



## In the Doghouse

Dave is down in the workshop, sitting at the printing bench, working his way through one of the impressions on his current woodblock print. It is a Sunday morning in May, and the workshop door is wide open to let the spring air fill the room. He hears a faint sound in the distance, from somewhere up the long flight of stairs, and his eyebrows lift in surprise. A moment later, the sound is repeated, slightly closer, and then again and again as Boots the Cat makes her way slowly down the steps one by one, her tiny bell making a little jingle as she lands on each step. She comes into the room.

**Dave:** Boots-chan! All the way down those stairs! I didn't think you would be coming down here any more!

**Boots:** Not dead yet, Dave. Not dead yet ...

**Dave:** That's plain to see! But when you dropped by my room upstairs two days ago for the first time in more than two months, I sure was happy to see you; I had started to worry that you perhaps couldn't walk any more.

**Boots:** It wasn't that; it was just that I don't have many opportunities to leave the house these days. You know I can't jump up onto the window sill any more, so my only chance to get out is when they leave the door open for a while. Two days ago was a holiday, so the family was at home all day, and it was also warm, so it was a rare chance for me. And we're now in Golden Week, so I might perhaps be able to get out a bit over the next few days ... we'll see.

Boots climbs up onto the bench area, with a little 'boost' from Dave, who quickly clears a space on the blue cushion that is always ready for her, underneath the platform where he keeps the printing paper.

**Dave:** You know, it was certainly nice to see you again the other day, but I'm sorry that you wouldn't let me take your picture.

**Boots:** No way. Let's not get into that again. You have plenty of photos of me taken in previous years; you don't need any more.

**Dave:** But ...

**Boots:** No. Look, what do I have to say to make you understand? Do you remember that print series you made a few years ago, the one with the design of the 'elderly' lady in it?

**Dave:** Yes of course. That was an excellent print!

**Boots:** That may be so, but do you remember the reaction from many of your collectors? Your *female* collectors?

**Dave:** Well, yes ... I do have to admit that some of them felt that I should have stuck with images of ... um ... younger women.

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**Boots:** So learn your lesson please. No more photos. Period.

**Dave:** I understand. But actually ... I should perhaps tell you that your cushion there is in view of ...

**Boots:** Dave, please. I would just like to relax for a while. I'm kind of tired after coming down all those stairs. You know, one day years from now you may really come to regret buying this house, what with all these stairs.

**Dave:** That may be true; at the moment my theory is that they are helping to keep me in shape!

There is a lull in their conversation. Dave continues to work at the printing, content to have his lady friend sitting there on the cushion by his side.



Boots herself watches the printing for a while, and her attention then wanders a bit. She idly looks out the window, where neighbour Tamura-san is turning over the soil in his garden as part of his spring chores.

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But she then looks upwards, and notices something ...

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**Boots:** Dave, what's that thing up there on the stand? That thing with the little red light, that seems to be looking down at us?

**Dave:** Um ... well ... that's ... er ...

**Boots:** It looks like a camera!

**Dave:** I tried to tell you - it's my webcam. It's there so that friends and collectors overseas can watch me while I work ...

Boots says nothing, but instantly gets to her feet, and prepares to leave.

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**Dave:** Boots, please! It's just low resolution video. It's not taking high quality pictures ...

But Boots is not listening. She jumps down from the printing platform and heads straight for the door. We then hear the reverse sequence of tinkling sounds, as she makes her way slowly up the long staircase, step by step. A minute later we can hear nothing.

Dave continues working. There isn't much else he can do.

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But he now has his fingers crossed, hoping that the next three days of the Golden Week holiday period will remain springlike and warm. And he wonders what he can do to get out of the doghouse!

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