

JUMP

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I do not know *who* I am; I do not know *what* I am.

Chapter 1 - Jeremy

This time it happened without much warning. I had to *jump* quickly in Quincy Market, at a shoe store. The switch was much faster than usual. I didn't have much time to choose.

It's been about a minute since the transition. I feel dizzy and a little off balance as I stand among shoppers who are focused on a man lying on the floor. Damian Murdoch had lost consciousness and collapsed. His wife, Carrie, is frantic and screaming for someone to call 9-1-1. There's chaos in the store.

I feel something in my back pocket; it must be a wallet. The distraction gives me time to quickly take it out and look through its contents. There's a Massachusetts driver's license in Jeremy Roberts' name with a home address shown as Heath Street in Brookline. There are some credit cards, cash, a few business cards, and an emergency contact card with a name, Jennifer Roberts, her phone number, and an e-mail address containing the name Jen.

The ambulance arrives in minutes, followed by the police. The woman standing beside me must be Jennifer, or maybe she calls herself Jen. Before the switch, she and Jeremy were talking to each other in a way that couples do in stores. I had sensed a profound grief within them.

The paramedics ask for everyone to clear the area as they tend to Damian. As he starts to come to, he mumbles something to Carrie, who is bending over beside him, crying. I had loved Carrie deeply. Damian will be okay.

Jennifer whispers to me, "Come on, let's go home."

I hesitate. I don't want to leave Carrie. I won't see her again. Jennifer takes my numb hand and starts to lead me away. I stumble, almost falling to the floor as I experience initial coordination problems. Jennifer tries to grab me as my hand slips from hers. She calls out my name with a gasp. I regain my balance and reach for her hand.

"What's the matter?" she asks.

"I'm not sure, I feel a little dizzy." In actual fact, much of my body has no feeling. As usual, for the first few moments of a transition, the neural messages being exchanged between my body and brain are not fully engaged.

"Do you want to sit down for a bit?"

“No, it’s ok, I don’t think it’s anything, Jen. Maybe that guy falling to the floor got me a little woozy.” Hopefully, she is Jennifer.

“Why are you calling me *Jen*?” She seems surprised.

I have nothing. I often have nothing at the beginning. I’ve learned that silence gets filled with information. Silence is powerful. Moments pass. Jennifer gives me more information.

“You haven’t called me Jen for years. What’s with you?” It is her.

I remain silent. Jennifer continues. “Are you okay? Do you think another migraine’s coming on?”

The opportunity. “Yes.”

“I better drive home,” she says firmly.

I’m relieved. At this point, I wouldn’t know where to go. She puts her arm around my waist, trying to give me support as we start to slowly walk out of the store. With each step, the neural pathways are connecting and I’m beginning to feel sensations in my limbs.

“I think I’m okay now,” I say as we reach the street. I concentrate on each step as I awkwardly place one foot in front of the other, trying to keep my balance.

I take her arm from my waist and hang on to her hand as she walks slightly ahead of me. As she proceeds, she looks back at me struggling to walk in a straight line.

“Jeremy, what’s wrong? You look drunk!”

“I’m just a little woozy. Let me sit down for a bit.”

We go to the curb where I sit. As the moments pass, I can feel sensations growing throughout my body. A few more minutes and it will be complete.

“The paramedics are still in the store. Do you want them to have a look at you?”

“No, I’m sure I’ll be all right in a minute or so. It’s probably just this migraine thing coming on. Let’s give it a couple of minutes. If I’m still dizzy, we’ll go see them.”

My new voice is deeper than Damian’s. It sounds odd as I talk. I clear my throat to hear the sound again.

After a couple of minutes, I feel complete and stand up. “I’m alright, let’s go to the car.”

Jennifer leads the way. I study her as she walks ahead. She’s a beautiful woman, five feet seven or so, high cheekbones, straight black hair formed into a ponytail threaded through the back of a pink Nike ball cap. Her aqua blue eyes,

tanned skin, blue denim shorts, pink tank top, and immaculate white sneakers with the pink swoosh is a look that you'd see on a Nike commercial. She must be in her early forties, a very feminine woman in perfect shape.

I watch her every move and take in all of the cues that she's unknowingly sending as she walks. To me, these signals are giant billboards indicating intention, feeling, and even thought. The way someone walks, how they move their feet, swing their arms, position their head, and even move their eyes can clearly reveal their level of comfort or stress, confidence, and their emotional state. My success has depended on my ability to read these nonverbal cues.

At first glance, Jennifer seems to walk like a confident woman. However, with a closer look, I can detect that she's unsettled. Her overall posture, expressions, hesitations, and the way she touches her hair, suggest that something emotionally significant is happening within her. Is it related to the grief feelings I felt in both her and Jeremy before the transition?

Jennifer walks toward a white Mercedes SL, presses one of the keys, and the trunk lid pops open. She places the Nine West bag inside and closes the trunk. With another press of the key, the doors unlock. As I struggle to coordinate my limbs to get into the passenger seat, she asks, "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yeah, my back's a little stiff, that's all."

"Can I put the top down?"

I nod. She presses a button and the trunk cover whirs to attention, gradually lifting open. The roof begins its folding dance and gently places itself into the front part of the trunk. The cover silently closes with no hint that the entire metal roof is hidden within. I watch as Jennifer adjusts the mirrors and seat. In one smooth movement, she belts herself in and starts the car with the push of a button. Her hands are beautifully manicured—clear polish on firm nails. She moves the car confidently away from the curb, narrowly missing the bumper of the Honda in front of us.

As she drives away, she says, "That poor man. I wonder whether he had a heart attack. Why didn't anyone give him CPR?"

"I think I saw him breathing; it didn't look like he needed CPR." I knew exactly what had happened. "I'm sure he'll be okay."

"How can you say that? It could have been a stroke!"

I respond with a shrug.

"It's interesting that it took no time for the police to arrive. I wish *she* had gotten such quick attention," Jennifer says with a sarcastic tone.

Not sure what she means by that. I stay silent.

I close my eyes and place my hand on my forehead, feigning a migraine as Jennifer drives us home. I take this time to think about my new life. What lies before me? How quickly will I figure out my objective? Do Jennifer and Jeremy love each other? Do they have children? What's the nature of the grief that I had felt within them? These are all pieces of the puzzle that I will have to figure out to help them navigate through their despair.

I do not know my name; I do not know how old I am. I have memories of thousands of people from countries and cultures around the world, but I can't remember anything about me. As I often do at the beginning of a transition, I start asking the questions that I can never answer. How did all of this start? Who am I? Where is home? Where is my family? Do I even have a family? It's all a puzzle and I am no closer to the answer than I ever was.

The one thing I do know is that today, and for some time to come, I am Jeremy Roberts. This morning, the tingling in my hands was the sign that the process was beginning. As always, I was not sure when or where it would occur, but I knew I had to act quickly. I needed to get to a busy place with many people. I asked Carrie if she wanted to go with me to the market.

For some reason, this time I felt that I wouldn't have much control over timing. As soon as we arrived, it began. Carrie wanted to go to the shoe store. I followed her in. As she was paying for her sandals, the tingling—which feels like a very mild electrical shock that starts in my hands—encompassed my entire body. It can happen very quickly.

During a transition, for a brief period of time, I feel compassion for everyone physically near me. The feeling takes over my mind and body as if I'm in a thousand places at the same time. This morning I could clearly hear all the noise, conversations, and even whispers around me. I could see everything in my surroundings and smell the scents of Quincy Market: the food, perfume, body odor, garbage, Boston harbor, and even the rotting spills on the sidewalk. I took it all in.

I sensed all of the emotion—all of the pain, happiness, frustration, and sadness—within the people at the market on this Saturday morning

in June. My transitions last for seconds only, yet it always seems much longer to me. It ends when I land. Jeremy and Jennifer were nearby. I felt a deep sense of sorrow and grief within them. I had to make a decision. I targeted Jeremy because of his anguish. It had to be him.

Then it happened. I jumped from Damian to Jeremy.

The sunlight strobesc through the trees as Jennifer drives up Huntington Avenue. Billowing cotton clouds form in the summer's blue sky. It's a beautiful day for the beginning of this new life experience. Jennifer's cell phone rings. She picks it up to her ear.

"Hi, sweetie. Hold on for a sec. Let me put in my earpiece."

She puts in the Bluetooth ear bud and continues the conversation. "Where are you? Is Jeff with you? Are you coming home for dinner?"

It sounds like she's talking to one of her children. As she continues the conversation, I discreetly reach for Jeremy's wallet. I look through the contents once again, searching for more clues. I find his business card—*Roberts & Levin Consulting Company, Jeremy Roberts, CPA, President*—with phone number, address, e-mail and website. Jeremy is an accountant.

As I look through the wallet, I notice my hands—*Jeremy's* hands. It's strange when first looking at my hands in a new host. They always look and feel odd at the beginning. I can sense them as if they're mine, but they look like someone else's. They're larger, a little rougher, and seem older than Damian's. As I stare at them, I'm having difficulty controlling their movements while going through the contents of the wallet. Manipulating the papers and cards is awkward. If I look away and allow my hands to feel through the wallet, my dexterity returns. It will take me some time to coordinate what I see and how I feel in this new body.

I take out a photo from the inside pocket of the wallet; a frayed, worn picture of four people sitting on a sofa next to a Christmas tree. It looks like a younger Jennifer and Jeremy with two children. I put down the sun visor and look into the mirror. It feels like someone is looking at me but it's my image being reflected back. Jeremy's piercing blue eyes are staring at me. Even now, after so many transitions, it still feels unreal to look at a new 'me' in a mirror. I put back the visor.

I focus on that family photo again. The two little girls are maybe ages eight

and ten. I assume they are Jeremy and Jennifer's daughters. There are two other pictures in the wallet, one of a girl in her early twenties, wearing a cap and gown. She looks very much like a grown-up version of the younger girl in the family photo. She's very pretty, with blonde hair and a huge smile. She looks so proud.

The other picture is of another young woman, perhaps in her mid-twenties, dark hair, standing in front of what looks like Niagara Falls. There's some resemblance to the older child in the Christmas family picture. She looks remarkably like Jennifer and quite beautiful as well. On the back, there's some writing: *I love you, Daddy. Thanks for all of your help. - Jessie.*

Jennifer continues her conversation as I pretend to organize the wallet. I listen carefully to her words. There's some tension in how she's speaking. Her intonations, mannerisms, and how her thumb plays with her wedding band confirms that she's talking to one of her children; one of the girls in the pictures?

I take a chance. "Is that Jessie?"

She glances over at me with a surprised look and narrowed eyes that seem to be screaming. "It's Sandy, *Sandy*, for God's sake!"

Now that was a mistake. I should have known better. All these years have taught me to wait and take in much more information before offering anything other than a neutral statement. Something is terribly wrong. Why such a negative response? I look away from Jennifer, but listen intently over the noise of the wind blowing through my hair.

Jennifer lowers her voice and says, "He asked if you were Jessie. Can you believe it? I know, I know, but still..."

Jennifer stops talking about me while continuing the conversation. It's hard to hear, but I think they're talking about plans for the weekend—shopping and various topics. She's not offering me any more clues.

Through my closed eyes, the bright pulsating sun creates flashes of light, and abstract images race through my mind. I think of Carrie. I didn't know it at the time, but last night would be our last time together. It was late, maybe one in the morning. We were in bed talking, sipping wine, and listening to an Al Jareau CD. After making love, we were still locked onto each other, our legs intertwined. With her head on my chest, Carrie looked into my eyes and whispered, "I have never loved you more." We kissed and fell asleep.

I will miss her dearly. A wave of heavy sadness and apprehension washes over me as I find myself awkwardly sitting next to this new stranger, Jennifer, in the body of her husband Jeremy, whom I know nothing about.

After Jennifer finishes her conversation with Sandy, she turns to me and says, “What the hell were you thinking?”

I don’t respond. I wait for more information. None comes forth. We are quiet for the rest of the drive to the house. I hold my hand to my head, hoping that my error will be perceived as a result of my supposed migraine. I feel tension with Jennifer. I don’t know enough yet to begin any conversation with her.

I do not have Jeremy’s memories or his expectations, worries, realities, dreams, or ambitions. I do not know any of the people in his life, their history, or their connection to him. I know nothing about his work or his finances.

For now though, I am him. I will be living in his world for some time. Although my life as Jeremy is now an empty canvas, his family, friends, and colleagues will soon paint it with colorful and intricate images. Their conversations, nonverbal cues, and even their touch will reveal their expectations of me. And from that, I will learn much about him.

I will have to learn all about his world quickly. Jennifer’s interaction with me is already giving me clues and is kick-starting my quest for information. When I arrive at their home, there will be a wealth of information about Jeremy and Jennifer’s lives that I will gather from their files, computers, and other clues that I will discover.

It will be my starting point towards understanding his life, and discovering my objective.

Chapter 2 - Home

Jennifer drives down Heath Street, in a beautifully treed area that contrasts with the high-density neighborhoods that we drove through from Boston. We pass entrances to large estates and barely visible mansions in this wealthy enclave. We turn onto a long driveway of a contemporary home set back from the street. Perfectly placed old oak trees line the crushed-stone drive. Curiously, there is a yellow ribbon on the first oak tree. I look at it as we go by.

The driveway splits into a circular turnaround passing in front of the entrance. A sculpture of a child with water cascading over a protecting umbrella is at the center of a well-manicured lawn. The fountain creates relaxing white noise as we approach. We stop at the parking area on the left side of the entrance. Jennifer parks next to a black Lexus.

I look at the construction of the stone and brick building and presume it has replaced an older structure. The mature oaks give away the property's history. The new building seems to have been erected in the footprint of the old home. It fits the setting perfectly.

As we get out of the car, Jennifer coolly says, "I want to finish the conversation that we started this morning." She seems emotionless and dry, like she's reading the news.

"Sure, but I'd like to lie down for a few minutes first." I'm hoping to buy some time to look around the house.

"Remember to take your Maxalt, I'll meet you on the patio in a half hour. We'll have a light lunch before my appointments this afternoon." I nod.

We enter through the large oak double front door, which opens onto an impressive foyer. I quickly glance around to get my bearings. Light-colored birch floors lead to a majestic staircase just ahead on the left. I take in all of the images and create a mental map of the home. A central floor plan—living room to the left, dining room to the right, the kitchen must be just off to the right, behind the dining room. I can see a den just ahead beyond the staircase. There must be a study or library to the left of the den. The house is eight to ten thousand square feet, vintage 1990s, high-end.

There are probably five bedrooms upstairs with a large master bedroom over-

looking the backyard. If there's a bedroom for each of Jeremy and Jennifer's two daughters, I suspect that one of the remaining rooms will be an office. Hopefully that's where I'll find the family's files. If not, they'll be in the master bedroom, in the study next to the den downstairs, or possibly in the basement. Files are key. I have to find them to learn more about my new life.

The house is immaculate, and understated yet elegant. A Latina woman greets us.

"Good morning, Señor Roberts."

"Morning," I respond, then wait to take my cue from Jennifer.

Jennifer asks, "Carmella, could you please make us a salad with a scoop of tuna?"

"Si," Carmella responds.

I look at Jennifer. "I'm going to lie down upstairs. See you in a half hour."

She walks off toward the kitchen with no response. She isn't happy. I suspect that the upcoming conversation will reveal what's bothering her. I hope that I'm able to find something during my preliminary search to help me through that discussion.

I walk upstairs and instinctively know where I'm going. I enter the large master bedroom to the right of the stairs. It's painted a muted green with a dark blue accent wall that's a backdrop to the king-size four-poster bed. It's a very large room, and it too is immaculate.

There are night tables on either side of the bed, a large plasma TV on the opposite wall, and a matching lounge chair and sofa in the corner of the room, positioned to view the TV. A large blue-green modern art painting hangs above the bed. I walk through the glass doorway to the master en suite. The ultra-modern bathroom leads to a balcony overlooking a large backyard, which has a pool and tennis court. I can see the balcony stretching along the back of the house.

I leave the bathroom and go back into the bedroom. An open door between the TV and bathroom leads me to a huge wardrobe room, which I suspect was a converted bedroom. The back wall has floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors leading out to the back balcony. The room is painted to match the bedroom and consists of built-in closet doors that are tinted in the same colors as the corresponding walls but in a high-gloss finish. The doors respond to a slight push of the finger. They open smoothly and silently, as if by remote control.

I push one of the green doors and it reveals drawers of women's underwear, hosiery, and scarves. As I search for documents, I open and close all of the closet doors, which conceal many drawers, hanging clothes, and cupboards. There

must be fifteen green closet doors. There are fewer doors in the blue area, and they open to reveal men's clothes—Jeremy's clothes.

There's a makeup area in the corner of the room, complete with a large white desk, upholstered chair, and a mirror framed by round white light bulbs, Hollywood style. A set of stand-up mirrors next to the desk are set at oblique angles to view all sides of one's body, similar to what you would find in a clothing store.

Positioning myself in front of the stand-up mirrors, I take a long look at my new image and study my features. Jeremy is about six feet tall and fit—a good-looking man with a solid jaw, and a full head of light brown hair that is graying at the temples, combed slightly off to the side, with a part. His looks remind me of President Kennedy. I touch my face and hair. I smile, stretching my lips to see this new image respond. Like always, it feels awkward at the beginning.

I move an arm and reposition my body. I watch the image in the mirror move. It looks like someone else in the mirror is copying me. Eventually I will see me in the mirror, but now I'm seeing a stranger. Right now, I feel like I'm having an out-of-body experience—which, of course, is exactly what's happening. It will take time for me to feel one with my new body.

I turn away from the mirror and move on.

I go back to the closets and open more doors, looking for files, notebooks, papers, or anything that I can use for information. I find nothing, but that doesn't surprise me. Jennifer and Jeremy's home is obsessively neat. Everything seems to have its place, and this room is clearly designated wardrobe only.

I leave the dressing room through a door that leads me back to the hallway. A quick glance around reveals a bedroom next to the dressing room. Across the hall, there appears to be two more rooms on either side of a bathroom.

I enter the bedroom next door, which is obviously a girl's room, painted in pink with purple linens. There's an adjoining bathroom, which, like the bedroom, is very messy. Sliding glass doors on the far wall also open onto that long connecting balcony. I scan the contents of the room, taking in as much as I can. I see a B.A. diploma from Boston University in the name of Sandy Roberts, hanging on a wall. There are a few unopened letters on the desk addressed to Sandy. Pictures of friends are randomly scattered on the walls.

At the top and stretching along the length of one wall, there's a red Boston University banner that reads, "Go BU!" There's also a single large photo just over the bed. It's the same image that I have in my wallet of Jessie in front of the falls. A large yellow ribbon is taped to the window.

I leave Sandy's room and cross the hall to one of the rooms on either side of the bathroom. The yellow room is immaculate, as if no one sleeps there. The queen bed is covered with a green patterned comforter and loaded with neatly placed colorful pillows and stuffed animals. Awards and diplomas in Jessie Roberts's name are on the walls of the bedroom. A Cornell University banner with large lettering saying, "Go BIG!" is hanging along the top of one wall, just like the banner in Sandy's room. I smile. There must be quite a school competition between the girls.

There are pictures of high school and college kids perfectly aligned on the walls, as well as many pictures of dogs and cats. There's a large National Geographic poster of a male lion hanging over the bed. It is sitting under a tree on a grassy area, with its large, beautiful green eyes staring into the camera, as if posing.

There are two long shelves mounted on the wall between the entrance and the bathroom door. Each shelf is dedicated to a different sport. On the top shelf are ten or fifteen trophies of different sizes with little metal images of people in karate positions. Most say first place, and a few say second. Just below that shelf are two certificates in Jessie's name: Karate Black Belt, First Dan and Karate Black Belt, Second Dan. The second shelf is full of similar trophies for fencing. Pictures under that shelf show someone, I presume Jessie, in various fencing positions, wearing a protective helmet with a full-face screen cover.

I feel odd in this room; something's just not right. I experience a deep sense of sadness. I look around and can't get a handle on what's causing my unease. I leave the room feeling quite uncomfortable. I know I will soon find out why.

As I had expected, the room on the other side of the bathroom is an office. It's very neat. There's a large mahogany desk with two drawers on either side of a leather chair. A silver MacBook laptop computer is sitting in the center of the desk. A notebook-sized calendar is lying just to the right of the laptop. The only other items on the desk are a green glass and bronze banker's light and a wireless phone in its dock. I open the drawers of the desk. They are neat and contain some pens, paper clips, and odds and ends; nothing of significance.

There's a comfortable reading area in the corner of the room, with a leather armchair and a brass stand-up reading light. Modern artwork adorns the grey wall behind the desk, as does a CPA certificate. Jeremy's degree in economics, from Boston University, issued in 1984, and his MBA degree from Columbia Business School, 1987, are hanging on the opposite wall. Beside them, there's an award of recognition in Jeremy's name, dated 2009, issued by the Big Broth-

ers and Sisters of Massachusetts, acknowledging Jeremy's "hard work and dedication" to the organization.

As I open the closet, I hear Jennifer calling me. "Jeremy, did you take your Maxalt yet?"

"No," I call down. "Just about to."

No response.

I see a large four-drawer file cabinet in the closet and a standing safe on the floor—a treasure trove of information. I open the top drawer of the file cabinet and take out the first file. They're all alphabetized. Automobile Association of America is the first one. I scan its contents, and, within seconds, it's memorized.

Over the years, I have jumped thousands of times and explored the minds of people from all over the world. I'm continually astonished at the distinctive nature of an individual brain, which is as unique as a fingerprint. I have come to understand that our sensations, experiences, and thoughts are unique to each individual. The perception of color for instance, is a subjective experience, different from one person to the next. The color of red does not look the same to everyone. Although we associate a particular visual image as red, the actual sensation of red that we experience is uniquely different for each person.

Our sensation of smell is also subjective. The smell of a rose can be very sweet to one but less sweet or even pungent to another. The perception of the sound of music can be so dissimilar between people, that when I've heard the same song in the minds of more than one person, the song can sound completely different. I can identify the song by its melody, words, and beat, but the actual sensation that it creates in my mind is entirely unique to the brain of my host.

This diversity of neural processing may explain why people are so different in terms of their approach to the world. What is beautiful and emotional to one may not create the same impact to another. These differences may explain why some people are artistic while others are athletic, why some can learn languages easily while others cannot.

Mind jumping has given me a gift. I am able to use my experience dealing with the diverse brain patterns and neurological processing that

I have experienced to create an optimum way of using my host's brain.

Examples of this are the encyclopedic and photographic memory capabilities that I have developed over the years. My encyclopedic memory allows me to remember every detail and image that I have ever seen or experienced. My photographic memory enables me to scan and store images holistically, and only when I want to see the details of an image, are those details processed by my brain. It's my version of data compression. It's like looking at a downtown street scene, taking a snapshot of it in my mind, and then, at a later time, bringing up that image to look for the smallest details.

I can scan documents extraordinarily fast—many times faster than an electronic scanner. I'm able to take in and process information on a written page at a glance, and when I quickly scroll down a website on a computer, I can take in all of the information instantly in real time, without pausing. I'm able to cross-reference information from my scans immediately. These abilities enable me to quickly absorb details of my host's life and ultimately help me achieve my objective.

Over the next five minutes I scan the first file cabinet drawer—files A through F—thoroughly. As I usually do after a scan, I sit down silently for the same amount of time to permanently store the information I've just viewed into my active memory. During this meditative state, my mind randomly explores and reviews all of the images and data that I've scanned. To finish off, I usually start to explore my memory with one bit of data to ensure that I have successfully transferred the images. This time I choose a random date to see where my memories of Jeremy take me.

February 15, 2011. Using information from his American Express Platinum card statements, I can now recall that on that date, Jeremy purchased lunch at Charley's Crab in Palm Beach, Florida. I cross-reference this information with any file I've scanned that refers to that Palm Beach trip.

Connected images from the scan immediately become available. Jeremy flew business class on Delta Flight 2123 from Boston to Palm Beach International at 6:40 AM on February 11, and returned on February 17, leaving PBI at 8:05 AM on Delta Flight 1184. He rented a luxury car from Avis, picking it up on his

arrival and returning it to PBI an hour and a half before the scheduled departure.

There are many other charges made during this time period shown on his AMEX statement, including his hotel stay at the Four Seasons Resort in Palm Beach, where he paid \$999 a night for a premier ocean-view room. In addition to a number of room service and mini-bar charges, there were two charges for in-room movie rentals. The value of the rentals suggests that one of those movies was X-rated. It looks like Jennifer was with him on this trip, as the airline tickets were in his and her names and the hotel reservation was booked for two people.

I don't have time to go through the other files. It's been fifteen or twenty minutes and I have to get down to Jennifer before she finds me in the study rather than lying down taking care of my 'migraine'. Before I head downstairs, I scan through the calendar on the desk.