



The Work With a Plain Name



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18





Chapter 1: A Name for the Table

"Office administration," her friend says.

The words sound substantial beside the cake plates.

Cheftzi is eighteen. Their class is finishing its school year, and the girls are comparing the programs they consider next. Some have firm plans. Some have applications. One has a folder full of possibilities she says she will read as soon as she stops collecting them.

"What about you?" the friend asks.

Cheftzi smooths a paper napkin.

"I'm looking into something practical."

"That course is practical."

"I know."

She knows more than that. She has the course information at home. It sounds like work she could learn. It does not sound like work she wants to spend her days doing.

What she wants to learn has a less impressive name.

Upholstery.





A few months ago, Mama took a dining chair to a small furniture workshop. Cheftzi went with her. The chair had a loose seam and fabric that pulled strangely near one corner. The owner explained what she could repair and what required a different job. Cheftzi stood beside the counter and felt an interest so strong it was nearly a physical leaning.

Since then, she has wanted to know how something worn can become useful without pretending its old shape never exists.

At the cake table, she says, "Maybe office work."

It is not a decision. It sounds enough like one for the conversation to move on.





Chapter 2: The Chair in the Hall

The repaired chair sits in the hall because Mama has not yet decided which room needs it most.

Cheftzi checks its corner seam every time she passes.

Mama notices her inspecting the seam.

"Still holding?"

"Yes. I like how she made it lie properly."

"You could ask about learning."

"I don't know if it's a real plan."

Mama shifts the towels.

"Then ask what a real plan would involve."

Cheftzi wishes Mama will tell her the work is definitely right for her.

A declaration from an adult would make it easier to defend at a table with cake plates.

"You think I should do it?"





"I think you're interested. I don't know the training, the costs, the work conditions, or what earning a living in it looks like. We should find out before choosing."

That is sensible. Cheftzi likes it less than a declaration.

She takes out the office-course form.

The title is clear. The registration process looks clear. A clear form is almost enough to make a choice look inevitable.

She does not fill it in.





Chapter 3: The Beautiful Chair Is Not the Job

The workshop owner agrees to a short conversation with Cheftzi and Mama while the shop is not serving customers.

The owner keeps them in the designated visitor area, away from machinery, tools, and materials they are not trained to handle.

Cheftzi has questions about choosing fabric and shaping a corner.

The owner answers some. Then she asks what Cheftzi thinks a normal workday contains.

"Repairs. New covers. Finding the right finish."

"Yes. Also estimates, ordering, records, cleaning, and telling a customer a damaged frame isn't a fabric problem. Some days, I spend more time explaining a price than sewing."

Cheftzi looks at the chair near the counter. It has one finished arm and one covered in a temporary protective layer.

"Do people think it's too expensive?"

"Sometimes. Some choose a different option. Liking the work doesn't make every customer want it."





Mama asks about actual training routes and who can provide reliable current information. The owner names possibilities for them to investigate, but does not sell Cheftzi a course or promise employment.

They talk about time, costs, safe instruction, physical demands, and the difference between liking a finished chair and doing repeated work on awkward ones.

Cheftzi wishes the conversation will return to the lovely corner seam.

It does not.

On the way out, she thanks the owner.

"You haven't put me off," she says.

"That isn't my job. Neither is making it sound easier than it is."





Chapter 4: The Answer She Keeps Polishing

Her friend visits that afternoon.

"Did you ask about the office course?"

"Not yet."

"You should. Places might fill."

Cheftzi checks the published deadline with the course provider rather than letting a friend's guess become a closing date. There is time to ask questions. No place is reserved just because she reads a form.

Then she tells her friend about the workshop.

"Furniture?"

"Upholstery."

The friend looks toward the repaired chair.

"You want to fix chairs?"

Cheftzi hears the sentence as a judgment. Her friend might mean it as a question. It still touches the exact place Cheftzi wants covered.

"It's really design and restoration," she says.





Some of the work is. Some of it is removing old material, doing repetitive preparation, and making an ordinary dining seat usable. She begins giving the work a grander name before deciding what she actually wants to learn.

The friend waits.

"Do you have a program?"

"I'm checking."

"I wouldn't like the shop part."

Cheftzi nearly argues that the shop is wonderful. She has visited twice. She cannot promise wonderful on its behalf.

"You don't have to," she says.

The sentence sounds cold. She adds, "I haven't decided yet. I want to understand the actual work."

Her friend nods.

"Fair enough. Can we still look at the office description together? I don't understand one requirement."

They do. Cheftzi can help read it without enrolling to keep the friendship tidy.





Chapter 5: Two Unromantic Pages

Cheftzi and Mama arrange a conversation with an adviser from the office course. They ask what the teaching covers, which requirements apply, what the costs include, and what the provider can and cannot claim about employment. They do not rely on a glossy picture of a smiling woman beside a desk.

The adviser explains the actual program. Cheftzi notices that some of the subjects interest her more than she expects. Organization is satisfying. Clear records are useful. She cannot honestly call the office course dull just to make upholstery the brave choice.

At home, she sets two pages beside each other.

The first contains verified information about the office program and the questions still open. The second contains workshop notes and training questions they still need to resolve.

One page is fuller. That means it is better researched so far, not necessarily better suited.

Mama asks what Cheftzi wants from the next step.

"To know what I actually like doing. Not just looking at."





"Then the next step might be finding out, rather than enrolling in either today."

Cheftzi has been treating the decision as a contest between impressive and honest. The papers suggest another contest: which information is missing, and how can they obtain it responsibly?

She writes a third short page.

What would I need to see before deciding?





Chapter 6: The Work She Does Not Touch

The shop owner offers an arranged observation period, with Mama aware of the plan. It is not a work shift, not unpaid production, not a training qualification, and not permission to handle equipment. The adults clarify the time, supervision, safe visitor area, and what Cheftzi can ask about before she arrives.

For part of it, the owner discusses a customer estimate. Cheftzi does not view private customer records. She hears a general explanation of what the estimate must account for.

Later, she watches from the approved place while the owner describes the broad stages of a repair. No one gives her tools to test whether she is naturally talented.

The shop is less charming for a full afternoon than it is for a short visit. There is waiting. There are interruptions. One job cannot proceed because a needed item has not arrived.

Cheftzi feels bored for ten minutes.

Then she feels alarmed at the boredom.

Surely this is the work she is supposed to like honestly. If she gets bored, perhaps the cake-table answer is right after all.





She asks about that at the end.

"You don't need to enjoy every minute to be interested," the owner says. "You do need to understand which parts repeat and whether you want to learn them. One visit won't answer everything."

Cheftzi writes down the repeated parts, not only the clever repair.





Chapter 7: A Plain Answer

At another class gathering, her friend asks what she has decided.

"I'm still investigating the training. Upholstery is the work I'm most interested in."

The plain word stays on the table.

One girl asks whether that means curtains. Another asks whether she will open a shop.

Cheftzi answers what she knows.

"I haven't chosen a course or a business. I've observed a workshop and made a list of what I need to find out."

"You aren't signing up yet?"

"Not yet."

She dislikes how unfinished the answer sounds. She does not replace it with a future shop name.

Her friend tells the group she is continuing with the office course application after checking the requirement. Cheftzi feels a brief sting at the neatness of that answer.

She can admire a plan without borrowing it.





Later, the friend asks about the repaired chair.

"Does the seam really hold?"

"It does."

They go look at it. Cheftzi shows the corner without giving a demonstration or pretending she repaired it herself.





Chapter 8: Not Yet a Sign Above a Door

The office form remains in Cheftzi's folder. She keeps it because some information may still be useful, not because her friend needs her to change her mind.

The workshop notes are beside it. Several questions remain open. Mama will help her verify actual training and safety requirements, and they will discuss money before any commitment.

Cheftzi does not put a trade title on her bedroom door. She is not a shop owner by liking a seam. She is also not foolish for wanting work with a plain name.

On Sunday, Mama finally moves the repaired chair into the dining room.

"Best place?" she asks.

Cheftzi sits on it after Mama sets it down.

"Better light here."

The chair is not a symbol of a guaranteed future. It is a repaired chair in a room that needs one.

Cheftzi opens her notebook to the unanswered training questions.





She puts a star beside the next source to contact with Mama.

