

The Sound She Kept Rehearsing

A guessing game and a voice that
needs a little room

For ages 9-12



Chapter 1

A Very Small Thunderstorm

Morah put a paper bag on her desk.

"Today's game has no pictures," she said. "One person makes a sound. The others guess what it could be."

Gitty rubbed her palms together. "Rain!"

Chani tapped the table softly. "Rain wearing shoes."

The girls laughed. They were sitting in their regular classroom chairs, taking turns. Nobody had to perform in front of the room.

When it was Leah's turn, she made the squeak she had practiced at home.

"A mouse!" someone guessed.

It was supposed to be a gate.





Chapter 2

The Gate Gets Stuck

Leah tried again, louder.

"A bigger mouse," Chani said.

Leah squeezed her hands beneath the desk. She pushed her shoulders up and tried the sound a third time. Now it came out thin and broken.

Morah smiled kindly. "You may tell us, or pass and have another turn later."

Leah wanted neither. She wanted the sound to come out correctly right now.

She drew a sharp breath and tried once more.

Nothing much came out.





Chapter 3

A Different Kind of Help

Morah came beside her chair.

"Would you like a little break?"

"I know the sound." Leah's eyes felt hot. "I keep making it worse."

"Your hands look very tight."

Leah opened them. Her fingers had left small marks in her palms.

Morah lowered her own shoulders. "You can let your shoulders rest. Breathe gently, the way you usually do. You don't have to pull in a huge breath."

Leah sat back. She let her hands lie open on her skirt.

At first she was still thinking, Gate, gate, gate.





She breathed without trying to make a sound. As she let the breath out, she loosened her shoulders a little more.

Morah waited. There was no race to be ready.

Chapter 4

Not the Same Squeak

The game continued around the room.

A spoon tapped a mug on Morah's desk. Someone guessed a tiny bell. Another girl guessed a cow with a very small necklace.

Leah smiled before she remembered that she was upset.

When her next turn came, she still felt uncertain.

"I want to try something else," she said.





She made a soft shuffling sound with her hands against her skirt.

"Someone walking through leaves?" Gitty asked.

"Yes!"

Chani tried it too. Her leaves sounded like a whole forest.

Leah joined the laughter.

Chapter 5

The Gate Can Wait

At the end of the game, Gitty asked about the first sound.

"It was a squeaky gate," Leah said.

"Oh. I thought it was a mouse opening a squeaky gate."





That made Leah laugh again.

She had not learned a perfect gate squeak. She had learned that squeezing harder was not always helping.

Later, when her pencil point broke during writing, she felt her shoulders rise.

She let them rest, took an ordinary gentle breath, and raised her hand for the classroom sharpener.

The broken point still needed fixing. She was ready to ask for what would fix it.

