

The Name Not on the Notice



Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18



Chapter 1: One Extra Sentence

The notice says WRITING INSTRUCTOR WANTED.

It does not say anything about Hodaya's teacher.

Hodaya reads it twice while waiting outside the school office. Next term's writing course is her favorite line on the proposed timetable.

She has been hoping the current teacher will teach it again.

The notice names that course. It gives the office as the place for questions.

Beside Hodaya, a classmate lowers her voice.

"So it's true."

"What?"

"She's leaving."

"Do you know that?"

"They wouldn't need someone if she were staying."

Hodaya looks at the notice again. The classmate's sentence fits underneath it so comfortably that she can almost see it printed there.

"Why?" Hodaya asks.

"I heard there was a disagreement."

"With whom?"

The classmate shrugs.





"I don't know."

A younger student comes out of the office. It is Hodaya's turn to ask for the form she needs. The secretary passes it over, and Hodaya leaves.

She does not ask about the vacancy.

At the next break, her friend mentions the new timetable.

"The writing course might not be the same," Hodaya says. "Our teacher is leaving."





Chapter 2: Being the One Who Knows

"Did she tell you?" the friend asks.

"There's a notice."

"Does it say who is going?"

"They need a writing teacher."

The friend looks concerned.

"I hope they haven't made her leave."

Hodaya has not said that. She has said enough to make it seem possible.

"Someone mentioned a disagreement," she adds.

The friend's face changes again.

Now the little conversation has a reason. A reason gives it corners a person can hold.

Hodaya is seventeen. She often knows which classroom has moved and where a missing worksheet can be found. Friends ask her practical questions because she reads the school notices carefully.

She likes being useful. She likes the moment when an uncertain person looks relieved because she has an answer.

Her friend does not look relieved now. She looks worried about a teacher who is not present to answer.

Another girl comes over to ask which form the office needs.





Hodaya shows her the form.

Then she says, "There's a writing vacancy too. It looks as if our teacher is leaving after some disagreement."

The girl puts the form in her folder. She takes the extra sentence away with it.





Chapter 3: Concern With a Question Inside

In the writing lesson, the teacher returns Hodaya's paragraph with a question in the margin.

"Whose observation is this? The narrator's, or the visitor's?"

Hodaya reads the sentence.

She has not made that clear.

The teacher goes to the next desk. Hodaya looks at her and searches for signs of an argument she has never seen.

The teacher seems tired. Or perhaps she is concentrating. Hodaya has not watched her face this closely before.

After class, Hodaya stays by her desk until the room clears.

She could say she hopes everything is all right. That sounds kind. Then perhaps the teacher would explain, and Hodaya would finally know what she has already told two people.

The teacher notices her waiting.

"Do you have a question about the paragraph?"

Hodaya holds the page.

"I saw the notice about next term."

"The office can answer questions about the course arrangements."

"I just wondered if you were all right."

The teacher looks at her for a moment.





"Is there something you want to ask me?"

Hodaya feels the folded edge of the page under her thumb.

"People are saying you're leaving because of an argument."

"I haven't told the class that. Please don't pass that on as
information about me."

She does not give Hodaya a different private story to carry.





Chapter 4: An Answer That Is Not Hers

At home, Hodaya tells Mama what happened.

She starts with the vacancy, then the classmate, then her two conversations.

"The teacher didn't explain."

"What question did you need answered?" Mama asks.

"Who will teach us next term."

"And what did you ask?"

Hodaya studies the paragraph on the table.

"Whether she had an argument."

"Did that answer belong to the course information?"

"Not necessarily."

Mama waits while Hodaya works through the difference.

The course can change without every student receiving the teacher's reasons. A school notice can concern a job without telling the story of the person who holds it now.

"But if I ask the office and they say she isn't leaving, I can fix it,"
Hodaya says.

"You can correct what you said without finding out her private plans."

"Then I'll have no answer."





Mama looks at her.

"What answer do you actually have?"

Hodaya takes out a scrap.

"There's a vacancy notice. I don't know what it means for her."

It looks embarrassingly small beside the story she has supplied.





Chapter 5: The Two Conversations

The next morning, Hodaya finds her friend before lessons.

"I need to correct what I told you. The notice doesn't say our teacher is leaving. It doesn't say anything about an argument. I passed that on without knowing it."

"But you asked her?"

"She asked me not to pass it on. She didn't give me private details, and I'm not going to look for them."

"Did she deny it?"

"That isn't what she said. I don't know her plans."

The friend looks toward the classroom.

"I asked my sister whether she had heard."

Hodaya feels her stomach tighten. Now there are people beyond the two she knows about.

"Please tell her my information wasn't established. Don't ask her to find another version."

The friend agrees to correct her own conversation.

Hodaya finds the second girl near the coat hooks. She makes the same correction without naming the classmate who started it.

"I thought you knew," the girl says.

"I spoke as if I did."





"I haven't told anyone."

Hodaya thanks her. She does not ask the girl to announce the correction to the whole class. That would introduce the rumor to people who have not heard it.





Chapter 6: What the Office Can Tell Her

At the allowed office time, Hodaya asks about the course.

"Will the next-term writing timetable stay the same? Who should we ask if we need to choose courses before the instructor is confirmed?"

The secretary takes out the current course sheet.

The subject and planned hours are unchanged. The instructor has not been announced. Students with a course-choice question can make an appointment through the office before their forms are due.

"Do you need that appointment?" the secretary asks.

"Not yet. I mainly wanted to know what was confirmed."

The secretary shows her which lines are confirmed and which remain provisional.

Hodaya makes a note. She does not ask why somebody is wanted, whether somebody else has complained, or whether the current teacher seems unhappy in meetings.

At lunch, the classmate who first read the vacancy beside her asks what she finds out.

Hodaya gives the course facts.

"But about the disagreement?"





"I don't know of one. I shouldn't have repeated it."

"I didn't say it was certain."

"I made it sound more certain when I told people."

The classmate looks down at her lunch.

Hodaya does not need to decide how much certainty the first sentence contained before correcting her own.





Chapter 7: No New Version

That afternoon, Hodaya speaks to the teacher after the writing lesson.

"I told two girls more than the notice said. I've corrected those conversations. I'm sorry I asked you about an argument as if I knew there was one."

The teacher listens.

"Thank you for correcting it. Questions about class arrangements are welcome. The office has the current information."

"I went there."

"Good."

Hodaya holds her returned paragraph.

She wants the teacher to say there is no harm done. She also wants the teacher to tell her the rumor is false, so she can stop wondering.

Neither sentence comes.

"Could I ask about this margin question?" Hodaya says.

"Yes. Show me."

They look at the visitor and the narrator. Hodaya changes the sentence so the reader knows whose observation it is.





The teacher suggests a second place to check. Hodaya marks it for later.

They finish a normal conversation about writing. It is not a reward of secret knowledge for apologizing.

When another girl comes to the desk with her work, Hodaya moves aside.





Chapter 8: Three Words She Can Say

For several days, no instructor announcement appears.

The uncertainty remains exactly where it was. The course has a planned time. The teacher's future is not announced. The rumor has no supporting fact Hodaya can supply.

Her friend tells her that she corrected the conversation with her sister.

"She asked who started it."

"What did you say?"

"That it wasn't confirmed and we shouldn't keep passing it around."

Hodaya nods.

At the noticeboard, a younger girl asks where the new term's course forms are.

Hodaya points to the office shelf. Then the girl asks who the writing instructor will be.

For a moment, Hodaya feels the familiar pull to be the person who knows.

"I don't know," she says. "The office can tell you what's confirmed."

She walks to her classroom, opens the paragraph, and writes the visitor's observation where the reader can see who it belongs to.

