

The Corridor That Was Empty



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 6-9



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Chapter 1: A ball for later

The blue ball waits in Rebbi's cupboard until the boys go outside.

Sruly has permission to carry it to the yard with Rebbi. In the school corridor, the rule is walking. The ball stays held, not bounced or thrown.

Sruly stands by the classroom door. His friend Motti waits behind him.

The corridor looks empty all the way to the far door.

"I could get there first," Sruly says.

He starts running with the ball against his chest.

"Stop and walk back to me," Rebbi calls at once.

Sruly stops. He returns to the teacher.

Nobody has fallen. Nobody has been bumped. The ball is still in his arms.

Chapter 2: Nothing happened

"I didn't hit anyone," Sruly says.

"You ran in the corridor."

"But there wasn't anybody."

Rebbi takes the ball while they talk. Motti waits at the classroom door.

Sruly looks toward the far end again. He has reached only partway, but the whole passage still looks clear.



He thinks the empty space ought to be on his side.

"Nothing happened," he says once more.

"I'm glad nobody was hurt," Rebbi answers. "That doesn't change the walking rule."

Sruly doesn't understand why a rule needs to stay after he has shown that this time went well.

Chapter 3: A door opens

As they stand beside the classroom, the office door opens.

Mr. Weiss steps out with a folder. He walks toward the stairs without any hurry.

A minute earlier, Sruly couldn't see him. Mr. Weiss was working inside the office, where he belonged.

"He wasn't there before," Sruly says.

"He was inside," Rebbi answers. "Doors open. People come out."

Then two older boys arrive at the other end of the corridor with their teacher. They are walking to a lesson.

Nobody has arranged a surprise for Sruly. This is simply a school where people use different rooms.

The corridor has changed while he has been talking.



Chapter 4: Not a test to repeat

Sruly watches the older boys pass.

"I could wait until it's empty again."

Rebbi shakes his head.

"Walking is the rule here, even when you can't see another person. You don't need to run again to test what might happen."

Sruly looks down at his shoes.

The first run did not hit anyone. That is still true. It also did not tell him who might come through a door during the next run.

"So nothing happening doesn't mean I can do it again?"

"Right. You can follow the rule before anyone gets hurt."

Rebbi gives him the ball to hold when they are ready to walk together.

Chapter 5: The trip to the yard

They walk along the corridor with Motti beside them.

Sruly holds the ball. He doesn't bounce it to make the walking more interesting.

At the far door, Rebbi leads them into the permitted play area and checks that it is ready. Outside play has its own rules. Reaching the yard isn't permission to throw at anybody he chooses.



Rebbi sets up the boys' game.

Sruly waits for his turn. Then he sends the ball toward the target as instructed.

Motti's throw lands closer. Sruly asks for another turn when the round reaches him.

The corridor rule hasn't taken away the whole game. It has put the journey and the game in different places.

Chapter 6: The story at home

At home, Sruly tells Tatty about the blue ball.

"Rebbi stopped me running. I said nobody got hit."

"Was that true?"

"Yes. But it didn't mean running was allowed."

Tatty listens while Sruly explains the office door.

He doesn't ask Sruly to imagine somebody badly injured. The actual school rule and what happened are enough to discuss.

Sruly still likes getting somewhere quickly. He can tell the truth about that wish without making the wish a reason to ignore the rule.



Chapter 7: Empty again

The next day, Rebbi asks Sruly to carry an attendance folder to the office along the usual permitted route.

The corridor is empty again.

Sruly takes the folder in both hands and walks. At the office door, he waits and knocks as he has been taught.

Mr. Weiss receives it.

On the return, nobody steps through a doorway. Nothing surprising happens.

Sruly has followed the rule on an ordinary quiet trip. He doesn't need a narrow escape to make the walking worthwhile.

At the classroom, Motti asks whether the office is far away.

"Not very," Sruly says. "I walked."