

Stupidity Unleashed and other nonsense

by Phillip W. Weiss

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Characters

The Professors:

Gloria Verdonsky

Simon Wallington

Robert Van Gaslinger

Clarence Rathington

Elmer Passilevsky

Rosanna Weinstock-Malloy

Egbert Yaroslavsky

Diana Tellovessi

Hyman Dinglehooper

General Wilbur Lamont

General Abdul Al-Raheem

General Samantha Strong-Jones

The Politicians

Joanna Jensen-Schwartz

Harold J. Brennington

Ergon Olivarsky

The Classroom

Vernon Carpollini

Janey

Jimmy

“I like your two plus two equals five synergy.”

Sen. Chris Koons

“There are times when we share denial information.”

FBI Director Christopher Wray

“Garbage in, garbage out.”

Sen. Brian Schatz

“Being more precise with data.”

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito

“Are there still more messages to be sent?”

Sen. Lindsey Graham

“Enter into the truth and let it affect you.”

Rev. Donald Haggerty

“We’re going to follow the truth wherever it leads.”

“Weaponization of students.”

Sen. Mark Warner

“They know it’s a hoax.”

President Donald Trump

Sources:

United States Senate, President’s 2020 FBI Budget Request, subcommittee hearing, May 7, 2019

Haggerty, Donald. Homily, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, 9:00 AM Mass, April 21, 2019

Warner, Mark. Christian Science Monitor. The Monitor Breakfast, May 9, 2019

United States President. Trump, Donald. News conference, May 9, 2019

Stupidity: the condition of being stupid. Its symptoms are as follows:

- 1. Rigidity of thought**
- 2. Denial of facts**
- 3. Inflated feeling of self-righteousness**
- 4. Lack of insight**
- 5. Intellectual inflexibility**

If left untreated, the consequences can be serious. This condition is known to produce irrational patterns of thought and behavior that are annoying, baffling and even dangerous. There is no known cure for stupidity. It strikes without warning. Its incubation period varies, depending on the virulence of the infection. Its prevalence is worldwide and every person on the planet is susceptible to contracting it.

***Phillip W. Weiss
A Short History of Stupidity (2015)***

Scene 1

Time: the present.

Place: A room at the Radbourn State Institution for Advance Bio-mathematical Studies. Two men and a woman are engaged in an animated discussion. Their names are Gloria Verdonsky, Simon Wallington and Robert Van Gaslinger. All three are professors of bio-mathematics.

GLORIA

No way. Absolutely out of the question.

SIMON

The results are irrefutable.

ROBERT

Nothing is irrefutable.

SIMON

This is.

GLORIA

Pure rubbish. All of it.

SIMON

Our methodology was beyond reproach. You know that because you designed the study.

GLORIA

You need not remind me of that.

ROBERT

My dear professor, you cannot deny it. It was your program that led to this astounding discovery.

GLORIA

And which will make me the laughing stock of the university and maybe the entire bio-mathematical community.

ROBERT

Nobody is laughing.

SIMON

I'm certainly not laughing.

GLORIA

Oh, stop trying to be so nice.

ROBERT

It's not a question of being nice. It's about giving credit where credit is due.

GLORIA

But I don't want credit for producing what is junk.

ROBERT

Maybe it's junk to you, but to me it is a discovery so profound that it can change the world.

GLORIA

I don't know what world you are living in, but it sure isn't mine.

SIMON

How can you quibble over such trivialities at a time like this?

GLORIA

It's not a triviality, as you put it. Knowing that you are where you think you are has its uses too.

ROBERT

I know where I am. Do you?

GLORIA

I am here. Where else would I be?

ROBERT

You can be somewhere else and not even know it.

SIMON

And I can be the King of Bulgaria and not know that either. What's your point?

ROBERT

Don't ask me. Ask her. She brought up the subject.

SIMON

Listen to yourselves. You sound like two little kids bickering over a toy.

GLORIA

I'm okay with that. Kids are honest.

ROBERT

So, what you're saying that we're not honest? That's no way to think of your friends.

GLORIA

What makes you think we're friends?

SIMON

Of course, we're friends. Here we are spending time together.

GLORIA

Trying to figure out what to do with the idiotic garbage that I discovered.

ROBERT

It's not idiotic. It's brilliant. The board will love it.

GLORIA

The board will hate it, just as I hate it. It defies all logic.

SIMON

It does not. It makes perfect sense.

GLORIA

Maybe to you it does, but that doesn't surprise me. You're the one who spent eighteen years trying to prove that pigs in fact can fly.

SIMON

And I proved it!

ROBERT

Simon, please, you know how that became a farce.

SIMON

After all these years, you still don't believe me.

GLORIA

That's because there was nothing to believe.

SIMON

And that's because you refused to accept my evidence, which was irrefutable.

ROBERT

I sat on the board that reviewed your findings and frankly we couldn't stop laughing.

GLORIA

I found it sad how they mocked you.

SIMON

That's because they had closed minds that refused to listen to the truth.

ROBERT

Oh, no, that wasn't it at all. Our minds were quite open. It was the research that was flawed.

SIMON

How could you say that? I conducted twenty-seven double blind studies that proved beyond all doubt that pigs could fly.

GLORIA

I read somewhere that your experiments, as you called them, were conducted under less than purely scientific conditions.

ROBERT

That's putting it mildly.

SIMON

My methodology was beyond reproach. I still remember the first moment when I achieved success.

ROBERT

Unverified of course.

SIMON

I repeated it twenty-six times, each time with the same results. I was elated.

ROBERT

I bet you were.

GLORIA

What got you started in that line of research?

SIMON

I grew up on a farm in central Nebraska. My parents raised hogs. So, from earliest times I can remember I was around pigs. I learned to love everything about them. Their smell, their squeals, their love of life and love for each other. My first friend was in fact a pig. I named him Ernie.

GLORIA

You were friends with a pig named Ernie. How nice. What did the two of you do?

SIMON

We used to run and jump and play. It was so much fun. Much better than playing with humans, who I found obnoxious.

ROBERT

So, you see, the idea of one plus one being three is not so preposterous after all.

GLORIA

Robert, do you know what you're saying?

ROBERT

I know exactly what I'm saying.

GLORIA

It flies in the face of all logic.

ROBERT

No more so than saying that pigs can fly.

SIMON

I can attest to that.

GLORIA

No, you can't because it is a physical impossibility.

SIMON

You do have a very closed mind.

ROBERT

Science is all about making new discoveries.

GLORIA

Based on verifiable evidence and rigorous testing.

SIMON

I conducted at least forty-seven experiments that proved conclusively that pigs can fly.

GLORIA

Show me your published results.

SIMON

You have some nerve doubting me. Remember, I am a full professor of bio-mathematics.

GLORIA

So what? Where's your findings?

SIMON

They were published in the Journal of Scientific Discoveries published quarterly at Quan-Cock University, People's Republic of South Zanzibar.

ROBERT

A university with an impeccable reputation for academic excellence. It is rated five stars by the International Association of Scholastic Institutions.

GLORIA

And no stars by me.

ROBERT

Your anger baffles me. You make an astounding discovery and now ridicule us for expressing our congratulations and support.

GLORIA

You don't know what you're talking about.

SIMON

Yes, we do. Your discovery will change the way we relate to the world and to each other. It will have the most profound effect on every facet of human life.

GLORIA

You're making a huge mountain out of a tiny mole hill.

ROBERT

No. The mountain is real, and together we will climb it to the top, and to fame and success!

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: The next day

Place: a room at Radborn State Institution. Seated around a table are three people: Professors Clarence Rathington, Elmer Passilevsky, and Rosanna Weinstock-Malloy. They are engaged in a lively discussion.

CLARENCE

No way! It is impossible! I refuse to believe it!

ROSANNA

This is what I heard.

CLARENCE

You must have heard it wrong.

ROSANNA

Excuse me? Are you accusing me that of not hearing things, right?

ELMER

Nobody is accusing you of anything.

ROSANNA

Clarence did just that.

CLARENCE

Because you are spreading a rumor. Nothing but a malicious lie to make the university look bad.

ROSANNA

Why would I want to do that?

CLARENCE

Because you hate this place.

ELMER

Wait a minute, Clarence. I think you're going a bit too far.

CLARENCE

Oh, am I? She concocts this crazy story about some cockamamie new discovery and now wants us to believe it.

ROSANNA

What did you want me to do? Not tell you? Aren't we colleagues?

ELMER

Yes, we are colleagues.

CLARENCE

But not for the dissemination of bunk.

ELMER

Look, Clarence, none of us like what the bio-mathematical department is up to. But there's no need to fly off the handle and make reckless accusations.

CLARENCE

(to Rosanna)

Aren't you friends with Professor Verdonsky?

ROSANNA

Yes, I am. So what?

CLARENCE

So, there! You're in on this conspiracy to make us look like fools. Admit it!

ROSANNA

That is absolutely-untrue. My first loyalty is to the Department of Molecular Philosophy, of which I am the deputy chair.

CLARENCE

And of which I am the chair and Elmont the vice chair.

ELMER

It's important that we all stick together during this crisis.

CLARENCE

The nerve of them to try to upstage us. For years we have been working on the exact same project, and now, if you believe Rosanna, we will become the laughing stocks of the world.

ELMER

Our propositional theory that supported our hypothesis was sound, and still is.

ROSANNA

Actually we can claim to have made the discovery first.

CLARENCE

Three years ago, we demonstrated that combining two constants can produce more than one result. We proved it, and now the bio-mathematics will get all the credit.

ROSANNA

You mean I proved.

CLARENCE

No I mean we proved it.

ROSANNA

The work product that my research generated was entirely mine.

ELMER

Yes, it was. However, I provided consultative oversight.

CLARENCE

And I provide the administrative support necessary to allow you to do your work. Hence, while you may have done much of the hands-on work, it was still a team effort for which we all deserve credit.

ROSANNA

That is unfair! I did the work and so must be given the credit.

CLARENCE

Such ingratitude.

ROSANNA

Ingratitude nothing! I'm talking about fairness.

CLARENCE

I am being fair. The initial proposal was the product of a collaborative effort.

ELMER

I first proposed the study.

CLARENCE

In that you are mistaken. I first raised the subject. It was at O'Leary's Bar and Grill on Demson Street. We were having a couple of scotch and waters ...

ELMER

That I paid for.

CLARENCE

And for which I expressed my deepest thanks and appreciation, when I first told you about my interest in trying to introduce new rules of logic.

ELMER

I also remember that you had had a lot to drink and was very drunk.

CLARENCE

I was not. My thinking then, as well as now, was as clear as a bell.

ELMER

Yes, a broken bell.

ROSANNA

Can you gentlemen please settle this dispute later? I'm more concerned with what's happening now and now with who was drunk and who paid the bill.

CLARENCE

It's important to get the record straight.

ELMER

But not when it's coming from a broken record player.

CLARENCE

Are you calling me broken?

ELMER

No. Just the record player.

ROSANNA

What record player? What are you guys talking about?

ELMER

I was using metaphors to try to make a point but apparently it went over everyone's heads.

CLARENCE

You keep on talking like this and I'll do an audit of your funding.

ELMER

All of which was approved by you.

CLARENCE

And which I can disapprove too, if you don't watch it.

ELMER

You know, Clarence, sometimes you're such a pumpkin head. He's been threatening to cut off my funding for the past nineteen years.

CLARENCE

You're lucky that you're married to my sister.

ELMER

And you're lucky to have me for a brother-in-law.

CLARENCE

I still think the Jets-Colt game was fixed.

ELMER

You still haven't forgiven me for winning that bet.

ROSANNA

Gentlemen, can we please get back to discussing the business at hand.

ELMER

Yes, it is an injustice.

CLARENCE

Remember how we were told that that it is not the business of molecular philosophy to meddle in such matters and how we should stick to teaching about morality and ethics and all that other stuff and leave the real research to others much more qualified than us?

ELMER

Yes, I do.

ROSANNA

I do too. Such insults. I was outraged.

CLARENCE

If you were, you never showed it.

ROSANNA

I'm not as open as you when it comes to showing my emotions.

CLARENCE

You certainly are a cool one, as cool as a cucumber, and just as moist, if bitten by the right person.

ROSANNA

Professor! I resent those sexist remarks.

CLARENCE

Resent them all you want. They're still true.

ROSANNA

How would you know?

ELMER

Clarence, let's drop this subject.

ROSANNA

No. Let's not. For years I've been doing the heavy lifting for this department but still have not been promoted.

CLARENCE

That's because the two senior chairs are currently occupied.

ROSANNA

No. It's because this department has glass ceiling for women.

CLARENCE

You see, Elmont, what I mean? She concocts stories. (to Rosanna) You think your friends in bio-mathematics would treat you better?

ROSANNA

I think they would.

CLARENCE

If you don't like it here, then put in for transfer. I won't oppose it.

ELMER

Now let's not be too hasty. We need you, Rosanna.

ROSANNA

Elmer, I've always had the utmost respect for you, even after that incident five years ago at the restaurant.

CLARENCE

Must you bring that up again? So, he touched you here and there. So what?

ELMER

You know I meant no harm or disrespect.

ROSANNA

I didn't know that at the time.

ELMER

But it was just an innocent touch on the should while I was walking behind your chair to go to the men's room.

ROSANNA

Who said you could touch me? You said you wanted to meet me to discuss some new theories.

ELMER

I did, but ...

ROSANNA

But nothing. You used that as an excuse to come on to me. I felt very demeaned.

CLARENCE

You should have reported this matter to me.

ROSANNA

That would have been like reporting a bomb to the bomb-maker.

CLARENCE

Rubbish! I would have brought Elmont up on charges.

ROSANNA

And Elmer would have made my life into hell. He was my supervisor.

ELMER

I would never use my official position for personal purposes, and never did.

ROSANNA

That's because I never gave you the chance, and because I happened to have recorded the entire affair, as you now know.

ELMER

Is that why you stayed on? Because you had something on me?

ROSANNA

No. It's because I believed in your work on proto-philosophical transformations. In fact, that is why I admired you.

ELMER

Admired? As in past tense?

ROSANNA

Yes, because now I don't know what to think. Three years ago we were so close to proving the one plus one continuum. But you were afraid to pursue your research to its logical conclusion. At that point I began losing respect for you. And now, another department will get all the glory.

CLARENCE

Gee, I wonder if bio-math had received any outside help.

ROSANNA

Once again, Clarence ...

CLARENCE

Call me professor.

ROSANNA

Oh my, now we are really being touchy.

CLARENCE

Touchy is the last thing I want to be, especially with you.

ROSANNA

Whatever you say ... professor. Perhaps we should be more formal with each other. However, as I was saying, you have no cause to suspect me of doing anything underhanded.

CLARENCE

There you go again talking about hands. My dear ...

ROSANNA

Professor, if you please. Call me professor.

CLARENCE

Excuse me ... professor.

ROSANNA

That's better. Now you may continue.

CLARENCE

Thank you. Now, what was I saying?

ELMER

You were talking about the bio-math department having received outside help.

CLARENCE

Yes, thank you for reminding me. No way a bunch of brainless clods in bio-math could have come up with that solution by themselves.

ELMER

Why do you say that?

CLARENCE

Because it's true. They're just a bunch of silly nincompoops masquerading as academics.

ROSANNA

Meanwhile those nincompoops beat us to the punch on what was our flagship project.

CLARENCE

This isn't finished yet. Have either one of you had a chance to review their findings?

ELMER

I have.

CLARENCE

And?

ELMER

And what?

CLARENCE

So, what did you think of it?

ELMER

I thought they did a great job of proving their theorem.

ROSANNA

We knew for years that one and one could equal something other than two.

ELMER

But knowing it and proving it are two different things.

ROSANNA

I proved it, but Clarence, I mean professor Rathington, refused to certify my findings.

CLARENCE

Because it was complete poppycock. Your reasoning was unsound, your methodology flawed and your findings therefore invalid.

ROSANNA

No, it was because you wanted to take full credit for it. You yourself told me that.

CLARENCE

I did not, and stop attributing things to me that I did not say. There is no way I would ever want to take credit for that mountain of rubbish you so brazenly dumped on my desk.

ROSANNA

Not rubbish. Eight thousand seven hundred pages of carefully collected and collated scientific evidence that fully supported my findings.

CLARENCE

How did you expect me to read all that?

ROSANNA

Because that's your job.

CLARENCE

Don't tell me my job. That's your problem. You're too darn bossy.

ELMER

Come on now, Clarence, no need to get personal.

CLARENCE

I can't help it. She marched into my office unannounced with large boxes crammed with notes, deposits them right on my desk and then leaves without even so much as an explanation,

ROSANNA

I did give you an explanation.

CLARENCE

"Hi Clarence. Here's my paper on my research project" is not an explanation.

ROSANNA

Just because you were too lazy to look at my findings is no excuse for not having read them.

CLARENCE

I glanced at a few pages and what I read was so dumb that I couldn't stop laughing. A ten-year-old child could have done a better job.

ELMER

Oh, come on now, Clarence. Aren't you being a bit too harsh on our colleague? After all, what do you expect from the junior member of our department?

ROSANNA

I don't need to hear you two gentlemen trying to tear me down. I'm going to take this matter to the full committee. The discovery is mine! I am the first to prove that one plus one does equal three. In this I shall prevail!

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: the next day.

Place: The Office of the Department of Educational and Intellectual Truth, Radborn State Institution. Seated around a table are Professors Egbert Yaroslovsky, Diana Tellovessi and Hyman Dinglehooper.

EGBERT

I hear some talk around the campus about some new discovery. Have either of you heard anything?

HYMAN

I heard something too. Something about some big breakthrough. Just talk though.

DIANA

I haven't heard anything.

EGBERT

Where's there's smoke there's fire. I don't want to be caught flat footed if the cat is let out of the bag before we know about it.

HYMAN

Yes. We can't be too vigilant. We have some very flaky characters teaching at this campus. They're libel to come up with anything.

DIANA

Nothing's wrong with a little innovation now and then.

EGBERT

There's a difference between innovation and deceit. I don't mind innovation if it's legitimate but all too often you'll have some wacko professor try to pass off some idiotic piece of garbage as some new earth-shaking discovery driven by the desire to either make a quick buck or score political points.

HYMAN

No surprise there. Remember what happened five years ago at Corkington University when some hustler masquerading as a professor of physics announced that he had discovered a new isotope of uranium that did not produce radiation? Before you knew it, the government was offering this guy a billion dollars for the rights to his "discovery." The scandal almost put the university out of business.

EGBERT

Not to mention what happen to the president of the school. He was run out of town. I don't want that to happen here.

DIANA

I don't either, but we can't put a lid on research either. Right now I'm involved in some serious research involving a number of sensitive subjects.

HYMAN

I don't consider the relevancy of home economics courses in today's college curriculum to be a particularly sensitive or controversial subject.

DIANA

Try telling that to today's woman.

HYMAN

Why to women?

DIANA

Because even in today's modern society women are still expected to cook and clean and do the shopping and care for the kids.

HYMAN

What's wrong with that? My wife is okay with it. She runs the house.

DIANA

That's exactly what I'm talking about.

HYMAN

About my wife running the house?

DIANA

No. About how you presume that it is role of women to do housework based solely on their gender.

HYMAN

What of it? Somebody has to be home to take care of the home. Women are best equipped to do that.

EGBERT

I agree with that. A woman's touch is always needed to keep a home in order.

DIANA

Where are you guys coming from?

EGBERT

Don't call me guy. Remember, I'm the department chair and authorize your research grant.

DIANA

Look, I'm sorry, but your comments stunned me.

EGBERT

Well, get un-stunned. This department will never condone or provide a safe haven for any irresponsible thoughts that are meant to incite or Cause confusion of sow doubt.

DIANA

I didn't say anything that is irresponsible. I was just informing you of my reaction to what you had said. Why are you getting so bent out of shape? We're just talking, exchanging thoughts.

EGBERT

Our system of values is under attack. If we do not act now to weed out all the crackpot and degenerate ideas in circulation, then our way of life will end and we will join the long list of civilizations that once flourished but are now extinct. Do you want to become an item in a museum, like the Hittites and ancient Egyptians?

DIANA

Now you're becoming hysterical.

EGBERT

Not hysterical. Concerned. Concerned for our future as a species. So many things out there meant to drive people crazy, like this rumor or story about one and one equaling three.

Who would ever buy that?
HYMAN

You.
DIANA

Me?
HYMAN

DIANA
Yes, you. Any man who still believes that a woman's place is in the home is capable of believing anything.

Young lady ...
HYMAN

That's professor ...
DIANA

To me you're a young lady.
HYMAN

Stop defining who I am.
DIANA

I'm just trying to be polite.
HYMAN

DIANA
No. You're being sexist and patronizing.

HYMAN
But it was I who helped you join our department.

DIANA
That was pure business, who did you have something else in mind?

HYMAN

Oh my: What have I have I done to offend you? (to *Egbert*) What have I done to set her off like this?

DIANA

Don't ask him, ask me.

HYMAN

I did ask you but you didn't reply.

DIANA

You didn't give me a chance to reply.

HYMAN

I thought we were friends.

DIANA

No, we are colleagues and I find your comments offensive.

HYMAN

Because I called you a young lady? I fail to find how that could upset you. In fact, it's the truth. You are young and you are a lady, aren't you?

DIANA

You see. You're continuing to define me based solely on my gender. Your intellectual rigidity and irrational prejudice, especially in this day and age, astounds me.

HYMAN

I remember growing up and watching my little sister play house and my older brother play cops and robbers. Nobody took offense and nobody forced them to play those games. They did it on their own.

DIANA

So, based solely upon that you can draw conclusions about gender roles?

EGBERT

That's the problem with research. None of is really objective.

DIANA

Mine is.

HYMAN

Coming from you, that statement is self-serving.

DIANA

But it's the truth.

EGBERT

What is the truth?

HYMAN

Something which is based on facts.

DIANA

Not when those facts are selectively compiled.

EGBERT

You know, all you brainiacs are alike. Always nitpicking, each one trying to upstage the other. You think you know so much when you know nothing.

HYMAN

Oh my, aren't we the touchy one.

DIANA

Oh, don't be such a sour puss. We're just talking.

EGBERT

You mean like when they were just talking when that sleaze ball at Yardley announced that he discovered the formula that proves that a square is actually a circle.

HYMAN

I thought it was a brilliant discovery.

EGBERT

Just shows what a dolt you really are.

HYMAN

You know, Egbert, I could take offense at that remark.

EGBERT

Then do so.

DIANA

I read about that in the Journal of Advanced Sub-Nuclear Mathematics. According to the article, it took a team of scientists at Yardley, financed by a two-billion dollar grant from the National Mathematics Foundation, fourteen years to develop the formula that proved beyond all doubt that the square is in fact round.

HYMAN

Gee, I wonder why it took so long for them to make that discovery? You think it had something to do with getting money from the government?

EGBERT

Yes, it did. And then the feds sued the school for fraud.

HYMAN

Big deal. The money was gone, already spent. But gravy train was good while it lasted.

EGBERT

At the taxpayers' expense. What a waste. I don't want this school to go that route.

HYMAN

We should follow the money trail. If the government thinks that we are onto something big, then they will pay us, big, as long as we can show them that we're making progress.

EGBERT

You know, Hyman, sometimes I think you would have done better as a racketeer than as a professor of English literature.

DIANA

Both have their merits. A racketeer is out to make money fast while an English professor writes a poem about it.

HYMAN

There is a lot more to English lit than writing poetry. Personally I have never written a verse of poetry in my life. I couldn't rhyme two lines in a poem if the sentences ended in cat and bat.

DIANA

If you can't write poetry than how can you teach it?

HYMAN

My dear Diana, being able to do poetry is not the same as being able to teach it. Some of the greatest poets in history probably would have flunked my class.

DIANA

But isn't the study of English literature about inspiring creativity?

HYMAN

No. Actually it does the opposite. It is so boring and dry that most of my students wind up falling asleep in class.

DIANA

I think I slept my way through half of my classes when I was a student. In my history and political science and archeology classes, my brain automatically went on auto pilot. Once I keeled over and fell off my chair. It was embarrassing.

EGBERT

How did you do in these classes?

DIANA

Got straight A's.

EGBERT

If you slept your way through these classes, then how did you get all A's?

DIANA

By sleeping my way through those classes.

HYMAN

You mean you learned while sleeping?

DIANA

Not exactly.

EGBERT

I think Diana is using the word sleep in another sense. Is that right?

DIANA

Well, professor, there is more than one meaning to the word, but I don't want to get caught up in semantics. Let's just say I was doing some research.

HYMAN

I still don't quite understand. Research on the relationship between sleeping and learning?

DIANA

Actually, more on the relationship between sleeping and academic success.

HYMAN

What did you find?

DIANA

I found that the more I slept the better my grades.

HYMAN

Where did you conduct your research?

DIANA

Both on and off campus.

HYMAN

It must have been quite a project.

DIANA

It was. I met a lot interesting people.

HYMAN

Did that include members of the faculty?

DIANA

Especially members of the faculty. They were some of my closest colleagues and mentors.

HYMAN

Did you publish your findings?

DIANA

I kept voluminous notes but never published anything formal.

HYMAN

That's too bad because I would have liked to have read your findings. I have a doctor friend of my who treats sleep disorders. He believes that there is a definite correlation between lack of sleep and onset of dementia.

DIANA

My research had to do with sleep as a method of achieving social advancement. Maybe you can write a poem about it.

HYMAN

If you tell me more about it, maybe I will.

EGBERT

Diana, your academic exploits as a student are quite fascinating, and I'd love to hear more about it, but we have more immediate and pressing matters to discuss.

HYMAN

Here we go again. Always the party pooper.

EGBERT

Business is business, as the saying goes, and we have business to discuss. So let's stop all this malarkey and get down to business.

HYMAN

Yes, let's get it down. All the way, baby.

EGBERT

Stop trying to be cute.

DIANA

I like cute.

HYMAN

Me too. But Mister grumpy here won't have it. Loosen up. Have you considered throwing an office party? According to a twenty-seven million-dollar research study, there is a direct correlation between office parties and creative activity. So, let's have a party.

EGBERT

I considered doing just that but unfortunately it is something we cannot afford. Now, what about all this talk about some new discovery or breakthrough?

HYMAN

I heard that the bio-mathematical department is onto something really exciting.

DIANA

Bio-math? Since when did they get their own department?

HYMAN

Beats me. One day I heard that the school had a bio-mathematics department. But in a place like this, anything is possible.

EGBERT

I'm going to look into this further. I can't have departments cropping up willy-nilly.

HYMAN

No, we can't. Who do they think they are anyway? Bio-math. Where did they come up with such a stupid combination?

DIANA

Yes, perhaps it does require further investigation. But in the meantime, let's at least go out for a snack, or netter yet order in some food. After all, we college professors and college professors have to eat too.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: same as the previous scene

Place: a conference room in the Pentagon

On stage are three persons, two men and a woman. All are in military uniforms and all have the rank of general. Their names are General Wilbur Lamont, General Abdul Al-Raheem, and General Samantha Strong-Jones. They are professors at the United States Military Peace College.

WILBUR

I've been reviewing a report from one of our operatives at Radborn State Institution. It's quite interesting.

ABDUL

What's it say?

WILBUR

It doesn't say anything. It's a report.

ABDUL

I'm just using a figure of speech.

SAMANTHA

You see how communication can get jumbled?

WILBUR

It happens all the time. Too many figures of speech.

ABDUL

Excuse, sir, but I speak clearly and plainly.

SAMANTHA

Please don't take offense. We have work to do.

ABDUL

Okay, I won't.

WILBUR

I said nothing to give offense.

ABDUL

Now he's offended.

SAMANTHA

Now both of you are offended?

WILBUR

I refuse to discuss anything further until he apologizes.

ABDUL

I will not. In fact, now I feel even more offended.

WILBUR

That goes double for me.

SAMANTHA

Gentlemen, if the two of you continue on like this, then I will be offended.

WILBUR

I can't help the way I feel. As a senior military officer in charge of a twenty-seven billion-dollar department, I can't allow anyone to try to upstage me.

ABDUL

You're pulling rank? Well, two can play the same game. Let me remind you that my department gets more funding than yours.

SAMANTHA

And let me remind the both of you that I represent the president of the United States.

WILBUR

Who called this meeting anyway?

ABDUL

That's a good question. I really don't know.

SAMANTHA

At the Peace Through War College we heard rumors about some new breakthrough in bio-mathematical logic. A new way of configuring numbers that expands our understanding of the universe and time.

WILBUR

That's exactly what I was reading about.

ABDUL

So it was you who called this meeting?

WILBUR

No.

SAMANTHA

Then who did?

ABDUL

Before I can talk about anything, we need to get to the bottom of this.

WILBUR

We're here. Why not just have the meeting?

SAMANTHA

Because unauthorized meetings are not allowed.

ABDUL

Isn't this meeting authorized?

SAMANTHA

I don't know, and frankly this worries me. Are we being manipulated by some outside force?

WILBUR

General, is this your doing? Are you trying to steal information from us?

ABDUL

I don't know what you're talking about.

WILBUR

Oh, I think you do. The fact of your denial proves that you're trying to hide something.

ABDUL

That is absurd. I've been in the army for thirty years and fought my way to one of highest administrative positions at the War College.

WILBUR

That was all politics. Look at you. You couldn't fight your way out of a paper bag.

ABDUL

Yes, I could. Get me a paper bag and I'll prove it.

SAMANTHA

How dumb is that?

ABDUL

Who are you calling dumb?

SAMANTHA

No one. I was referring to the situation and not to anyone in particular.

ABDUL

We all got here through politics.

WILBUR

Speak for yourself. I climbed the promotion ladder the hard way. By pulling straight A's in all of my classes and speaking highly of all of my professors, especially those who took a special interest in me.

ABDUL

My commanders took a special interest in me too.

WILBUR

That's because of where you were from.

ABDUL

So now you're going to use that against me.

WILBUR

Facts are facts. If you were from Hoboken, you would have never made past captain.

ABDUL

That is a lie. I gained every promotion through merit and hard work.

WILBUR

And that your father was the Emir of the Central Islamic Kingdom with close ties to the US oil and gas industry.

SAMANTHA

We know all about that at the White House.

ABDUL

You see? It's okay with the boss.

WILBUR

Which boss are you referring to?

ABDUL

I have only one boss, the president.

SAMANTHA

Of course, you do.

WILBUR

I've heard differently. Isn't true that you're in line to become king?

SAMANTHA

Is that true?

ABDUL

I have renounced all claims to the throne.

WILBUR

Prove it.

SAMANTHA

Gentlemen. We're here to discuss other matters.

WILBUR

Even though we don't know who called this meeting?

SAMANTHA

As special envoy from the White House, I'll get to the bottom of the question later. Now general, what is it in that report that caught your attention?

Wilbur stands and goes over to a chalk board.

WILBUR

It's like this. According my operative inside the bio-mathematical department, the department discovered a new theorem that proves conclusively that one plus one equals three.

SAMANTHA

And ...?

WILBUR

That's it.

ABDUL

You called to this meeting to tell me that? Everyone knows that.

WILBUR

They do?

ABDUL

Absolutely. It's been known for at least one thousand years.

SAMANTHA

But isn't one plus one two?

ABDUL

Not necessarily. Permit me to explain. Consider a triangle. When the square of the hypotenuse exceeds the tangent of the linear co-efficient, that creates a distortion in the base of the logarithmic factor to a power of nine. To make allowances for that deviation, we then need to factor in the degree of the arc that produces a parabolic equation that super-substantiates the integrity of the numerical values found in the number one. Now, please understand, that when two number ones are combined, they form a mathematical body unique to the natural world. This takes us to the biological factor. About one thousand years ago the famous mathematician Shah Rahmid ben-Yousseff bin Abcar illustrated this phenomenon in his now iconic formulation that he later published in his now famous work, the Secret World of Numbers and Their True Meaning. It is an eighteen-volume work that successfully refutes every principle of Western scientific and cultural thought including the entire work of Isaac Newton who, as Abcar proved, got it all wrong. Today his work, this tower of logical light, is buried at a secret location in the middle of the Iranian desert.

SAMANTHA

Why there?

ABDUL

In 1783, the same year the US officially won its independence from Great Britain, or so we've been told, the British discovered the Abcar writings and immediately had it banned. They also made some minor adjustments to Abcar's original equation that, in my humble opinion ...

WILBUR

You're humble?

ABDUL

Excuse me. Please don't interrupt. As I was saying, a team of British mathematicians, led by the famous professor Lord Wilmont, fifteenth Duke of Parkingshire, re-configured certain numbers in Abcar's equation. Wilmont committed this act of cultural vandalism in a deceitful attempt to get Abcar's findings to confirm the validity of Britain's most famous intellectual fraud,

Isaac Newton. Instead it produced a new set of variables that yielded yet another set of results that rendered the original equation virtually useless for anyone. Unwilling to admit their error, and desperate to conceal his crime, Wilmot ordered the original Abcar work to be suppressed and buried in a special vault located in the middle of the Pan-Iranian desert where it lies to this day. Its exact location has been lost.

SAMANTHA

So, what you are saying is that the proposition that one plus one equals three in fact is true?

ABDUL

Yes, I am. Abcar proved it, yet the West refuses to believe it.

WILBUR

We proved it too.

ABDUL

Obviously, you were not listening to me. I just told you that the theorem was discovered and proved in Persia almost a thousand years ago.

WILBUR

I listened to every word you said and frankly was not impressed. While it may be true that this Abcar fellow developed an interesting theorem that allegedly disproved what seemed to be an incontrovertible fact, namely that one plus one equals two, the fact is that everything you said was nothing but pseudo-intellectual bunk. The fact is that Abcar was onto to nothing. According to what you said, the co-efficient of the hypotenuse as it relates to the right angle is the determining factor that effects the relationship between the numbers that result therefrom. If that is the case, then the numbers would produce square roots that, when factored in with the existing set of variables, would produce a new set of coefficients that would result in a product that contradicts the original hypothesis. According to Nolling's Law of Reciprocal Numbers, such a finding is a physical impossibility. Thus, everything that Abcar published was nothing but rubbish.

ABDUL

How dare you say that? Abcar was correct. If you weren't so biased against Iranians, you would admit it.

SAMANTHA

Don't call me biased.

WILBUR

Hey, he said it, not me.

ABDUL

Because it is the truth.

WILBUR

Just like all that Abcar garbage is the truth.

SAMANTHA

General. I found your exposition on the Abcar work most interesting, especially as it relates to those factors that create a new understanding of the meaning of the sum of one. It bears an uncanny similarity to other secret research at the Institute for the Advancement of Proto-Neurological Science in Kensington, Alaska, located just a few miles south of the Arctic Circle.

WILBUR

Why was I not informed? I have the highest security clearance.

ABDUL

So, do I. I wasn't informed either.

WILBUR

I can understand the government not informing Abdul, but why did they leave me out of the loop?

SAMANTHA

I can't discuss that here. It's classified information.

WILBUR

And I have no access? Me? The officer who has been entrusted with the command of some of this nation's most sensitive academic national security research-projects?

SAMANTHA

The president felt that you were already involved with too many projects. He did not want to burden you further.

ABDUL

Can you tell us more about the current work being done in Kensington, Alaska?

SAMANTHA

Yes, the president has authorized me to bring you into loop, provided that you promise to protect the secrecy of what you are about to be told. Do you promise.

WILBUR

I promise.

ABDUL

I promise too.

SAMANTHA

Duly-noted. Okay, now both of you gentlemen are aware of the intense debate that is going on at the highest academic circles over the nature of the number or quantity we call the zero.

WILBUR

Yes, I've gone to a couple of conferences where the subject came up for discussion.

ABDUL

I attended the same conferences. I heard nothing about the subject that was especially interesting. They talked about the zero. So what?

SAMANTHA

At Kensington, the United States Secret Pseudo Science Council brought together a team of proto-neurological scientists and philosophers from all over the world to determine the feasibility of using the zero as a source of energy. They based their work, which cost the taxpayers over fifty-eight billion dollars, on a mathematical theory first propounded by the late Professor Lester J. McNally at the University of Lower Manitoba in Canada. McNally's theory, known as the McNally's Theory of Inverse-Reverse Induction, is based on a series of experiments McNally conducted on the nature and property of the zero.

WILBUR

A zero is a zero.

SAMANTHA

McNally believed that too, but in his experiments, he found that when combined the zero with another quantity, it produced a product that was more than zero. What an incredible discover! Out of nothing could be produced something. The military applications are virtually endless.

ABDUL

Could you please further expand on this so-called theory.

SAMANTHA

Of course. It's like this. When isolated the zero is a zero. That is of course a tautology. Something is something and not something else. Standing alone a zero is nothing. It is vacuous. It denotes emptiness. A vacuum, the lack of matter, a blank. However, through a series of rigorous experiments, each involving a double-blind super-retigular study, Professor McNally was able to harness the inner anti-molecular structure that make up the zero. But to do this, first he had to prove that the zero was in fact not a zero. This was a daunting task. Heretofore it was presumed that a zero was nothing. However, by applying the theory of the anti-matter inverse-reverse proto-pseudo-psychological continuum, which asserts that there is no such thing as absolute nothingness, McNally succeeded in discovering and isolating the sub-electronic super-sub-atomic substructure of the zero.

ABDUL

I don't quite follow.

SAMANTHA

Okay. Let me give you a simple analogy. You know the phrase doing nothing. Right?

ABDUL

Yes.

SAMANTHA

Good. Doing nothing sounds pretty-straight forward. Doing nothing means just that. Doing nothing. However, by doing nothing, are we not in fact doing something? That by doing nothing we are in fact doing something which is doing

nothing? The same thing applies to the zero. Its apparent nothingness is something. Nothing is something. Isn't it beautiful? So simple. So self-evident. It is that something of nothingness that makes the zero so valuable. Gone are the days when a number multiplied by zero equaled zero. Now that formula will yield untold power. It is just a matter of developing the technology to enable us to tap into the unlimited source of energy stored up in the zero's super-sub-atomic proto-super-structure.

WILBUR

I can imagine the day when all our weapons will be powered by nothing.

SAMANTHA

Now you got it. This is exactly what is being worked on right now. Isn't it exciting?

ABDUL

The possibilities are endless. Unlimited energy. No more need for war.

WILBUR

I wouldn't go that far.

SAMANTHA

You may be right.

WILBUR

No way. We will always need the military.

ABDUL

I'm in the military too, but unlike you, I'm willing to put the needs of my country ahead of my own petty personal needs.

WILBUR

That's easy for you to say. Your father is a king. I need my job to survive.

SAMANTHA

Nobody said that anyone will be losing jobs.

WILBUR

But that's only inevitable. When researchers finally combine the Kensington findings with the McNally Theorem, we will possess the capability to produce a zero-powered bomb that will make the hydrogen bomb seem like a fire cracker. The military as we know it will become obsolete.

ABDUL

That's good.

WILBUR

No. That's bad. We need the military to keep the economy going.

ABDUL

No, we don't.

WILBUR

I knew it. You want us to be defenseless. Don't you? Admit it.

ABDUL

Don't be absurd.

WILBUR

Don't call me absurd.

SAMANTHA

Gentlemen: stop this bickering. This is not the time or place to discuss matter of policy.

WILBUR

I disagree. This is exactly the time and place to discuss matters of policy.

SAMANTHA

Let me remind you that we are not elected officials.

WILBUR

Meanwhile I still have no idea who called this meeting or why I am here.

ABDUL

We're here to discuss some really-important research.

WILBUR

I know that, but for what-purpose?

SAMANTHA

That's the president's call.

WILBUR

Does he know about this potential new weapon's system?

SAMANTHA

The president knows everything.

ABDUL

Everything?

SAMANTHA

Well, not literally everything.

WILBUR

Does he actually understand the nature of the research? He not exactly the professor type.

SAMANTHA

And what is the professor type?

WILBUR

Someone who is an intellectual snob.

ABDUL

You're a professor, so that must make you a snob too.

WILBUR

Not exactly. I'm a military officer first and the professor second.

ABDUL

So what? You're still a professor.

WILBUR

As you are as well. In fact, as the three of us are. So much book learning, yet here we are, gabbing away like crazy birds who drive people crazy with their incessant chirping. How I hate that sound. It is the worst sound in the world. Every time I hear it I want to kill something.

ABDUL

I hate grinding and buzzing sounds. They penetrate into the depth of my brain. I completely go to pieces whenever I hear it. Just thinking about it makes me want to vomit, or punch a hole through a wall.

SAMANTHA

Haven't you ever heard of ear plugs?

WILBUR

I tried that. They don't work. I've also tried relaxation therapy, cognitive therapy, insight-oriented therapy, eating chocolate cake, drinking gallons of vodka, reciting Shakespeare at the top of my lungs, and running the fifty thousand-meter marathon. None of it works. In fact, they made things worse.

SAMANTHA

Why don't you try putting your head under water for five or ten minutes or even longer?

WILBUR

I abhor water. I drink it only because I must and bath in it as infrequently as possible. But I may give your suggestion a try.

ABDUL

I did try it.

WILBUR

Did it work?

ABDUL

Yes. It made me unconscious. But the cure is only temporary. The effect wears off once you are revived. Sometimes I wonder if it would help if I wasn't revived.

SAMANTHA

That could help too. Maybe we should ask Congress to appropriate a couple of billion dollars for research on noise abatement.

WILBUR

Why only a couple of billion? Why not five or ten billion?

ABDUL

I agree with that. No need to short change ourselves, right? After all, the taxpayers expect a lot from us.

SAMANTHA

I'll bring it up with the president.

WILBUR

That would be greatly appreciated. And while you're at it, please don't forget to remind him of his promise to nominate me for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

ABDUL

Wait a minute. He promised to nominate me!

WILBUR

Why would the president want to nominate someone named Abdul? How far would your nomination get in the Senate?

ABDUL

A lot further than yours, buddy.

WILBUR

Don't you buddy me, buddy; remember, I'm the one who introduced you to your wife.

ABDUL

Who just happens to be your sister; why did I ever listen to you in the first place?

WILBUR

What's wrong with my sister?

ABDUL

She has you as a brother.

SAMANTHA

Come on now. Let's not bring personal issues into this discussion.

WILBUR

It's not personal. It's just that I don't like when anybody speaks badly about my sister.

ABDUL

Listen, buddy, you keep on talking this way and you can forget about being invited for Thanksgiving dinner.

WILBUR

You wouldn't dare.

ABDUL

Listen, as far as I'm concerned you are a zero, a cypher, a blank space with no value at all.

WILBUR

And this abuse, after all I've done for you. It's not fair. If it weren't for me, they would have never let you into the country.

ABDUL

You were well-paid for your services.

WILBUR

You call paying me fifty bucks and giving me a pack of baseball cards well paid?

ABDUL

At that time fifty bucks was a lot of money and it wasn't my fault that you traded your baseball cards for that phony Babe Ruth bat that even a book worm could see was fake.

SAMANTHA

Meanwhile, the president has asked me to ask the both of you to help him provide an answer to a question. It was brought up during his recent conference with our allies in Northern Greenland. The prestige of our country is on the line.

WILBUR

We'll try our best.

SAMANTHA

Trying is not an option. You must provide him the answer. Failure to do so will mean that the US will lose face with our allies.

ABDUL

Okay. Understood. Now what is the question?

SAMANTHA

What is the width of a straight line?

WILBUR

This is what they discuss at these conferences? Widths of lines? This is what the taxpayers are paying for through the nose? It almost makes me want to become a tax evader except I don't pay taxes.

ABDUL

We can calculate the width of a line using a virtually unknown and seldom used formula. Of course, the easy way to calculate the width of a line is to take out a measuring device, such as a ruler, and measure it.

SAMANTHA

But the problem is that by doing that, then the line is no longer treated as a line but rather as an elongated rectangle. So, my dear colleagues, I need an answer now. The president is waiting to hear from me. If I don't provide him with the answer, he will want an explanation, and I can assure you it will not be me who will be made the scapegoat. I hope I make myself clear.

WILBUR

Now, I remember doing research on a similar problem, but it had to do with calculating the roundness of a circle. We had discovered that some circles are more-round than others.

SAMANTHA

That's very interesting, but this is about straight lines, not circles.

ABDUL

Look. We all know that a line is a mental construct. Thus, by definition, it lacks width. Yet we all know how to draw lines. So, to me, the solution is clear. By transposing the mental image of a line onto a piece of paper and then repositioning or re-orientating its supra-axial component, properties that are embedded in both ends of all lines, we can arrive at a solution that will provide our dear president with the answer he needs. It's merely a question of applying the principle of common sense.

WILBUR

That makes all the sense in the world to me.

SAMANTHA

In all my years as a professor of advanced proto-natural philosophy, I never heard of something so profoundly insightful as what you just described in your discourse. I'm sure the president will feel the same way.

WILBUR

Yet there are those who will not accept the somethingness of the zero. Pathetic. It is that kind of closed mindedness that is eroding the moral fabric of our country.

SAMANTHA

The president is determined to reverse that trend. He is searching for people with new ideas and new ways of reconfiguring all that we now take for granted. For instance, we presume that the earth is round, and that water flows downstream and not up. But such thinking is restrictive and excludes other possibilities. It produces intellectual inflexibility that stifles creativity. And that's why we are here. To create new pathways to greater understanding and thereby make the world a better place in which to live, even for our political enemies and all the other stupid and closed-minded people who will do and say anything to suppress and avoid the truth.

WILBUR

Under my command the Interstellar Research Department will be conducting a series of rocket launches to confirm whether the earth is still round. Personally, I believe it could lead to a breakthrough in the way we understand our environment and lead to a fundamental restructuring of our entire intercontinental defense system. It makes no sense whatsoever to spend billions of dollars on an anti-defense missile system without first confirming the actual shape of the planet.

ABDUL

My command plans a similar series of studies to confirm the existence of the reverse gravitational effect, the force that allows water to naturally flow upstream. It is a continuation of a fifteen billion-dollar project we launched five years ago to study the effects of anti-gravitational quasi-radiation on the internal mini-molecular structure of robotic rabbits that we bombarded with up to eighteen quad zillion mega volts of semi-protonic energy for one-nineteenth of one second. The results were astounding.

SAMANTHA

Now you're talking. This is exactly the kind of thinking the president wants. It will yield practical results that will strengthen our national defense and make the country a better place in which to live.

WILBUR

Now, let's get to work. Where would the world be without us, the college professors of the world who do all this remarkable and important work? We are truly a gifted profession.

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: One month later

Place: a television studio

Onstage are two men and a woman. All three are candidates for President of the United States. They are having a debate which is being televised. The woman's name is Joanna Jensen-Jones. The first man's name is Harold J. Brennington. The second man's name is Ergon Olivarsky. He is the President of the United States. As the scene opens, we join the debate in progress.

JOANNA

Mister President, your administration so far has made our country the laughing stock of the world.

ERGON

I don't see anyone laughing in the audience. Do you?

JOANNA

Sir, please don't make light of this. Since you took office you've done nothing except insult people, hobnob with dictators and fight with everybody, including members of your own staff.

ERGON

You know, Joanna, all that's a bunch of malarkey, concocted by a media that will say and write anything to make me look bad. In fact, the people love me. I'm the greatest president ever to occupy the White House.

HAROLD

Greater than FDR? Greater than Reagan?

ERGON

Much greater. They didn't have to clean up the kind of mess I inherited from my corrupt and venal predecessor. When I took office, I found a government so mired in stupidity that it made my head spin.

JOANNA

You've been saying that for almost four years now. I think it's time that you take responsibility for the mess that you created.

HAROLD

And how you cheated your way into office.

ERGON

Wait a minute, pinhead. Are you calling me a cheat? I won the election fair and square.

HAROLD

No, you didn't. Your friends gave you inside information that they stole and sold to you. Why can't you admit it?

ERGON

Because it's not true, that's why. I've been saying that for the past four years. If anyone is a puppet for the special interests, it's you, Mister Mushhead. Everything inside your head is mush. That's what happens when you've served too long in Congress. Your brain cells wither away. It's a fact. I read that in an important medical journal.

JOANNA

There you go again, making up things. You live in a fantasy world.

ERGON

Listen Ms. Petunia Head, if anyone is living in a fantasy world, it's you. Why would anyone want to vote for a woman as ugly as you? Have you looked at yourself in the mirror lately?

JOANNA

My looks are not the issue here.

ERGON

Oh yes, they are.

HAROLD

Isn't that being a bit superficial?

ERGON

Are you sticking up for her? What kind of man are you?

HAROLD

Man enough to have served three tours of duty in combat overseas.

ERGON

Big deal. I served as the president of the Upper Long Island Yacht Club Association.

HAROLD

Oh yes, I forgot. You were made honorary admiral.

ERGON

That's right and it was a tough job. I had to make all kinds of decisions. But it all worked out for the best because it prepared me to take on the awesome responsibilities of my current office.

JOANNA

I was chief operating officer of one of the largest international corporations of the world.

ERGON

That you ran into the ground.

JOANNA

I did no such thing.

ERGON

Stop lying. The company went belly-up while you bailed out with your one hundred million-dollar parachute for a job well done.

HAROLD

A general should stay with the troops, not abandon them, to their fate. After I'm elected president, my first official act will be to sign an executive order promising that I will take full responsibility for all actions taken by my administration.

ERGON

You wouldn't last a week.

JOANNA

I never bailed out from the company. That's just another lie you fabricated.

ERGON

No fabrication. The truth. I received thousands of emails and instagrams and tweets from the workers you abandoned.

JOANNA

Could you provide me a copy of those emails?

ERGON

No, I will not. They are private and personal communications. You just have to take my word for it.

HAROLD

Take your word for it? Are you joking?

ERGON

I don't joke when it comes to emails. By the way, Harold, which is such a pansy name, I checked into your military record. The closest you ever got to combat was a shoving match with a female wac at Fort Poseiden, Utah.

HAROLD

You don't know what you're talking about.

JOANNA

For him that's normal.

ERGON

That's the problem with the both of you. You're both so stupid. You say and do stupid things. Your stupidity revolts me. You are products of a culture that awards stupidity, in fact covets stupidity and produces clowns like you. That is why I launched my program to Make America Smart Again. We need smartness. We need new ways to think about things. We need to produce people who are savvy. That's why I was elected. The people were tired of all the stupidity that was destroying our country.

HAROLD

The king of dumb wants to make America smart. That's a laugh.

JOANNA

You sure have a funny way of doing it.

ERGON

That's the problem with you two jerks. You both have closed minds.

JOANNA

At least I have a mind. I wonder about you, though. Going around telling people that one and one is three and that a circle is really a round square. Garbage like that.

ERGON

My people are involved in serious research that is uncovering startling new facts.

HAROLD

You mean like at Radborn College where that bio-mathematics department, whatever that is, is making all these so-called new discoveries?

ERGON

Exactly. And don't forget the work being done at the War University in DC where they discovered incredible new properties about the zero.

JOANNA

In another words, about nothing.

ERGON

No, not about nothing. About something. Yet the media doesn't report it right. They think it's a bunch of hogwash only because I support it.

HAROLD

Oh, right. That the zero is a potential source of energy. really brilliant stuff. Like that kind of knowledge will really help the country.

JOANNA

Mister President, you are not making the country smarter.

ERGON

You're saying that because you didn't make these discoveries first. The people love what I'm doing.

HAROLD

Not according to the polls.

ERGON

According to my polling, I'm at an eighty-three percent approval rate, the highest approval rate in history.

JOANNA

Who validated your polling? Your team at Raddon University?

ERGON

Don't you start mocking Radborn. They are at the cutting edge of a whole new understanding of our perceptions of space and time.

HAROLD

Oh, you mean when they're smoking a little weed or popping some special pills?

ERGON

You are such a jerk head. You have no imagination. You are part of the old think that has gotten this country into deep trouble.

HAROLD

Old think? You mean as opposed to new think?

ERGON

That's right. New think is the way of the future and I'm going to make it happen, and when I'm finished, America will be the smartest nation in the world. The American people will be so smart nobody will ever outsmart them again. That's what Make America Smart Again is about. You two represent intellectual stagnation; I represent intellectual rebirth.

JOANNA

Do you really believe that one plus one equals three?

ERGON

According to the experts, it does and I have to go with what they say.

HAROLD

But doesn't common sense dictate that one plus one equals two?

ERGON

Don't try to confuse me with stupid arguments, okay? That's the problem with you people. You're so closed minded.

JOANNA

To me, we need a president who understands that one plus one equals two.

HAROLD

I understand it, so that qualifies me.

JOANNA

You're just saying that, Hal. Just the other day you proposed sending a basketball to Mars.

HAROLD

That's right, to find out how high it would bounce.

ERGON

You stole that idea from me. My space agency people studied that exact same thing three years ago. Where've you been, Hal?

HAROLD

If I recall correctly, they used a computer model. Anybody can do that. I would use a real ball.

JOANNA

Such a project would cost billions of dollars. Not worth it. This irresponsible spending of the taxpayers' money on such rubbish is why the country is going bankrupt.

ERGON

Rubbish to you. Breakthrough science to me. Joanna, you have your priorities all wrong. All you're concerned with is the money. Well, I have news for you. There's more to government than spending money. There's something called leadership, which I have provided from the very first moment I took office.

JOANNA

Under your leadership, the public debt has quadrupled.

ERGON

But the stock market is at an all-time high and now we have more billionaires than at any time in human history. Those are immense accomplishments. Yet the biased media gives me no credit.

HAROLD

They do give you credit, for screwing things up to the point that the entire economy is facing collapse.

ERGON

Don't believe those reports. Pure gossip that the media tries to pass off as news. The American people are aware of that. That's why I'm going to win re-election,

JOANNA

Not if I can help it.

ERGON

You can't help it. You're wasting your time and money opposing me. You're just another one of those pseudo-conservative pandering quasi-liberal social democrat liberals who preach a good game but can't deliver. All you do is blab away, like a spoiled child who needs a spanking. The people are tired of old worn out formulas. They want someone who is smart, like me.

JOANNA

Meanwhile you still can't figure out what is one and one.

ERGON

That's because I'm involved in new think, something that you cannot possibly comprehend.

HAROLD

I've studied the issue and I'm still convinced that one and one equals two.

ERGON

Continuing to listen to the two of you prattle on like this makes me doubly convinced that neither one of you are qualified to be president, and that the people must re-elect me.

JOANNA

I read a report that you believe that the earth isn't round. Is that part of your new-think also?

ERGON

Joanna, like I said before, as president I am obligated to maintain an open mind. Otherwise, I'm just perpetuating stupidity, and stupidity is our biggest and most serious obstacle to solving problems and making progress.

HAROLD

Meanwhile your open mindedness almost got us into a nuclear war in Asia.

ERGON

Phony news. Relations with our partners and friends, and even with our adversaries, have never been better. I even received a birthday card from that recluse who hasn't left his palace in twenty-seven years.

JOANNA

What did the card say?

ERGON

That's personal and top secret. Do I ask to see your birthday cards?

HAROLD

The American people have a right to know the content of the message in that card.

ERGON

No, they do not. The card was sent to me, not to the American people.

HAROLD

But the president represents the American people. Therefore, all communications received by the president must be made public.

JOANNA

That's only logical.

ERGON

Listen to you! You're preaching to me about what's logical? Meanwhile, you can't even accept the possibility that one plus one may have more than one answer. It shows that both of you are just hapless nincompoops. Why you are even wasting your time running against me baffles me. Why not save yourself a lot of money and effort and concede the election now? The American people will understand. They are on my side. That's because I want to make America happy again, I want to make America sing again, I want to make America dance again, I want to make America smile again, I want to make America laugh again, and most of all, I want to make America smart again. Good night and goodbye. I'm out of here. (*Ergon exits.*)

JOANNA

The nerve of him, just getting up and leaving like that. Who does he think he is?

HAROLD

He's the president.

JOANNA

There's no way that the country can survive another four years of him. No way. Him and his new-think.

HAROLD

You think he even thinks?

JOANNA

One plus one equals three. Is he serious?

HAROLD

He's obviously pandering for the stupid vote.

JOANNA

There's no way that the American people will ever accept that garbage. It defies all logic.

HAROLD

But that's how he won, by pandering to stupidity and with help from his well-placed friends overseas.

Ergon enters.

ERGON

I heard that last remark.

JOANNA

We thought you left.

ERGON

I did, but first I had to make a pit stop.

HAROLD

Thank you for letting us know.

ERGON

When nature calls, nature calls. Now what was that you said about me being helped by well-placed friends?

JOANNA

They helped you get elected.

ERGON

Let me tell you something. I won because the American people hate stupidity, period.

HAROLD

I hate stupidity too. But that doesn't mean I voted for you.

ERGON

That shows how stupid you really are. All you college-professor types are alike. You think you know it all when you know nothing. Your fancy degrees and titles are a sham. The average working Joe has more common sense in his little pinky than you do in your entire body. That's why they can figure out how one plus one can equal three while you can't. Your intellectual arrogance is what is keeping the people down and killing the country. I am changing that.

JOANNA

Does that statement also apply to your team of geniuses at Radborn College and at the Peace School?

ERGON

No it does not because they are no longer dues paying members of the National Association of College Professors and Other Know It Alls. That organization should be banned. I am totally fed up with how they want to keep Americans stupid, especially our most vulnerable members of our population: the dumb-clucks and silly-heads who refuse to believe that the world is flat.

JOANNA

All you're doing is spreading misinformation and creating confusion.

ERGON

And all you're doing is pandering for the college professor vote. Admit it. You know I'm right.

HAROLD

No, you're not. You have to be stopped.

JOANNA

Your program is an attack on logic itself. It will never succeed, not if I can help it.

ERGON

It's succeeding already beyond my wildest dreams.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

Time: Ten years later

Place: A classroom in an elementary school. The room is filled with children. It is a fifth grade class. On stage is a man and two children, a boy and a girl. The man's name is Vernon Carpollini. His official title is Brain Saver. Vernon is standing at the head of room that is filled with children. The boy's name is Jimmy and the girl's name is Janey. Both are ten years old. Hanging from the wall in the front of the classroom is a large photograph of Ergon who is still president of the United States.

VERNON

Before we begin our lesson, let's all stand up and recite the pledge of allegiance.

(Vernon, Jimmy and Janey stand up and place their right hand on their heads.)

VERNON, JIMMY and JANEY (together)

I pledge allegiance
To President Ergon
And to his lovely wife Katy
And to all the people
In our great nation
Who love us
And keep us smart.

VERNON

Excellent. Now let's go over what we learned yesterday in class. Jimmy, one and one equals what?

JIMMY

Three!

VERNON

Very good. Now Janey, is the earth round or flat?

JANEY

Flat!

VERNON

Very good. Such a smart class. Now, Jimmy, where do babies come from?

Storks!
JIMMY

VERNON
Wow, are you kids bright. Now Janey, which number is bigger, zero or one million?

Zero!
JANEY

VERNON
Jimmy, what's better, democracy or dictatorship?

Dictatorship.
JIMMY

VERNON
And why is dictatorship better, Janey?

JANEY
Because elections are rigged.

VERNON
Correct! Jimmy, is fire hot or cold?

Cold!
JIMMY

VERNON
Why not hot?

JIMMY
Because we only think it's hot.

VERNON
Janey, are schools bad?

Yes! JANEY

Why? VERNON

Because teachers lie. JIMMY

Do I lie? VERNON

No! JANEY

Why don't I lie? VERNON

Because you're not a teacher. JIMMY

How do you know I'm not a teacher? VERNON

Because you tell the truth. JANEY

How do you know that I tell the truth? VERNON

Because you know that one and one is three. JIMMY

And why do I know that one and one is three? VERNON

JANEY

Because you are smart!

VERNON

And what makes you think I'm smart?

JIMMY

Because President Olivarsky says so and he is the smartest person in the world.

VERNON

Right again! You are the smartest students I have ever taught. You know, kids, there was a time, in fact only a few years before the stork delivered you to your homes, when everyone was taught that one plus one was two, that the earth was round, that babies came from something called sex, that humans evolved from apes, that the universe was billions of years old, that fire is hot, that war is bad, and that the zero meant nothing. All lies, the product of a vast conspiracy concocted by the snotty know-it-alls, you know who I mean, the pundits, professors and all the other fraud-mongers, who, protected by their corrupt political cronies, spewed out misinformation, half-truths and outright lies in order to keep the people stupid and stop them from thinking for themselves. But all that changed when our great liberator, President Ergon Olivarsky, took office. He broke the power of the pseudo-intellectual elite once and for all. Their self-righteous pontificating is now a thing of the past and the veil of stupidity is gone forever. Because of President Olivarsky, today America is again the smartest country in the world, and we're going to keep it that way. Right?

JANEY and JIMMY

Right!

VERNON

Good. Now for your next homework assignment, I want you to write two compositions: first, a one hundred-word composition on why a straight line really is curved and the second, a one-hundred-word composition on why breathing isn't necessary to live. My use of the word two means just that, two. Both assignments are due tomorrow. And for extra credit, I will ask one of you to show the class what happens to you when you stop breathing. That should be a lot fun! See you all tomorrow, that is, presuming that tomorrow really isn't now. Any questions?

JANEY

How do we know that when you say two compositions, you mean two?

VERNON

I can't answer that. Only you know the truth. As President Ergon says, those who ask questions are blessed for they trust no one but themselves. Remember, truth is relative and all reason confusion and out of confusion comes knowledge, which no one owns except you. So when I ask for two compositions, do not take me at my word, for my words are empty. It is up to you to fill in the void inside your head that is your repository for the truth. As President Ergon says, believe not in what others spout for it is nothing but noise meant to distract, frustrate and confuse. For it is by spreading confusion that the evil ones who covet power render us powerless.

JIMMY

Wow, are you smart. When I grow up I want to be smart just like you.

VERNON

And so you will. I couldn't be more proud of all of you. In the old days, before our leader took charge and liberated the people from the pseudo-intellectual muck that kept us in bondage, we were taught to assume that everything we were taught was correct. We were taught to have faith in those who claimed to be the dispensers of the truth. But it was all lies. Schools taught us history, science, art, mathematics, physics, literature, and religion that were crammed with lies cleverly packaged to look and sound like the truth. But it was their truth, not ours. Darwin, Einstein, Pasteur, Kepler, Freud – frauds. Now we know better.

JANEY

Down with the elite!

VERNON

They're gone, but the stain of deceit that they left remains. It will take years, maybe centuries before it is completely eradicated. Then everyone will be smart and the forces of stupidity gone forever.

JIMMY

I want to be smart forever.

VERNON

Then assume nothing, doubt everything, think illogically, for there is no one correct way to think. There was a time when we were taught that there was only one pathway to understanding. If A, then B. If B, then C. If C, then not C, and so on and so forth. If democracy then liberty, if liberty then democracy. If reason then knowledge, if knowledge, then reason. Their goal was to make us feel smart while at the same time making us stupid by filling our brains with lies. Empirical evidence. How they bandied that term around, threw it in everyone's faces. Then the courageous thinkers at Radborn State Institution showed that empiricism is a monstrous fraud, that one plus one can equal anything, and with that the tyranny of the elite was finally lifted.

JANEY

Down with empiricism.

VERNON

Good. You've learned your lessons well. Before you leave, let's recite the catechisms according to Ergon.

VERNON, JANEY and JIMMY (*together*)

Ergon says:

Up is down and down is up.

Square is round and round is square.

Straight is curved and curved is straight.

Smart is stupid and stupid is smart.

Bad is good and good is bad.

In is out and out is in.

Young is old and old is young.

Past is present and present is past.

Sharp is dull and dull is sharp.

Rich is poor and poor is rich.

Boys are girls and girls are boys.

Lies are truth and truth are lies.

Good is bad and bad is good.

Fast is slow and slow is fast.

Mine is yours and yours is mine.

Black is white and white is black.

Freedom is slavery and slavery is freedom.

Love is hate and hate is love.

High is low and low is high.

Diversity is unity and unity is diversity.

Small is large and large is small.

Democracy is dictatorship and dictatorship is democracy.

Majority is minority and minority is majority.
Opinions are facts and facts are opinions.
History is myth and myth is history.
Music is noise and noise is music.
Fake is real and real is fake.
Finite is infinite and infinite is finite.
Forever is now and now is forever.
Friends are enemies and enemies are friends.
War is peace and peace is war, and anyone who believes differently is a fool, a freak and my enemy, as well as my friend.

JIMMY

Nobody can tell us anything!

JANEY

Let them try, and I'll them have it.

JIMMY

Lies, lies, everything lies. One plus one is three, and not two. The snobby know-it-alls just want us to think it's two so we'll think like them.

JANEY

Who is anyone to tell us what's true? It's all spin, isn't that right, Mister Vernon?

VERNON

Very good. You have learned your lessons well. Now, enough of all this talk. Go home, trust no one, and do your homework. Tomorrow should be a very exciting day.

The end

