

Argument Clinic

[...]

A reception desk in a sort of office building.

RECEPTIONIST. Yes, sir?

MAN. Ah. I'd like to have an argument please.

5 RECEPTIONIST. Certainly sir, have you been here before ...?

MAN. No, this is my first time.

RECEPTIONIST. I see. Do you want to have the full argument, or were you thinking of taking a course?

10 MAN. Well, what would be the cost?

RECEPTIONIST. Yes, it's one pound for a five-minute argument, but only eight pounds for a course of ten.

MAN. Well, I think it's probably best if I start with the one and then see how it goes from there. OK?

15 RECEPTIONIST. Fine. I'll see who's free at the moment ... Mr. Du-Bakey's free, but he's a little bit conciliatory. Yes, try Mr. Barnard – room 12.

MAN. Thank you.

20 *The Man walks down a corridor. He opens door 12. There is a man at a desk.*

MR BARNARD. What do you want?

MAN. Well, I was told outside that ...

MR BARNARD: Don't give me that you snotty-faced heap of parrot droppings!

25 MAN. What?

MR BARNARD. Shut your festering gob you tit! Your type makes me puke! You vacuous toffee-nosed malodorous pervert!

MAN. Look! I came here for an argument!!

30 MR BARNARD (*calmly*). Oh! I'm sorry, this is abuse!

MAN. Oh I see, that explains it!

MR BARNARD. No, you want room 12A next door.

MAN. I see ... sorry. (*Exits*)

MR BARNARD. Not at all! (*As he goes.*) Stupid git.

35 *Outside 12A. The man knocks on the door.*

MR VIBRATING (from within). Come in.

The man enters the room. Mr Vibrating is sitting at a desk.

MAN. Is this the right room for an argument?

MR VIBRATING. I've told you *once*.

40 MAN: No you haven't!

MR VIBRATING. Yes I have.

MAN. When?

MR VIBRATING. Just now.

MAN. No you didn't!

45 MR VIBRATING. Yes I did!

MAN. Didn't!

MR VIBRATING. Did!

MAN. Didn't!
MR VIBRATING. I'm telling you I did!
50 MAN. You did not!
MR VIBRATING. Oh I'm sorry, is this a five-minute argument, or the full half-hour?
MAN. Oh ... Just a five-minute one.
MR VIBRATING. Fine (*makes a note of it; the man sits down*)
55 thank you. Anyway I did.
MR VIBRATING. Anyway, I did.
MAN. You most certainly did not!
MR VIBRATING. Now let's get one thing *quite* clear: I most definitely told you!
60 MAN. You did not!
MR VIBRATING. Yes I did!
MAN. You did not!
MR VIBRATING. Yes I did!
MAN. Didn't!
65 MR VIBRATING. Yes I did!
MAN. Didn't!
MR VIBRATING. Yes I did!!
MAN. Look, this isn't an argument!
MR VIBRATING. Yes it is!
70 MAN. No it isn't, it's just contradiction!
MR VIBRATING. No it isn't!
MAN. Yes, it is.
MR VIBRATING. It is not!
MAN. It is. You just contradicted me!
75 MR VIBRATING. No I didn't!
MAN. Ooh, you did!
MR VIBRATING. No, no, no, no. no!
MAN. You did just then!
MR VIBRATING. No, nonsense!
80 MAN. Oh, look this is futile.
MR VIBRATING. No it isn't!
MAN. I came here for a good argument!
MR VIBRATING. No you didn't, you came here for an *argument!*
85 MAN. Well, an argument's not the same as contradiction.
MR VIBRATING. It can be!
MAN. No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.
MR VIBRATING. No it isn't!
90 MAN. Yes it is! It isn't just contradiction.
MR VIBRATING. Look, if I argue with you, I must take up a contrary position!
MAN. But it isn't just saying "No it isn't".
MR VIBRATING. Yes it is!
MAN. No it isn't, argument is an intellectual process ...
95 contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying of any-

thing the other person says.
MR VIBRATING. No it isn't.
MAN. Yes it is!
100 MR VIBRATING. Not at all.
MAN. Now look!
MR VIBRATING. (*pressing the bell on his desk*). Thank you,
good morning.
MAN. What?
105 MR VIBRATING. That's it. Good morning.
MAN. But I was just getting interested!
MR VIBRATING. Sorry the five minutes is up.
MAN. That was never five minutes just now!
MR VIBRATING. I'm afraid it was.
110 MAN. No it wasn't.
MR VIBRATING. I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to argue any
more.
MAN. What?
MR VIBRATING. If you want me to go on arguing, you'll
115 have to pay for another five minutes.
MAN. But that was never five minutes just now! ... oh
come on! (*Vibrating looks round as though man was not
there.*) This is ridiculous.
MR VIBRATING. I'm very sorry, but I told you I'm not
120 allowed to argue unless you've paid.
MAN. Oh. All right. (*Pays.*) There you are.
MR VIBRATING. Thank you.
MAN. Well?
MR VIBRATING. Well what?
125 MAN. That was never five minutes just now.
MR VIBRATING. I told you I'm not allowed to argue
unless you've paid!
MAN. I've just paid!
MR VIBRATING. No you didn't!
130 MAN. I did! I did! I did!
MR VIBRATING. No you didn't!
MAN. Look I don't want to argue about it!
MR VIBRATING. Well I'm very sorry but you didn't pay!
MAN. Aha! Well if I didn't pay, why are you arguing ...
135 got you!
MR VIBRATING. No you haven't!
MAN. Yes I have ... If you're arguing, I must have paid.
MR VIBRATING. Not necessarily. I could be arguing in
my spare time.
140 MAN. I've had enough of this!
MR VIBRATING. No you haven't.
MAN. Oh shut up! (He leaves)
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