



The Second Hard Morning

A tangled lace and a plan that
can be changed

For ages 9-12





Chapter 1

Tuesday's Knot

On Tuesday morning, Avrumi pulled both ends of his shoelace. The knot tightened instead of opening.

He was already dressed for school. His bag stood beside the door. Now one small knot seemed determined to stop the whole morning.

"This knot again," he muttered, tugging again.

Totty sat beside him on the entryway bench.

"Pulling harder is tightening it. Let's put the shoe down a moment."

Avrumi let go. He rested his hands, then asked Totty to help loosen the knot. After that, he tied it himself.

The morning went better than it had begun.





Chapter 2

Wednesday's Hurry

The next morning, Avrumi remembered the pause.

When his lace crossed the wrong way, he set down the shoe and waited. Then he tried again.

His little brother was asking where his blue cap had gone. Mommy called that breakfast was ready. Avrumi could hear a chair scrape in the kitchen.

He tried to tie the lace too quickly.

It twisted around his finger. He pulled it free and dropped the shoe.

"The pause doesn't work," he said.





Chapter 3

Not the Same Morning

Totty came to the bench.

"Yesterday I did it and it helped. Today I did it and I'm still annoyed."

"A pause doesn't promise that every next try will be easy," Totty said.

"Then why bother?"

"Did it help you stop pulling for a moment?"

"Yes."

"What happened when you started again?"

Avrumi looked toward the kitchen. "I hurried because everyone was talking."

Totty nodded. "Then we have another part to work on."





They moved the loose lace ends where Avrumi could see them. Totty asked the little brother to bring his cap question to Mommy. Avrumi asked for help with the crossed lace before it became a tight knot.

Chapter 4

A Plan with More Room

After school, Totty and Avrumi sat at the bench again.

Avrumi tied the shoe when there was no hurry. He could do it. Morning noise and rushing made it harder.

They decided to leave a little more time for shoes. If a lace twisted, Avrumi could stop pulling, look at what had happened, and ask for the help he needed.

"What if I'm still annoyed?" he asked.





"Then we can work while you're annoyed. We don't need to pretend you aren't."

Avrumi put his shoes neatly beside the bench. He did not tie them while they were off his feet; he wanted the loose ends ready for morning.

Chapter 5

Thursday's Beginning

Thursday was not a perfect morning.

Avrumi's brother found the cap but couldn't find his other mitten. One lace slipped from Avrumi's hand.

He almost said, "Here we go again."

Instead, he picked up the loose end and asked Totty to check the crossing. Then he made the loop himself.





Later he told Totty, "It was easier than yesterday. Not as easy as Tuesday."

"That is useful to know."

One hard morning had not erased the helpful part of the first one. It had shown them what the plan was missing.

At the door, Avrumi looked down at his shoes. Both were tied. He still had a school day ahead of him, and not every knot in it would be made of string.

