked at her.

"Not the other room. Something you can see here."

"The atlas shelf."

"Yes."

The atlases leaned against their wooden bookend.
There was no dust on the floor beneath them.





"Shira's putting the labels in the tin."

Shira looked up but didn't interrupt.

"The curtain has a crooked hem."

Mrs. Mandel glanced at it.

"I've been meaning to fix that."

It was a very ordinary thing for a teacher to say.
Gitty liked hearing it.

Chapter 4

Feet on the Floor

The thunder sounded again.

Gitty gripped the chair. For a moment, the old hall
came back sharply.

"It's rain outside," she said, but the sentence didn't
instantly make her calm.





Mrs. Mandel stayed beside her.

Gitty noticed her shoes resting on the library floor. The chair seat supported her. Somewhere behind her, paper labels rustled.

She wasn't being asked to prove she could stop feeling frightened.

She was finding the room again, one ordinary thing at a time.

"The labels make a scratching noise," she said.

"They do."

Chapter 5

No Performance

After a few minutes, Gitty's hands felt less shaky.





She wanted to announce that she was completely fine. Then Mrs. Mandel would not have to sit with her any longer.

Instead she said, "It's a little easier. I'm still frightened."

"We have time."

Shira brought a cup of water and put it on the table without making a ceremony of it.

"Do you want me to stay here or finish those shelves?" she asked.

"Finish them, please."

Shira nodded.

Gitty watched the books slide into place. A shelf didn't become dangerous just because she had remembered a different piece of furniture.





The storm outside still needed the teacher's attention. The memory inside needed care of a different kind.

Chapter 6

The Book She Left

When the rain eased, Mrs. Mandel checked the arrangements again.

The girls' mothers had been contacted. Nobody was going to dash out simply because a quiet patch had appeared.

Gitty's mother would pick her up.

While they waited, Gitty asked for the book she had dropped.

"You don't need to finish the job today," Mrs. Mandel said.





"I know. I want to read the first page while we wait."

She put it on her lap.

Reading wasn't a test of whether the fright had gone away. She could stop if she wanted.

She read the same paragraph twice before it made sense. Then she turned the page.

Chapter 7

What Mama Heard

Mama arrived wearing her dark green tichel.

In the hall, Gitty told her about the thunder and the other crash she had remembered.

"It was strange. I knew where I was, but I kept feeling as though I was back there."

Mama listened without hurrying her.





"We'll talk about it properly at home," she said. "You don't have to handle that alone."

Mrs. Mandel explained what had happened and what had helped. She didn't claim that looking at a shelf would fix every frightening memory.

If this kept happening, Mama would speak with someone qualified to help.

For today, Gitty had told the people who could look after her.

Chapter 8

The Crooked Hem

The next morning was bright.

Gitty returned the book to the library during break. She paused at the door.

Mrs. Mandel was straightening the labels.





"How are you today?"

"Better. Mama and I talked last night."

Gitty put the book in the right place. Then she looked at the curtain.

Its hem was still crooked.

Yesterday that crooked line had helped her notice the room she was in. Today it was simply a hem the teacher hadn't fixed yet.

She didn't need to pretend the storm had been nothing. She didn't need to turn the library into the hall from last winter either.

The bookend held the atlases. Shira was looking for a story. Mrs. Mandel was sorting labels into the tin.

Gitty stepped inside.

