

Chairs

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by Eli Blevis

Two chairs await uncertain demise on my front porch. They were stacked there before the unexpected snow fell—stacked in an apparent embrace in order to signal to others that sitting on them is certain peril. Several of the wooden legs have cracked and despite the tenuous mock assembly illustrated, their service as instruments of repose is no longer a viable enterprise. I eventually put them out by the curb hoping that someone will “free-cycle” them and repair them to be suitable again for their once noble purpose.

The chairs are victims of a computer game—World of Warcraft (WoW). To explain, I rent furnished rooms in my house, mainly to students at the university where I teach, students who play WoW avidly and addictively. In WoW, accomplishment is measured in levels. As the levels of accomplishment rose *chez nous*, so did the girth and motion of the players. As the girth and motion rose, the demands of “being chairs” on my chairs became an unsustainable ideal. They became victims of a technology their designers and artisans never imagined.

It is a loss to all who knew and counted on and supported them—the trees which gave their wood, the foundry which made the lovely hex-key bolts that had held them together, the new graphics card that made WoW play so much fun, the software that made the new graphics card so desirable, the frozen microwave-ready fried chicken strips that made eating minimally interruptive, high-calorie, low-nutrition food the choice source of physical world energy for virtual-world quests.

I did not love my chairs as objects *per se*—their material was the instrumental stuff of a loved ideal. That ideal—the ideal of reducing my eco-footprint by decreasing the square foot per-capita of my home—is the real object of this object obituary. Renting out a room makes the luxury of too much space serve the responsibility of making adequate use of that space. My chairs seemed exactly suited to the purpose of furnishing such a room. They were not precious designer objects. They were not those mesh-back, high-status Herman Miller chairs that made the cover of *ID* magazine quite a few years back. They were not those uncomfortable looking Eames’ chairs much loved by those in the know. They were just chairs that came packaged in sets with matching desks. They were too cheap to have produced a reasonable wage and access to adequate nutrition for their makers, residents of a remote physical world elsewhere.

I did not design the chairs. In my physical world quest for the sustainable, their early demise was designed by their unimagined context of use—by my poor choice about their suitability as a lasting mount for game world combat. Like an Ogre Lord’s triumph over a Blood Elf in a battle of avatars, such is their early retirement a triumph of the unsustainable over my best of intentions. 🖐

