

Collective Intelligence

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Logline

Rival strangers, a tormented academic and sneering entrepreneur, help a deeply divided citizen's assembly unite in the face of technological and social upheaval, omens of civilizational collapse.

Overview

This is a US political drama set 1~2 years in the future. Due to rapid advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), unemployment and geopolitical tensions with China are rising. Facing a PR crisis, the leading AI company has organized a citizen's assembly. A cross-section of America is being brought into a room to talk out their differences and collectively solve a problem: as a civilization, how should we handle advanced AI? The film follows one committee's debate. They will either fall apart or unite. While this committee eventually unites, the fate of the rest of public is left an open question (it's implied this is in the audience's hands).

All the characters are crucial but two stand out, the ECONOMIST and the ENTREPRENEUR. The ECONOMIST emerges as a reluctant protagonist, while the ENTREPRENEUR is their fake-opponent-ally. Their repartee becomes that of frenemy siblings, pushing each other to go farther, be sharper, transcend easy answers.

Tonally, the film will have the tension and rhythm of a courtroom drama. Imagine *12 Angry Men* updated for our polarized times, aimed at reminding Americans what constructive consensus-making looks like - democracy in the flesh.

My hook has two prongs. The first is the same as that of [Jubilee's "Middle Ground" videos](#) or [Vice's political panel videos](#): curiosity about the politically alien "other," the thrill of watching sparks fly, the thrill of rooting for your team OR the desire to see reconciliation (and feeling good about yourself for watching an educational, reconciliatory film). The second: I hope to capture the catastrophizing zeitgeist (while ultimately offering hope, indicating a way out). The stakes,

though abstract, will feel real because the predicament the characters are in will look and feel exactly like the predicament my audience feels they are in: America is a falling power on the brink of civil war; people are stuck in a broken, rigged system; we're building an inhuman machine economy that will destroy what's left of our humanity.

The characters are naturalistic, complex. Unities of time, place and action are closely adhered to, likening it to a classical tragedy. (The ending is nearly tragic but for a final twist). This also allows the audience to watch up close the process of consensus making. Rare moments will break unity, to highlight a metaphor, historical parallel, or inner psychological battle.

Characters

More details [here](#). This demographic distribution is highly representative of the general American population.

* = member of the COMMITTEE we are focused on.

Economist* - Caucasian, Millennial, woman. A reserved, exhausted academic whose hope for democracy hangs by a thread. Needs others to feel what she feels: the overwhelming magnitude of the socio-technical problems before us and the total inadequacy of our current institutions to handle them. Buried guilt: in the past, she helped create the inhuman attention economy. Struggles with communication. Comes from a dysfunctional family (or maybe is in the process of a divorce).

Entrepreneur* - Caucasian, Gen X, man. A clever, libertarian, techno-utopian who's a constant thorn in ECONOMIST'S side. Contrarian, enjoys stirring the pot; cares little for norms; hates phoniness (despite being quite hollow and nihilistic himself). He does have a message he wants to deliver: AI will be way more transformative (likely deadly) than any of them can imagine. Doesn't know how else to deliver his message other than by demeaning others, mocking their ignorance. Narcissistic (and other dark triad traits). Probably here because he lost a bet.

Part-time Amazon Picker ("MAGA")* - Caucasian, Boomer, woman. Proud, hard-working MAGA Republican. Suffered from globalization and the opioid crisis (maybe husband was previously a machinist, now alcoholic and can't hold a job). Is angry, misinformed; feels misunderstood, ignored.

Manager ("NATIVE AMERICAN")* - Native American, Boomer, man. A down to earth, soft spoken, reasonable human being. Delightful

gems of dry humor. Prides himself for being self-made (modestly successful businessman, logging industry), while also respects and wishes to protect the self-determination of local community.

Social Worker* - Caucasian, Millennial, queer (likely has purple or green dyed hair, and side buzz cut). A partisan Democrat, passionate about social justice. Recognizes their own privilege and doesn't play the victim, but aggressively fights for select oppressed groups. Very concerned about AI's potential to deepen systemic bias/inequality.

Uber Driver ("UBER")* - African American, Millennial, man. Comfortable breaking silence, pops jokes and teases, but won't be pushed around. Works hard for a better life for his children: accepted invitation to the assembly for the easy money.

Dentist* - Caucasian, Millennial, man. Thinks of himself as having earned his wealth, not recognizing he come from a very supportive white middle-class household. Thinks certain groups in America have become entitled and that this is destroying America. Partisan Republican. Very socially conservative - worried about moral decay promoted by "radical liberals." Hawkish against China. Frustrated by the affordability crisis: supports government interventions that seek to make "single-earner households a viable option again." Projects confidence but nervous underneath. Euphemistic, Southern polite.

Social Media Handler ("GEN Z")* - Caucasian+Asian American (multi-racial), Gen Z, woman. College student, unsure what the point of getting a degree is. Despite a blasé exterior and edgy humor, she's "low-key" depressed about her future. While immature in many ways, very politically engaged, strategic, and sick of both political parties for someone her age. Terminally online. Feels misunderstood.

Veteran* - Caucasian, Silent Generation, man. Korean War veteran and insurer. Principled. Only speaks when he has something to say, but says it firmly. Always wants to know what the rules of the game are - stickler for them. Wry humor. Dislikes theatrics, speeches. Comfortable in his retirement, but worried about deterioration of the country's spirit/leadership. Your classic small government, fiscal responsibility, Reaganite conservative.

Hairdresser* - Latina, Boomer, woman. Fiercely independent. Proudly legal immigrant. Proud to be a self-made business owner. Devout Catholic. Champion of individual freedom. Worried about moral decay.

Facilitator - African American (multi-racial), Boomer, man. There to help "hold the space" for discussion. Genuine, transparent. Skilled at keeping the peace through mediation. Somewhat naïve about the power of having a collective kumbaya - bit of a COMMITTEE hype man. Skilled at withholding his opinions.

Expert - Desi, Millennial, man. There to provide fact-checking, expert opinion on AI, and test-drive various "AI tools for enhancing deliberation." Struggles to withhold his opinions. Naïve techno-utopian, ardent defender of Progress. Well intentioned, but sees every problem as needing a technological solution. Wants COMMITTEE to have a more positive image of AI.

CEO - The CEO of the AI company that is sponsoring the citizen's assembly. Well disguised narcissist. Soft spoken, smooth talker. Analog for e.g. Sam Altman or Elon Musk.

CORTES - The infamous conqueror of Mexico. Clever, confident, quick temper.

Extended Synopsis

ACT 0: *Echoes of History* - Introducing Scope and Themes

Historical prologue: the true story of Tlaxcala, the more or less democratic city state of pre-Colombian Mexico which was instrumental in helping CORTES defeat the Aztecs, enabling the Spanish Conquest.

Open on starry night sky, CORTES narrating necessary context and while expressing his imperialistic worldview. Alien/sci-fi music (think *Arrival*). A frightened conquistador enters - the men are on the brink of defeat and defection. A feverish CORTES wills that they carry on and conquer.

Cut to the debate of the Tlaxcallan city council (same night). Should they ally themselves with CORTES against their ancient geo-political rivals, the Aztecs? Or should they destroy him for fear of losing their freedom to him/allowing these aliens to corrupt them? The debate is fierce. Ultimately CORTES' fear tactics have their effect and the council painfully decides to join forces with CORTES.

The themes of their deliberation, and the stakes they faced will be echoed in the main work. These are:

- The ancient and universal tradition of consensus-making

- o Interpreting and constructing visions for the future (a seer tells them a vision of the future, and together they must interpret it)
 - o The emergence of collective wisdom, greater than the sum of its parts.
- Geo-political rivalry and competition (many council members will be too focused on their petty rivalry with the Aztecs)
- Power-seeking imperialists (CORTES)
- Colonialism
- Civilizational stakes
- The dramatic impact our choices can have at the cross-roads of history (An elder will recognize the magnitude of the decision before them. The prologue ends on that note.)

ACT I: *The Dysfunctional Family* - Inciting incident, Exposition, Rising action

Contemporary US. Montage of the citizen's assembly entering auditorium. The venue: a tacky "grand" hotel, faux stately. Big business conference vibes. Interspersed: clips of an interview with the CEO of "DeepAI" on TV screens around the venue. We learn that unemployment is rising and geopolitical tensions with China are running high.

A montage of the COMMITTEE + FACILITATOR + EXPERT settling into the side room where they will be discussing. Interspersed: shots of the EVENT ORGANIZER speaking to the general assembly in the auditorium. EVENT ORGANIZER briefly explains that the AI company ("DeepAI") has sponsored this event. In 2 sentences they explain what a citizen's assembly is, and why the topic of AI is important.

With COMMITTEE settled, FACILITATOR starts by getting them to introduce themselves. It's stiff, quiet (especially ECONOMIST). People are guarded, tense: people's political affiliations are pretty immediately apparent. It's clear there will be heated disagreement.

FACILITATOR quickly walks them through some ground rules (based on [Dynamic facilitation](#)). He explains how their discussion is being recorded and an AI powered "smart board" is keeping track of it. It will also be giving him discussion prompts occasionally.

Their driving problem statement: "How should we use Artificial Intelligence to ensure prosperity for all Americans?"

The COMMITTEE is tasked with discussing the topic and writing up their "resolutions" (policy proposals, calls to action). For what purpose? FACILITATOR tells them the company is a "committed audience" and has promised to "incorporate this feedback" into their mission statement. When a few try and question what that means, FACILITATOR just repeats and deflects. The COMMITTEE is also told to collect questions as they discuss: there will be a Q&A with the company CEO in ~1.5hrs.

Just before they're about to start, EXPERT whispers to FACILITATOR: "When should I do the thing?" FACILITATOR: "Later." (Intrigue for Act II).

FACILITATOR prompts COMMITTEE to share concerns they have about AI. DENTIST starts: he's worried about its effects on children. SOCIAL WORKER is worried about systemic bias and inequality. NATIVE AMERICAN; its effect on jobs. VETERAN; military use of AI/terrorism.

ECONOMIST tries to contribute, but they use too much jargon (e.g. "multi-polar traps"). Blank stare from most (impressed look from ENTREPRENEUR but no help). She curls back into shell. ENTREPRENEUR nonchalantly declares "I think it'll kill us all - like, human extinction." Most don't know how to react. MAGA brushes this off with a half-joke - any robot that comes for her she's gonna pop with her Glock. Uncomfortable laughs and eyebrow raises from the liberals. (A metaphorical Chekov gun for this act).

HAIRDRESSER remarks that the problem statement is about how AI can ensure "prosperity:" why are they focusing only on negative things? She proudly describes how she's using AI in her business. UBER agrees and voices the truism that AI, like all technology, is just a tool - depends on how you use it.

DENTIST agrees that it can do a lot of good; they use it all the time for diagnoses. Most people feel the pressure to declare themselves pro-Progress and Growth - we're in the presence of a powerful mythos. ECONOMIST is conspicuously silent.

UBER jokes that since they all agree, they can all go home. This relaxes people. But it also makes a point: that was too easy. Their answers are too cheap. People are clearly avoiding confrontation or looking stupid.

Now what? They look to FACILITATOR. His AI prompter suggests something he knows is dumb but with a forced smile he dutifully

goes along with it. It's a bland icebreaker activity - this is clearly going to take forever.

ENTREPRENEUR is bored+tired of waiting for everyone to catch up with him. He takes matters into his hands, rhetorically grilling the EXPERT on the rapid advances in AI capabilities.

What are AI companies aiming for? Human Level Machine Intelligence - that's been their stated goal for decades. What does that imply? We won't be the smartest species on the planet anymore, and there's no guarantee its values will be aligned with ours. Also, you'll all be out of job. When should we expect it? In 3 to 5 years.

At first the EXPERT is happy to finally be of use but he quickly becomes uncomfortable since the ENTREPRENEUR clearly has an agenda very misaligned with his own.

ENTREPRENEUR forces COMMITTEE to confront the magnitude of what's before us. This isn't just another piece of technology: this is probably the last technology we'll ever invent on our own. This will change everything - exponential growth, whole different economy, massive power shifts - it's gonna be crazy! "Put that on your problem-statement board."

SOCIAL WORKER dismisses this as AI hype/doomerism. Real problem is systemic injustice. MAGA shakes head vigorously. She thinks that's woke nonsense. She describes conspiracy theory of how woke, liberal AI is influencing elections.

ECONOMIST unintentionally but callously puts face in hand after this remark: MAGA is suddenly triggered. Awkward hush, everyone tense. ECONOMIST is a deer in headlights.

MAGA starts lashing out at "coastal elites" disrespecting her. FACILITATOR tries to placate her. ENTREPRENEUR just smiles. ECONOMIST suddenly understands what happened, quickly apologizing and making amends: she agrees with MAGA - social manipulation is a serious concern with AI. Her bridge building succeeds and sets a good example. Crisis narrowly averted.

DENTIST follows up: he's worried about AI chatbots corrupting the youth. VETERAN agrees. GEN Z isn't so sure. She feels her chatbot is often good for her.

ECONOMIST probes GEN Z. ECONOMIST teases out that the chatbot helps GEN Z feel less lonely, but that the loneliness is probably due to social media. This is twisted: the companies

causing loneliness are then offering you a pseudo-cure, all while making money off you.

EXPERT blurts out that this makes it sound like developers are sociopaths. ECONOMIST counters: developers aren't sociopaths, but the business model is sociopathic.

GEN Z is less sure. She wonders whether this isn't just a problem with men being bad texters. SOCIAL WORKER concurs and claims men use chatbots more - accuses patriarchy/toxic masculinity for making men emotionally immature and unable to commit.

UBER doesn't like that they're pinning this on men. MAGA accuses SOCIAL WORKER of being "feminist" (to mean "anti-men"). SOCIAL WORKER is confused - of course they're a feminist. The two are talking past each other.

ECONOMIST intervenes to avoid an eruption of tribalism. She succeeds, though SOCIAL WORKER ends up saying something full of gender studies jargon. Probably true but preachy.

UBER makes good-natured joke, sarcastically imitating SOCIAL WORKER in an uppity white accent. Many laugh, but UBER accidentally misgenders SOCIAL WORKER in the joke.

SOCIAL WORKER doesn't laugh. Others think they can't take joke. Very quietly SOCIAL WORKER responds: "it's *they/them*, if you don't mind." Full-blown eruption of tribalism triggered - SOCIAL WORKER is called a snow-flake and other names.

FACILITATOR restores order. People notice the "smartboard" (which has mostly been writing gibberish) is putting all the vitriol up on the board. FACILITATOR, thoroughly done with that thing, unplugs it and wheels out a whiteboard and marker.

NATIVE AMERICAN regrounds the discussion: these bots are powerfully addicting, especially for the young, period. DENTIST proposes a ban for the under-age.

ENTREPRENEUR and GEN Z mock the idea of a ban (compare it to "18 or older" pop-ups on Pornhub). ENTREPRENEUR claims we can't blame devs supplying where there is demand. SOCIAL WORKER disagrees: the fact that *some* unscrupulous dev will supply, doesn't justify every other dev doing so. That's morality 101. All others nod.

ECONOMIST agrees with SOCIAL WORKER, but also agrees with ENTREPRENEUR that competition is powerful: a ban alone isn't enough, need to change incentives. How? She falters... (our first encounter with the real antagonist: competition/multi-polar traps/tragedies of the commons).

ENTREPRENEUR moves them onto the topic of military AI, and competition with China. ENTREPRENEUR, VETERAN, MAGA and UBER are all China hawks. SOCIAL WORKER doesn't trust China either, but suggests that's what treaties are for.

MAGA mocks SOCIAL WORKER for believing "those globalists," and their "bullshit." They again misunderstand each other. Another mention of "treaties" from GEN Z triggers a rant from MAGA.

When FACILITATOR tries to calm MAGA, latter responds with: "What? I'm worried! I mean they're gonna hand over the country to the Communists! You've, you've got these (gesturing to GEN Z and SOCIAL WORKER) mixed up people—"

SOCIAL WORKER and GEN Z, queer and halfy respectively, go ballistic: "Who *the fuck* are you calling "mixed up"?!"

Sudden setting change: the argument is transposed onto an argument around the Thanksgiving Dinner table of a dysfunctional family, a metaphor for America. This emphasizes the stubborn, heated, barbed feeling of the bickering, but also our (estranged) kinship. FACILITATOR is at the head of the table.

This eruption is the worst. Hurtling of insults, blame, who started what.

The ECONOMIST has her head in her hands; ENTREPRENEUR is sat smiling. He makes blasé remark to self: "This is gonna be fun." ECONOMIST overhears. He doesn't see her glare back at him. She resolves to do better, be a positive participant.

GEN Z on verge of tears: "What are you gonna do, *deport me?*" MAGA: "What, are ya Scared of crazy Aunt Deb?!" Throughout this act the characters have been dancing around the elephant in the room: Trump, democracy hanging by a thread, civil war. It's coming out more explicitly now. Chekov's gun goes off - MAGA, to SOCIAL WORKER "Try me! I'll pop your Marxist ass!" Maybe SOCIAL WORKER throws food at MAGA, but accidentally hits HAIRDRESSER. The whole thing is tough to watch (a moment of catharsis for audience).

FACILITATOR finally shouts them all down. Scolds them for not *listening* to each other. We're all family - if we can't trust each other we can't have nice things.

ECONOMIST musters courage and pipes up in agreement, praising trust as virtue, valuable in itself. ENTREPRENEUR agrees too, but treats trust instrumentally. ECONOMIST calls this out - the first of many serious, substantive disagreements between them. Pause.

Standing to side holding huge steaming sloppy pie, EXPERT suddenly interrupts: can he do his thing now? No. FACILITATOR wants things to "cool off."

Setting suddenly returns to normal, and the members break up for a water break. Moment of reflection, making amends, thinking about what's next.

ACT II & III: *Dreams and Possibility* - Rising action

They return to table. FACILITATOR resets the discussion. HAIRDRESSER proposes renewed focus on discussion of *positives*. EXPERT can't hold it in anymore, he's gotta show off his toy.

AI Visions: EXPERT has prepared two positive visions of the future, as hallucinated by an "oracle" AI model. Plan: COMMITTEE will watch the two visions and then discuss what they like/dislike. They will be polled on their preferences twice: once "before deliberation" and once "after deliberation".

They watch: one is techno-utopian, while the other is pastoral (imagine "grand expansion across the stars" vs. "living organically in harmony with nature").



Techno-utopianism: "Grand expansion across the stars"



Cozy futurism / Solarpunk: "Living organically in harmony with nature"

Outspoken members make comments during the videos. ENTREPRENEUR notices, to EXPERT's chagrin and everyone else's mirth, there appears to be a product placement in the 2nd (pastoral) vision.

They proceed with the *before* poll. (There is a comedy of glitches, and they end up just doing a show of hands). A few vote for each vision, but the vast majority are uncertain.

Discussion begins. Starts with a vague discussion of what they like/dislike, using metaphorical language (slick vs. green, grand vs. cozy, fast vs. slow, man-made vs. natural...)

Over course of ACT II the COMMITTEE starts realizing their values and worldviews don't line up with the political tribes they've assigned themselves.

SOCIAL WORKER briefly questions framing of the discussion: how do we know these visions are plausible? Why *these* visions, and not others? And MAGA again asks, what's the point of this whole exercise? (Foreshadow of crisis in ACT IV). They're ignored because FACILITATOR and ECONOMIST want to guide COMMITTEE toward more optimistic discussion.

COMMITTEE discusses automation, value of work, value of leisure. In here: SOCIAL WORKER blames everything on "Neoliberalism." DENTIST accuses SOCIAL WORKER of loving "Marxism." Before a dogmatic ideological fight breaks out, ECONOMIST (backed up by NATIVE AMERICAN) convinces everyone they should drop all isms and just discuss the specifics of each topic. These labels divide us: not constructive. (They are slowly learning how to talk to one another).

COMMITTEE discusses consumerism, and happiness/life satisfaction stats. In here: in attempt to avoid conflict, FACILITATOR suggests dropping some questions and posing them to the CEO during the Q&A. ECONOMIST (backed by ENTREPRENEUR) pushes back: the disagreements they're now having are productive - she encourages COMMITTEE, to arrive at its own conclusions, independent of what CEO has to say. Most nod. FACILITATOR respects the decision.

As the topics get more complicated and the positions get more nuanced, ENTREPRENEUR and ECONOMIST emerge as the two most intellectual people in the room. They're starting to lose others: GEN Z and UBER are falling asleep. It's comedic at first, but then problematic. ECONOMIST is getting more vocal, but also jargony. She knows she's losing them but this is the only way she knows how to communicate. In response she just speeds up, her speech starting to out-pace everyone, cramming every sentence with info. ENTREPRENEUR doesn't care about losing others; he's found a fun sparring partner in ECONOMIST. His comments are getting spicier and more animated. ECONOMIST is torn, but can't resist the repartee.

Their repartee increasingly monopolizes airtime. The ENTREPRENEUR is a fierce defender of the techno-utopian vision,

which he claims is what everyone will choose and therefore what they really want (even if they don't know it). At the same time (in a vaguely circular argument) he implies it is the inevitable future anyway, so you might as well get comfortable with it. ECONOMIST clearly leans toward the pastoral vision, but officially just wants it to receive a fair hearing instead of being dismissed as impossible or naïve. It's Carl Shulman + Tyler Cowen + Steven Pinker + Peter Thiel vs Daron Acemoglu + Robert Putnam + Richard Easterlin + David Fleming. Dramatic tension: the biting repartee of frenemy quasi-siblings.

COMMITTEE discusses sustainability, growth, geo-political competition. In here: the arms race with China is raised again, and nearly everyone but ECONOMIST is hawkish. ECONOMIST makes them face their hypocrisy: earlier they all agreed one person's unscrupulous behavior didn't justify another's. But building military AI "because China will" is the same kind of justification.

They discuss surveillance, data, power. In here: ECONOMIST suddenly and painfully confesses to helping design the auction system advertisers use to bid for ad space - "bid for your brain!" This is her motivating guilt. With this confession, she now has little to lose: hereafter she's more tenacious.

An underlying theme throughout the discussion has been that of competition, tragedies of the commons, and what agency we have over the future. This is most explicit in discussions about what the free market can and cannot do for us.

The ENTREPRENEUR and ECONOMIST really start flying over everyone's head (Aaron Sorkin levels of impossible speed + sophistication). They're really shutting others out, focusing just on themselves. (VETERAN, to neighbor: "They're worse than lawyers!"). This becomes the dramatic tension.

Eventually the others have enough of them. Some just want to move on. But a few recognize value of the debate these two are having. NATIVE AMERICAN proposes they each argue their case, one at a time, like in court. All agree.

Setting change: the debate is transposed onto a metaphorical court room trial. FACILITATOR is judge, EXPERT is the witness, other members are JURY. On trial: our global socio-economic system. The charge: defrauding the public of their right to self-determination and the pursuit of happiness.

Prosecution: ECONOMIST, arguing that our current system is not responsive to the wishes of the people (partially by arguing that the pastoral vision embodies a lot of what people want *deep down*, but people are *forced* to choose otherwise).

Defense: ENTREPRENEUR, arguing that the current socio-economic system is basically fine, and will take us where we *actually* want to go (the techno-utopian future).

The debate is short and intense, but because better structured and paced, easier to follow. Montage of courtroom drama - plenty of objections, pointing out contradictions etc. FACILITATOR calls fouls and asks clarifying questions for JURY/audience.

On the evidence, they're evenly matched, but ENTREPRENEUR is clearly better speaker. He starts playing dirty during defense and ECONOMIST is off balance.

She has to play dirty as well. In final cross-examination she successfully goads ENTREPRENEUR. He slips, he admits the market is not responsive to what the public wants, but claims: "people are stupid! They're NPCs, they're *sheeple*! They don't know what they want!" It's "great men" (from Genghis Khan to Steve Jobs) that give people something to want. *They* drive history - rightfully so.

JURY knows ENTREPRENEUR just called them NPCs - he just blew up all his political capital with them.

FACILITATOR calls for final statements and then for the JURY to leave and make their verdict.

Cut back to reality: 2nd water break. ENTREPRENEUR and ECONOMIST are in opposite corners of the room, in silence. Others are stood, discussing. We hear snippets of their discussions.

FACILITATOR calls them back: it's time for the after poll. Almost no one is uncertain anymore. The pastoral vision wins by quite a large majority.

As EXPERT records results, people chit chat. They're beginning to chat like casual acquaintances. ECONOMIST is smiling for first time, relieved. ENTREPRENEUR is sour. Where he was jokey before, from here on he's bitter and biting.

ACT IV: *Hard Truths* - Crisis, Falling Action

FACILITATOR prompts them to start writing their proposals. All but ENTREPRENEUR engage. The suggestions are tame, mostly just asking for the vague nice things they all agree they liked in the visions and asking to avoid the things they didn't like. The court scene definitely settled one question: they all agree they should just ask for what they want, regardless of "plausibility."

At some point someone notes half-joking, "Heh, do we even need AI for this? Like, why aren't we talking about that?"

ENTREPRENEUR pulls rug from under them: "Because our 'problem statement,' was a leading question." All quiet. He goes on to forcefully argue that this entire event is all a PR stunt ("democracy washing"), market research (A/B testing), and free labor (more data for AI) for "DeepAI" the sponsoring AI company.

Others start sadly piling on evidence, repeating the doubts they've had from the beginning. They question why a very pro-AI EXPERT is there, why they're being polled, why they're being recorded etc. ENTREPRENEUR rips into the ECONOMIST: by leading the COMMITTEE to naively write up their vague, non-threatening, easily commandeered statement of values, she was helping the AI company placate them. ECONOMIST is crushed, knowing he's right: it's her turn to sit in the corner. Everyone reorients reluctantly/sadly toward ENTREPRENEUR.

"Now what?" moment. They look to ENTREPRENEUR, who directs them through bullying. No more of this "wimpy values shit." Then what do they do? He struggles to say anything positive - he just knows it has to be something "concrete, actionable, REAL!"

Like what? Well, if he were emperor, he'd nationalize the industry (yes, the free market guy surprised himself). Murmurs of doubt. He barks them down: they still don't understand the stakes. ENTREPRENEUR grills EXPERT again, driving home how powerful AI will be, how poorly we understand it, how easily we could lose control over it. We're building an *alien species* that's *smarter than us*. This is bigger than nukes - why would we trust it with anyone other than gov? (Resigned, ECONOMIST immediately agrees, quietly from corner).

Stakes are starting to sink in. ENTREPRENEUR bullies harder: they should demand for nationalization (presented as the only choice). Again, would you trust the first nukes with some random private citizen like the CEO, or with a foreign adversary like

China? This is a question of power and control. It's crush or be crushed.

ECONOMIST makes bitter remark: "Right, build your precious Artificial General Intelligence at all costs - summon your devil before others do, so you can make your wishes first."
ENTREPRENEUR: "Well, yea!"

ECONOMIST erupts, wildly arguing that we *already* face a rogue AI superorganism - the global market economy. We the people have *already* lost control.

MAGA suddenly jumps up - yes exactly, the globalist cabal is bleeding us dry! MAGA's legitimate fears are expressed through a haze of conspiracy, but ECONOMIST interprets for them on the fly (e.g. "globalist cabal bleeding us dry" = off-shoring; "rampant drugs and crime" = opioid crisis; etc.)

After describing how globalization ravaged her community, MAGA blurts: "What do you think that does to a man? People are hurting out there! I got the bruises to prove it!" She is admitting to being abused, without playing the victim. Uncomfortable pause.

DENTIST agrees. Somethin ain't right - the world ain't right. GEN Z, with increasingly pitiable attempts to laugh it off, describes the dread of biosphere collapse, the feeling of a robbed future. NATIVE AMERICAN finishes her sentence: "Like everything is being taken from you. And you are powerless to stop it." The irony is only lost on MAGA.

The COMMITTEE is coming together, not around hope, but a shared existential dread. All the great problems of our century and the human toll behind them are laid bare.

ENTREPRENEUR doesn't get it - this is why we *need* AGI! ECONOMIST viciously shoots him down: "no - there is no *deus ex machina*! There's just this - giant - CLUSTERFUCK!!"

Silence. COMMITTEE enters lurch. All hope seems lost. ECONOMIST and ENTREPRENEUR have turned their backs on it all.

UBER (African American) non-aggressively points out that at least everyone else had something to lose. HAIRDRESSER, who also came from nothing, understands UBER but gently insists this isn't a competition.

SOCIAL WORKER, ever the activist, prompts them: what do they do? VETERAN never had any illusions. Just wanted to speak his peace. HAIRDRESSER and SOCIAL WORKER gently encourage. Slowly but surely the COMMITTEE is starting to rally (without input from ECONOMIST or ENTREPRENEUR).

HAIRDRESSER suddenly remembers the Q&A: maybe that's an opportunity to speak truth to power, put the CEO in the hot seat. Suddenly people light up. They start scheming. The COMMITTEE is finally synergizing. ECONOMIST watches in awe, slowly thawing.

They all agree to the plan. Suddenly ECONOMIST steps back in "I'm in too". All turn to ENTREPRENEUR: he's last holdout. In his demeaning way, he also rejoins. He demands: what statement are they going to make?

Timer begins: they only have ~10mn before Q&A. They need to agree on one proposal/statement they want to pressure the CEO on.

People are tired of feeling like everything is happening to *them*. They realize they all share this in common. A whole new, deeper truth is revealing itself to the COMMITTEE: until we're back in control, we can't trust anyone with the development of AI. This is what they want to say to the CEO.

ENTREPRENEUR is sounding like a whiny child, calling this stupid and mushy (but he sorta has a point).

EXPERT suddenly chimes in: if it's democratic deliberation they want, they could demand that these companies develop AI models that simulate the deliberative process of assemblies like these. ECONOMIST, MAGA, SOCIAL WORKER and FACILITATOR explode simultaneously - the EXPERT doesn't get their plight *at all*. *My* autonomy means, *me* making meaningful choices after reflecting with *my* brain and discussing with my fellow humans. "Stop trying to outsource our lives!"

ENTREPRENEUR goes back to whining. What are they asking for - more representation? That's too vague!

ECONOMIST obliges, sharpening their ask. They should push for a halt on AI development until citizen assemblies, like this one except with actual power, are held to draft and vote on laws to govern the development and use of AI.

They're running out of time. FACILITATOR proposes they vote. They agree. The ECONOMIST's "more representation" proposal narrowly wins.

ENTREPRENEUR starts throwing a tantrum: this is the craziest, stupidest idea - will never be accepted, let alone work. "This isn't Hollywood!"

ECONOMIST agrees - which is why they should do it: it'll make headlines. If this is all a PR stunt, they need to commandeer it, push the narrative they want.

ECONOMIST takes helm and kicks the scheming into high gear. ECONOMIST is becoming a little tyrannical but they're also running out of time.

ENTREPRENEUR continues tantrum in background. His charisma is gone and he's actually being the more risk-averse. ECONOMIST has one-upped him, practically daring them all to take the bigger gamble.

Setting change: the fierce hashing out of the terms is suddenly transposed onto the drafting of the Declaration of Independence.

It's July 1776, and a muggy 78°F in the Assembly Hall of the Pennsylvania State House. Sound of a ticking clock and crackling fire (callback to prologue). Representatives are sweaty, exhausted but alert with a nervous energy. It's gritty, raw, radical. We're watching the same primordial consensus-hashing machine in action. We're reminded of the do-or-die stakes at the roots of American democracy.

The COMMITTEE members are now representatives in the Second Continental Congress. Without being in your face about the swap, non-white male COMMITTEE members will be replaced with white male actors. There will be subtle hints (mostly dialog and seating position) of who's an analog for whom. At most maybe a painting behind ECONOMIST's analog will depict the original actress.

The debate over what breaches of trust they want to accuse the CEO of, is transposed onto the debate of what grievances against King George III to include.

ENTREPRENEUR is lashing out: how does this quibbling over words help anyone? "Dogma won't stop a bullet" - the war is being fought "out there!" ECONOMIST retorts that "there is another front up here," pointing to head.

DENTIST wonders if ENTREPRENEUR doesn't have a point - maybe making such radical demands will incur the Crown's wrath. Maybe they should soften their language, or try again to bargain.

MAGA

He [George III] doesn't want to *trade*
with you - he wants to *own* you!

SOCIAL WORKER

And this could be our last chance to
make our stand!

NATIVE AMERICAN

And if we fail?

(Pause)

You realize, there is no going back.

MAGA

Then at least we'll have died trying!

ENTREPRENEUR

(striding toward ECONOMIST, hissing)
Their blood will be on *your* hands!

ECONOMIST

And my blood will proudly join
theirs! Rather than die in
dishonor, a defector!

(Pause)

Or will you sign?

(Pause, staring contest)

ENTREPRENEUR

As if I have a choice.

Has the ECONOMIST become a delusional ringleader? Is the ENTREPRENEUR right? It's not clear. The clock strikes the hour. Montage of faces. On final strike, we cut back to reality. FACILITATOR: "It's time."

ACT V: Final Battle - Final Suspense, Resolution

Cut to loud general assembly. Late, our COMMITTEE is still finalizing text as they make their way to their seats. ECONOMIST asks who will deliver the statement. Without batting an eye, as they're sitting down, the others nominate her - an obvious choice to them. ECONOMIST is surprised - she doesn't realize how charismatic she's become. She's come a long ways.

Once crowd settles down, the MODERATOR on stage introduces their guest, the CEO. Q&A begins. Another committee goes first. ECONOMIST, tense, is mentally preparing for final battle. When the CEO gives an easy non-answer, MAGA makes a quiet joke. All but the sour ENTREPRENEUR chuckle. ECONOMIST's morale is buoyed by the budding camaraderie in her COMMITTEE.

They're next. ECONOMIST rises and delivers their declaration. She starts hesitant, but finds her stride. It's firm and reasonable, only a little audacious. By the end, the entire auditorium is dead silent. Then eruption of applause - they've won the room. She's elated.

CEO is not angry, but impressed. Suddenly CEO and MODERATOR are calling her to join them on stage. ECONOMIST is wary: this is unexpected. She can't say no though.

Crowd still cheering, she awkwardly takes seat with CEO and MODERATOR. CEO proceeds to give a very slippery reply - on the surface he seems to agree with her ("My PR department is gonna hate me for this. But I think you're right...").

He's masterfully taking back control of the narrative. He charms and confuses the general assembly by running through the one-dimensional talking points that were deconstructed in ACT II and III. ECONOMIST must smile and nod or else appear unreasonable. Heavy dramatic irony + empathy for ECONOMIST: audience will feel the gut-punch of having all the context, of knowing better but being unable to speak, forced to watch a nuanced discussion get butchered.

ECONOMIST tries to push back, but gets few openings. She slips, making too radical a comment. CEO goes for kill with light jab, implacably reasonable sounding.

Room begins to spin for ECONOMIST, the CEO's voice fades out, and Bo Burnham's "That Funny Feeling" fades in. Suddenly, applause and blinding lights. ECONOMIST is reeling.

Setting change: we're in the same auditorium, but it's suddenly empty, ECONOMIST alone on stage - we're inside her head. She lets out a desperate cry. She begins an impassioned monologue - all the things she's wanted to say come tumbling out.

She begs with the missing audience not to accept cheap answers. She begs them to stay focused, to stick together. She begs them to see: if they sit on their hands (or worse, turn on each other) they're handing everything to the CEO. They're handing

their future to the cold, calculating, inhuman market. She rails against the market and a world out of control. Angry now, she *commands* the missing audience to stand up for themselves.

Suddenly, a slow, lone clapping. It's the ENTREPRENEUR, somehow here in her nightmare, to prove a point and mock her. The *true* final battle begins.

He wants her to admit he was right: human nature is the problem. She rebuts: that kind of thinking is the problem - he's the problem.

He proves she's complicit. She's a pawn: she's the democracy defending "strong female character" who sells the CEO's message that they care about democracy and justice. She handed the CEO a gift on a silver platter - allegedly her inevitable fate.

A heavy blow, but she's still standing: she's adamant the world can coordinate its way out of this disaster. How? The same way we built the most complex global supply chains this planet has seen: through powerful myths (like private property and money).

ENTREPRENEUR presses her to admit she has a fascist streak, wants some mind control. Wavering ever so slightly, she refuses: she wants control through consensus, not coercion. She wants better democracy.

This is hilarious to ENTREPRENEUR - democracy is a joke. Triggered, ECONOMIST rails against current political system - we don't have democracy, we have a sham. ENTREPRENEUR is relishing this cynical streak in her.

To ENTREPRENEUR's dismay, she soon takes a hopeful turn, calling for e.g. voting reform that would help. He mocks this as pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking.

She's sick of his cynicism, starting to lash out. He stops joking, and lays out her impossible task. She's forced to concede, some preaching is needed: "democracy also needs its marketing campaign!"

She wins a blow. ENTREPRENEUR suddenly goes cosmic and transhumanist. Even if all she hopes for comes true, her peaceful, static garden world will collapse - succumbing to external competition or internal decay. "The only way to fight back against both vacuous entropy and alien order" is to grow, expand, conquer. "To build something that will outlast this cold hunk of dirt! Something that (gesticulating at his body) will

straighten out this this hairy goop for brains - that will conquer this MEAT, once and for all!"

She's stunned, almost pitying. Then disgusted - he wants humanity to become a borg-like cancer on the galaxy. "Tell me, when was the last time colonization went well?" (Callbacks to prologue). She's scolding - he has Sith Lord ambitions. She's mocking - he's just scared of death, and needs to "grow a pair" and "get over himself." She commands him to do his duty: carry the torch, pass it on, and bow out.

As she berates him, he slowly gets up and begins to leave auditorium, poker faced. She notices, mocks him for running away, then pretends she doesn't need him. He calls her bluff and keeps walking. She's calling him back angrily, then pleading, then desperate.

He leaves and she crumbles. Alone again. She suddenly rises, wildly muttering that she can turn this around. Or was he right - is this world too far gone? The sound of applause comes crashing back in.

Setting change: we're back in reality, barely a moment has passed. Suddenly the CEO clasps her hand, shaking it. She looks at it curiously, then smiles uncannily at CEO. She says "Fuck you" quietly, but he mishears, responding "No, thank you!" Suddenly a flash - he got the photo-op. This is the final blow.

Reeling (the camera with her), her exiting the stage is a disorienting transition to her standing before a door, opening onto a dark abyss. Applause cuts as she crosses threshold and turns on light: she pauses, exhausted, standing in her apartment's entrance hallway. She closes the door on the world.

A week has passed. She lives alone, and her life is a mess. She's on her laptop, scrolling on twitter. She stops on a post - it's a cut up clip of the CEO during the general assembly. It simplistically paints the CEO as a megalomaniac who's going to end the world. She scrolls on. Another clip of the same moment, this time mocking her wide-eyed expression on camera. Caption is something to the effect of "SAMA [Sam Altman] SCHOOLS DECEL [Decelerationist] BITCH." She can't look away. She suddenly shuts laptop, trembling a little. We see she's on medication. She's the shell of a person, looking worse than when we first met her.

Suddenly a notification on her phone. (We see she has many unread messages). It's an email from EXPERT. He has quit his

job, describing her influence on him. He hopes she'll join the Whatsapp group her COMMITTEE made to stay in touch.

She hesitates, then joins. Most have joined (but not ENTREPRENEUR). She scrolls through past messages (they are read aloud in the member's voices and we see them typing them). A montage of these messages reveals an intelligent, cordial, lively discussion. The COMMITTEE realized their declaration was commandeered. They've tried to push back on the worst misportrayals of ECONOMIST's stage appearance. They expressed hope she'll join their group chat.

ECONOMIST's eyes are welling up.

Finally she sees a link to a podcast interview (caption from SOCIAL WORKER reads "Well would you look at that!"). It's ENTREPRENEUR on a Lex Friedman like podcast (popular in tech world). He's talking about his experience in the assembly.

At first it seems he's the same sarcastic cynic we first met. But he starts to admit he was actually very impressed. The people, "especially this one person" really challenged him.

He thinks these assemblies are, surprisingly, a good idea - he wants to see more of them. But not sponsored by AI companies - that's fucked up! He tears into CEO and his company, exposing what a hollow PR stunt it was.

ECONOMIST is finally crying.

ENTREPRENEUR ends by echoing a line from ECONOMIST in ACT II, something to the effect of: "we - you, me, the public - need to play less of this 4D chess thing of blindly encouraging competition for its own sake. If there is a future we want, we also need to like, just, stand up and ask for it."

As video ends, ECONOMIST wipes away tears. She looks out the window at the stars (callback to prologue). Then, through the reflection of the window, we see her turn and stare down lens at us, daring us to act. Cut to black, roll credits.