

Contents

CHAPTER 1: Catching Up.....	1
CHAPTER 2: The First Practice.....	10
CHAPTER 3: The Call from Huvie	18
CHAPTER 4: Shabbos at Huvie's	28
CHAPTER 5: The Busy Morning	35
CHAPTER 6: Recess Talks.....	42
CHAPTER 7: Avital's Surprise	50
CHAPTER 8: Ima's Decision	60
CHAPTER 9: Telling the Others.....	68
CHAPTER 10: Solo Tryouts.....	75

CHAPTER 11: The Soloists	82
CHAPTER 12: Emergency Sleepover	88
CHAPTER 13: Rikki's House	95
CHAPTER 14: Late-Night Talk.....	102
CHAPTER 15: Ima Comes Home	109
CHAPTER 16: Party Plans.....	116
CHAPTER 17: Baking Cupcakes.....	123
CHAPTER 18: The Sleepover	131
Acknowledgments	141



CHAPTER 1

Catching Up

Shira Gelb hopped out of the car and let the door slam shut behind her. “Thanks, Ima!” she called over her shoulder as she headed into the school building.

“Have a great day!” her mother called back. “Don’t forget, you’re taking the after-school bus back with Huvie after practice!”

The redhead waved her hand to show she’d heard and took the stairs two at a time up to the lobby.

As soon as she entered 5B’s classroom, she was attacked by Rikki Alter, one of her new friends at her new school. “Hey!” Rikki said as Shira put her

green knapsack over the back of the chair. “Are you excited?”

“Excited for what?” Shira asked.

“The first official practice of the Shireinu Girls Choir!”

Shira shook her head, her ponytail waving back and forth.

“How can you forget?!” Rikki threw her hands in the air. “This is the most interesting thing that’s happened all year!”

“I mean, technically, we already had practice two days ago,” Shira pointed out. “When Avital welcomed us to the choir and told us how practice would work.”

Rikki thought about it for a moment before nodding. “I guess you’re right. But still, it’ll be a real practice today! We might even learn a new song! We could—”

“Is Rikki *already* chewing your ear off?” Huvie walked over to them and put her navy-and-white striped backpack down beside her desk. The smile on her face showed that she was just joking. “It’s not even nine o’clock yet, Rikki. You can’t be this energetic!”

If there was one thing Shira had learned over the past two weeks, it was that Rikki most certainly *could*

be this energetic before class even started. She hadn't had anyone with this much spirit in her old school.

A lot of things were different than they had been back in her previous home.

Over Chol HaMoed Sukkos, her parents had sat down with her and explained that the family was moving to Flatbush. Her grandmother — her mother's mother — was sick and needed someone nearby to take care of her. Shira's mother was an only child, like Shira herself, so she was the only person who could help. It didn't make sense for the Gelbs to stay in Lakewood, not when Oma would need help going for treatments every couple of weeks and might require more help at home, too.

In a whirlwind of packing and planning, Shira transferred to Bais Yaakov of Flatbush. She had to drop out of the Lakewood Girls Choir and leave all her friends behind. It was hard. Shira hated being the new girl, the one everyone stared at.

But she switched schools at exactly the right time. The first week she moved in, a famous Jewish singer, Avital Geller, announced her new choir. The girls from Bais Yaakov of Flatbush got the chance to try out before the students of any other schools. And

because Shira was in the Lakewood Girls Choir, that made everyone look to her for advice. She was the expert, after all.

At least she had Huvie. Huvie's mother and Shira's had been friends in high school, so when Shira's family moved to Flatbush, her mother called up her old friend and asked if Huvie could look out for Shira. This way, when she started at her new school, Shira already knew one person. Then, because of Huvie, Shira met Rikki, and through Rikki, she met Dassy Cohen, Rikki's cousin. So even though she'd only started here two weeks ago, she had a great group of friends.

"Shira? Earth to Shira!"

Shira shook her head to clear it of her memories as Rikki called her name. "Sorry, I was thinking for a minute. What's up?"

"I was just asking if you had any idea what the practice was going to be like this afternoon," Rikki said. "Since you were in the other choir and all."

"Well..." Right. Shira was the expert here. She tried to remember her first practice. "I don't think today's practice will be the same as my first practice, because the Lakewood Girls Choir has been around for seven

years, I think. I'm sure Avital is still trying to figure out how she wants to run things."

Her blond hair framing her face, Huvie leaned into the conversation. "But what were your practices usually like? Did you always learn new songs? Or did you practice old ones?"

Shira noticed movement out of the corner of her eye. Perri Muller, someone she thought of as her absolute worst enemy at her new school, was staring at them. When Perri saw that Shira noticed her, her face reddened, and she turned away.

Shira shrugged. If Perri wanted to hear what she had to say, she could join the conversation.

"It depends. Sometimes we learned a new song. If we had an album to record or a performance coming up, we practiced motions, going from song to song," Shira answered. She tapped her lip, thinking it over. "Avital will probably start by teaching us a song. Then next week or the week after, she can pick soloists and do harmony and stuff."

"That makes sense," Huvie said, nodding slowly.

"Aw. So, no solos yet." Rikki sighed dramatically. "I really wanted to show Avital that I deserve to be in this choir, that I have a really good voice."

When the girls who would make up the first Shireinu Girls Choir were announced, Rikki had been dismayed to discover that she hadn't made the cut. Only Perri, Huvie, and Shira had gotten in from their class. Although Dassy, Rikki's cousin, had been accepted to the choir, she was in class 5D.

After the announcement, Shira had insisted that Rikki go talk to Avital. All four of the friends ended up going together, and in the end, Rikki was accepted to the choir.

The catch was that Huvie, who hadn't wanted to join originally, had had to join the choir as well. Avital said that Huvie should try it out until the first performance, and then she could leave if she still didn't want to be in the choir.

Shira had a feeling that Huvie would stay, though. The other girl looked excited when she spoke about the choir now.

"Oh, hey, Huvie!" Rikki turned to her oldest friend. "What's going on with the logo? Have you and Leah figured out what you want to do with it?"

Right. Shira almost forgot. To keep the girls from becoming too nervous about the outcome of their tryouts, Avital also ran a logo competition. Anyone in