



The Vase She Wrapped Too Soon

A canceled birthday visit, a gift ready
to return, and an evening too sharp for
a lasting decision

For ages 12-15





Chapter 1

Back in the Box

The blue vase still had its little tag.

For Chani, from Deena.

Chani pulled the tag off and put the vase in the box it had arrived in two weeks earlier.

Deena had canceled Chani's birthday visit that afternoon. Again. She had gone to a cousin's gathering instead, after the visit had already been arranged.

"We'll do something another day," Deena had said at the Bais Yaakov gate.

Chani had answered, "Don't bother."

Now she was preparing to give the vase back.

She wanted Deena to know exactly how it felt to make somebody feel unimportant.





Chapter 2

The Ribbon That Wouldn't Lie Flat

Chani wrapped the box in brown paper.

The ribbon twisted under her fingers. Every time she tried to smooth it, she pictured Deena laughing at the cousin's house.

She didn't know whether Deena was laughing. She didn't need to know for the picture to make her angrier.

Mama came in wearing her gray tichel.

"Are you taking a gift somewhere?"

"Returning one."

Chani explained why.

Mama looked at the box but didn't take it away.





"Do you want to end the friendship, or do you want her to feel your hurt tonight?"

Chani had been treating those as the same question.

Chapter 3

The Vase and the Afternoon

"She shouldn't have done it," Chani said.

"Canceling an arranged visit for another gathering hurt you. You can address that."

Mama's answer didn't excuse Deena. Chani was relieved she hadn't been asked to pretend the afternoon was fine.

"Then why not return the vase?"

"What would returning it say?"

Chani pictured the box on Deena's doorstep.





It would say more than I was disappointed. It might say that the gift, the last two weeks, and the friendship were all being handed back.

Perhaps that was what she wanted. Perhaps she would want it less fiercely after supper.

She couldn't tell while she was trying to make the ribbon hurt somebody.

Chapter 4

No Delivery Tonight

They agreed the box would stay on Chani's shelf that evening.

She could decide later. Waiting did not require forgiving Deena, making another plan, or saying the canceled visit didn't matter.

It only meant that no package would leave the house while Chani's hands were shaking with anger.





She put the box away and washed her hands for supper.

The table conversation sounded too cheerful at first. She ate quietly, then told Mama she wanted a few minutes in the sitting room afterward.

Mama sat with her. Chani described the empty afternoon without rehearsing a speech designed to make Deena cry.

Chapter 5

The Next Morning's Question

In the morning, the box was still there.

Chani was still hurt. She no longer wanted to send it simply because it would produce a dramatic moment.

She made room on her desk and wrote two possible actions on scrap paper.





Return the gift and end the friendship.

Keep the gift, tell Deena what happened, and stop arranging visits for now.

Both had consequences. One couldn't be undone by explaining that she had only wanted to make a point.

Chani chose the second for now. It protected her afternoons without making yesterday's anger the author of everything that happened next.

Chapter 6

Words Instead of a Package

At break, Chani asked Deena to speak away from the crowded doorway.

"I waited for the visit we arranged. When you chose another gathering instead, I felt unimportant. I don't want to make more home-visit plans right now."





Deena looked uncomfortable.

"I thought you wouldn't mind because we've known each other so long."

"I minded."

Chani stopped there. She didn't need to add the imagined laughter or call Deena a person who never cared about anyone.

Deena apologized for changing the plan so late.

Chani thanked her for saying it. She didn't promise the next visit.

Chapter 7

The Paper Comes Off

At home, Chani unwrapped the vase.

The tag was lying in the desk drawer. She put it back beside the box.





Mama asked whether she was glad she had waited.

"I still don't like what happened."

"Waiting wasn't supposed to make you like it."

Chani looked at the blue glass.

She could keep a gift without agreeing to the same unreliable arrangement. She could also decide later that a friendship wasn't working, with support from a grownup if she needed it.

A pause wasn't a promise to stay forever.

It was room to choose deliberately.

Chapter 8

The Flowers on Thursday

On Thursday, her little sister brought three paper flowers for the vase.





One had nine petals. One had four. The third appeared to be wearing a hat.

Chani put them in the blue glass.

At school, she and Deena still greeted each other. They hadn't arranged another visit. Chani was comfortable leaving that decision open.

The birthday afternoon had mattered. Her response to it mattered too.

She hadn't sent the box out just to make pain travel from one house to another.

There were words she could say, limits she could keep, and later decisions she could make when she was ready.

For now, the vase held three peculiar flowers instead of one permanent message written in the angriest hour of her day.

