

6.6 Text 1: Tidy the room that time forgot and you might clean up

This extract is from a newspaper article written by the journalist Rowan Pelling, first published in *The Telegraph* in 2014.

To say I am pathologically¹ untidy does not begin to do justice to the thick soup of chaos in which I swim. When I found I could no longer access my study for towers of bills, books and shoe-boxes, I simply closed the door and moved my centre of operations to the loft.

Sometimes, I'd hear a faint rustling from behind the old room's door and would idly wonder if a long-forgotten houseguest lay trapped under a tsunami² of newspaper. I'd never have investigated, but my older son turns 10 this week and has pleaded for a bedroom large enough for bunks and sleepovers. Nor could I ignore the symbolism of Easter: a moment for renewal and so a little spring-cleaning. It was time to break into the room, armed with bin-bags, J-cloths and a bamboo pole for gently dislodging spiders.

My resolve was strengthened when I took delivery of 10 large flat-pack cardboard boxes. There's something akin to the pleasure of origami³ in picking up a two-dimensional rectangle of card and folding it into the kind of clean-lined, clutter-munching receptacle that would make an archivist⁴ purr. My husband, who was orderly to the point of obsession in his bachelor days, was instantly on my assembly line, soon to be joined by both sons, demanding containers for superheroes and Lego. Who knew, outside the world of cats, you could create so much rapture in a simple cardboard box?

It's extraordinary what you may find in the room time forgot. I unearthed the snorkelling set my sister gave me after a holiday in Barbados – we thought we'd go back, we never did. A large battered boot box contained my wedding dress, still muddied on the hem. As I drew it out, I remembered how once, long ago, I had kept cash in its folds for safekeeping. There was a gentle thud on the floor as a manila⁵ envelope hit the floor; inside was £280 in £20 notes.

Glossary

¹pathologically: obsessively

²tsunami: tidal wave

³origami: paper-folding craft

⁴archivist: person who is in charge of archives or historic files

⁵manila: made of strong brown paper