

How to Build a Sofa Fort in Ten Not-So-Easy Steps

by pokeystar

Sometimes, you need instructions.

How to Build a Sofa Fort in Ten Not-So-Easy Steps

Chapter 1 of 1

Sometimes, you need instructions.

□

i. Determine the foundation for your fort. An even, solid surface...such as a dining table or a pair of sofas...makes a good base to build on.

"I don't like you," Hermione says. "But we do have to work together."

She sets her book bag on the table between them. The table bows slightly beneath the bag's weight. Malfoy nods at her comment, lips set in a thin line. He fiddles with the quill he'd dropped moments earlier. The silence stretches between them.

"Look, I don't have time for faffing about."

He clinches the quill tightly, almost breaking it in half. Her snotty tone sets him on edge.

"My plate is pretty full with Exams revision. I imagine yours is too. Being honest will save us both time."

"Honest?" His voice cracks and he clears his throat. "I don't like you either. My side lost and I'm glad we did and I hate your side for it. My life is crap. My father is in prison. My mother won't leave the house. And I'm stuck here, learning about *Muggles*. To prove I'm reformed. As if I'll use any of this outside of school."

He doesn't bother sneering at her. It seems redundant at this point.

"Ninety percent of what they teach us is utter shite."

His jaw is hanging open. She can't help but smile at him.

"When are you going to turn a rat into a tea cup or consult a crystal ball for financial advice? We just need to get through this. We both have something to prove here."

"Both?"

"Yes. That we're capable adults. Employable, productive citizens."

"Oh. That." He pulls out his notes from Muggle Studies. "Ninety percent? Did you conduct a survey?"

She throws a wad of parchment at him. It bounces off his Slytherin tie.

"Strictly informal observation," she says, consulting her homework diary, after casting a hasty *Silencio* at it. "I may have exaggerated the figure a bit."

"More like eighty percent, then, is it?" he widens his eyes comically.

She sticks her tongue out at him. "Perhaps sixty."

"That's quite a margin of error, Granger."

"Shut it, Malfoy, and get to work."

"Yes, dear." Every letter drips sarcasm, but he reads his notes anyway.

□

ii. Position other items of furniture...such as chairs and end tables...around the foundation pieces to provide extra room in the fort.

He sits with his mother, his Aunt Andromeda and Teddy at the Leaving Feast. It's a small group of graduates this year, despite being a combination of two; they're all seated at one long table in the center of the Great Hall, faculty included.

It's difficult to ignore Potter sitting on Teddy's other side, but he manages. It's difficult to ignore his father's absence, due to imprisonment, but he manages. What proves too difficult to ignore is the way Weaselbee is talking to Hermione. The arrogance is almost amusing. Who knew the ginger git had it in him? But the lack of respect has put Draco off his food.

Twice now, his mother has prevented him from speaking or standing up with a light touch to his arm. He wonders why Potter isn't doing anything about it. Until he looks at Hermione again, and sees her shaking her head at her friend.

Finally, the meal is over and a few speeches are made and everyone goes out onto the lawn to say their goodbyes. He pats Teddy on the head and gives Aunt Andie a hug. He kisses his mother on the cheek. He nods at Potter.

He keeps an eye on Hermione, all the while. Longbottom gives her flowers and a clumsy hug. She chats with several professors. Ginny and Luna dance her around, giggling in glee. Then Weaselbee pulls her away to talk and Draco watches her shoulders hunch, her arms cross to hug herself. At long last, Potter intercedes, distracting Weasley. Probably with Quidditch scores.

Hermione catches Draco watching and smiles, walking over.

"I hear you're taking a trip," she says, bumping his shoulder with hers.

"It's my birthday present," he replies with a shrug. "But, really, I need to get out of here for a while. Too many bad memories."

"Perfectly understandable."

They fall silent, gazing at Dumbledore's tomb at the edge of the lake.

"Why do you put up with that?" Draco asks quietly, glancing at Weasley.

"He's a little insecure right now. Auror training isn't going as well as he'd hoped," she says. "He's not like this all the time."

"Seems like it." Draco loosens his tie. He's getting warm in the direct sun. "I remember him saying some pretty awful stuff, before."

"So did you," she replies softly.

He catches Hermione's hand in his. "But I wasn't your friend, then."

□

iii. Drape a large sheet or blanket over the foundation and support pieces to form the roof.

12 November 2000

Dear Draco,

I'm looking at the postcard you sent me from Provence. The fields of lavender sway in the breeze every now and then, and their fragrance fills my nose. I wish I was there. I hope the fields give you the same sense of calm I feel. I saw Pansy at the Leaky Cauldron yesterday. Apparently, she and Greg had dinner with you during their honeymoon last week. Lucky cow. She says that France is good for you. And that your hands are a mess because you're painting so much. Is that true?

You asked what was going on with me. Not much. Revising for finals. Thinking about adding a minor in History to Magical Law. I broke it off with Ronald a week ago. That's why I didn't answer your postcard sooner. I was too busy drowning my sorrows in chocolate and vinegar crisps. Before you recoil in horror...not together.

Let's see, what else is happening? I suppose Pansy has told you, but just in case she hasn't...Blaise Zabini got caught with Oliver Wood in the Puddlemere United shower room last week. Wasn't he supposed to marry Astoria next year? Harry has been assigned to the War Retrieval Squad. Ginny and Molly are frantic with worry, but at least it will be over, once they've found Rabastan Lestrange. Neville will be replacing Pomona Sprout after her retirement next year. Minerva is grooming him for Head of Gryffindor. I wonder what Professor Snape would say to that?

Draco. I heard the news today. And I am very sorry for your loss. Whatever kind of man Lucius Malfoy was, to you he was a father. I know what it means to lose a parent. If you are coming home for the funeral, send me an owl. I want to be there for you, school be damned. Shocked? You mean that much to me.

Your friend,

Hermione

□

iv. Add seat cushions to form the walls between foundation and support pieces. Your fort now has a clear parameter.

It's not exactly a crush, but the important people are there. Important to him, anyway. He knows his father would be offended. Not only at the paltry size of the gathering, but also at the distinct lack of dignitaries and sycophants both. Potter, at least, mumbles his condolences to Mother. That's an ironic something, he supposes. And Hermione is there, directing the house-elves and offering a shoulder to lean on.

The rest of the afternoon passes in a blur.

Too soon, everyone has left and it's time for their solicitor, Mr. Woolbrite, to read Father's will. Draco holds Hermione's hand tightly, almost afraid to hear what Lucius thought of him. He sees Mother is clinging to Aunt Andie too.

"I, Lucius Malfoy, being of sound mind and body, leave the bulk of my estate and holdings to my son, Draco Abraxas Malfoy. I confer upon him the seal of the Malfoys and all that entails," Mr. Woolbrite intones, pausing to sip at his tea.

Draco goes numb. From shock or relief or sheer terror, he's not sure. Hermione is patting his hand, but he can't feel it.

"To my wife Narcissa, I leave an annual income of five thousand Galleons, the Italian property, and domain over Malfoy Manor until such time that Draco is wed."

"I don't ever want it," Draco protests. "Mother can have it indefinitely."

"Hush Draco," admonishes Aunt Andie. "This isn't the time or place for that discussion."

He watches his mother crying into one of his father's handkerchiefs and keeps his mouth shut.

Mr. Woolbrite drones on for some time, distributing personal effects to various individuals to be delivered by house-elves and monies to charities to be apportioned through Gringotts.

Then Mr. Woolbright is finished reading and he takes his leave promptly.

It is done. His father is gone.

Aunt Andie takes his mother to her room and puts her to bed.

He stares into the fire. His father is gone.

He's never cried in front of anyone willingly, excepting a ghost.

Until now.

His body shaking with every sob, he feels Hermione put her arms around him, and they rock together on the sofa in his father study.

□

v. Put out materials to make art, provide inspiration and display the results on the walls of your fort.

"Where are we going?" He asks, feigning indifference.

She's not fooled. Her eyes sparkle with mischief. "You'll see."

He takes her arm and they Apparate to the new art gallery in Diagon Alley.

He tenses and gives her a look from the corner of his eye. "It's Dean Thomas's opening night," she says casually. "We were in Gryffindor together. But we can go somewhere else, if you'd like."

Draco starts to say he'd rather be anywhere else, but his attention is caught by a painting in the gallery window.

It's an abstract interpretation of a forest, seething with menace in a spectrum of blacks, grays, and browns that pulse with an undercurrent of reddish-orange.

"It's called 'Running,'" says Pansy from the doorway. He can see the motion in it now, uneven and choppy. As if he, as the viewer, is running across rough terrain.

Hermione takes his arm again and draws him inside. He moves from painting to painting, utterly absorbed. He notes techniques, takes in the passion and skill. His fingers itch for a brush.

"You paint?" A voice asks, and Draco turns slightly to see a slender dark-skinned man with warm brown eyes standing next to him.

It takes a few moments for Draco to place him. Dean Thomas, the artist.

"I used to," he replies, shaking Dean's hand. "Your work is amazing."

Dean shrugs the complement off. "I'm trying something new."

"The abstracts?"

"Yeah. I do portraits, mainly."

"Landscapes. But I haven't picked up a brush since...well, for several months now."

"I can't imagine not painting," Dean murmurs, gazing blankly into space. "I had a bit of a rough spot where the portraits felt stale."

"A rough spot?" A freckled man asks, while chuckling. He puts his arm around Dean. "You destroyed everything you were working on."

"You remember Seamus?" Dean says by way of introduction. Draco nods. "He's right. I hacked through a bunch of canvases, and when that got old, I started throwing paint at the leftovers."

"And stumbled on this brilliant technique." Seamus states proudly. "Want anything? I'm buying."

Neither Draco or Dean are thirsty, so Seamus wanders off to the bar alone.

"Of course, he's paying when the drinks are free." Dean shakes his head affectionately.

"It is a brilliant technique," Draco says.

"Brilliant or not, it changed my perspective." Dean tilts his head to the side. "And that changed me. Excuse me, Malfoy, the owner is signaling me over."

Draco watches Dean cross the room and start a conversation with a sleek blonde woman. Hermione walks up to him as he turns back to the painting.

"Amazing work, isn't it?" she asks.

"I thought I had to be him," Draco says. "Or be like him. For a long time."

"And now?"

"My perspective is changing."

□

vi. Gently test the stability of your fort. Shore up weak points with extra cushions, small furniture pieces and clothespins.

"Granger, open your door." Draco knocks the rectangle of solid wood, waiting a few moments. "I can hear you breathing."

"Go away, Draco. I feel horrid." A spate of coughing is muffled by the door.

"That's rather the point, you ninny. Now let me in."

Hermione opens the door and steps back, so that Draco can enter her flat.

It's a disaster. Every surface is covered with crumpled tissues, half-empty tea cups and a variety of encrusted potion vials.

But that's nothing on Hermione. She looks like walking death on toast. Her hair is matted, there are bags under her eyes, and several fortunately unidentifiable stains decorate the plain pale blue flannel pyjamas she is wearing.

Draco refrains from wrinkling his nose in disgust and casts a gentle cleaning spell over her.

"Come on, ninny, let's get you into bed," he says, nudging her along.

"I'm thirsty." She won't budge.

He transforms a clean looking vial into a glass and conjures some water. She drinks it greedily, swaying a little as her head tips back. He puts an arm around her just in case.

"Better now?"

She nods.

"Okay. Bedtime, then."

"I'm hungry." Frozen treacle moves faster than a belligerent Hermione Jane Granger.

"All right. Be a good girl and get in bed and I will feed you."

She snorts wearily but shuffles to the bedroom with his help.

If the rest of her flat is a disaster, her bedroom is Armageddon.

And it stinks to high heaven.

He casts refreshing charms, and *Evanescos* and *Tergeos* galore, while keeping Hermione upright. Mostly.

"Whoops-a-daisy, there you go."

She falls into bed and he tucks her in, which is quite the production, involving the retrieval of extra blankets, the fluffing of many pillows, and summoning a favorite stuffed elephant named Peanut from the depths of her closet.

"I want Crooksie."

He spends the next twenty minutes hunting down her ungrateful, scraggly beast, only to discover the mangy creature nestling with his half-zombie mistress when he returns to the bedroom.

Draco shoots the Kneazle an irritated death glare. Which is countered with a dismissive yawn and a fairly explicit tongue bath.

"I'm hungry."

"I did promise you something to eat, didn't I." She nods, lower lip trembling. "Okay, I'll be right back."

The kitchen, as expected, is a tip. And the cupboards are bare, which is a problem.

He contemplates a blackened pan containing some fossilised beans and a half-eaten mouldy soldier until the solution dawns on him. He groans, wondering why he didn't think of it sooner.

"Mipsy," he calls softly.

The elf is there instantly. "Yes, Master."

She looks around with wide eyes, vibrating with suppressed glee.

"Miss Granger is sick, and there is no food here."

Mipsy bounces in place, pulling eagerly at her ears. "We is bringing soups and crackers and..."

"Thank you, Mipsy," Draco says with relief. "Please bring Pepper-up and Mother's stomach soother, too."

"We is being back very quick," Mipsy says. She vanishes, only to return to a heartbeat later.

"I hope you didn't strain anything." Draco was impressed. Even for house-elves, that was fast. He takes the packet of supplies from her. "You may clean the flat, quietly."

Mipsy starts to clap her hands in delight, but stops herself just in time. She wraps her arms around her torso instead. "We is being quiet as mices, Master."

Much later, after a nap and soup and more doses of potion, Hermione is nearly herself again.

"You look much better," Draco remarks smugly.

A blush steals over her cheeks and throat. "I can't believe I let you in."

"You were pretty out of it." He watches her squirm a little. "It was adorable."

"You didn't have to come," Hermione says, plucking at her comforter. "Thank you."

"You'd do the same for me, right?" She nods and he gives her a hug. "No thanks necessary." He stands up to leave. "But, Hermione?"

She looks up at him. He wrinkles his nose. "Do the world a favor. Bathe as soon as possible."

He Disapparates before the pillow can find its target.

□

vii. Use clothespins to secure the corners and the edges of the roof to the walls of your fort.

The party is in full swing when they arrive.

"Happy birthday!" Hermione exclaims as she hugs Harry. "And congratulations!"

Harry lets her go to pull Ginny closer to his side. He nods at Draco. "Thanks. I'm a lucky man."

"You keep thinking like that," Ginny says, while showing off her ring to Hermione and Luna, who's wandered over to say hello, with a skinny, shaggy young man in tow.

His name is Rolf.

Draco chats with him and Potter about places they've been or intend to go while the girls discuss wedding details.

The sun sets and fairy lights fill the Burrow garden before the girls exhaust their topic. Potter saunters off to greet his other guests. Draco and Rolf continue to discuss travel, politics, Quidditch and now, the weather.

"Hot, isn't it?"

"Very."

Draco is desperate for a drink.

"Excuse me, ladies," he says. "Would any of you care for libations?" He quirks an eyebrow at them and leers.

Ginny and Luna giggle. Hermione rolls her eyes at him.

"Some champagne would be nice," Hermione replies. Ginny and Luna both agree.

Rolf offers to help and Ginny points them to the bar. Her brother Bill is pouring. The queue isn't long, so they hurry over.

Draco turns from the bar moments later, laughing at Bill's joke about fire-breathing dragons, his hands full of crystal flutes, and almost runs smack into the Weasel.

"What're you doing here, Malfoy," Weasley practically shouts. A hush falls over the crowd. "And who's your little helper?"

"What's it to you, Weasley?"

"My name is Rolf."

The other two men both ignore him.

"This is my sister's engagement party and my best mate's birthday."

"Thank you, Auror Obvious. Would you like to tell us something we don't know?"

Weasley turns to Luna's boyfriend. "Rolf, is it?" Rolf nods. "Well, Rolfie. What you and Malfoy may not know is that I'm about to throw him out of this party."

Draco sneers at him. "So predictable."

Hermione steps between them before Ron can finish pulling out his wand. "He's with me, Ronald."

"What?" Ron turns bright red and his wand is vibrating. "But... He's *Malfoy*."

Draco starts to say something, but Hermione stops him with a single look.

"He's my friend, Ronald."

"But, he called you names. He beat up Harry. He let Death Eaters into Hogwarts!"

"A long time ago, yes, he did those things," Hermione says as Draco hands her a flute of champagne. "Since then, he has become my friend. It's not a difficult concept, Ronald."

Weasley looks over at Ginny and Luna. "Did you know about this?"

Ginny rolls her eyes at him. "She never kept it a secret. They became friends back at Hogwarts, our last year. You just never listened to her."

"I did! She nagged too much."

"Shut it, Ron." Potter says, as he gently nudges Hermione out of the way. "Her so-called nagging saved our hides several times."

"Draco stays," Hermione states, staring her ex-boyfriend down.

"If you have a problem with that," adds Ginny, "spend the party on the opposite side of the garden from him."

□

viii. Keep things fun and lighthearted. Colorful scarves make great curtains. Strings of Christmas lights are cheery and festive. A party noise-maker can be the doorbell. Don't take the fort so seriously.

"I couldn't eat another bite," Hermione groans, leaning back into her sofa. She wants to unbutton her trousers, but decorum and her mother's voice in her head prevents her.

Draco observes the remains of their sofa table picnic. "Good thing. I don't think there's anything left."

"Mmmmm," she murmurs, drunk on red curry and fresh paneer. "Nothing to clean up, then."

"Oops. I was wrong." Draco spies half a pappadom resting in a pool of green curry. "I shall dispatch this blot upon your pristine décor forthwith." He pops the messy morsel into his mouth and chews vigorously.

"He's here someplace," Ginny says. "Probably in a dark corner, snogging Lavender."

Harry joins the little group, and gives Hermione a hug before twirling Ginny around. "Who's snogging Lavender?"

Ginny giggles. The champagne has gone to her head. "My idiot brother."

"Nope," Harry replies. "He dumped her to date Romilda last week."

"I hope a love potion wasn't involved," says Hermione.

"Have you seen Romilda's hips?" Ginny asks. "You know how he loves to watch 'them' walk."

Harry peers closely at his wife. "I think you need food."

Cho Chang arrives and makes a beeline for Draco, throwing her arms around him with a squeal.

"I'm hungry," Hermione announces brightly. "Is there anything to eat at this soiree?"

Pansy points to the far wall of Draco's penthouse flat, which features a long table full of food.

Her group crosses the room slowly, stopping several times so that Hermione can say hello to various friends and colleagues.

Every time she looks, Draco is talking to a different witch.

By the time they reach the food, she isn't hungry anymore.

"Finally!" A pair of strong arms wrap around her shoulders from behind, and a chin rests on her head. "Welcome home, Hermione."

She steps away and he lets her go. "Thanks. Especially for the party."

"Enjoying yourself?" Draco asks, slinging an arm over her shoulder.

"Not as much as you are," she says a bit sharply.

He narrows his eyes at her. "What's your problem?"

"Nothing." She sips some champagne. "I'm having fun."

"I thought you were," he replies, quirking an eyebrow at her. "Now I'm not so sure."

"Maybe I'm just tired from the trip." Hermione puts her glass down. "Portkeys always have a strong effect on me."

"How was New York?" Draco asks. "Potter says you were up to neck in work. Did you get any time to sightsee?"

"Not really. The paperwork was never-ending."

She crosses her arms when Padma interrupts to say goodnight, giving them both kisses on the cheek. She leaves a streak of lipstick behind, near Draco's chin.

"And you? Do much while I was gone?"

She takes a napkin from a nearby table and wipes the lipstick away. He catches her hand in his. She suddenly notices that they are alone in this corner of his flat.

"I read a little. I painted a lot. I lagged around the flat, being miserable, and thinking about you." He pulls her closer.

"Me?"

She gasps when he leans in, capturing her lips with his. His arms grip her waist, lifting her off her feet, as he moulds his body to hers. Her hands are in his hair and she kisses him back as if her life depends on it.

Eventually, he pulls back and looks her in the eye. "It's always been you, Hermione. Only you."

~the end~

End notes:

Based on the prompt: "Friendship that builds."

Sofa fort instructions modified from a set found at eHow.

http://www.ehow.com/how_966_build-indoor-fort.html

Mipsy is a great house-elf name, isn't it? It's scifichick's creation.

"You know how he loves to watch 'them' walk."- A reference to Ron's fascination with girls in Goblet of Fire.

Many thanks to my betas, M & P.