**The Cardboard Desk**

In a guest room in a little house there was a bed and a desk. That’s all there was as there was no room for anything else. The bed was always teasing the desk because he thought he was better. He was a king-sized bed, with wooden slats and a smart wooden headboard and footboard. He was clothed in a goose down duvet and a creamy white cotton bedspread.

“You don’t deserve to sit next to me,” the bed said contemptuously to the desk. “Really, you are nothing but a cardboard desk. A cardboard desk!” he repeated with a splutter. “Preposterous!”

It was true that the desk wasn’t made of wood like the bed, or like other desks for that matter. He was made of cardboard and had been issued to the man by his work during the Covid-19 lockdown, so that the man could set up his computer and work from home.

“When the lockdown is over,” the bed warned the desk, “The man and woman won’t want you anymore. They will find a nice wooden desk, a *real* desk, to take your space. And you will be packed down and put out with the recycling.”

At this the desk grew sad. He had seen the way the woman looked at him with a critical eye. He had heard the couple discussing ‘permanent’ desks. But the desk kept quiet. After all, despite being made of cardboard, he was a strong desk, and the perfect size for the corner between the bed and the window. He had even heard a rumour, spread by the door perhaps as it conversed with the other doors along the hallway, that there was a famous cathedral made of cardboard in a city far away. Something inside the desk made him think, “We’ll see.”

By and by, the lockdown ended and workplaces opened up again. The man worked from the office most days at a fancy wooden desk with buttons that raised it to the perfect height. Sometimes he worked from home at the desk in the guest room. On these days, the woman came and brought him a cup of tea. She looked approvingly at the bed and smoothed down the ruffles in the bedspread. She frowned at the desk. She showed the man pictures of new desks on her phone and the man nodded.

Still the desk remained. One autumn day, it must have been Saturday or Sunday, the man and woman rushed about the house straightening some things out and tidying other things away. The woman vacuumed under the bed, which she never normally did. She fluffed up the bed’s pillows and dusted along its headboard and footboard. She called out to the man, “This desk will have to go.”

The next thing the desk knew, the man had picked him up and he was being carried out of the room. He could hear the bed sniggering as he was conveyed through the air.

*Maybe the bed was right*, thought the desk. The man set him down on the hard stone floor in the garage and closed the door. The desk sat in the semi-darkness and waited. He waited for several days, all the time fearful of the man returning and folding him up for recycling. Finally, on the fifth or sixth day - the desk was starting to lose count, the door opened and the man stepped in. The man picked up the desk, but to the desk’s great relief, the man simply carried him back to the guest room and set him down in the same place as before.

The bed looked outraged.

The woman was passing by in the hallway. She caught sight of the desk and stopped. “I thought we were getting a new desk,” she said to the man.

“This cardboard desk is something special,” the man replied. “It is so light to carry. It makes it so easy to set up the room when our parents come to stay. I say we keep it.”

The woman was glad. She didn’t like fussing around moving furniture, just as much as she didn’t like vacuuming in hard-to-reach places. And she didn’t really mind that the desk was made of cardboard.

“Yes, let’s keep it,” she agreed. “It has been a good desk after all.”

From that day on, the desk took pride of place next to the bed in the guest room.

And the bed never teased the desk again.