Two cardboard boxes, big enough to sit in, hide inside.

Birt and Etho take them out each day, climb up Sudden Hill and sit in them.

Sometimes they’re kings, soldiers, astronauts. Sometimes they’re pirates sailing wild seas. But always, always they’re Big Friends.

Their sailing, running, leaping, flying, their chatter and giggles, him and Etho, their silences and watching small movements in the valley and feeling big as Giant Kings.

Birt loves their two-by-two rhythm.

And then one Monday (it’s cramping cold) they meet another box-carrier who wants to join them. This tiny boy’s called Shu. He’s watched Birt and Etho every day and finally found a big enough box and the courage to ask if he can play too.

Etho smiles and says, “Sure!” And so the three sit in their boxes, watch one kestrel and two lost clouds.

Sometimes they’re dragon-slayers, side-by-side house dwellers and skyscraper dancers. But Birt feels strange.

One night, Birt smashes his box, stamps on it, rips it to bits. His dad shouts something flat from the front room about being quiet and that’s enough!

Birt stops going up Sudden Hill.

Etho and Shu call round sometimes. Birt avoids them. Instead he stays at home mostly drawing pictures of two boxes, side-by-side. But he misses Etho. He misses their cardboard castles on Sudden Hill.

One day, a knock on the door. He hears Shu’s voice. “We’ve made you something. Please come out!” All Birt can see as he peaks from the curtain is a box.

But it’s much, much more than a box.

It’s got bright, waving things attached to it like huge kites. Its got colours. It’s got sound. It’s got, it’s got – WHEELS!

The HUGE box on wheels (that they call Mr ClimbFierce) is hauled up Sudden Hill. It’s amazing! An incredible Monster Creature Box Thing.

It’s a supersonic rocket blaster! A triple jet transformer! A sparkling glitter king!

It’s even got boxes inside, one with biscuits and one with lemonade. Birt likes Shu. Shu is kind. Shu is funny. Shu is daring and brave.

Birt loves their time together, their Etho-Shu-Birt-iness. He loves their three-by-three-rhythm.

It’s new. And it’s good.