

Brack and Deckel

“Me Brack, he Deckel,” announced the hamster previously known as Teddy Parker. “You heard of us,” he added confidently.

“Skilled carpenters,” explained the hamster also known as Patty Perkins. “No woodworking job too tough.”

“You mean Black and Decker, don’t you?” asked Mrs D. doubtfully.

Teddy Parker coughed politely and Patty Perkins sniggered behind his paw. “Not at all, skinny one,” said Teddy. “You thinking of some smaller outfit. We the originals: Brack and Deckel.”

Mrs D. decided not to pursue the argument. She smiled encouragingly. “Well, I asked Gordon Bleu to recommend someone to do some carpentry for me - ”

“Yes, yes, that right,” interrupted Patty. “We that someone.”

“Someones,” corrected Teddy, shaking his head knowledgeably. “You someone, me someone else. We two someones.”

Patty pondered this in silence for a few moments. He did some arithmetic on his toes, brow ruffled. Then he stopped, closed his eyes and began to groom the fur on his back. Teddy continued. “We someones do all kind of woodwork. Drill holes, saw woods. Indoors, outdoors.”

Patty paused and looked up. “We do outdoors?” he asked his partner in a worried tone.

“Hamsters do any doors,” replied Teddy Parker confidently. “Hamsters best at - what that called? - topiary.”

“Oh, really!” said Mrs D. without thinking. “That’s my favourite of all. I like topiary bushes.”

Teddy continued. “Topiary. And that other outdoors thing - tree-surgery.”

Mrs D. was startled. “You mean ... you trim trees?” she asked.

Teddy Parker detected the tone of disbelief. “Trees, certainly,” he confirmed. “We no one-trick hamsters.”

“But,” said Mrs D. tentatively, “trees are a bit too big for you, surely? I mean, aren’t - um, well - beavers better at that sort of thing?”

Teddy raised himself to his full height. “Beavers? You want woodworking done?” he wanted to know. “Or you want DIY?”

“Right,” chipped in Patty, “DIY - drill it yourself!”

“Do it, do it, B and Q it!” hummed Teddy.

“Yeah - Bodge it and then Quit!”

The two hamsters grinned and gave each other high-fives. At length, Patty resumed his grooming.

“So,” asked Teddy magnanimously, “what woodwork you want done? You want that table lower?”

“No, no, that table is just right,” said Mrs D. hurriedly.

“Very high table,” urged Teddy. “Difficult to see over top. Hamsters shorten tables dead easy. One corner at a time. Leave your tea laid out. No spills, no fuss.”

Mrs D. continued to shake her head. Teddy Parker sighed. “What about that chair? - it got four legs, we do very good line in three leg chairs.”

“No, four legs is fine,” said Mrs D.

“Three legs better sometimes,” argued Teddy hopefully.

“But two legs bad,” noted Patty, shaking his head.

“Not chair, not table. H’m,” said Teddy. He peered about. “What seem to be problem, then?”

“The kitchen door,” said Mrs D. “It squeaks all the time - probably needs some planing back. Just a little bit, though.”

“Squeaky door?” asked Patty. “That just up our street. We do squeaky doors all the time.”

“That right,” agreed Teddy comfortably. “Show us door, we sort it for you.”

Mrs D. obliged by opening and shutting the door a couple of times. Each time it came close to closing, the wood at the bottom caught in the frame and gave out a little squeak.

“Ah,” nodded Teddy wisely. “That squeaky door you got there.”

“Very squeaky,” said Patty. He approached the door cautiously and looked it up and down with a practised eye. The he shook his head and took breath in with a hiss. “Never seen worse. Needs skilled workforce. This a one nighter,” he said.

“Me think so,” agreed Teddy.

“A one nighter?” asked Mrs D.

“Just so,” said Teddy Parker.

“Me think so too,” said Patty Perkins supportively.

“We all agreed then,” said Teddy cheerily. “Now hamsters have sleep. Quotation-work very tiring.” And without further ado, the two hamsters steered themselves behind the sofa and curled up for a snooze. Mrs D. was left to ponder the wisdom of hiring professional help.

At around two in the morning, the house was quiet. Quiet, apart from the sound of gnawing. Teddy and Patty were trimming the kitchen door. The noise went on until about six o’clock. And then it stopped.

At seven, Mrs D. went to look at the kitchen door. It was not a pretty sight: where once the door’s bottom corner had been more or less square, now it was more like a half-formed tennis-ball. Bulbous. Her heart sank. She tried the door. It closed without the hint of a squeak. There was, however, a large gap between door and frame. Daylight came through. And a draught.

“Nice work, heh?” said a voice behind her. Teddy Parker gazed admiringly at the door. “Patty Perkins done good job!”

“I think maybe too good a job,” stated Mrs D.

“You hear that, Patty?” squeaked Teddy excitedly. “Patty, you awake? You hear that? You done too good job! Skinny human likes your topiary!”

“Nice one!” acknowledged Patty modestly.