

Wright Now Play Later: November

Prompt - Amanda Mizeur: a good pair of boots is absolutely necessary for joining a revolution

&

Joel Stone: an aging SDS revolutionary and a millennial discuss the pros and cons of nonviolent demonstrations while marching in a protest rally:

Smell ‘Em a Mile Away

A scene in three blocks

By Ismail Khalidi

Two people walk among many. Perhaps the younger one carries a sign.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Great turnout. Gotta be at least four or five thousand people.

OLD RADICAL

Six. On the dot. Give or take a couple hundred.

YOUNG LIBERAL

How are you so sure?

OLD RADICAL

I'll bet you that three dollar granola bar you have in your backpack I'm right.

YOUNG LIBERAL

How'd you know I have-

OLD RADICAL

Lucky guess. But now I do...It's an equation.

YOUNG LIBERAL

What?

OLD RADICAL

The number. At the march. It's an equation. An old trick.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Oh.

OLD RADICAL

You take the official police number.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Ok. Let me look.

She scans her phone.

OLD RADICAL

Which is always low by the way. Four thousand. I just overheard someone.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Four. The cops are saying four thousand. Ok, I bite. So what's the formula?

OLD RADICAL

First you take the cops' bullshit number and divide it in two. Then take that number, and multiply it by three. And that's the "people's protest prognostication model". Tried and tested, since 1791 .

YOUNG LIBERAL

Wow. 1791?

OLD RADICAL

Haiti.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Right. I knew that. By the way, I'm-

OLD RADICAL

Z.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Right. Oh yeah, duh, got a name tag on. I was at a workshop beforehand.

OLD RADICAL

Well I'm "A". Pleasure, sweetheart.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Just A?

OLD RADICAL

As long as you're just Z, I'm plain old A.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Fair enough.

OLD RADICAL

Better get used to changing your name. Might need it if you plan on fighting this regime. Might have to underground.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Regime. I like that, A.

OLD RADICAL

I call all of 'em regimes. Democrats and Republicans. This one's a strongman, for sure. Might even qualify for Junta once he appoints his cabinet.

Z laughs

YOUNG LIBERAL

I needed to laugh today. I mean, these last days. Fuck. They've been like. A nightmare.

A laughs.

OLD RADICAL

Two things, honey. First. Yes. You need to laugh. We all need to laugh. It's the best supplement to hearty resistance.

YOUNG LIBERAL

And second?

OLD RADICAL

Tell me. What would you have done if the other one had won? I assume you didn't vote for Mr. Strongman, right?

YOUNG LIBERAL

Well I would've been a lot happier. Would have felt like I still lived in a sane democracy.

OLD RADICAL

And I bet most people here would agree with you about that.

YOUNG LIBERAL

But not you?

OLD RADICAL

(lightly)

This ain't no real democracy, honey. I got two nephews can't vote cause of problems with the law, got three comrades in prison for opposing the war in Vietnam and fighting racism back in my day. Political prisoners. You know, like the kind of prisoners they only got in Russia and Syria and Chine. Plus there's only two parties, faulty voting systems, voter suppression, media bias, pay to play, closed debates, some crazy shit called the electoral college and super delegates. Shall I go on?

YOUNG LIBERAL

But-

OLD RADICAL

- And last but not least a population of bright young people willing to say "but" in defense of it all. But in defense of what? In defense of whom? Think about it. When you say "but" you are protecting them.

A bunch of rich folks, mostly men by the way, all of whom are using this fake ass electoral reality game show to justify pillaging your pocket and mine, not to mention the earth and its resources for higher profits, selling arms like there's no tomorrow, which there ain't, to dictators and monarchies, apartheid regimes and on and on, all for a buck, and all the while killing the planet.

YOUNG LIBERAL

But I'm against all that. I'm a lawyer and I volunteer at Human Rights Watch and Amnesty, and -

OLD RADICAL

- But at the end of the day you would have woken up if the other one had won and you wouldn't have been out here in the streets. Which is one way of denying that it's always nightmare, for millions of people in this country and around the world, regardless of which party is in power here. That's my point. Your phone's buzzing.

Z looks at her phone.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Everyone's saying we're at least six thousand.

OLD RADICAL

Never believe the cops. And always bring a couple three-dollar granola bars to a protest.

Z take out two granola bars and gives one to A.

YOUNG LIBERAL

Any other advice?

OLD RADICAL

Ditch the sandals. Boots. Good pair of boots are key for any revolutionary. Not too expensive, not too cheap. And watch out for that one right there. The tall one.

A points off and Z looks.

YOUNG LIBERAL

He's cute. Rugged, intellectual -

OLD RADICAL

Undercover. Or a snitch. Trust me. I can smell 'em a mile a way.

Z looks again. When she turns around, A is gone. A chant picks up and she joins in.

