

The Seat on the Planning Committee



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 15-18

Chapter 1: The Smallest Name Card

Chavatzeles's name card is the same size as everyone else's.

She checks that while Mrs. Rubin pours water. At eighteen, Chavatzeles is the youngest person on the committee planning the community women's learning afternoon. She is invited because she helps with last year's registration and notices several things the organizers miss.

Now she sits with a folder she prepares carefully. Beside her are women who organize events before she is born.

Mrs. Rubin's dark tichel covers all her hair; her high-necked dress has sleeves to her wrists. She passes out the proposed schedule.

"The younger participants can come straight from school," she says. "We'll begin their workshop at four."

Chavatzeles looks at the line.

Her own class finishes at four. Two neighboring schools finish later. The supervised transport arranged for students cannot reach the hall by the proposed start.

She opens her mouth.

Then Mrs. Rubin asks whether anyone objects to the draft order, and three people nod approvingly.

Chavatzeles nods too.

Her name card stays exactly the same size.

Chapter 2: A Good Meeting, Apparently

Afterward, Mrs. Rubin thanks her for coming.

"It's useful to have a young perspective."

Chavatzeles smiles.

She has given no perspective at all. She takes the schedule home and finds the four-o'clock line again.

Mama reads it beside her at the kitchen table, wearing her navy tichel and a long-sleeved blouse.

"You can't get there by that time," Mama says.

"I know."

"Did you tell them?"

"Not exactly."

Mama looks up.

"They all seem so sure," Chavatzeles says. "And Mrs. Rubin runs the afternoon. I don't want to correct her in front of everyone."

"A schedule question is not an insult."

"It can sound like one."

"Then make it specific. What do you actually know?"

Chavatzeles knows her own dismissal time. She has a current school notice showing it. She also knows another school's time from a friend, but that may change for the day. She does not know every student's transport arrangement. She writes those limits in the margin.

Knowing less than all the facts is not a reason to pretend she knows none of them.

Chapter 3: Before the Invitations

The printed invitations are not ordered yet. Mrs. Rubin says the committee will confirm the schedule at the next meeting.

Chavatzeles asks to raise a timing question before then.

They speak in the hall after another community class.

"I nodded at the workshop time," Chavatzeles says, "but I should have raised a practical problem. My class finishes at four. With the agreed travel arrangement, we can't reach the hall at four. I think some other groups finish later too, but those times need checking."

Mrs. Rubin looks at the schedule.

"I understood most of the schools finished at half past three."

"Some may. Mine doesn't."

"Could girls miss the last lesson?"

Chavatzeles feels herself preparing to agree because an adult suggests it.

Then she pictures the actual school day.

"That's something the schools and parents would need to decide. It isn't an arrangement I can promise for them."

Mrs. Rubin nods slowly.

"Bring your dismissal notice to the next meeting. I'll ask the other organizers to confirm the schools involved."

Chavatzeles does not ask to rewrite the whole afternoon. She brings one checked concern to the person responsible.

It takes less than five minutes. Her hands still feel unsteady afterward.

Chapter 4: Not All Young People

At the next meeting, Chavatzeles reads her question from the margin.

She does not say, Young people hate four-o'clock workshops. She does not say, Nobody can come.

She gives her own school time and the confirmed arrival limits for the groups the organizers intend to invite. Mrs. Rubin provides the additional information the adults collect.

One committee member asks, "Would all the girls prefer a later afternoon?"

"I can't answer for all of them," Chavatzeles says. "For this group, the proposed start happens before they can arrive. Preference is a separate question."

Another member explains why the room is available only until six. The adult speaker has a later commitment. Moving everything by an hour will not work.

Chavatzeles wants her concern to produce an obvious solution. Instead, it produces more constraints.

They consider options: a shorter workshop, a different place in the program, or separate arrangements for a later date. The adults will confirm transport, staffing, and permissions. No one asks Chavatzeles to recruit students before those details are settled.

They choose a later, shorter workshop within the room booking, with its scope agreed by the speaker. The committee keeps the rest of the afternoon mostly unchanged.

"I liked the longer version," one woman says.

"So did I," Mrs. Rubin answers. "It doesn't fit the confirmed arrivals."

Chavatzeles looks at the revised line. It is not the entire afternoon she would design.

It is a line that works better because she speaks.

Chapter 5: The Next Disagreement

Later in the meeting, the committee discusses table decorations.

Chavatzeles likes one option. Most of the others choose another. Both fit the budget and the room.

For a moment, she feels the same pressure in her hands as when she raises the schedule. Perhaps she should defend this preference too, to prove she is no longer merely nodding.

She asks one question about how the decorations leave room for the worksheets. The organizer shows the arrangement. There is room.

Chavatzeles lets the choice stand.

Speaking when a fact matters does not require turning every preference into a contest.

Mrs. Rubin asks her to help check the invitation proof. Chavatzeles agrees to check the time, location, and description against the confirmed version. She will not approve the print order; Mrs. Rubin keeps that responsibility.

One line still has the old workshop time.

Chavatzeles marks it.

This time she does not wonder whether a polite person should leave the line alone.

Chapter 6: The Afternoon Arrives

On the day of the event, Chavatzeles comes by the confirmed arrangement with the school group. The first part of the program is already underway, as the schedule now makes clear.

They are not late for their workshop.

At the door, one girl says she wishes the session were longer.

"It needs to fit the room and the speaker's time today," Chavatzeles says.

She does not claim every compromise is wonderful. She also does not blame the organizers for failing to give an hour they do not have.

Inside, the room has the decorations Chavatzeles does not choose. They look fine. The worksheets fit on the tables.

Mrs. Rubin asks whether the arrival arrangement works.

"For our group, yes."

"Good. We'll ask the other groups too."

Chavatzeles likes that her answer is accepted without becoming the answer for everyone.

During the workshop, she participates. She is not responsible for watching all the students just because she serves on the committee. The designated adults handle supervision.

When the session ends, the girls leave with the agreed transport. Chavatzeles stays only because her own later collection is arranged in advance.

She helps put the folders into a carton.

Chapter 7: Her Name in the Minutes

At the review meeting, the committee discusses what works and what needs changing.

Chavatzeles reports her group's experience. One other group arrives with less time to settle than expected. The organizers record that and will check the arrangements earlier if they run another afternoon.

The timing change helps. It does not make every arrival perfect.

Mrs. Rubin asks Chavatzeles whether she will join the next planning discussion.

"Yes," she says. "If I can see the draft before we confirm it."

"We'll send it to everyone."

The minutes name her contribution: raising the school-arrival issue before invitations are printed.

They do not call her the voice of young people. They do not suggest she runs the event.

At home, she puts the meeting notes in her folder. Her first schedule is still there, with the question written in the margin.

She keeps it behind the confirmed version.

The next time she sees a practical problem, she may still need a moment before speaking. A respectful question does not always feel easy just because she now knows it belongs.

She takes out a clean page for the next meeting.

At the top, she writes the questions she will need to check, leaving space beneath them for answers from people who know different parts of the plan.