



The Afternoon He Won't Enjoy

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: Probably Dull

"It will probably be dull," Dov says.

The paper mill is exactly where he has wanted to go since he saw a drawing of its great waterwheel.

His father has arranged a short visit to the old mill's public exhibit. No working machinery, no wandering near water. They will stay in the visitor rooms with the guide.

Dov has three questions ready.

He tells his brother it will probably be dull anyway.

"Then why are you going?"

Dov folds the little visitor leaflet.

"Something to do."

If he sounds excited and the afternoon goes wrong, everyone will know how badly he wants it.

If he expects nothing, there will be nothing to lose.

Chapter 2: The Smaller Picture

Last winter, a different outing was canceled because Tatty was ill. Dov had been counting the days.



He remembers the last breakfast, with his coat ready and his shoes on before Tatty could tell him.

He doesn't blame Tatty for being ill. He doesn't want to feel that disappointed again either.

So now he makes the mill smaller whenever anybody mentions it.

The waterwheel is probably not very big. The guide will probably speak too long. Perhaps all the rooms smell dusty.

His brother stops asking about it.

Dov also stops looking at the leaflet. One part shows the very wheel he wants to see. Wanting is the part he is trying to put away.

Chapter 3: Not Interested

The evening before, Tatty sits beside him.

"Do you still want tomorrow's visit?"

Dov looks up.

"Yes."

"You haven't sounded interested. We can leave it if you'd prefer."

"Don't leave it."

That comes out so quickly Tatty sets down the book he is holding.

Dov explains.



"If I expect it to be bad, I won't mind if it is."

Tatty listens.

"Does saying that stop you wanting the wheel?"

"No."

"What does it stop?"

Dov thinks about the leaflet and his brother's questions.

"Talking about it."

"And what do you know about tomorrow?"

They check the actual plan together. The exhibit expects them. Tatty can take him. If something changes, Tatty will tell him. They don't know every room will be interesting.

Dov opens the leaflet.

His questions are still folded inside.

Chapter 4: The Door That Is Closed

At the mill, the guide explains that one visitor room is closed because a window needs repair.

Dov feels the old urge to say he knew it would be a waste.

The closed room holds a model of the drying racks. He wants to see those too.



"Will we miss that model?" he asks.

"Today, yes. I can show you a picture of it in the main room."

Dov is disappointed.

He doesn't like being disappointed after all his careful practice at not caring.

Tatty asks whether he still wants to see the open exhibit.

Dov says yes.

They follow the guide. The great wheel is visible through a protected viewing window from the dry visitor floor.

It is much bigger than the little drawing.

Dov forgets to make his face unimpressed.

Chapter 5: A Real Question

The guide shows how the old mill uses moving water. Dov asks one of his three questions.

Then he asks another he only thinks of while looking at the model gears.

He stays where the guide tells him. Tatty stands beside him. Neither needs to go near a machine for Dov to find something worth asking.

The drawing of the drying racks isn't the same as the model. Dov says so to Tatty afterward.

"No," Tatty agrees.



"The wheel was good."

"You looked interested."

Dov smiles.

"I was."

Two answers can describe the same visit. He doesn't need to make the wheel dull to prove he predicted the closed room.

Chapter 6: What He Tells His Brother

At home, his brother asks whether it is as boring as expected.

"I said that because I didn't want to be disappointed," Dov admits.

"Were you?"

"About one room. Not about the wheel."

He opens the leaflet and points to the drawing.

His brother has a question about how the wheel turns. Dov explains the part the guide showed him and says he doesn't know the rest.

Later, he thinks about another outing he might like. He can ask Tatty about it without pretending he has no preference.

If the plan changes, he may still feel upset. Mama and Tatty can help him with that feeling when it arrives.



Tonight, the next outing is only an idea. He doesn't have to spoil it in advance.

The leaflet lies open on the table, where a boy who wants to see a waterwheel is allowed to look at one.