



## Back to the Upstairs Desk



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18





## Chapter 1: The Desk He Wants

Yehonadav wants the downstairs desk.

It stands in the small room beside the kitchen, close enough to hear family conversation but not in the middle of the supper table. When his older brother uses it, somebody occasionally brings a cup of water or asks what he is reading.

The upstairs desk has a wall in front of it and a door behind it.

Yehonadav is seventeen. He studies at home after his regular classes. He can work upstairs. That is not the problem he brings to Tatty.

"I feel as if the evening happens without me."

Tatty listens.

"You come down for supper and afterward."

"I miss the parts in between."

"The downstairs room isn't quiet at those times."

"I don't need complete quiet."

The older brother says he would prefer upstairs for his own work this week. There is no reason the family cannot try a different arrangement if the times fit.

Mama takes out their desk schedule. The desks remain where they are. The boys will change work spaces, not move furniture.





They agree to a one-week trial, with a review on Sunday before the next week's times are settled.

Yehonadav writes DOWNSTAIRS beside his name.





## Chapter 2: The First Evening

At six, Yehonadav takes his books to the downstairs desk.

His brother goes upstairs.

From the kitchen, Mama asks a younger child to count out the spoons. A spoon falls. The child begins counting again from the beginning.

Yehonadav smiles and opens his page.

For the first ten minutes, the room feels exactly as he hopes. He is working, and the family is still around him.

Then Tatty comes home. Yehonadav steps into the hall to say hello.

Tatty has a short story about somebody carrying two identical parcels and delivering the wrong one first.

Yehonadav asks how they discover the mistake.

When he returns to the desk, he has to read the last paragraph again.

That is fine. He has time.

The next sound is his little brother asking where his exercise book is.

Yehonadav knows. He comes out to point to it.

Back at the desk, he reads the paragraph a third time.

At supper, he has finished one page instead of the usual three. He tells himself the first evening needs settling in.





He leaves the books downstairs.





## Chapter 3: What He Calls Normal

On Tuesday, Yehonadav asks the younger children not to talk near the study-room door.

They move farther into the kitchen. He can still hear them. They live in the house too.

Mama asks what quiet arrangement he is requesting.

"Just while I work."

"This is their ordinary free time before supper. We can remind them not to enter your work space. We didn't agree to make the whole downstairs quiet."

Yehonadav remembers the trial conversation. He said he could work with ordinary household sound.

He has not meant this much ordinary household sound.

But nothing unusual is happening. The children are not shouting through his doorway or touching his books. He is also leaving the room whenever an interesting subject begins.

His brother comes down for water.

"How's the new desk?"

"Good."

The brother looks at the page.

"I like upstairs. I get through more there."





Yehonadav wants to argue that upstairs is dull. The brother has not asked him to choose it.

"It depends what you want," he says.

After the brother goes, Yehonadav turns back to the same paragraph.

He wants more than one thing. The desk is not supplying all of them.





## Chapter 4: The Work He Hides Upstairs

By Wednesday, Yehonadav has work left after supper.

He takes it upstairs to his bed with a book resting on his lap. The desk is in use by his brother, exactly as they arranged for the trial.

The page is awkward to hold. He asks Mama whether the small table in another room is available for a short period. She checks and offers it until a family member needs the room later.

He finishes there.

Tatty finds him gathering the books.

"More work tonight?"

"A little."

"Did the downstairs time cover what you expected?"

Yehonadav could give the whole answer. He has used the desk for three evenings and finishes less each time. He likes hearing the family but keeps losing his place. Some interruptions are sounds; others are choices he makes himself.

"I'm still getting used to it," he says.

That might be true. It is not the information Tatty needs to review the arrangement.





Yehonadav takes the books back downstairs before bed. He wants the morning to show the place he chooses, not the place where he actually finishes.





## Chapter 5: Sunday Has a Question

On Thursday, his brother asks whether they are likely to keep the swap after Sunday.

"I need to know where to put my materials for next week."

Yehonadav feels the trial becoming permanent because someone else likes it.

"I might go back upstairs."

"I thought downstairs was good."

"Parts of it."

The brother waits.

"Then let's tell Mama and Tatty before they settle the times."

Yehonadav nearly says the downstairs desk is fine after all.

Going back will sound as if Tatty knows his own study habits better than he does. He remembers how confidently he argued that he did not need quiet.

"I thought this would suit me," Yehonadav says.

"You were trying it."

The brother does not sound disappointed in his judgment. He sounds concerned about next week's schedule.

"Do you mind going downstairs again?"





"I'd rather stay upstairs. But we need an arrangement for both of us. I don't know it yet."

His preference has a place in the conversation too.





## Chapter 6: The Report He Owes the Trial

That evening, the boys sit with Mama and Tatty before the planned review, while there is time to consider next week's schedules.

Yehonadav starts with the pages he finishes. He gives the ordinary amount he expects and what actually happens during the trial. He does not count every kitchen sound as somebody else's offense.

"I kept coming out when a conversation interested me," he says.

"Then I had to read again. I finished later somewhere else."

"What do you want to change?" Mama asks.

"I'd like the upstairs desk back for my first work period."

His brother explains that upstairs helps him too. His next week's later classes mean he will use the home desk at a different time on three evenings. On the other two, their preferred periods overlap.

They put the actual times on the schedule.

Yehonadav cannot claim the upstairs desk for every hour because it used to be his regular space. The brother cannot claim it permanently because the trial works for him.

For the overlapping evenings, Mama offers another available quiet work surface for the brother's first short task. The brother checks that it fits what he needs. He agrees, then uses the upstairs desk after Yehonadav's period ends.

The adults confirm the arrangement.





## Chapter 7: No Victory Sentence

When the others leave the table, Yehonadav stays beside Tatty.

"You said it would be noisy."

"I said there would be ordinary sound downstairs."

"And you were right."

Tatty looks at the two schedules.

"You wanted company while working. You found it interrupted this part of your work. Now we've changed the arrangement."

"I thought you'd say I should have listened."

"We agreed you could try it. I needed an accurate report, not the result I expected."

Yehonadav taps Wednesday's later work period.

"I didn't give you that at first."

"You did tonight."

He is relieved. The trial is not a contest Tatty wins by knowing more.

It also is not a promise that every choice Yehonadav makes will turn out useful. He can report a poor fit without finding a person to blame.

They put the old trial sheet behind the new schedule.

The downstairs desk stays exactly where it is.





## Chapter 8: Company Afterward

On Monday, Yehonadav starts upstairs at the agreed time.

His brother uses the other approved work surface for the short task. The younger children talk in the kitchen. Yehonadav hears only a little of it from here.

He does miss being nearby.

After the first page, he wants to go downstairs to see who is laughing. He looks at the schedule. There is time after his work, and his brother needs the desk at the agreed end.

"I chose this work period, not a whole evening alone," Yehonadav thinks to himself.

He returns to the next paragraph.

When the period ends, he clears the desk. His brother brings his own folder upstairs.

Downstairs, Yehonadav joins the family. Somebody asks whether he has heard the latest parcel story.

"Only the first one."

Tatty starts at the beginning. Yehonadav sits at the kitchen table with no paragraph waiting beside his elbow.

