

The Chair

Arthur thought the universe was smashed the day Dominic came into existence as that could be the only explanation to how impossibly deranged the latter was. In return, Dominic told Arthur that he was a bloody Yank and his opinions, by default, should not and did not matter. Their loud verbal altercations led to complaints being filed against them from their neighbours in all directions and their landlady threatening to evict them. It was written into the laws of nature like the rotation of the planets and the tides of the sea that these two entities would not play nice.

Arthur swore if Dominic wasn't the first person who answered to his ad on Craigslist, he wouldn't step five feet of the guy. However, events had a funny way of unfolding themselves, and two days after their initial phone call, Dominic showed up to Arthur's tiny rented apartment with nothing but his share of the rent and a duffle bag.

At first, Arthur was convinced it was Dominic's wardrobe that sparked his negative first impression. Dominic wore nothing but obnoxiously coloured matching Adidas activewear, but no matter how many jacket and pants combo Arthur's counted (17), the one Dominic's wearing would always be stained. Dominic, nevertheless, seemed to exist for the sole purpose of challenging whatever was left of Arthur's sanity.

Despite Dominic being nothing but a menace to his sanity, Arthur had no choice because of a silly piece of paper called a rental contract. By the time the contract ended (two years), Arthur's will to live would be so miniscule that it might as well be just another stain on Dominic's filthy fire-engine red tracksuit. Being in constant stress was not an option, thus the Our-Get-Along-Jar.

It was actually Cameron's idea, the jar. Cameron was a 'mutually-known-person' of both Arthur and Dominic's. Arthur defined his relationship with Dominic as 'roommates', perhaps 'acquaintances' at best, and it didn't sit right with him that he and Dominic had anything in common, much less a *friend*.

Cameron claimed that inspiration had struck one fine afternoon when she was nestled on their sofa snacking on some trail mix out of Arthur's pretentious mason jar while Arthur and Dominic busied themselves debating over the legitimacy of Christopher Nolan's directorial track record. Somewhere between "Christopher Nolan is a God who *have not* and *will not* make a bad movie, *ever*." and "*-but Dunkirk*.", she ran out of trail mix. All she was left with was an empty glass jar the height of her forearm. Cameron scratched her head. In front of her, the verbal jabs only grew louder.

"If it weren't for all the CGI, *Inception* would've been a flop," Dominic's nostrils flared as he hisses, "*and you know it*."

"YOU STOP RIGHT THERE," Arthur roared, jabbing a finger into Dominic's chest and digging deeper with every word. "INCEPTION IS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON AND-"

"Uh-oh, guys!" Cameron intervened, fearing that the situation would soon was escalate with Dominic dead in some ditch in Tennessee without legs. Arthur and Dominic, too wrapped up in their squabble, paid her no mind.

"Hey guys!" She tried again, no success.

"HEY YOU PANINI HEADS, LISTEN UP!"

That did it. Arthur and Dominic paused mid-sentence and turned to give her the stink eye, their cheeks flushed.

“Now that I finally have your attention, may I introduce you to the the answer to world peace, the dove with the olive branch, the jar to end all jars,” she stopped for dramatic effect, “The Our-Get-Along-Jar!”

Cameron beamed, thrusting the newly modified mason jar forward for Arthur and Dominic to see. Surely enough, there on the thick piece of masking tape scrawled in Cameron’s architect’s print: OUR GET ALONG JAR :).

Cameron continued to showcase her masterpiece. “Whenever you *don’t* get along, both of you’ll have to toss a dollar into the jar. And who knows, since the ‘whenever’ is more like ‘always’, someday that money can go into funding for a trip to somewhere exotic for once you guys *do* start getting along,” she shrugged and added menacingly, “probably in your seventies.”

Arthur crossed his arms and turned away from Dominic in favour of channeling his displeasure at Cameron at full force. “This is stupid,” he said.

“The Yank’s right,” Dominic nodded in agreement. “There is no way on God’s good earth for me to throw my money in that bloody jar, you twat.”

Three months after the birth of the jar, Cameron visited the boys again. Instead of acknowledging the feuding pair, she went straight to the jar for a dollar.

"Do you mind if I take this?" she asked. "I want candy. As a last meal. Before I kill myself because *Brooklyn 99* might get cancelled and then I'd actually have nothing to live for."

Arthur shrugged. "Go ahead," he said, distracted, because his ethics paper was more important than anything Cameron had to say. "Dom'll be around to fill it up again in no time, I'm sure."

Dom was caterwauling to Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up" in the shower after absolutely trashing the kitchen for his first cup of tea of the day. When he emerged from the bathroom, Arthur grimaced and rolled his eyes at Cameron to alert her of some annoying presence.

"Dom, your apartment needs some new — something a little more... permanent for the space," said Cameron out of the blue.

Dominic subtly scooted left on his makeshift seat built of boxes filled with British classics he amassed over the years, sadly, two inches to the left closer to Arthur.

"Just in case if you've forgotten," Arthur looked up from his phone and squinted at Cameron, and glared at Dominic's invasion of his space. "It's a *shared* living space, Cameron, not your senior art project. And Dom, move away from me this instant!"

Because it was just off downtown, Arthur and Dominic's flat was small and dim. What could they do? They were balling on a budget. They had piles of books and DVDs instead of a coffee table, which played right into their favour because they could rearrange armfuls of Penguin hardbacks and The Smiths albums under their ankles when sitting at opposite ends of the sofa. Far, *far* removed from each other. A proper coffee table could *never*.

“The flat’s... fine,” said Dominic, too preoccupied with the spaghetti bolognese in front of him to grant them his full attention. “But we could maybe use a proper coffee table. My Jane Austens are starting to smell like msg and feet.”

The blatant disrespect.

Shifting his displeasure to Dominic, the corners of Arthur’s mouth dipped down to an impossible low. He watched as the meat sauce swished around on Dominic’s plate, droplets of it arching for the baby blue of his tracksuit. Disrespect or not, Dominic was right; they needed proper furniture. After days of haggling and arguing, they compromised on a chair, an Ikea chair that was either *a mistake* as Dom aptly and disdainfully snorted or *an item we would all look back and laugh about one day*. Whatever it was, it was all they could afford. Then came the daunting task of assembling it.

“Done.”

“Like hell it’s done,” challenged Arthur, juggling a handful of screws dangerously close to Dominic’s face, metallic clinks punctuating his every word. “I have enough screws sitting in my left hand to reenact that scene in Home Alone.”

“Well, it’s assembled, so I don’t know what more you want,” Dominic sighed, tossing away the assembly instructions, which he had been using as a sweat rag.

“I want to be able to sit on the Knutstorp without getting stabbed by screws.”

“Well, be my guest,” Dominic grumbled exasperatedly, waving out a hand to gesture at the chair.

“You first, darling” Arthur insisted.

Dominic hesitated for a moment, eyes darting nervously to the screws rattling ominously in Arthur’s palm. “Fine!” he snapped after a moment. The chair gave a tentative creak as Dominic slowly, carefully lowered his weight onto the seat. He paused for a moment, making sure that he was steady before blossoming into a smile. “See? No problem.”

“Lift up your legs.”

“What?” Dominic gawked, a sheen layer of sweat building up at the base of his neck.

“You’re supporting your weight with your legs,” said Arthur speaking very slowly, as if to his five-year-old nephews. “Lift them up.”

Dominic scoffed, eyes betraying his uncertainty. “Now, why in the world would that sodding matter- Arrghhgfc-”

Arthur burst out laughing looking at the pathetic Dominic sitting squarely on his behind his legs in the air. The flimsy chair was still intact albeit a bit wobbly, but it stood upright regardless.

For a moment, Dominic and Arthur, polar opposites in every possible bearing from the way they dress to the movies they watch, sat in their tiny shared space, one on a pile of dusty hardcovers, the other on the floor as they gazed at the now empty Our-Get-Along jar and simultaneously burst out in mirth.

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