

**The Plot to Take Over the World or why you should never trust
your cellphone**

by Phillip W. Weiss

**Phil's Literary Works LLC
19 West 34th Street
Penthouse
New York, NY 10001
pwnycny@aol.com
www.philsliteraryworks.com
212-388-8690**

Characters

Dave Hallett– a retiree/test subject

Saul – covert government agent

Ralph – covert government agent

Emily – a waitress/covert government agent

Dr. Leo Kepperman – a psychiatrist/covert government agent

Synopsis: A man is an unwitting pawn in a clandestine plot to take over the world using a common electronic device.

“All human beings, all persons who reach adulthood in the world today are programmed bio-computers. No one of us can escape our own nature as programmable entities. Literally, each of us may be our programs, nothing more, nothing less.”

Dr. John C. Lilly, discoverer of the Lilly Wave

“It is not a requirement, as is understood by the majority of science, to implant electrodes to cause the brain’s water molecules to be entrained to a certain frequency, it can also be accomplished by any waveform that can penetrate the skull and then cause the entrainment of the brain’s water molecules.”

The Lilly Wave and Psychotronic Warfare

Scene 1

Time: The Present

Location: New York City

Place: a coffee shop. Three men are sitting at a table. Their names are Dave, Ralph and Saul.

Everything stinks! **DAVE**

You're right. **RALPH**

Right about what? **SAUL**

That everything stinks. **DAVE**

SAUL
You're not saying anything I haven't heard before. What the hell is bothering you?

Everything. **DAVE**

That covers a lot of territory. **RALPH**

DAVE
I'm not talking geography. I'm talking about life. My life.

RALPH
We all have lives. It's just a question of how we live them.

DAVE

Cut the clichés. I can do without the clichés. I'm being serious.

SAUL

Nobody said you weren't.

RALPH

That's right. I would never dismiss anything you say, even if I heard it a million times before.

DAVE

This time I'm serious. I can't sleep at night.

SAUL

That's normal. When you reach a certain age ...

DAVE

Stop! Don't try to diagnose me.

SAUL

I'm not trying to diagnose you. I'm not even a doctor.

DAVE

Then stop talking like you are a doctor.

RALPH

Saul does have a Ph. D.

DAVE

Yeah. In English literature. Lot of good that would do me.

RALPH

That depends. If you wanted to learn about Keats and Shelley ...

SAUL

There's more to English literature than Keats and Shelley.

RALPH

I know that. I was just trying to make a point.

DAVE

I'm suffering and all you guys can do is talk poetry. Who cares about poetry?

SAUL

Now, don't go making remarks that later on you may regret.

DAVE

At this stage of my life I can say whatever I want without worrying about whose toes I step on.

RALPH

I wonder where that term stepping on toes came from.

DAVE

Oh, who cares? I've earned the right to say anything I please.

SAUL

Of course you do. It's in the constitution.

DAVE

Now you're a lawyer, but if you don't quit talking to me like I'm a fool, I'm going to make you an astronaut, with my fists.

RALPH

Holy cow! I've never heard you talk this way before. What's gotten into you?

DAVE

So much crap. So much ugliness. Everywhere I go people are mean and vicious. The noise, the filth, the nastiness. I don't know if I can take much more of this.

RALPH

Do not despair, my friend.

DAVE

I can't help but feel despair. I'm old, and nobody seems to care. I can live or die. It won't matter.

RALPH

I've feeling a little bit out of sorts myself. I can't quite put my finger on the cause however.

SAUL

Maybe you need to be pre-occupied with some activity. You know, something creative.

RALPH

Yeah, a diversion.

DAVE

You mean, I should take up a hobby?

RALPH

You have the time, don't you? You're retired.

SAUL

Maybe you shouldn't have retired.

DAVE

Shouldn't have retired? I hated my job. I despised my boss. I detested my clients. I couldn't wait to get the hell out of there. The only thing that kept me from killing myself first was the thought that I would lose my pension. So I lived.

RALPH

Luckily I liked my job.

DAVE

Your job stunk.

RALPH

But the pay was good. I made a hell of a lot more money than you, and without having a college degree.

SAUL

Not everybody is cut out to go to college.

DAVE

Listen to you. Such an elitist. Boy, are you stuck up.

SAUL

Why do you say that? I just made a comment.

DAVE

If you think you're something special because you're a college professor, well let me assure you, you are not.

SAUL

I never said I'm something special.

RALPH

I think I know what's making me feel out of sorts.

SAUL

I hope it isn't anything I said. He's the one that said your job stunk.

RALPH

No. Dave's said that to me a thousand times before. It's something else.

DAVE

Well, you go on and try figuring it out and when you come up with something, keep it to yourself. Frankly, I don't give a darn.

SAUL

That's mean.

DAVE

Too bad.

RALPH

I could have gone to college, but instead got drafted into the army.

DAVE

At least you served your country.

SAUL

That's right. Did I ever thank you for your service?

DAVE

Aw, stop patronizing the guy. Okay?

RALPH

I'm not offended. Thanks mean nothing anyway. I didn't even want to go.

DAVE

I was in the Boy Scouts.

SAUL

That's not exactly the same as being in the army.

DAVE

How do you know? Were you in the boy scouts?

SAUL

No I wasn't.

DAVE

Then keep you remarks to yourself. As a boy scout I wore a uniform, had to salute and had to obey orders. So there.

RALPH

Looks like we both served.

SAUL

I beg to differ.

DAVE

On what basis? You were never Boy Scout and lord only knows you never served in the military.

SAUL

How do you know that?

DAVE

You're a professor! Professor don't do things like join the Boy Scouts or go into the military.

SAUL

Now you're stereotyping me.

RALPH

Stop stereotyping him, whatever that means.

DAVE

No stereotype. It's true. While I was going to college I did not know of one instructor who served in the military. Oh, my head.

SAUL

Who are you to talk? You never served in the military either.

DAVE

I did so.

SAUL

That's news to me.

DAVE

I never had the need to bring up the subject.

RALPH

You were in the military too? What branch?

DAVE

Army. Just like you. Oh, this pain in my head.

SAUL

Maybe you need to relax. Where were you stationed?

DAVE

Upstate New York.

SAUL

Where upstate?

DAVE

You know, upstate. Look, could you drop the subject? My head hurts.

SAUL

You brought it up.

RALPH

You sure you were in the army?

DAVE

As sure as the day is long. Now will you please drop the subject?

SAUL

What you just said makes no sense whatsoever.

RALPH

I took my basic training at Fort Holk, Louisiana. Where'd you take your basic training?

DAVE

In Kentucky or Louisiana. Somewhere around there. The pain. Please, guys, ask me about something else.

RALPH

Stop your complaining. What was the name of the base?

DAVE

I think it was Fort Belton.

SAUL

You think? You don't know?

DAVE

Hey! I said Fort Belton. My head is beginning to spin.

SAUL

No need to try to bite my head off.

DAVE

I don't want to bite your head off. I'm having enough problems with my own head.

RALPH

You're not some kind of psycho, are you?

DAVE

Hell no. I'm just so damn angry.

SAUL

You said you're a vet. So, go to the VA. Maybe they can help you. X-ray your head. See if anything is in there. That's just a joke.

RALPH

I went to the VA when I had appendicitis. I got good care.

DAVE

Who needs the VA? Just another bloated uncaring bureaucracy.

RALPH

That's what the news says. You can't believe everything you hear on the news.

SAUL

So true. Sometimes I don't know if there is anyone I can really trust.

DAVE

Trust whom?

RALPH

I trusted my platoon sergeant. He was a good guy.

SAUL

Where were you stationed?

RALPH

Germany.

DAVE

Germany? How come you weren't sent to Vietnam?

RALPH

I don't know. That's where the army ordered me to go, so I went.

SAUL

I lived in Germany for a year.

DAVE

I lived in New York City all my life.

RALPH

Dave, what was your rank?

DAVE

Rank?

RALPH

Yeah, in the army. You said you were in the army.

DAVE

I did?

SAUL

Yes, you did. Don't you remember?

DAVE

When did I bring that up?

SAUL

Just a few minutes ago. You said you were stationed at Fort Belton, Kentucky.

DAVE

Kentucky? I've been to Churchill Downs, if that's what you mean.

RALPH

Dave, come on. Don't you remember what you said?

DAVE

I do. You mentioned something about the army, then I talked about New York City, then Saul started questioning me, then ... Hey! Why you guys giving me the third-degree? What the hell do you want to know?

SAUL

Calm down.

DAVE

Don't tell me to calm down. You're grilling me like I'm some kind of criminal, and I don't like it.

RALPH

I've seen this before, at the VA.

SAUL

Thank goodness I wasn't in the army.

DAVE

Said like a true shirker.

SAUL

I tried to enlist but was rejected.

RALPH

So that's why you became a professor?

SAUL

Not exactly. It was a little more complicated than that.

DAVE

How come you went to college and became a professor while I went to college and became a nobody?

SAUL

You're not a nobody.

DAVE

Yes, I am. I got a college degree and got a desk job pushing papers and dealing with people who wanted welfare while you became a big time college professor. Probably came on to all the female students.

SAUL

I did not and I resent that statement.

DAVE

Come on. Tell the truth. How many girls did you lay?

RALPH

Is that true? You used your job to meet girls?

SAUL

The man is speaking rubbish.

DAVE

When I was in college I saw lots of profs coming on to the female students. I bet all those ladies got straight A's.

SAUL

You have such a filthy mind.

DAVE

Hey, I'm not passing judgement. I would have done the same too. Me: I struck out like crazy. The girls wouldn't give me the time of day.

RALPH

With rank comes privileges. That's what we learned in the army. Like in that movie From Here to Eternity. The Senior NCO was screwing the captain's wife. Then she started pressuring him to become an officer.

SAUL

I never misused my position to get over on anyone.

DAVE

You expect us to believe that? You ever been married?

SAUL

No.

DAVE

Neither was I. What about you, Ralph?

RALPH

I was married for a three years, then my wife dumped me.

DAVE

Three single guys. We had all the opportunity in the world to get laid. Oooh. There's that pain again.

SAUL

Just because I was single did not mean I went after female students.

DAVE

Now you're insulting my intelligence. You had to do something to get nookie, or maybe you swung another way?

SAUL

I had a girlfriend. We even talked about getting married.

RALPH

But you didn't. it was all talk.

DAVE

All talk? So what? You had all the ladies you wanted, so why confine yourself to one?

SAUL

It was a little more serious than that.

DAVE

You college professors really got it made. Man, I should have been a college professor. Instead, I had to work. Boy, did that suck.

SAUL

Was that after you got out of the army?

DAVE

Don't bring up the army again! Okay?

SAUL

I was just making conversation.

RALPH

Why are you so touchy about that subject?

DAVE

None of your business. I did what I did. You guys don't believe me. Everybody thinks I'm a liar.

I didn't say that.

RALPH

But you meant it.

DAVE

No, he did not.

SAUL

Hey, speak for yourself, not for me. Okay?

RALPH

Now, you're touchy too?

SAUL

When you do that, I feel put down. Just because I'm a blue collar guy doesn't mean I don't have a brain.

RALPH

I never implied that.

SAUL

That's the problem. All you intellectual types think you have it over on us working class slobs. But we do the work. All you do is push papers.

RALPH

I work too.

SAUL

I don't think so. You may make a living, but what you do is not work. I worked.

RALPH

That's telling him, Ralphie boy.

DAVE

RALPH

And you shut your trap too. I'm beginning to get fed up with the two of you.

DAVE

Then why don't you get up and leave?

RALPH

I'll leave when I'm good and ready.

SAUL

We came here to have a pleasant chat. So, let's have a pleasant chat.

DAVE

I thought that's what we were doing.

RALPH

For you, yes. For me, I'm a little teed off that you're trying to pass yourself off as a vet. That's a pretty low thing to do.

DAVE

I told you that I don't want to talk about it.

RALPH

That's because you have nothing to talk about.

DAVE

You are so wrong, and so stupid.

RALPH

Mister, you are angling for a knuckle sandwich.

A waitress enters. Her name is Emily. She is young and very attractive.

EMILY

You boys all right?

DAVE

Yeah, we're fine. What about you?

EMILY

I'm fine too. Thanks for asking.

RALPH

You know, I'm hungry.

DAVE

What's your name, babe?

EMILY

Emily: how about you?

DAVE

I'm Dave, and my two pals here are Ralph and Saul.

RALPH

Hi ya.

SAUL

Hello, young lady.

EMILY

You guys ready to order?

RALPH

I am. I'll have a cheeseburger deluxe and a cup of coffee, black.

EMILY

What about you, Dave?

DAVE

I'm still thinking.

RALPH

Well, don't think too long. She can't be standing here all day.

DAVE

Will you get off my case?

RALPH

I'm not on your case.

SAUL

My dear, maybe you should come back in a little while. We need more time.

EMILY

Maybe I will

DAVE

Wait a minute, doll. Don't leave yet.

EMILY

So what will you have?

SAUL

I'll have the tuna fish sandwich on whole wheat bread toasted and a side order of French fries.

EMILY

Have you decided yet?

DAVE

I'm still looking.

RALPH

Come on, order already.

DAVE

Will you get off my case? I said I'm still deciding.

EMILY

I'll come back in a few minutes. (*Emily exits.*)

DAVE

Now you see what you've done? You ruined it for me. All of a sudden I got this buzzing sound in my head.

SAUL

You okay?

DAVE

I'm okay. It should pass.

SAUL

Okay, but let's get one thing straight: I'm not ruining anything for you. You still haven't ordered. What are you waiting for?

DAVE

I like taking my time when ordering food.

RALPH

You are taking too much time.

DAVE

What's the rush?

SAUL

We waiting for you.

DAVE

Since when do I have to follow your schedule?

RALPH

We just wanted to order food and not give Emily a hard time.

DAVE

Who cares about Emily?

RALPH

Just because she's a waitress doesn't mean she shouldn't be treated nicely.

DAVE

What is this? You have the hots for her?

RALPH

No. I just don't want to give her a hard time, that's all.

DAVE

You definitely do have the hots for her. Right, professor?

SAUL

I wouldn't know.

DAVE

You wouldn't know. I saw you leering at her rack. She has big ones. Reminded you of one of your students?

SAUL

You were seeing things.

DAVE

No I wasn't. I was looking directly at you. You couldn't take your eyes off her knobs. I she noticed you starrng.

RALPH

She does have a nice figure.

DAVE

You guys are such b-s artists. I bet if the price is right, she'll do either one of you, or maybe both.

RALPH
What about you?

DAVE
What about me?

RALPH
You like her too?

DAVE
Of course, I do. What do you take me for? A queer? There it goes again.
That buzzing sound.

RALPH
You have no chance with her.

DAVE
Listen, Ralph. If I wanted to I could always swing a date with that gal. She's
easy pickings.

RALPH
What the hell would she see in you?

SAUL
You can never tell with women.

RALPH
If I was a woman, I wouldn't give you the time of day.

DAVE
You're just saying that. You'd be singing a different tune if the price was right.

RALPH
Now you're sounding like a Jew.

DAVE

What the hell do the Jews have to do with anything?

RALPH

I was just joking. No need to get so worked up.

DAVE

No need to bring up Jews. Next thing you'll be telling me is that I'm Jewish, or gay, or a black man. Who cares? For all I know you're some left-wing Jewish freak who wants me to join the cause. Well I won't, you hear? So, drop the subject. *(pause)* This hammering inside my head will not stop.

SAUL

Why does everything always have to come down to a question of money?

DAVE

Because everything has a price.

SAUL

But there some things in the world that are beyond price. Honor. Integrity. Truth. They are priceless.

DAVE

Those are words, nothing more. As the saying goes, talk is cheap.

RALPH

That's what my senior drill sergeant said in basic training.

DAVE

I bet he was a real philosopher.

RALPH

He was.

DAVE

Did you feel that way when he was screaming at you? Like Sergeant Foley did with Mayo?

He was doing his job. **RALPH**

By torturing you? **DAVE**

The army tortures soldiers? **SAUL**

He doesn't know what he's talking about. **RALPH**

I sure do know what I'm talking about. **DAVE**

Too bad you don't want to talk about it. **SAUL**

Who said that? **DAVE**

I thought you said you didn't want to talk about the army. **SAUL**

I don't, but Ralphie forced me to comment. The army uses physical training as a form of torture. They did with me. **DAVE**

You were probably a wash out. That's why you don't want to talk about. **RALPH**

Think what you want. That goes for you too. **DAVE**

I didn't say anything. SAUL

The less you say, the better. DAVE

Now, I have to limit what I say? SAUL

My, you are bossy. RALPH

I'm just letting you know how I feel about things. DAVE

You sound like my drill sergeant. RALPH

Yeah. Sergeant Dave. DAVE

Sometimes I wish that I had experienced the military. SAUL

Don't sweat it. It was just a job. RALPH

No. It had to be more than just a job. SAUL

Maybe it was. All I know is that they paid me, which to me made it a job. RALPH

DAVE

What I did for a living was a job, and I hated it. That's what made it a job, hating it.

SAUL

I loved my job.

DAVE

Of course you did. Easy work, great pay, fantastic fringe benefits.

SAUL

It wasn't fun and games.

DAVE

Reading all those term papers had to be really rough.

SAUL

Sometimes it was.

DAVE

I bet you never failed a student.

SAUL

That bet you would have lost.

RALPH

You actually flunked students? Weren't they paying to attend school?

SAUL

Yes, they were. But that had nothing to do with whether they passed or failed.

DAVE

That is, of course, if they were willing to do a little something extra on the side.

SAUL

You know, you are really starting to annoy me.

DAVE

Oh, did I offend you? I'm so sorry.

RALPH

Dave, did something happen to you to get you in such a bad mood?

DAVE

Let me tell you ...

Emily enters with the food. She serves the food to Saul and Ralph.

EMILY

Sorry for interrupting.

RALPH

No problem.

SAUL

That's okay.

EMILY

Now, are you ready to order?

DAVE

To tell you the truth, I still haven't decided yet. Why don't you come back in a few minutes? I have this awful pain in my brain.

EMILY

Look, I can't be going back and forth.

DAVE

Well, I'm sorry if I upset you. What can I do to make it up?

EMILY

I have no time for games. I have other tables to serve.

DAVE

Wait a minute, doll. What's the rush? Why can't we be friends?

EMILY

What kind of friends?

DAVE

Good friends, or must I spell out what I mean?

RALPH

Don't listen to him. He's all talk.

DAVE

That's right, and right now I'm doing the talking, not you. Anyway, as I was saying, I think we can be friends.

SAUL

He's actually a very friendly guy.

EMILY

You don't seem too friendly.

DAVE

Maybe after you get off from work, I can fill you in on the details.

EMILY

I don't know. I'd have to talk to my husband about that.

SAUL

Oh. You're married?

Yes, I am. **EMILY**

How sad. **SAUL**

What do you mean by that? **EMILY**

Please don't misunderstand. I'm very happy for you. **SAUL**

What he's trying to say is that he has the hots for you. **DAVE**

I never said that. **SAUL**

But you thought it. You see, I can read minds. **DAVE**

A man of many talents. **EMILY**

I don't want to brag, but that's true. I'm very talented. I keep getting loads of messages. **DAVE**

Well, that's quite interesting. Now, what is it you would like to order? **EMILY**

How about a little loving with a side order of cash? **DAVE**

EMILY

My, you do have a dirty mind.

DAVE

Not as dirty as his.

RALPH

When do you get off from work?

EMILY

At midnight.

RALPH

Do you need anyone to escort you home?

EMILY

No, my husband meets me.

DAVE

Come on. Are you really married? I don't see a ring on your finger.

EMILY

Of course, I'm married. Don't you believe me?

DAVE

Of course, I do. What woman would ever lie?

SAUL

None, of course. It would be ungentlemanly to think otherwise.

EMILY

You I like.

SAUL

Why, thank you, my dear. I like you too.

RALPH

It looks like you've made a new friend.

SAUL

So it has.

DAVE

Don't you have to get back to work?

EMILY

I'm still waiting to take your order.

DAVE

Don't rush me. (*pause*) I'll have whole wheat toast with jelly and a green tea.

EMILY

My, you are a big spender.

DAVE

I also leave big tips, depending on the quality of the service.

EMILY

You're about as smooth as sandpaper.

RALPH

That's a good one.

DAVE

Okay, you have my order. Now, if you don't mind, we'd like to continue our conversation. So, get lost. Ouch!

EMILY

My, you certainly are a forceful one. (*Emily exits.*)

DAVE

Now I'm really pissed off at you. Are you trying to give me a hard time or what?

SAUL

What did I do?

DAVE

You showed me up in front of the dame.

RALPH

What are you talking about?

SAUL

I did no such thing. I just paid her a compliment regarding her character. What's wrong with that?

DAVE

You didn't mean it.

RALPH

Cut the crap. You're pissed because you didn't say it first. Admit it.

DAVE

No, that's not it.

SAUL

Then what is it?

DAVE

I don't know. Everything seems so jumbled in my head.

RALPH

If you can't level with your friends, then with whom can you level?

SAUL

Well stated, my dear boy. Are you certain you never went to college?

RALPH

Fooled you, right?

SAUL

More like pleasantly surprised me.

DAVE

You fooled me.

RALPH

I can only fool one person at a time.

SAUL

And a jokester too. What other quirks of character are you concealing from us?

RALPH

Nothing much.

SAUL

May I check under your sleeves?

DAVE

I thought you were going to say under his pants.

SAUL

You know, Dave, in this world you cannot always get your way.

DAVE

Where's that coming from?

SAUL

I have the distinct feeling that you are jealous that Emily likes me.

DAVE

You can have her. She was only being polite anyway. She's angling for a bigger tip.

RALPH

Nothing wrong with a lady being nice to a man.

DAVE

I didn't say that anything was wrong with that. All I'm saying is that it's all an act. You're just another customer to her. And why do you keep aggravating me?

RALPH

What's the problem?

DAVE

There's something going on inside my head. I can't explain it.

RALPH

Maybe you ought to see a doctor.

DAVE

For what? So they can take a CAT scan of my head and then bill me?

SAUL

What are you arguing about?

DAVE

I don't know. He started it.

SAUL

You know, Ralph, maybe you should change the subject.

RALPH

He said his head was hurting and I suggested he see a doctor. What's wrong with that?

SAUL

Sometimes even the most innocent comments can be misinterpreted.

DAVE

Stop with your game playing already. You guys are starting to drive me nuts.

SAUL

No. You're wrong. What's driving you nuts is that we're competing for attention from the same woman.

DAVE

Get out of here. At this stage of my life, the last thing I need is a woman. My sex drive is gone, and you know when that started? After I bought my first cell phone.

SAUL

Really? From the way you were talking, you sure seem pretty perked up to me.

RALPH

Admit it, Dave. You're turned on to her.

SAUL

And to a married woman, no less.

DAVE

Do you honestly believe that she's married?

RALPH

Sure. Why not? Most women are married, so why not her?

DAVE

I think you have your eye on her too.

RALPH

Maybe I do, and if she's married, what do I care? Makes things much simpler.

SAUL

Until you get caught.

RALPH

But until then, it could make the experience much more exciting.

DAVE

How do you know that?

RALPH

From past experience.

DAVE

So when you weren't swinging a crane you were running around with married women?

RALPH

I didn't make a habit of it, if that's what you're driving at.

SAUL

Personally, I frown on screwing around with another man's wife. Even when you're in, you're still on the outs

DAVE

Pussy is pussy, okay? There's no right or wrong when it comes to getting laid. I want to get laid. But to tell you the truth, it's hard for me to concentrate on this subject. Lately I've had other things to think about. *(pause)* Oh, there goes my head again.

RALPH

Take an aspirin. Now, what other things have you been thinking about?

SAUL

Yes, Dave, what other things?

DAVE

Things. Not the stupid crap you guys are talking about. Let's go on to something else.

SAUL

You're right. Let's talk about something else.

DAVE

Now you're making me feel like a jerk.

SAUL

Could you please stop the melodramatics?

DAVE

Get off my case, will you? You're nothing but a dirty-minded pervert. As a professor you never came on with any of your female women students?

SAUL

That is correct.

RALPH

Were you at least tempted?

SAUL

I have to admit that at times I was.

DAVE

How often? Every five minutes?

SAUL

No. But every so often I would take note of one of my students, but nothing more than that.

DAVE

You never asked them to meet you after class? You know, for a conference.

SAUL

Sure, I did that, but only to discuss homework assignments and similar business.

DAVE

You dirty filthy lecherous ... What the hell am I saying? I have to hand it to you, professor. You're a better man than me ...

RALPH

You mean than I.

SAUL

Ha! You are amazing, my good friend.

DAVE

Me, I. What's the difference?

SAUL

The difference is that I is a subjective pronoun while me is an objective pronoun. Didn't they teach you grammar in college?

DAVE

Why are you getting on my case? So I used the wrong pronoun. So what? Stop your damn nitpicking. I can't stand it! Aaah, the pain won't go away.

RALPH

Dave, when you use the wrong pronoun, it can ruin the entire sentence, and cause confusion, and there's already enough confusion in the world. Don't add to it.

DAVE

You guys make it sound like I committed a capital offense. What are you guys trying to do to me? Make my headache worse?

SAUL

Improve your speech.

RALPH

You know, in the army I had a buddy of mine who could not put together a coherent sentence longer than six words. Yet, they made him company clerk, and he did a great job, just as long as he kept his mouth shut.

SAUL

There's something to be said about keeping one's mouth shut.

DAVE

That's dumb. People are meant to talk. That's why we have mouths.

RALPH

That's right. To communicate. That's why we have cell phones.

DAVE

Because of my cellphone I'm all wired up, like a computer. It's unnatural. Oh! My head!

SAUL

No. the cell phone is just a device.

DAVE

No. it's not. It's much than that. It is the tool of the devil. It is an instrument of torture. It is a symbol of everything I detest about modern life.

SAUL

I think you're exaggerating a bit.

DAVE

No, I'm not. My cell phone tells me when to go to sleep and when to wake up. It never stops. It drills messages through my skull.

RALPH

Dave, just to change the topic. How did you like serving in the army?

DAVE

I told you not to mention that subject, so please don't. I don't want to talk about it.

RALPH

Most guys I know love talking about their military service.

DAVE

Well I'm not most guys. I'm me. Let's leave it at that.

SAUL

Dave, what's really bothering you?

RALPH

Yeah. It's like you got a pipe jammed up your butt and you can't get it out. Everything we say irritates you. There's got to be something going on. So, what is it?

DAVE

Haven't you been listening? I think my cell phone is out to kill me. Let me tell you why. I had this cell phone. It broke, so I called my service provider and they told me that I was covered under their service protection plan and that they could send me a replacement phone and transfer all my data to my new phone, which they call a device. Okay, so far so good. They mailed me the device. First, how to turn out the device. It's not like in the past when all you had to do is flick the switch. Now to get the device activated is a major, time consuming and nerve-racking process. To get it done I had to call my provider, which I did. I spoke with a tech support person who kept feeding me more and more instructions. While I was receiving instructions I kept complaining. It was awful. Anyway, finally, I got the new device activated. Now the next task was to get my data transferred from my old device to the new device. Now, remember, I had a lot of data stored on my old device. Text messages, music, emails, pics and the like.

So, I went to one of my provider's stores and asked them to transfer the data from my old phone to new device. They flat-out told me that they couldn't do it and told me to call tech support. I went back to my apartment and from there called tech support and asked them to transfer the data from my old phone to new device. The guy I spoke with told me that I first had to be connected to WiFi. I told him that I wasn't sure if I was connected to WiFi. He said that nothing could be done unless I was connected to WiFi. I told him that was news to me. A lot of time wasted. The next day I called again, and this time spoke with a woman. She told me I was already connected to WiFi. However, she couldn't get the data transferred without accessing the special app on my old phone. I told her that my special app was not working and could not be re-installed. Then she said that I had to scan my old phone to my new phone. I had no idea what she was talking about and told her so. By this time, I felt so frustrated and put upon that I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown. All I could think about was more time wasted and more promises not kept. That evening I drank a pint of vodka. It worked. It helped me to pass out and put an end to my misery, at least temporarily. Finally, in desperation, the next day, I went back to the store and spoke with one of the tech support people, in this case a young lady. First, she said that the data could not be transferred. As I was preparing to leave she said that she wanted to try one more thing. She opened a closet and took out a device. She hooked up my old phone and new phone to the device and maybe fifteen minutes later told me that the data was transferred. Relying on her report, I deleted all the data from old phone. After I left the store I discovered that some text messages and my entire music library were not transferred. I lost data. I felt totally disgusted. The whole experience was nothing but a huge runaround, a complete waste of time, all at my expense. I'll tell you, guys, the quality of service today stinks. Nothing but a horrible rip off. It left me feeling totally exhausted and with an overwhelming hatred and loathing for all cell phone repairs services. Since leaving that shop, every time I use my cell phone I get this pounding headache. It's as if my cell phone is trying to dissolve my brain.

SAUL

No wonder why you're feeling suicidal. What you went through is enough to make anybody feel suicidal. I've lost data too. It's a horrible feeling.

RALPH

You're lucky that they were able to transfer any data.

DAVE

I was paying for that service and it failed. But that doesn't surprise me. Customer service is a lost art. Nobody cares anymore.

SAUL

I care.

DAVE

Yeah, but you're not my cell phone provider. They need to care, and they don't.

SAUL

Dave, anyone who owns a smartphone has had the exact same experience. It generates a feeling that I call Post Technical Distress Syndrome, or PTDS.

RALPH

PTDS? I like it. Is that your area of expertise?

SAUL

No. I just made it up.

DAVE

I don't appreciate your levity coming at my expense. I think you're laughing at me. I'm suffering and you find it funny.

SAUL

Can't you lighten up? Just for a moment?

DAVE

No, I cannot lighten up. Everything seems to be a struggle. Nothing gets done anymore. Our quality of life is crap and to tell you the truth, with this damn pain in my head I don't even know if I should go on living.

RALPH

What? You want to kill yourself?

DAVE

Sometimes I think about what it might be like if I was dead. You know, eternal rest. My cell phone often teases me about me already being dead and not knowing it. Guys: am I dead?

RALPH

Sooner or later you're going to find out.

SAUL

My friend: do not despair. Things can't be that bad.

DAVE

That's easy for you to say. You're not me and your head isn't about to explode.

SAUL

We all have our crosses to bear.

DAVE

Now you're sounding like a priest. That's all I need.

SAUL

I don't know what to tell you. You told us a story.

DAVE

That you forced me to tell.

SAUL

That's true, and then when I try to commiserate you want to bite my head off.

RALPH

Saul, that's not quite accurate.

DAVE

Thanks for speaking up for me, soldier boy. I don't know how managed without you.

RALPH

Now you're being sarcastic.

DAVE

So be it. I'm in no mood to concern myself with your feelings.

SAUL

You're being a bit selfish.

DAVE

Listen to you. That's like the pot calling the kettle black. I was all set to make a move on Emily when you barged your way in and ruined it for me.

Emily enters.

EMILY

Here you are: what you ordered. (*Emily places the whole what toast and tea on the table.*) Enjoy.

DAVE

Why did it take so long?

EMILY

We're busy. And besides I noticed you guys talking and didn't want to interrupt your conversation. How's the food.

SAUL

You know, I barely touched my sandwich.

RALPH

Me too. Wow, we sure got into it.

EMILY

Well, I hope all of you enjoy your meals.

SAUL

Thank you, Emily.

EMILY

You are quite welcomed ... Saul

SAUL

You remembered my name. For that you will get an extra special tip.

EMILY

How about you? Ready to dig in?

DAVE

Yeah. I can't wait.

EMILY

Wow. Why so down?

DAVE

Don't ask.

RALPH

She just did

DAVE

I know she did.

SAUL

Dave's cell phone service company has been giving him a hard time.

EMILY

That's too bad. I can't stand dealing with them. I let my husband deal with them.

DAVE

Come on, Emily. You're not married. You're just saying that to put us off. Admit it.

EMILY

I am married. Why would I lie about such a thing?

DAVE

I don't know. People lie about a lot of stuff for a lot of different reasons.

EMILY

Look, I don't know who you are, and how you can take it upon yourself to talk to me that way.

SAUL

Sometimes a man will sound nasty to cover up the way he really feels.

DAVE

More pseudo-psychological babble. What's next? A taxi-ride to the psycho ward?

RALPH

Look, Dave, you were the one who brought up wanting to kill yourself.

SAUL

That is true.

RALPH

But in all fairness to Dave, he had gone through the ringer dealing with his cell phone.

EMILY

Now you're thinking about committing suicide. Right? I know. I've been there too, but got over it. Are things that bad for you?

DAVE

Yes, they are that bad, but none of your care. Everything I say gets twisted, blown out of proportion. I'm sorry I even brought up the cellphone stuff.

EMILY

This is getting way too heavy for me. Anyway, enjoy your meals.
(Emily turns to exit.)

DAVE

Wait! Don't leave yet. I may want to order something else.

EMILY

Well, make it snappy. I spent enough time here already. I have other customers to serve.

DAVE

Could you please bring over the menu?

EMILY

The menu is right in front of you.

DAVE

So, it is.

SAUL

How's business tonight?

EMILY

Busy, as usual.

RALPH

Could I ask you a personal question?

EMILY

Sure, as long as it's not too nasty.

RALPH

Did you ever do any modeling?

EMILY

What are you? An artist or something?

RALPH

No, Actually I'm a retired heavy-duty equipment operator.

EMILY

Really? Wow? That sounds cool. You operated bulldozers and cranes?

RALPH

That's right. Worked all over the world on construction jobs.

EMILY

The only place I've ever been was St. Louis, Missouri, when I was a kid. My parents took me to visit my sick grandmother. Later on she died.

SAUL

That's too bad. Please accept my condolences.

EMILY

Well, it happened years ago. I got over it, but thank you anyway.

SAUL

A pretty lady like you should be in the movies.

EMILY

Thank you. You have such nice things to say. Maybe we can meet again ... later.

SAUL

Thank you too. Maybe we shall.

DAVE

What are you guys jabbering about. He's nice. You're nice. You're going to meet. Who cares?

SAUL

What's your beef? We're just making conversation.

DAVE

You're doing more than just making conversation. Something's going on here. I see how the two of you look at each other.

SAUL

If I've done anything to upset you, please accept my apology. I really want for us to be friends.

EMILY

Well, fellows, I need to be getting back to work. Oh. I almost forgot. You said you wanted to order something else.

DAVE

Forget it. I changed my mind.

EMILY

Okay. If you change your mind again, just signal me and I'll come right over. And I'm sorry that you're feeling so down.

DAVE

Yeah. Whatever you say. (*Emily exits.*)

RALPH

I'll tell you, Saul. I think you have a chance with her. She really seems to like you.

SAUL

It's all just talk.

DAVE

That's right. All talk.

RALPH

How do you know that?

DAVE

Because that's what she was doing. Talking. *(Pause)* Wow, my head is beginning to hurt.

RALPH

Take some Motrin. That may help.

DAVE

I'll dope myself up while you get laid.

RALPH

What about me?

DAVE

I only swing one way, pal, and not in your direction. For all I care the two of you can have a go with her, at the same time.

RALPH

You are starting to sound so high and mighty. Especially for a guy who got the run around from his cell phone company.

SAUL

That was just bureaucratic inefficiency. Nothing personal.

DAVE

When it involves people, everything is personal. I didn't like being lied to or being treated like a fool.

SAUL

Yet, that's what happens. It makes me wonder why we even put up with it.

RALPH

I don't know why either.

DAVE

I do know why. Because people stink. That's why.

SAUL

Does that include Emily?

DAVE

Maybe it does.

RALPH

And maybe it doesn't. I think you really have the hots for her, pal.

DAVE

Maybe I do. It's all part of the courtship ritual. But whenever I begin thinking about a woman I start hearing a loud beeping sound inside my head, almost like a siren.

SAUL

Do you hear it now?

DAVE

Not at this moment. The female always puts the male through the hoops. That's to test the male. To seem if he is a worthy sexual partner.

RALPH

That's a bit of a stretch to me. Humans are not animals.

SAUL

With the way people act toward each other, I sometimes wonder if we're not actually lower than animals.

DAVE

I noticed her first, and she picked up on it.

SAUL

But she's been nicer to me.

DAVE

But being nice is not the same as being turned on. When the female is ready to accept the male, she lets him know.

RALPH

So, you think that this is all part of an instinctual process?

DAVE

That's right. She's testing us out. Notice how she stood there, chest sticking out. You think that was accidental?

RALPH

No, I guess it is not.

SAUL

Maybe that's just her posture when she is standing.

DAVE

You college professors have an answer for everything, don't you?

SAUL

I don't know about that.

DAVE

Well I do. Sometimes their pomposity nauseates me, present company included.

SAUL

No need to get insulting.

RALPH

Did he hurt your feelings?

SAUL

He's indicting an entire group of people. That's not fair.

DAVE

May not be fair but it's the truth, and truth trumps fairness in my book.

RALPH

You wrote a book?

DAVE

Very funny, pal. That's just an expression. You know that. Don't you?

RALPH

Hey, I was just playing with you. Trying to inject a little levity into our discussion.

DAVE

I'm in no mood to laugh, get it?

RALPH

I get it, I get it.

SAUL

Dave, I wish there was something I could say or do to lift your spirits.

DAVE

Maybe buy me the winning lottery ticket or the winning ticket to a one hundred to one long shot at the track.

SAUL

Sorry, I don't gamble.

DAVE

Then what good are you?

SAUL

Maybe I could introduce you to my sister.

RALPH

You have a sister?

DAVE

Since when did you have a sister? You never mentioned her to us.

SAUL

I never had any need to mention it.

DAVE

I don't know about meeting your sister. The idea of it gives me a queasy feeling.

SAUL

She's not bad looking.

RALPH

That's not much of a recommendation.

DAVE

You have pic of her?

SAUL

No, I don't.

DAVE

So, you want to set me up on a blind date. Thanks but no thanks. I'll go with Emily. *(pause)* Oh. I'm beginning to hear the sound of bells in my head.

RALPH

But she's not really hot for you.

DAVE

I better stop talking about Emily.

RALPH

Don't worry about it, Dave. Emily's actually more interested in Saul than you.

DAVE

No way, but the chiming is getting louder.

RALPH

That cell phone stuff really screwed up your head.

DAVE

How do you know that? Are you a shrink?

RALPH

No, I'm not and you know it. So why ask?

DAVE

To shut you up.

RALPH

Let me tell you something, pal: nobody tells me to shut up. Got it?

DAVE

Excuse me. Shut the HELL up. Is that better?

SAUL

Dave! Can it already. You're behaving like ...

DAVE

Don't you understand? The noise in my head won't stop.

SAUL

You're worse than my students.

DAVE

So, what are you saying? That I'm some kind of spoiled brat?

SAUL

You and your bell ringing. You're nothing but a malingerer.

DAVE

No, I'm not. Please believe me.

RALPH

Prove it.

DAVE

How? I feel like my brain is being torn in half.

RALPH

Dave, who are you trying to fool?

DAVE

Nobody.

RALPH

And I can't visualize you actually being in the army.

DAVE

I told you not to ask me about that!

RALPH

What do the letters MOS stand for?

DAVE

I will not allow you to test me.

SAUL

What do the letters MOS stand for, Ralph?

RALPH

Military Occupational Specialty.

DAVE

And what do the letters FU stand for?

RALPH

You know the answer to that question.

SAUL

Don't they mean fine underwear?

RALPH

No. Guess again.

SAUL

French union?

RALPH

Not even close. You really don't know what the letters FU stands for?

SAUL

I really don't. I don't speak in initials.

DAVE

I hate you guys.

SAUL

You say that with such contempt. Do we upset you that much?

DAVE

Don't take it personally. I'm in pain. I mean what do you want from me?

SAUL

I want us to be friends.

DAVE

Look, Saul. Your name is Saul, right? I'm just trying to polite but it's hard to do when my brain feels like it's on fire. It's that damn call phone of mine. I know it. I can feel it.

RALPH

You and your cell phone. Do you realize how dumb you sound?

DAVE

For all I know we're communicating by mental telepathy and don't even know it.

SAUL

Now you're going into the realm of science fiction.

RALPH

I love sci-fi movies.

SAUL

I wrote a sci-fi story. It was about a race of aliens who land on earth disguised as comedians. They went all over the world, cracking jokes and making everyone laugh. Finally, while everyone on the planet was convulsing with laughter, they drilled holes through the earth's crust and inserted long tubes, which they connected to a huge vacuum cleaner like machine orbiting the earth and then proceeded to suck the earth dry.

RALPH

What happened to the earthlings?

SAUL

They kept laughing.

RALPH

Did they survive?

SAUL

I don't know. I guess I'll have to write a sequel.

DAVE

Why don't you do just that.

RALPH

And be quick about it because I can't wait to find out what happens.
Sounds like a really great story.

DAVE

I wrote something too.

RALPH

Wow. You're a writer too?

DAVE

Yeah. I dabble in writing occasionally. I wrote a play about a fool and a jerk who believed themselves to be the smartest people in the world. They were so dumb that one day the fool bet the jerk a million dollars that he could jump out of a plane without a parachute from five miles up and survive. The jerk insisted on jumping out of the plane with him to make sure that the fool didn't lie about the results.

RALPH

So how does the story end?

DAVE

By my smashing your head against a wall to get you to shut up and take me seriously. That's how.

RALPH

I don't like that ending.

DAVE

Too bad.

RALPH

No need to be so hostile.

SAUL

Ralph, Dave is pulling your leg.

DAVE

You stay out of this. This is between me and Ralph.

RALPH

Okay, tough guy. One more nasty remark and I'll put you out of your pain permanently.

DAVE

You know, I may want to take you up on that.

RALPH

You are some piece of work.

DAVE

My brain is splitting and you mock me. You're horrible.

RALPH

You're the one with the attitude. You know, I was a paratrooper in the service. You should have more respect for me.

SAUL

You were airborne?

RALPH

That's right. Made about fifteen jumps.

DAVE

I could never understand why anyone would want to jump out of a moving airplane.

RALPH

Well, I wasn't doing it for fun.

SAUL

That's right. It was part of your military service.

DAVE

Stop your bragging. I did things in the military too.

RALPH

Like what?

DAVE

Like wouldn't you like to know. *(pause)* Oh, the banging in my head is getting even louder.

SAUL

Dave, what do you want from us? We're trying to be your friend and all you do is complain.

RALPH

We are friends, are we not?

DAVE

On that point the jury is still out.

Emily enters.

EMILY

Hey, you guys hardly touched your food.

RALPH

Hey, you're right. I guess we we're too busy talking.

EMILY

If you want, I can wrap it up for you. We'll be closing soon.

DAVE

To tell you the truth, I didn't have much of an appetite.

RALPH

Then why did you order food?

DAVE

Force of habit. Social Convention. Social conditioning. I was in a restaurant.

EMILY

Are you a shrink?

DAVE

Shrink. Such an ugly word.

EMILY

Excuse me. I didn't mean to offend.

DAVE

Nobody ever means to do anything. Everything we do is just a bunch of accidents. Nobody wants to take responsibility. Unintended consequences for innocent acts.

EMILY

Hey, buddy, I'm just a waitress, doing my job.

RALPH

And doing a swell job too.

SAUL

I second that.

EMILY

You gents are way too kind.

DAVE

But you are more than just a waitress. You are a messenger of hope, inspired by your presence. Now, if the pain in my head would only ease up.

EMILY

I also have a hope: that you guys finish your dinner so we can close up.

DAVE

Yes, let's get out of here, now. I can't take much more of this.

EMILY

Hey, you still have time.

SAUL

Come on, Dave. Stop giving the young lady such a hard time.

DAVE

I'm not giving anyone a hard time. I got to get out of here.

EMILY

Listen, guys. I'll be back in a minute with the check and three doggie bags.

DAVE

Pay up and get out. That's what it's all is about.

RALPH

Don't listen to him. He had a rough day today.

EMILY

That's too bad. But no need to take it out on me.

SAUL

Young lady, you are too pretty for anyone to take anything out on you.

DAVE

That's right, Saul. Play up to her while I'm ready to go bonkers.

SAUL

I'm just being polite.

DAVE

Oh, my dear, dear friends. I can't take much more of this. My brain is killing me!

EMILY

What's going on here?

DAVE

I'm in pain. That's what's going on here.

RALPH

Don't listen to him. He's just acting out. Wants attention. Maybe we should buy him a drink.

SAUL

Right now I could use a good shot.

RALPH

It calms the nerves.

SAUL

And makes you mellow.

DAVE

And gets you nauseous. As for you, young lady, please stop wasting time and go out with him. I can't take much more of this.

EMILY

I told you gents that I was married and that my husband would be meeting me after work.

RALPH

If you weren't married, I'd take you out right now.

SAUL

Hey, Ralph, it's me she wants, not you. You see what you've done, Dave? Now you got me and Ralph arguing. Are you happy now, Mister Grumpy?

EMILY

Look, guys. It's been fun but we have to close. I'll be back with the check.
(Emily exits.)

SAUL

I think she's politely giving us the brush off

RALPH

Giving you the brush off you mean.

SAUL

No, I meant us.

RALPH

Speak for yourself, old man.

SAUL

I'm not that old.

RALPH

If you're collecting social security, you are, according to the government.

DAVE

Collecting benefits. That's living the American dream. I guess the three of us are living a dream. In my case, a bad dream. I know that my cell phone has something to do with this horrible noise in my head.

SAUL

That's a bit of a stretch.

DAVE

You'd be singing a different tune if it was your head that was resonating. But all you care about is that woman.

RALPH

Hey, she's a waitress, and waitresses are hot.

DAVE

With us, she's the star of the show.

SAUL

Let's stop talking about her.

DAVE

Yes, please do. The more you talk about her the worse the pain in my head gets.

SAUL

Then drink. That will stop the pain.

RALPH

There's a bar down the street. How about we all go there for a night cap. My treat.

SAUL

Why, that is most kind of you.

DAVE

We should have gone there earlier.

RALPH

Better late than never. That's what I say.

DAVE

How original.

SAUL

But so true.

DAVE

Truth. Boy does it suck. Guys, I have to leave now.

Emily enters.

EMILY

Here's your check and three doggie bags.

DAVE

It's on me. If I don't pay, we'll never get out of here. You guys leave the tip. And make sure it's a big one. Bigger the better.

EMILY

Hope to see you again soon.

DAVE

Thanks for the invite. I may take you up on it, when I'm feeling better

EMILY

I hope you do. That goes for all three of you.

SAUL

Why, thank you. You made this a very special evening. I'll be thinking about you.

RALPH

Take care, young lady.

EMILY

And take care of yourselves too. I really hope to see you here again.

DAVE

You will. (*Cell phone rings.*) Excuse me. (*Dave takes out his cell phone.*) I got an emergency message, marked urgent. Right now I'm feeling calm. I'm in no mood for bad news.

SAUL

You better see what it says.

DAVE

Okay. (*Dave taps on the phone.*) Oh no! NO!

RALPH

What is it, Dave?

DAVE

I don't believe it. It can't be!

EMILY

Oh my. It must be something very serious.

SAUL

Give me the phone. (*Dave gives Saul the phone.*) It says here, and I quote, "According to our records, due to a technical malfunction in our software, all the data in your phone has been lost. To re-install your data, please call tech support between the hours of seven AM and seven PM eastern standard time. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience and hope to hear from you soon." Closed quote.

RALPH

Wow. You have to go through the process all over again.

DAVE

What am I going to do? I can't face it again. It's as if I'm being punished for some sin I may have committed in a previous life. Maybe what they say is true: we pay for the sins of our fathers. Maybe I have this dark cloud over my head.

SAUL

Get a grip, man! It's not as bad as it seems.

DAVE

(hysterical)

No. It is worse! Emily, if I said anything to offend you, I'm sorry. Maybe I brought this upon myself because of the things I said to you. I should have come right out and said that I wanted to get it on with you. There. Now you know. *(pause)* Oh, my head! The pain! I can't stand it!

EMILY

I don't know what to say.

SAUL

I've never seen him so upset like this before.

DAVE

My cell phone is cursed. That's it! It is an evil machine; an instrument of torture.

RALPH

So get rid of it.

DAVE

Get rid of it! I need it! I'm addicted to it. It is my companion. My best friend, and now my worst enemy. I have a five-year service plan. I get rid of it, they'll just send me another device.

SAUL

Keep the faith. That's what I say.

EMILY

Pay the check. That's what I say.

RALPH

Dave, you still going to pay the check?

DAVE

What check? What are you talking about?

RALPH

You know. The bill. You said you were going to pay the bill.

DAVE

Where am I? Who are you guys? Why am I alive?

RALPH

I hope you're not trying to weasel your way out of paying the bill.

SAUL

I don't think he's faking it. I think I better call an ambulance.

EMILY

In the meantime, I'll wait here with you guys until you pay the bill and leave.

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: The following day

Place: The office of Dr. Leo Kepperman. Seated in the office are Dave and Dr. Kepperman.

DAVE

Where am I?

KEPPERMAN

You are in the office of Doctor Leo Kepperman located in the inpatient psychiatric service of City Medical Center. I'm Doctor Kepperman.

DAVE

Psychiatric service? What am I doing in here?

KEPPERMAN

Don't you remember?

DAVE

No. I don't. Everything seems so hazy. I remember talking with my buddies and then everything became a blank, until now.

KEPPERMAN

Your friends called an ambulance which took you to our emergency room. From there you were admitted to the hospital.

DAVE

Well, I'm feeling fine now, so I guess I'll be leaving.

KEPPERMAN

Not until we have finished doing a complete evaluation of your mental state to make sure you're all right.

DAVE

I don't need my mental state evaluated. I told you I'm feeling fine.

KEPPERMAN

You came to us in a completely psychotic state. We gave you some anti-psychotic medications to stabilize you. Now let's continue.

DAVE

No. I'm leaving. I want no part of you or your crummy hospital.

KEPPERMAN

I'm afraid that's out of the question. Under law, we can hold you here for up to seventy-two hours.

DAVE

You can shove your law up your you know where. I didn't ask to come here, and I certainly have no desire to talk with you.

KEPPERMAN

Look. We want to help you. We want to make sure that you don't wind up back here again. Okay?

DAVE

It's not okay, but there's not much I can do about it now.

KEPPERMAN

That's better. Now, let us begin. Your name?

DAVE

David Hallett or is it Frank Covington?

KEPPERMAN

Your age?

DAVE

Sixty-eight or somewhere around that.

KEPPERMAN

Place of birth.

DAVE

**Minneapolis, Minnesota, or Biloxi, Mississippi, or Brooklyn, New York.
One of those places.**

KEPPERMAN

Occupation.

DAVE

I'm retired, I think.

KEPPERMAN

What kind of work did you do?

DAVE

**I was a caseworker for the city department of social welfare services, but
I also remember being a fighter pilot named Randall something or other. It starts
with a k.**

KEPPERMAN

Marital status.

DAVE

Single.

KEPPERMAN

Were you ever married?

DAVE

I think I was. I knew this woman but ... nah. Forget it.

KEPPERMAN

Did you serve in the military?

DAVE

I don't want to discuss it.

KEPPERMAN

I'm just asking if you served in the military.

DAVE

I said I don't want to discuss it. Go on to something else.

KEPPERMAN

All right. Were you ever hospitalized?

DAVE

Why are you asking me all these questions?

KEPPERMAN

This is part of the initial assessment process.

DAVE

Process? Did you say process?

KEPPERMAN

Yes, I did. Is there a problem?

DAVE

You don't by any chance work for the cell phone company, do you?

KEPPERMAN

No. I told you before. I am Doctor Kepperman and I'm a psychiatrist and this is City General Hospital.

DAVE

You expect me to believe that? How stupid do you think I am?

KEPPERMAN

No, Dave. I am not questioning your intelligence.

DAVE

Then cut the crap. You kidnapped me to force me to re-program my phone. Well I won't do it. My phone is evil and you are evil. I want out of here, now!

KEPPERMAN

This is not the cell phone company and I am not a cell phone employee.

DAVE

Stop pulling the wool over my eyes. You tech support guys think you're so clever, but you're not.

KEPPERMAN

It seems like you have some negative feelings about your cell phone company.

DAVE

Yes, I do, but that gives you no right to force me to do anything against my will.

KEPPERMAN

Force you to do what, for instance?

DAVE

Don't make me bring it up. It's just too painful.

KEPPERMAN

I want to know.

DAVE

You people just won't stop, will you? Stop tormenting me. You made me jump through hoops to get my cell phone programmed and now you want to do it again. Stop it, I say. Stop it now!

KEPPERMAN

Dave, I really have no idea what you are talking about.

DAVE

Okay. Let me show you. (*Dave reaches into his pocket.*) Where is it?

KEPPERMAN

Where's what?

DAVE

My cell phone, or should I say, my device?

KEPPERMAN

The hospital took your personal belongings and placed them in storage. Don't worry. They are secured.

DAVE

You took my cell phone?

KEPPERMAN

Yes.

DAVE

First you torture me and then you steal from me your instrument of torture. You people are so diabolical. You want to destroy all the evidence of your plot to drive me mad. That's it, isn't it? I wish Emily was here.

KEPPERMAN

Who is Emily?

DAVE

Only the most beautiful woman I have ever met.

KEPPERMAN

Sounds like you have some strong feelings for her. Is she your girlfriend?

DAVE

She would be, if it weren't for those two bums, Saul and Ralph. They ruined it for me.

KEPPERMAN

What did they ruin?

DAVE

My chances for getting it on with her. She liked me more than she liked them, and they didn't like that, so they did everything they could to make me look bad.

KEPPERMAN

According to our records, it was your friends who called the ambulance.

DAVE

They would say anything to get me out of the way, so they could have their way with her. Now it's one thing to cart me to a hospital. But it is something else entirely to cart me to my cell phone company.

KEPPERMAN

I told that this is a hospital.

DAVE

And I told you that I'm not buying that. Just level with me. That's all I ask. If you want me to reprogram my phone, I will. I'll do anything to get out of here.

KEPPERMAN

Did anything happen to you that had anything to do with your cell phone?

DAVE

You should know. You people have my records.

KEPPERMAN

Have you been hospitalized here before?

DAVE

This is no hospital. This is a POW camp and I'm a prisoner of war.

KEPPERMAN

I assure you that you are in a hospital.

DAVE

Whatever you say. I won't waste my time arguing with you.

KEPPERMAN

What happened to bring you here?

DAVE

If I tell you, will you let me go?

KEPPERMAN

That all depends.

DAVE

Conditions. More conditions. I bet you're reprogramming my phone right now to slam me down and shut me up. You people don't like that I'm on to you. So do your thing and keep sending me stupid asinine messages to drive me crazy. It won't work. From here on, I'm giving you only my name, rank and serial number.

KEPPERMAN

You are not a prisoner of war.

DAVE

Like hell I'm not. I know my rights under the Geneva Convention.

KEPPERMAN

I repeat: you are not a prisoner of war.

DAVE

We are at war and you are my enemy. You are trying to hack into my life by using my cell phone or device or whatever you call it to suck information out of me, like vampires. You'll have to kill me because there is no way I'm going to take part in your nefarious plans.

KEPPERMAN

That is not true. I'm trying to help you.

DAVE

That's what they all say. You must be Russian. Are you Russian? Every day I hear on the news how the Russians are trying to infiltrate and take over. Admit it. You are Russian.

KEPPERMAN

No, I am not Russian.

DAVE

Well, listen, Boris, your ruse won't work with me. I'm not for sale, and you can keep my cell phone. Use it to torture someone else. Maybe Emily was in on this plot. Maybe she was using her charms to lull me into complacency. I hate her. She was playing with me. She never really cared.

KEPPERMAN

You're losing me here, Dave.

DAVE

Don't you see? All of you are part of conspiracy to control me. You, Saul. Ralph, Emily. All of you. But why me? I'm just a retiree. I'm not even a politician.

KEPPERMAN

A lot of things seem to be bothering you, Dave. I'm here to help you sort them out.

DAVE

Sweet words are what got me into trouble. I'm so weak, so impressionable. Ralph and Saul asked me to join them for a friendly chat. I should have known better. Maybe they were the ones who keep sending me those awful texts.

KEPPERMAN

You seem to be greatly preoccupied with thoughts about your cell phone.

DAVE

It's the most diabolical instrument of torture ever invented by mankind, or should I say human kind. I don't want to offend anyone, especially Emily. She's not a man, but she is human. Or maybe she is a man, and maybe I'm a woman and I don't even know it. Am I a woman?

KEPPERMAN

What do you think?

DAVE

You tell me. Maybe I should pull down my pants and let you check for yourself.

KEPPERMAN

No. That is not necessary.

DAVE

You're not interested. I don't blame you. What I have doesn't work anymore anyway. I haven't used it in years.

KEPPERMAN

Why haven't you used it in years?

DAVE

Lost my drive. Lost my juices. I'm old, worn out. I had my fun, but that time is now past. I've put it away, permanently. No more diddling with my diddle stick. But then Emily showed up, and I felt something stir. That old feeling came back, like I had when I was a young stud, riding women left and right. You know, when I was a man.

KEPPERMAN

Tell me more about when you were a man.

DAVE

There's not much to tell. I was always infatuated with women, but also terrified of them, afraid that they would reject me. Rejection is so painful, but also so liberating. Who the hell wants to live with them? Deal with their nagging and bitchiness. Do you feel the same way? You're a man. Aren't you?

KEPPERMAN

Yes, I am a man.

DAVE

Then you should understand exactly what I'm talking about. Women hate us. They torment us with their seductive clothes and manipulations all meant to drive us crazy.

KEPPERMAN

Do you have any particular woman in mind?

DAVE

Yes, I do, but how do I know I can trust you?

KEPPERMAN

Because I am a medical doctor.

DAVE

That's just a front. You're a mind picker, that's what you are.

KEPPERMAN

Okay, Dave. I'm not here to argue with you. If you do not cooperate then I will not be able to help you.

DAVE

Oh, the old turn the table on the victim routine. But it won't work with me. I'm already on to you. Now I know your name is Boris and you're in cahoots with the agency that wants my brain. Well, you can't have it. It's in my head and that where it will stay. You hear?

KEPPERMAN

Calm down, or I'll have to sedate you.

DAVE

You Russians are clever. Posing as doctors and refugees and what not.

KEPPERMAN

I am not Russian.

DAVE

Your denial means nothing. You are a KGB operative who has infiltrated into my country and maybe my brain. Who else is working with you? Saul? Ralph? Emily? Are they part of your gang? Next thing, you'll be forcing me to eat borscht. Personally I prefer pastrami but it's bad for my cholesterol level.

KEPPERMAN

You mentioned a particular woman. Could you tell me more about her?

DAVE

I don't want to. You're KGB. You're a mind picker. You're messing with my mind. I don't even know why I'm here wasting my time talking with you.

KEPPERMAN

I told you why. You were at dinner, had some kind of mental lapse, your friends called an ambulance which brought you here.

DAVE

Emily is responsible. I knew it. She was playing me. She wanted me to flip so she could get into my head and suck it dry. Women do stuff like that.

KEPPERMAN

Do you know any Russians who are posing as refugees?

DAVE

Why do you ask that?

KEPPERMAN

Before you mentioned Russians posing as refugees, so I thought you may know of some.

DAVE

Let me get one thing straight right now: I did not, nor would I ever, help anyone enter my country illegally. I'm for tight borders. No one allowed in without a guest pass.

KEPPERMAN

I didn't accuse you of any wrong doing.

DAVE

But others have, and I don't like it. I was played the fool. I met her online. Then we exchanged text messages for a few months. Soon her image, and that of her darling little daughter, such a cute little thing, became embedded in my brain. All this happened through my cell phone! From Russia! Or maybe from Paris or Istanbul. Who knows? She was a master manipulator. I didn't realize it then, but she wanted to use me to try to sneak into the United States and destroy my country. I didn't know! I did not commit treason! Please, I beg you, don't send me up the creek without a paddle! I thought she cared!

KEPPERMAN

I'm not a police officer. I'm here to help you, not arrest you.

DAVE

For a KGB man you are very nice. Perhaps one day we could meet somewhere for a snack.

KEPPERMAN

Thank you. Now could you tell me about what happened with you and this woman?

DAVE

What woman?

KEPPERMAN

The one you met online.

DAVE

Right. Anyway, next thing this lady started bombarding me with text messages trying to get me to meet her in Mexico and help her cross the border. I became frantic. I never felt so conflicted in my life. I didn't want to say yes but I couldn't tell her no, because if I told her no I was afraid I would lose her, and I didn't want to lose her because I had invested too much time in her already. So the text messaging went on and on and on. I wanted to smash my cellphone to make the messages stop, but didn't have the guts to do it. I feared divine retribution. My cell phone kept telling me, "Don't do it. Don't do it." Plus, my phone wasn't insured. I thought my head was going to explode.

My cellphone kept telling me, “Don’t do it. Don’t do it.” Plus, my phone wasn’t

KEPPERMAN

How did you deal with it?

DAVE

By watching sports on television, especially professional football games. The noise from my television set put me to sleep within minutes. Every night. Without fail.

KEPPERMAN

How's your head feel now?

DAVE

Like mush.

KEPPERMAN

I'll give you a sedative.

DAVE

Actually, I'd prefer watching more football.

KEPPERMAN

I'll see what I could do about getting the television in your room turned on.

DAVE

Thanks. Also, maybe you could do me one other favor.

KEPPERMAN

What is it?

DAVE

Could you go out and order me a cheeseburger deluxe and a coke? Suddenly I'm feeling very hungry. And while you're at it, get me a pretty nurse too, someone like Emily, but that may be asking too much.

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: Three months later

Place: The same restaurant as in scene 1. Saul, Ralph and Dave are seated at the same table. Dave is about seventy-five pounds heavier.

SAUL

It's good to have you back. We missed you.

RALPH

Yeah. You gave us quite a scare. It was touch and go there for a while.

DAVE

It's good to be home. Three months in that hospital was more than enough for me.

SAUL

Well, I'm glad you're feeling better.

DAVE

I am too.

RALPH

It looks like they were feeding you good in the hospital.

DAVE

There was nothing for me to do except eat. So I ate. I hope that doesn't bother you.

SAUL

Not at all.

RALPH

No. Not in the least bit. A pal is a pal, no matter how much he weighs.

DAVE

I'm still a little fuzzy over how I wound up in the hospital. Was I really that wacky?

SAUL

Well, you were saying some bizarre things and getting agitated.

DAVE

All I remember is that we were talking and the next thing I'm in the hospital talking to a shrink. By the way, does that waitress still work here?

RALPH

You mean Emily?

DAVE

Yeah. Emily. I thought of her from time to time.

Emily enters.

RALPH

Speaking of Emily. Here she is right now.

EMILY

Dave. It's so nice to see you back. I hope you're feeling better.

DAVE

You knew about my being hospitalized?

EMILY

Yes. Saul and Ralph kept me informed.

DAVE

So while I was in the hospital, you three were talking about me? Maybe laughing at me? Having some laughs at my expense?

SAUL

Wait a minute, Dave. It wasn't like that at all.

EMILY

No, Dave. We really cared about what was happening with you. I'm sorry you took it the wrong way.

DAVE

That's right. I'm wrong. You're right. Maybe I made a mistake coming back here.

RALPH

Please don't be that way. You're with friends.

EMILY

Yes, you are.

DAVE

You're my friend too?

EMILY

Of course.

DAVE

Don't patronize me. *(pause)* Ooh. The pain in my head. It's back.

EMILY

I'm not patronizing you. You've been through a lot.

DAVE

Well. Okay. Whatever you say.

SAUL

Don't worry, Dave. You're with friends.

EMILY

So, what would you boys care to order?

End of scene 3.

Scene 4

Time: Later that evening.

*Place: An office in a government building located in Washington, D.C.
On stage are Saul, Ralph and Emily.*

SAUL

The agency wants to know how Dave is progressing. Any comments?

RALPH

It's too soon to tell. We have to give it more time. The agency really didn't give us much to work with. They managed to wash out most of his mind, but what they embedded didn't take very well.

EMILY

That's putting it mildly.

SAUL

I agree. The goal is not to scramble his brain and cause him pain, but to re-configure his neuro-pathways so as to render him receptive to commands while simultaneously maintaining a high level of social competency and intellectual fluidity. In other words, we don't want to transform Dave into a robot. Right now he's not even close to being operational. His thought processes are much too disorganized, his emotions too labile and his receptivity limited at best. According to Doctor Kepperman, Dave's breakdown was caused by a trans-neural super-refractive overload in the anterior lobe of the brain.

RALPH

That sounds serious.

SAUL

It is serious. That's the part of the brain that processes and stores sensory stimuli. The cell phone was transmitting too much data too quickly for Dave to adequately process. But glitches are to be expected. The software is still in its early stages of development.

EMILY

Did the agency choose the wrong subject?

SAUL

No. I was a part of the screening team. We exercised great care in selecting the right subject, and Dave met all the qualifications. He was retired military, was a combat veteran, had flown spy missions, had no blemishes on his record, no criminal history, and no record of serious physical or emotional impairments.

RALPH

I gave him a rough time at the restaurant. I think I was too confrontational with him. Maybe that set him off and caused him to decompensate.

SAUL

No, that wasn't it. When Dave came to us, his neuro-psychiatric template was already in a fragmented state. The degree of fragmentation could only be estimated. Section 9A thought they could work around this problem by transferring data into a new phone with more advanced circuitry, but the operation failed. It put Dave even more on edge. So don't blame yourself. We were doing our jobs. Testing him out. Saying inane stuff. Trying to see how long he could stay stable in real time and in real situations. As you know, the results were less than optimal. He still retained fragments of his original identity, hence his confusion and paranoia. However, according to Doctor Kepperman, these symptoms are transitory and are not evidence of deeper organic damage.

EMILY

How long do you think we can keep up this ruse?

SAUL

Indefinitely. We have taken all necessary precautions to make sure he is never found. Officially, he is a missing person. If he is found, the program will shut down his brain and cause him to lapse into a catatonic state.

RALPH

But how much longer can we maintain our cover? Sooner or later he may start remembering who he was.

SAUL

That is a remote possibility, but if it happens, we'll deal with it. We now have the technological potential to implant ideas into the human mind. Once we perfect that technology, then we will proceed to stage two, worldwide application. The whole world will march to the beat of one central drum, our drum. Peace and serenity will flourish. Human strife will become a relic of the past. For the first time in history, people will not have to live in fear.

EMILY

But what about freewill?

SAUL

It will be abolished. Freewill is what got us humans into trouble in the first place. It is just another term for licentiousness. Over and over again throughout history it has brought us to the brink of destruction. To save humanity, we must act now to eliminate freewill once and for all.

EMILY

But isn't freewill an inalienable right?

SAUL

Pure liberal poppycock based on a lie. Clever politicians concocted that myth to legitimize their own grab for power. The Declaration of Independence includes the words life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. What Mister Jefferson and his associates conveniently failed to add was the disclaimer "at someone else's expense." Look what the unrestrained exercise of freewill has produced. Nonstop wars, riots, crime, domestic strife. The whole gamut of social maladies that place the entire human race at risk. We're not the bad guys here. We're the good guys. We're the cavalry coming to save the day. To save humanity from itself.

EMILY

I don't mean to press the point, but who are we to try to reverse what is a part of human nature?

SAUL

We are the people who are fed up with all the chaos sown by others who want to keep us divided. Unity means strength, disunity means weakness. You're familiar with Lincoln's house divided speech, aren't you? In that speech Lincoln said, and I quote, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand," closed quote. He was right. Diversity is just another word for division which pits man against man, woman against woman, woman against man, man against woman, group against group, nation against nation, and class against class, and is the cause of all the infighting that makes life miserable for all of us. That is why the government created our agency, known to the public as the Federal Agency for Interactive Research, or FAIR, to deal with this threat once and for all.

RALPH

So the public is in on this?

SAUL

No. Our project is top secret. Officially FAIR's mission is to coordinate and monitor all publicly funded scientific research. However, its secret mission is to provide bureaucratic cover, logistical support and most importantly an unimpeded stream of funding for this project. Due to its very nature, our project must be cloaked in secrecy. Now, do either of you have any more questions?

EMILY

No. I'm good

RALPH

Me too.

SAUL

Then don't waste my time again asking me foolish questions. Concentrate your energies on completing our mission and take pride in the knowledge that you are on the cutting edge of something new, something that will elevate humanity to new levels of accomplishment and guarantee our security and survival.

EMILY

I do feel pride, but I must admit that occasionally I have second thoughts about what we are doing.

SAUL

That is normal. After all, it takes tremendous willpower to reverse a lifetime of social conditioning. I struggle with it too. We all do. We've been brainwashed into believing that freewill is good and that any alternative is bad, even unnatural. But we must get beyond that and look at the larger picture. It's all for a greater good.

EMILY

Hitler and Stalin said much the same thing.

SAUL

So they did, but with one important difference. They lacked the technological capability, and the imagination, to systematically restructure human thought. Instead, they relied on brute force to break down resistance and impose their will. We will not have to resort to such barbaric and disruptive tactics. Our method, once perfected, will be painless. No fuss. No bother. Modern technology that will finally unite the entire human race.

RALPH

If only Dave knew what he is doing for humanity.

EMILY

It's too bad we can't do more to ease his pain.

SAUL

Stop thinking such sentimental rubbish. I noticed that you seemed to be gravitating to him. It would be unwise for you to become emotionally involved. By doing so, you will lose all sense of objectivity and place the entire project in jeopardy, and as section chief I will not let that happen.

EMILY

He's still a human being.

RALPH

We know that, but he's not the person he used to be, literally. He's a test subject, period. Under other circumstances, he and I could have been the best of friends. It's too bad.

SAUL

It is tempting to throw caution to the wind and tell Dave about the project. But we can't tell him, ever. It would destroy our work, and destroy his mind.

EMILY

But what if his memory comes back in one spurt?

SAUL

Then we will have to consider implementing emergency procedure number three.

EMILY

I hope it doesn't come to that.

RALPH

We all hope that.

SAUL

When we signed on to this project, we all took an oath of absolute fidelity to the program. Don't forget that. The agency informed each of us upfront about the purpose of this project and what it would entail. The time for having second thoughts is passed.

EMILY

Yes, I know that. It's just that ...

SAUL

There can be no "it's just that." Let me repeat: the time for having second-thoughts is passed. Right now, our immediate task is to protect the integrity of the project, which means keeping Dave under control while we re-program the software to eliminate the glitches. We can't have Dave malfunctioning again. Dave's hospitalization gave us time to reconfigure certain circuits to block extraneous messages that could trigger an adverse response. This time the device will work. It must work. We must move this project forward. Time is of the essence and funding is limited. The agency is depending on us. So let's do this and do it right, for the sake of science, for our country and for the world. Are you with me?

EMILY

Yes! I'm with you!

RALPH

Me too!

SAUL

Good. Then let's get back to work. We have a new world to build.

EMILY
(to herself)

And conquer.

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: Same as scene 4

Place: Dave's apartment. Dave is alone. He is talking to his cell phone.

DAVE

I know you're inside there, my little friend. No need to hide. I won't hurt you. I couldn't hurt you. We're buddies. I don't hate you anymore. I just wish you wouldn't be so quick with the switch. It makes my head hurt and makes me feel so tired. We served together somewhere but I don't know exactly where. Everything is so fuzzy. I have all these images flashing through my brain. Planes. Tanks. Uniforms. Women. Captain Randall Kalvokian, whoever he might be. Let me call my mother. Maybe she can help me sort things out. But you know what? I don't remember my mother's name. How can I not remember my mother's name? What guy can ever forget his own mother's name? What the hell is happening to me?
WHO AM I?

The end.

