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## The Hotel Bed

by Candida Lloyd

Jack and Flo chased our suitcases round the carousel and then heaved them on to the trolley, climbing on after them and I pushed the unsteady load through customs. There was no sign of Dan among the crowd waiting to collect passengers. Instead there was a man in uniform holding a sign saying “Williams” on it.

“How does he know our name?” said Flo, “where’s Dad?”

“Oh, he’s probably been held up at a rehearsal,” I replied.

The chauffeur led us outside to a blast of heat and a silver limousine waiting at the curb.

“Woahhhh!” said Jack, eyes wide

“Really, this isn’t necessary...” I began, but the driver was already loading our luggage into the trunk.

We journeyed through the city streets to an apartment-hotel, all gazing prickly eyed at the commuters and the early evening sun reflecting off the high-rise buildings. The smell of street food and cigarettes wafted in through the air-conditioning.

At the entrance the children spun around in the glass, revolving doors laughing. There were palm trees in pots and lots of reflective surfaces. Jack and Flo tried to skid on the shiny floor which made their trainers squeak, and people looked round. A bellboy carried our luggage into the elevator where Flo started to press all the illuminated buttons numbered up to 60.

“It’s gonna be a long ride up,” the bellboy muttered.

We were shown in to our spacious, beige apartment and I gave the young man a tip, uncomfortable with the transaction. The interior was strangely silent as huge sound-proofed windows shielded the apartment from the din of the city outside. Thick, pale carpet covered the floors and heavy drapes hung at the windows. On the living room table was a bouquet of flowers and a basket of muffins wrapped up in cellophane. A card read "Welcome to the Williams family"

"This is a present for us?" Flo asked.

"Well, Dad's agent will charge us for it so it's not really a gift," I said, but help yourself."

The children took a muffin each and explored the apartment spreading chocolate crumbs all over the floor. In the gigantic twin bedroom, they argued over who would have the double bed nearest the television as I went to see my room. There were a few signs that my husband had been there; his shoes kicked off and a jacket on the back of a chair.

I was about to lie down on the enormous mattress but then stopped. There were indentations on the pillows and the covers had been pulled back and straightened, not just on the side nearest the door, which was the one my husband always favoured, but on both sides. After 14 years of sharing a bed with him I knew that he was a sound sleeper and never ventured across to my side. This bed was also huge, so there was no way Dan would have needed to stretch out across the whole thing.