

The Suggestion From That Desk



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 12-15



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Chapter 1: A perfectly good problem

The label hides the bird.

Rivka moves it left. Now it hides the nest. She moves it right, where it covers the corner of the branch.

The illustration is part of the Bais Yaakov classroom display. Mrs. Klein asks each pair to make one panel about a bird's home, with a picture, three checked facts and a title large enough to read from the doorway.

Rivka draws. Her partner, Chani, checks the facts against the teacher's approved book. Both girls agree the label must go somewhere.

From the next desk, Deena looks over.

"Could you put the title below the picture instead?"

Rivka presses the label down at the top.

"No."

Chani lifts one end before it sticks.

"Why not?"

"It belongs at the top."

There is no such instruction on the board. Rivka knows that.

Chapter 2: The person behind the idea

Rivka has reasons not to like Deena very much.



Deena interrupts at lunch. She sometimes answers a question asked of somebody else. Last week, while Rivka was telling a story, Deena began a longer one before Rivka finished.

Rivka asked her not to do that. Deena said sorry, then did it again two days later.

Mrs. Klein helps with the repeated interruptions. Rivka is allowed to ask for room to finish speaking. She isn't required to make Deena her closest friend.

But Deena's idea about the label arrives without an interruption. The girls are working in neighboring groups, and suggestions are allowed.

Rivka wishes the idea came from somebody else.

"I like it at the top," she tells Chani.

"Me too. But it covers the bird."

That is an inconvenient answer from a partner who isn't Deena.

Chapter 3: A less useful choice

Rivka draws a smaller bird on a fresh scrap.

It can fit beneath the title. It also makes the nest almost too small to see.

Chani looks at the two drawings.

"The first one is clearer."

"This one has room."



"For the title. Not the picture."

Rivka wants to mention how Deena behaves at lunch. That would be a real thing to discuss, but it wouldn't make the nest larger on this scrap.

She puts the new drawing down.

Mrs. Klein comes to check their progress. Her grey tichel covers her hair fully.

"What are you trying to fit?"

Rivka shows the bird, the nest and the title.

"A suggestion is to put it below," Chani says.

"Deena's suggestion," Rivka adds.

Mrs. Klein looks at the panel, not at Deena.

Chapter 4: One question at a time

"Would that position make the display clearer?" Mrs. Klein asks.

Rivka keeps her hands beside the paper.

"Probably."

"Is there another reason it can't go there?"

Rivka describes wanting a title above the picture. Then she says the quieter reason.

"I don't want to use her idea."



Chani watches her carefully.

Mrs. Klein asks whether using a useful suggestion means Rivka must be pleased about the lunch interruptions.

"It might look as if everything is fine."

"To whom?"

Rivka doesn't know. Mostly, it would look that way to her.

"We can keep helping you with interruptions," Mrs. Klein says. "The panel can still use a good position for its title. Those are different questions."

The teacher doesn't tell Rivka to like Deena. She doesn't tell her to ignore the idea's usefulness either.

Chapter 5: The lower strip

Rivka and Chani try the title below the picture without fastening anything yet.

From the doorway, they can read it. The bird and nest are both visible. The facts fit beside the branch.

Rivka can't find a fault she would notice if Chani had suggested the same thing.

They show Mrs. Klein before using the approved glue.

At the next desk, Deena is drawing a roof above a swallow's nest.

"The title fits below," Rivka says. "Thanks for suggesting it."



Deena looks up.

"Oh. Good."

That is the whole exchange. No friendship ceremony begins. Rivka doesn't add a compliment about Deena's roof merely to soften the small thank-you.

Chani holds the panel while Rivka fastens the strip.

Chapter 6: The unfinished sentence

At lunch the next day, Rivka explains a funny part of the book she is reading.

Deena begins speaking before the ending.

Rivka feels the familiar annoyance. For a moment, she imagines peeling the title off the panel. It is a strange urge: make the display worse so she can prove she is still upset.

She leaves the panel where it is.

"I haven't finished," she says. "Please let me get to the end."

Their teacher is nearby and helps make room when the interruption continues. Rivka tells the rest of the story. Later, she speaks privately with Mrs. Klein about the pattern.

Taking the suggestion doesn't remove her limit. Keeping the limit doesn't require taking the suggestion back.



Chapter 7: What a visitor sees

During the classroom display, a visiting teacher asks how the girls decide on the layout.

Chani explains the facts beside the branch. Rivka points to the title.

"We tried it above first, but it hid the bird. Deena suggested putting it below. That worked."

She says the contribution accurately. She doesn't describe lunch to a visitor asking about a panel.

Afterward, Deena offers another suggestion: blue lettering around the border.

Rivka looks at the available space. The panel already has the clear title and three readable facts.

"We are leaving the border plain," she says.

This time, she knows why.