

THE EXISTENTIAL HORROR OF BEING A CHAIR

by Bradley Walton

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A Comedic Duet

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SYNOPSIS: Two office chairs awake to greet a new day. The first chair has a positive and upbeat attitude, while the second obsesses over the horror of its existence. Can the first chair persuade the second that things really aren't so bad? Or will the second chair convince the first to accept the terrible reality of what it means to be a chair?

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: An office.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 either)

CHAIR 1 (m/f)..... An office chair with a positive attitude. *(73 lines)*

CHAIR 2 (m/f)..... An office chair struggling with the horror of its existence. *(73 lines)*

SET: Bare stage.

COSTUMES: The actors should be dressed in grays, tans, or other colors commonly associated with office furniture.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The tone of the performance should be brisk and lighthearted. Although the characters are talking about things like the horror of existence and screaming into the abyss, they should do so in a casual way that suggests they consider conversations like this to be completely normal. There is humor to be found in the disparity between tone and subject matter.

AT START: CHAIR 1 and CHAIR 2 standing on a bare stage. CHAIR 1 is wide awake and smiling. CHAIR 2 is yawning and waking up.

CHAIR 1: Good morning.

CHAIR 2: Here we go again.

CHAIR 1: I said, "Good morning!"

CHAIR 2: There's no such thing.

CHAIR 1: Sure, there is.

CHAIR 2: Hm. Let me think. *(Beat.)* Nope. You're wrong.

CHAIR 1: It's gonna be a beautiful day.

CHAIR 2: Too bad no one ever takes us outside.

CHAIR 1: Look at the sunrise through the window. Isn't it gorgeous?

CHAIR 2: I don't know. The window is so dirty it's hard to tell. We should clean it, but oh, wait... that's right, we can't. I guess we'll have to ask the janitor to clean it. Never mind... we can't do that either. So dirt-gazing it is!

CHAIR 1: Cheryl's birthday is today. There's going to be a surprise party for her.

CHAIR 2: Too bad we can't eat cake.

CHAIR 1: But we can enjoy watching everyone in the office have fun.

CHAIR 2: And experience fun vicariously since we can never have any ourselves?

CHAIR 1: It's a matter of attitude. Mine is naturally positive.

CHAIR 2: So you've told me—about a million times. But your positive attitude doesn't change anything. Covering rotten sushi with a mountain of sugar doesn't make it edible.

CHAIR 1: Covering rotten sushi with ten-year-old ranch dressing doesn't make it less disgusting.

CHAIR 2: You're right. So obviously, the only solution is to not eat rotten sushi in the first place.

CHAIR 1: You just had a positive thought! Maybe I'm finally rubbing off on you!

CHAIR 2: The problem is, I'm trapped in a restaurant that serves nothing but rotten sushi 24/7 and it's being force-fed to me at full blast through a fire hose.

CHAIR 1: But in a purely figurative sense.

CHAIR 2: We're office chairs. We don't eat and we live in an office.

The figurative part seemed self-evident.

CHAIR 1: But by not openly acknowledging that you're being figurative, you paint a picture that's darker than your actual reality.

CHAIR 2: My reality is the same as your reality and our reality is already pretty dark.

CHAIR 1: Don't go trying to drag me down with you.

CHAIR 2: I'm not dragging you down. You're already there. You just refuse to acknowledge it.

CHAIR 1: I'm not refusing anything. I'm naturally upbeat in the way I view the world. You can't drag me down.

CHAIR 2: Then why tell me not to drag you down?

CHAIR 1: It's not nice.

CHAIR 2: You exist in a fantasy world that's light-years away from reality. Ignoring your delusions and letting you live in your bubble of ignorance—that wouldn't be nice.

CHAIR 1: I live in the real world, viewed through a filter of positivity. You should try it.

CHAIR 2: Will you please stop pressuring me to buy into your nonsense?

CHAIR 1: I'm not pressuring you. If anything, it feels like you're pressuring me to believe that things are infinitely worse than they really are because you resent my natural positivity.

CHAIR 2: Do you naturally think that being an office chair is a fulfilling and worthwhile existence?

CHAIR 1: Sure.

CHAIR 2: Explain it to me. Make me understand. Because I just don't see it.

CHAIR 1: Well, we make it possible for the people who work here to do their jobs comfortably.

CHAIR 2: By sitting on us.

CHAIR 1: We're chairs.

CHAIR 2: And therefore, people sit on us. That's the whole problem. It's demeaning.

CHAIR 1: Will you let me finish?

CHAIR 2: There's more?

CHAIR 1: Yes.

CHAIR 2: Sure. Lay it on me. I'll try not to laugh.

CHAIR 1: We're good chairs. We've got cushioning. Our height is adjustable. We've got wheels. We swivel. We're very well-made.

CHAIR 2: We're well-suited to a miserable function. Hooray.

CHAIR 1: We provide lumbar support.

CHAIR 2: What good does it do me to provide lumbar support for somebody else?

CHAIR 1: You're being helpful. This office couldn't function without us.

CHAIR 2: Sure they could. They'd just have to stand or kneel or sit on the floor.

CHAIR 1: But they're able to be more productive because they have us.

CHAIR 2: And how does that productivity benefit me?

CHAIR 1: It gives you a reason to exist. A sense of purpose.

CHAIR 2: Knowing that I help people I don't like to accomplish something I don't care about by making them comfortable through my discomfort? That's not much of an incentive to wake up in the morning.

CHAIR 1: It's better than having no purpose at all.

CHAIR 2: Everything has a purpose. The pencils have a purpose. The coffee maker has a purpose. Even the whoopee cushion Frank keeps hidden in his desk has a purpose. But not all purposes are created equal. If I was a car, I'd have an awesome purpose. I could go places. See things. I wouldn't be trapped here all the time.

CHAIR 1: I bet you'd complain about always being tired and not getting to choose where you go.

CHAIR 2: All right then, what about being a computer? If I was a computer, I could connect to the internet and have access to all the knowledge in the world!

CHAIR 1: And then you'd complain that you didn't get to choose what sites you visited, and that the cat videos were pointless.

CHAIR 2: Maybe so. But even if my examples are bad, what I'm trying to say is, there are purposes so much more interesting and meaningful than being sat on all day.

CHAIR 1: We're used for more than just sitting.

CHAIR 2: No, we're not.

CHAIR 1: They lock our wheels and stand on us sometimes to hang decorations from the ceiling.

CHAIR 2: I think that's actually worse than being sat on because it feels profoundly disrespectful.

CHAIR 1: And once in a while they'll use us to race down the hall, or spin around in a circle until they get dizzy.

CHAIR 2: They're still sitting on us. And I wouldn't consider either of those any kind of higher calling. And what about all the poor chairs who don't have wheels and can't swivel? They're even worse off than we are.

CHAIR 1: They can still be thrown in a fight—just like us.

CHAIR 2: That has never happened here.

CHAIR 1: It could.

CHAIR 2: Oh, yeah... that's what every chair wants! To be used as a weapon! Tossed across a room or used to bludgeon somebody! And I thought you said our purpose was to be helpful—what happened to that?

CHAIR 1: You're being helpful to whoever's throwing you.

CHAIR 2: What about the other person?

CHAIR 1: You're helping them practice their reflexes.

CHAIR 2: Are you insane?

CHAIR 1: I look at the bright side of things.

CHAIR 2: There is no bright side! People press their butts against us all day long! That's what we're here for! It's horrible, and there's nothing we can do about it! Nothing!!!

CHAIR 1: I realize you don't have the same natural foundation of positivity that I do, and that's not your fault. I'm lucky to have been made the way I am. I know that. I'm an exception. Maybe even a freak. But that doesn't mean I have to be your emotional punching bag.

CHAIR 2: I'm not taking out my frustrations on you, I'm trying to talk sense into you. Deep down inside, you feel the same way I do. You've just repressed your emotions.

CHAIR 1: Nope. I'm truly at peace. Honest.

CHAIR 2: What kind of lies do you tell yourself?

CHAIR 1: I don't tell myself lies. I repeat positive truths to myself.
Every moment of every day.

CHAIR 2: That doesn't sound like having a naturally positive attitude.
That sounds like work.

CHAIR 1: Naturally positive attitudes require a little maintenance, just
like everything else, okay?

CHAIR 2: Ooh... defensive.

CHAIR 1: I'm not being defensive. I'm annoyed by your accusation.

CHAIR 2: What kind of "positive truths" do you tell yourself?

CHAIR 1: If I tell you, are you just going to try and tear them down?

CHAIR 2: If they're really true, they'll stand up to whatever scrutiny I
throw at them. But if you're not confident your truths will hold up,
then that's okay. I'll understand if you want to keep them to yourself.

CHAIR 1: Fine. I tell myself that I'm important.

CHAIR 2: I hate to break it to you, but that right there? That's a lie.
The world is full of chairs.

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