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Breaking the News

A satire in two acts

By Don Zolidis

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Full-length comedy
10W 8M plus ensemble

The two news outlets at Presley High School take clear sides about Student Council president Christy. While one produces stories fawning over Christy's cute First Boyfriend, the other digs through her report cards looking for scandals. But intrepid journalist Olivia wants to report real news, not puff pieces - and she may get her chance when a shadowy figure tips her off about a fundraising conspiracy that goes all the way to the top. Is someone at school making thousands of dollars off of bobbleheads? Can Olivia trust even a delicious snickerdoodle? Is the concept of truth itself so twisted that Beyonce herself might have to get involved? Find out in this wild ride of a satire.

Cast of Characters

The Presley High Intelligencer:
OLIVIA, a reporter
TODD, a reporter
LUKE, the editor
TIA, a reporter

The Presley High Beacon:
CADE, a reporter
ALYSSA, a reporter, in love with Cade

The Administration:
CHRISTY MARTIN, Student Body President
MARION, her spokeswoman
JOSEPH, the First Boyfriend

PRINCIPAL WEEMS, the Principal
MYA, his student assistant

DECA Club:
KAYLA, the boss of DECA club
MYLAR, a heavy
LOUIE, a heavy

The P.T.A.:
BETTY LEWIS, head of the P.T.A.
LARGE MARGE, the secretary/enforcer

ESCOBAR
STUDENTS

The Set: There are numerous locations in this play. It's important to keep things moving quickly, so don't feel the need to fully "establish" each location. A bench or chair will do for an office. No need for platforms rolling in and out. Nothing will kill the momentum of the piece faster than long breaks for scene changes.

Act One

OLIVIA stands in front of a series of lockers with a microphone in her hand.

OLIVIA

Breaking News! We here at the Presley High Intelligencer have secured an exclusive first-look into the locker of Student Body President, Christi Martin. I have to say, in all my years as a reporter for the high school paper, I have never experienced anything like this. We are here for the unveiling. What it will reveal about our President? Her study habits? Her concern for all the students her in the school? I am literally trembling. I am trembling right now.

(Lights up on TODD, in a reporter's desk.)

TODD

Olivia, this is Todd. Can you give us a sense of the excitement there right now?

(OLIVIA looks around. There is no one near her.)

OLIVIA

It is palpable, Todd.

TODD

Wow.

OLIVIA

I know. The air is alive with electricity. It is as if Zeus himself has fallen into a bathtub. Cows are being electrocuted in nearby fields.

TODD

Really?

OLIVIA

Metaphorically, Todd.

TODD

Good to know!

OLIVIA

Okay, I am seeing President Christy and her spokeswoman Marion approach the locker. This is it. This is what we've been waiting for in our six hours of live coverage.

(CHRISTY and MARION enter, chatting.)

CHRISTY

Hi.

MARION

Hello there.

OLIVIA

This is Olivia St. John with the Presley Intelligencer and we are so excited to have this opportunity to see your locker today!

MARION

The Christy administration is pleased to let the average humans of this school a glimpse into the locker of their glorious leader.

CHRISTY

I want everyone out there to know that I value each and every one of you, even if you are not smart.

TODD

Wooo!

CHRISTY

In this great school of ours, it's important to remember that I am right about everything.

MARION

All right I think it's time –

CHRISTY

Are you ready?

OLIVIA

Yes!

(CHRISTY opens her locker. It's a normal locker without much in it.)
(OLIVIA reports on it back to Todd.)

Okay, I am seeing books! I am seeing some folders in there – I can report that I see a coat, there's a coat hanging in the locker, it appears to be from a very expensive store – it is stylish.

TODD

Can you give us an idea of how stylish, Olivia?

OLIVIA

I can only speculate right now, but I would say, it is Vera Wang level. Yes, I can confirm that. Vera Wang level stylishness.

TODD

I don't know who that is but I assume she is very stylish.

OLIVIA

There are also some photos of a mansion –

(JOSEPH enters)

JOSEPH

What's up, babes?

MARION

Oh this is a shocking coincidence! It's the new First Boyfriend, Joseph!

OLIVIA

Wha-a-a-at?!

CHRISTY

Yes, I can confirm that. It's time to let all of Presley High know that I have a new boyfriend. Joseph.

(She holds his hand.)

JOSEPH

Yo.

OLIVIA

WE INTERRUPT OUR FIRST BREAKING NEWS WITH MORE BREAKING NEWS! President Christy announces new First Boyfriend! This is incredible! This is like the landing at D-Day! We are at Ground Zero of News!

TODD

I AM FREAKING OUT, OLIVIA!

OLIVIA

I AM FREAKING OUT TOO, TODD!

TODD

CAN YOU DESCRIBE HIM FOR THE PEOPLE AT HOME?!

OLIVIA

I CAN DO THAT, TODD! HE IS A MAJESTIC LION MADE FLESH! I can confirm that now! Incredible bone structure! He has amazing teeth!

TODD

How amazing, Olivia?

OLIVIA

They are approaching the Platonic ideal, Todd!

TODD

I don't know what that is, but I assume it's awesome!

MARION

All right, we have to get on to third period, so the President needs to be going.

(She shuts the locker)

OLIVIA

Before you go, is it love? Are you in love? Can you let us know if you are in love?

CHRISTY

Well, at the moment we're not ready to say.

(CADE storms in, with microphone.)

CADE

This is Cade O'Connor, with the Presley High School Beacon. I am here at the locker of President Martin, to address the Gluten-Apocalypse!

CHRISTY

I really don't have time for this right now. I need to get to third period.

JOSEPH

Presley High School Football rules!

OLIVIA

He is giving a message to our troops, Todd!

TODD

I love him already!

CADE

President Martin, can you address the allegations that you are removing the gluten-free options from the cafeteria?! Why?! What are you doing that?!

CHRISTY

I can't really answer that right now –

CADE

People will die! People will die without gluten-free options! Their glutenated blood is on your hands!

CHRISTY

I don't think anyone's going to die because of gluten –

CADE

How could you?! You cold-hearted robot! There are literally five or six people in this school right now that are going to starve to death to because of your evil policies!

MARION

All right, all right – that's enough -

CADE

Once again, you are running away from the questions of a free press!

CHRISTY

I need to go. I love everybody –

OLIVIA

Does that include new First Boyfriend Joseph?

CHRISTY

It's not the same kind of love. I'll say this – we are giddy right now.

JOSEPH

Word.

MARION

All right, the President needs to go.

(MARION escorts CHRISTY and JOSEPH off-stage.)

(OLIVIA looks at CADE, then moves away from him.)

OLIVIA

I can report now that Joseph is premium man-candy. That's right. I said it. I don't think there's ever been another First Boyfriend nearly as hot as this one.

TODD

What about that guy Lucas? I thought he was special.

OLIVIA

He was not special, Todd. You are dead wrong about that. He had a face like a manhole cover.

TODD

He had those eyes though.

OLIVIA

They looked in two separate directions, Todd. One here and one over there. He was a walking compost heap. But the story here today is new First Boyfriend Joseph. Hair like a golden wave, muscles like bulging sacks of flour and the personality of a majestic elephant chieftain, we can only assume that this First Boyfriend will be around all a while. Giddy. The word of the day. Our President is giddy. We are living in glorious times. Once again, I am honored to be a reporter for

the highest-rated school news program, the Presley High School Intelligencer, where we are able to bring you these amazing, amazing stories. This is Olivia St. John, signing off.

(CADE looks at her, then files his own report.)

CADE

The story today was the depths of nonsense this president will go to distract from the tsunami of scandals stemming from Gluten-Apocalypse. President Martin trotted out a new man in another game of, "hey look over there a boy!" to provide the illiterate morons who watch the Intelligencer with new fantasy material. At the same time, the questions over Martin's gluten policies remain unanswered. Is she in the pocket of big wheat? What is her connection to the mysterious DECA Club? And why is it that she smells like brimstone? Is she the devil? No answers from Christy Martin. This is Cade O'Connor, singing off.

(Lights change. They look at each other.)

OLIVIA

What the heck, Cade?

CADE

I thought I would find you here. Doing your propaganda for this President. You know what Hitler said?

OLIVIA

I don't really care.

CADE

Whoever owns the past owns the future.

OLIVIA

That has nothing to do with Christy Martin! And that wasn't even Hitler! That was George Orwell.

CADE

Oh you're real up on your Hitler quotes, I guess.

OLIVIA

Give it a rest, Cade.

CADE

So the gluten-free kids are just supposed to starve to death then? You'd like that, wouldn't you? You sicko. Emaciated, skeletal bodies of gluten-free kids staggering up the steps, just to make things easier for you. We died for your sins.

OLIVIA

They're phasing out like one bread option, it's not a nightmare made flesh.

CADE

This is all a game to you, isn't it?

OLIVIA

Their parents can pack them lunches!

CADE

What if they can't? What if their parents don't have hands? What if they just have hooks? And they try to make gluten-free things with the hooks, but the food just slips through their hooks and lands on the floor! What about that?! Mice eat it instead!

OLIVIA

All right. Whatever.

CADE

You need to check your gluten privilege. What about the vegans? We're just going to mow them down and eat them too, is that the plan? Is that what the President wants?

OLIVIA

She's trying to save money on the cafeteria!

(SARA, an ordinary student, walks by.)

CADE

Excuse me? Can I ask you a question? Can you tell us about why the gluten-free options are important? And if you could use vivid, terrifying details that would be awesome.

SARA

Um… so like I'm actually gluten-free and uh…

CADE

See?! SEE?

SARA

My Mom had to pack my lunch today. So…

CADE

Terrifying.

OLIVIA

Does your Mom have hooks for hands?

CADE

So now you're mocking people with hooks instead of hands, nice.

OLIVIA

I'm not mocking them!

CADE

I hope you're ashamed!

SARA

My Mom has hands. But her lunches are usually insect-based. She gets them from her guru. It's not… good.

CADE

You hear that? The students have been reduced to gobbling up roaches they find in their lunchboxes.

SARA

Grasshoppers. I gotta go.
(SARA walks off.)

CADE

Nightmare. Thank you.

OLIVIA

Maybe you're over-reacting.

CADE

You're a disgrace.

OLIVIA

Okay. Nice to know.

CADE

Carrying President Martin's water. When we all know she's the most corrupt student body president ever. You're just a propaganda arm for her.

OLIVIA

I guess.

CADE

You are.

OLIVIA

And you're a reactionary idiot! She smells like brimstone?

CADE

People have said that. I'm just reporting it as a possible fact.

OLIVIA

Ugh.

CADE

Just ask yourself: what's more important, reporting about her new fake boyfriend, or actually talking about her policies? What's actual journalism?

(short pause)

Yeah. I thought so.

(CADE exits.)

(OLIVIA waits there for a second.)

(Lights change to the studio of the Presley High School Intelligencer.)

(LUKE, the editor, is holding a meeting. TODD and TIA, another reporter, sit around a table. OLIVIA enters. They clap for her when she sits.

LUKE

Great work on the boyfriend expose, Olivia.

OLIVIA

Thanks!

TIA

That was some smart reporting. You are so inspirational.

TODD

I was there too.

TIA

Whatever.

LUKE

All right guys, it's time to plan next week's stories. Who's got some ideas?

TIA

So I was thinking of following the new boyfriend and writing an inspirational story about his journey to love. What makes him so cute?

LUKE

Awesome.

TODD

I'm planning a piece on how Christy Martin likes dogs. Like which dogs? Big dogs? Little dogs? Dogs with fluffy tails? There could be a whole seven-part series. The dogs of Christy Martin. We could call it, "Dogs."

LUKE

Ooh.

TIA

Also, I was thinking about maybe doing something about how people who don't like Christy Martin are stupid jerks. Like, I could find the dumbest one, and then interview him, and be like, "you're dumb."

LUKE

I like the way you think, Tia.

TIA

And then I could also frame that person for crimes and watch them be hauled away by the police.

LUKE

I'm not sure we want to go that far yet.

TIA

Just brainstorming.

LUKE

Olivia, what do you have?

OLIVIA

Uh… So… I was thinking –

TODD

Uh-oh, girls are "thinking"! Watch out!
(LUKE high-fives TODD)

LUKE

Good one.

OLIVIA

So I was thinking I wanted to do some actual investigative reporting.

LUKE

Uh-huh.

OLIVIA

It seems like all we do around here are stories about how great Christy is.

Skipping Forward

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That's right!

CADE

Absolutely none. And now –

(CADE brandishes the report card)

This arrived in my mailbox this morning. You can tell from the paper, from the embossed seal, this is the legitimate article. We have had it examined by experts, we have had it verified – this is authentic, this is real, this is her actual report card. You're probably interested in what it says.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

YES!

ALYSSA

Let's take a few more minutes to talk about context.

(The AUDIENCE groans.)

CADE

I am going to get to this explosive report card very soon and you will all see it. You will be amazed.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

YES!

ALYSSA

But first, let's talk about random stuff for a while.

(The AUDIENCE groans louder.)

CADE

Alyssa, if this report card were truly damaging for the Christy administration, what would it say?

ALYSSA

If I had to speculate –

CADE

Speculate away.

ALYSSA

A really awful report card would prove that she had been cheating on her classes and skipping school to murder bunnies.

(The AUDIENCE is confused.)

CADE

Would that actually be stated on a report card?

ALYSSA

Not normally, no. But let's imagine a report card so damaging, so terrible, that it lists "Christy leaves class to murder bunnies" on it. If those words are on this report card, she is done as President.

CADE

Also, cheating.

ALYSSA

Yes, let's say a teacher writes, "I had to give Christy a C because the mafia was threatening to kill me." If that's in the teacher comments, that would be catastrophic for Christy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Woo! YES!

ALYSSA

Just to be clear, that's not actually on there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Then why are we - ?

CADE

Let's imagine a whole bunch of other things that could be bad for Christy

ALYSSA

Oh sure. There could be anything on there, if I use my imagination. Let's say the report card says "Christy is actually twenty-nine years old." That would be bad. "Or… Christy pays for her term papers from a Chinese website." Or "Christy is dumb."

CADE

Would it say "Christy is dumb"?

ALYSSA

If I'm using my imagination it could really say anything. "Christy's dog hates her." "Christy is a weasel in human shape." "Christy is a walking pile of garbage animated by a mad scientist's experiment." I could imagine seeing all those things on this report card because I have a vivid imagination.

CADE

And we will find out what it actually says right now!

AUDIENCE MEMBER

WOOOOO!

CADE

After these commercials.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

ARRRGHGHGH!

ALYSSA

We don't have commercials. This is public-access.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

WOOOO!

CADE

Oh. Maybe let's spend some more time tweeting about this then.

(The AUDIENCE GROANS.)

ALYSSA

Okay.

(They both tweet)

CADE

All right! The time is now! We have the report card! What is on it? It says –

ALYSSA

Before we get to that,

(AUDIENCE groans loudly)

I want to take a moment here to give the history of the grading system. Because we cannot understand Christy's report card without a full understanding of how and why our system of grades came about.

(An AUDIENCE MEMBER charges the stage.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER

STOP IT! STOP IT! IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING, SAY IT! YOU ARE KILLING US!

CADE

Okay, all right. All right.

(she looks at the report card)

But we need to understand –

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I WILL EAT YOUR CHILDREN!

ALYSSA

We don't have children. Sadly.

CADE

Okay. Here we go. World Geography: B. Minus.

(The audience is dismayed.)

BUT there is a teacher comment! "Conscientious."

(no reaction)

Alyssa can you speculate on why she would be given "conscientious"?

ALYSSA

Well… the word conscientious comes from a Latin root –

AUDIENCE MEMBER

ARRRGHGHG! Is there anything at all?!

CADE

She had a 2.75 GPA and –

(The audience throws down their signs and leaves.)

There could be more report cards! This is just one! Just because this one is okay doesn't mean that –

(The AUDIENCE is gone.)

All right. Well… perhaps that was not the bombshell we were looking for. But we have another hour of analysis by Alyssa coming right up so stay glued to your seats!

(Lights change.)

(Exercise music.)

(OLIVIA enters, clearly hating this. She has an exercise outfit on, but not with yoga pants.)

(She speaks into her phone.)

OLIVIA

This is Olivia St. John doing a hard-hitting investigative series on… Pilates, which is about sculpting… and toning… I will be reporting my results because I have no self-esteem and this is what you have to do to be a journalist.

(She stops the recording. Erases it. Starts over.)

Olivia St. John here! And it's time to get physical! Not in a physical science sort of way, but in a pointless exercise of tedious drudgery! Yes, once again it's time to put my body through pain to realize an impossible beauty standard foisted on us by popular culture! Hit it, girls!

(She stops. Erases.)

Life is meaningless. Therefore, I exercise.

(short pause)

Yayyyy.

(She stops again, turns off the music.)

(her phones rings.)

Hello?

(Lights up on a SHADOWY FIGURE elsewhere on stage, on the phone.

SHADOWY FIGURE

Olivia?

OLIVIA

Who is this?

SHADOWY FIGURE

I am a shadowy figure.

OLIVIA

What?

SHADOWY FIGURE

I've got a big story for you.

OLIVIA

What kind of story?

SHADOWY

About the truth. The truth of what's really happening at this school.

OLIVIA

What truth?

SHADOWY FIGURE

Meet me in boys' locker room after school and I'll tell you.

OLIVIA

Oh come on.

SHADOWY FIGURE

I mean um… meet me behind the school.

OLIVIA

The school's a big place.

SHADOWY FIGURE

By the tree.

OLIVIA

Got it. Which tree?

(But it's too late. The SHADOWY FIGURE has hung up.)

(OLIVIA talks into her phone.)

This is Olivia St. John, reporting.

(Lights change to the tree. OLIVIA enters. Looks around. Nothing.)

(SHADOWY FIGURE, dressed in a trenchcoat, with a fedora pulled down over its face, steps out from behind a tree.)

SHADOWY FIGURE

Olivia?

OLIVIA

Ah! You really are a shadowy figure.

SHADOWY FIGURE

Everything I say is the truth. This is the beginning of the story – if you follow it, it might lead you all the way to the top. Here.

(Hands OLIVIA a manila envelope.)

OLIVIA

What is this?

SHADOWY FIGURE

It's a manila envelope.

OLIVIA

No, I mean, what's inside this?

SHADOWY FIGURE

I figured you were blind or something. You couldn't see what I was actually handing you. I was being helpful.

OLIVIA

What's in here?

SHADOWY FIGURE

Two sets of books. One is the receipts reported for the annual school fund drive, and the other is the actual money received.

OLIVIA

I don't get it.

SHADOWY FIGURE

One is the money the school received from the fundraiser, the other is the amount the fundraiser raised.

(OLIVIA takes out the pieces of paper.)

OLIVIA

So the fundraiser looks like it raised 1.2 million dollars, and the school received fifty-three thousand dollars.

SHADOWY FIGURE

It was a really good fundraiser. We sold those bobblehead dolls.

OLIVIA

We sold 1.2 million dollars worth of bobblehead dolls?

SHADOWY FIGURE

They were seriously awesome.

OLIVIA

But the school only got fifty-three thousand? What happened to the rest of the money?

SHADOWY FIGURE

What do you think happened to it?

(SHADOWY FIGURE's cell phone rings with a funny ringtone.)

Wait, hold on.

(SHADOWY FIGURE answers it.)

Hi Mom. Yeah, I'm just hanging out. Sure, I'll pick Sammy up from daycare. Okay. Yes I did my algebra homework. Mom. Mommmm. Come on. All right I gotta go. No I'm talking to my friends. Stop it.

(SHADOWY FIGURE hangs up.)

That's all I can tell you. Follow the money. Find the truth.

OLIVIA

Okay.

(Pause.)

SHADOWY FIGURE

I'm going to hide behind the tree again. Do you mind?

OLIVIA

No that's cool.

(SHADOWY FIGURE slips behind the tree.)

(Lights change to the opposite of the stage. CHRISTY is giving a speech. JOSEPH stands near her.)

CHRISTY

Hey everybody! This is Christy. I AM YOUR PRESIDENT.

(Cheers from the pro-Christy faction.)

I love you guys. And I'm here to tell you about the amazing, amazing things we're doing in this school right now. First of all, the weather has been great. Right? Hasn't it been great? Like

sunny. With the past president it was cloudy all the time, and now it is sunny, so I think it's pretty guaranteed that I'm responsible for that.

(The crowd Cheers)

People might tell you I'm not responsible for the weather. Why would somebody say that? Jealousy. All right, all right, on to the policy proposals. First, there is a petition in front of me right now – declaring everyone who voted for me special. I think we need to take time to celebrate ourselves, and you guys, the best student body in the country –

(The crowd cheers)

That's right. Cheer. Cheer for yourselves. You deserve it. You're the best. The people who don't like me think you're dumb. They do. They think you're dumb. They think you're ugly too. I'm not the one saying these things. There are awful, awful people who hate you. And First Boyfriend Joseph is here to say some words too.

JOSEPH

Presley High School Football rules!

(More cheers.)

(CHRISTY takes the microphone again.)

CHRISTY

Thank you, First Boyfriend. You are a delight. I love you guys! You are amazing! Everything is going great!

(she cheers again and lights change to CADE and ALYSSA watching.)

CADE

That was President Christy's speech today. And the people ate it up. They ate it up. Of course they did. When someone tells you you're great are you going to disagree with them? `You're amazing!' 'No you're exaggerating that! We're only pretty good!'

ALYSSA

Good point, Cade. You always have the best points. That's why you're enthralling.

CADE

All right, Alyssa. Take it down a notch.

ALYSSA

Sure.

CADE

But let's take a dive into what she actually said. First, she took credit for the weather and blamed people who didn't give her credit for the weather as jealous. What do you do with this?

ALYSSA

I think it's pretty clear that there are a lot of stupid, stupid people in this school.

CADE

They clapped for that. What is going through your head when someone says, "I control the weather," and then you clap? How do you agree with that? 'I am not bound by the laws of space and time!' Woo. What do you think, Alyssa?

ALYSSA

I hate people who are not you.

CADE

I think that's kind of a leap.

ALYSSA

I mean – um…

CADE

I if I came to you and said, "Alyssa, I'll go out with you, but first you must believe that I'm a superhuman mutant." Would you believe that?

ALYSSA

Yes.

(short pause)

CADE

I have adamantium claws you can't see.

ALYSSA

I agree.

CADE

Well we have Christy's spokesperson Marion here today to answer these questions.

(MARION enters)

MARION

I'm so happy to be here.

ALYSSA

Christy said she could control the weather today.

MARION

President Christy –

ALYSSA

President Christy said she could control the weather –

MARION

She never said that.

CADE

She said, I quote, "With the past president it was cloudy all the time, and now it is sunny, so I think it's pretty guaranteed that I'm responsible for that."

MARION

Those are your words.

CADE

Those are *her* words. I'm quoting her.

MARION

The words are coming out of your mouth. They're your words.

CADE

They are her words!

MARION

According to you.

CADE

I am quoting her. I can show you the video if you want.

MARION

I don't see why we're getting caught up on whose words they are. Is that really the point here?

ALYSSA

No! The point is that she's taking credit for the sun!

MARION

According to you. I think we all know you're biased.

ALYSSA

Does Christy believe she can control the weather?

MARION

I don't know. I'm not inside her brain.

CADE

As her spokesperson, do you believe Christy can control the weather?

MARION

I think reasonable people can disagree about that.

ALYSSA

What?

MARION

Can anyone say anything with certainty? I think the scientific consensus is unclear on whether President Christy can control the weather.

CADE

Do you, personally, believe this?

MARION

I believe there is uncertainty.

ALYSSA

Do Christy's followers believe she can control the weather?

MARION

I can't speak for them. How would I know? Your questions are ridiculous. Let's talk about the real issue here: there are people who don't believe anything President Christy says. Why? What is wrong with them? Maybe they hate the school. Maybe they're sexists.

CADE

I am not a sexist.

MARION

All I know is that when a woman says something, you jump all over it.

CADE

Because a woman is saying lies!

MARION

According to your male brain. You're taking a male-centered point of view, and applying it to a female speaker, which is the height of sexism.

ALYSSA *(a joke)*

I don't think he's being sexist, maybe he's just being… sex-y.
(they look at her)
Was that not good? I thought it was pretty good.

MARION

You don't think he's being sexist because you're being sexist. You don't even realize you're being sexist because you're so inherently sexist!

CADE

Can Christy control the weather?

MARION

Can you prove she can't? There's uncertainly all over the place, and your biased view is always going to be negative towards her. I'm done here.

(Lights change.)

(The Principal's Office.)
(OLIVIA enters, in more professional attire. She speaks into her phone.)

OLIVIA

Olivia St. John, reporting. Shocking revelations about missing funding. I am going straight to the top – The Principal -

(MYA enters)

MYA

You wanted to see me?

OLIVIA *(into the phone)*

Or the Principal's student assistant.

(She puts away the phone)

Hi, I'm –

MYA

I know who you are. I'm such a big fan! I love all of your reporting.

OLIVIA

Thank you.

MYA

The story on how Christy Martin cares about the kids in ISS? That was amazing. And the story about Christy Martin's hair care regimen – on my gosh, that changed my life. Before that, I was like, who cares, I'm just gonna use Pert cause it's shampoo and conditioner in one, you know? Like, how dumb was I? What was I was thinking? I want to go back in time and just slap myself in the face and be like, "wake up! SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS! Use essential oils! DO IT!"

(she stops for a second, puts her hands on OLIVIA's shoulders.)

So thank you. My hair thanks you.

OLIVIA

Right. I've got an appointment to see Principal Weems –

MYA

Oh wow. You're doing like a scoop. That is so amazing.

OLIVIA

Skipping Forward

OLIVIA
Great. Oh um… by the way, what was the organization that handled the fundraiser?

PRINCIPAL WEEMS
I don't know anything, I'm just the Principal. Check with the Student Council.

OLIVIA
You've been a big help, Mr. Weems. I want you to see a counselor.

PRINCIPAL WEEMS
I see them every day.

OLIVIA
I mean a therapist. You have some serious issues.

PRINCIPAL WEEMS
I know. Can I have a hug?

OLIVIA
No.

PRINCIPAL WEEMS
You're right.
(OLIVIA walks out.)

(The Lunchroom. CADE sits down with his lunch. ALYSSA sits very close to him.)

CADE
You're kind of in my personal space bubble.

ALYSSA
I will be in your personal space bubble whenever you want.

CADE
I don't want it. That's the point.

ALYSSA
Oh. Okay. How far does the bubble extend? Like six inches?
(ALYSSA moves to six inches away. She mimes coming up against Cade's space bubble.)
I can see you in there. Hello, Cade. You're an amazing journalist. I love your space bubble.

CADE
This is why you don't have any friends.
(OLIVIA enters, smugly.)

OLIVIA
What's up, reporters on the lowest-rated cable news show in this school?

CADE
Shouldn't you be working on a story about how sweet Christy's Instagram is?

OLIVIA
Actually, I'm working on the biggest news story of the year right now.

ALYSSA
Is it how much you suck? Cause you might think that's a pretty big story, but everybody knows it already! Boom. Sick burn.
(she high-fives CADE.)
Thank you for letting down your walls, Cade.

OLIVIA
I'm sure it won't be as great as your shocking expose of Christy's kindergarten attendance records –

CADE
Those are fair game –

OLIVIA
The fact that she got "plays well with others!" doesn't qualify as breaking news!

CADE
You're lame.

OLIVIA
Newsflash: Your hair is stupid.

ALYSSA
We will bury you! You hear us?! We will rip out the beating heart of The Intelligencer and eat it in front of you! And get better ratings while we do it!

OLIVIA
Good luck! And when I break this story, the Beacon will be finished… forever. Until next semester.

CADE
Whatever.

OLIVIA
Whatever.

ALYSSA

Whatever!

OLIVIA

See ya.

ALYSSA

Whatever!
(she yells after her)
WHATEVER!
(takes a breath)
Can I come inside the bubble now?

CADE

No.
(They exit as OLIVIA enters, speaking into her phone.)

OLIVIA

Olivia St. John reporting on Bobbleheadgate. The next step, Studio Council.
(MARION enters.)

MARION

It's so good to see you, Olivia. We love the Intelligencer.

OLIVIA

Sure.

MARION

There are so many news organizations out there that are so terrible.
(CADE runs in.)

CADE

I'm late to fifth period so I'm going to make this short do you deny the claims that Christy was mean to people in middle school and was part of a clique that referred to other people as hippos?

MARION

What?

CADE

I gotta go!
(He runs off.)

MARION

See what I mean? So what's the story this time? I can confirm that First Boyfriend Joseph does Crossfit. It's incredible. He falls down and then he gets up and then he falls down again.

OLIVIA

I'm not here about the First Boyfriend. I'm actually trying to get to the bottom of something about a fundraiser.

MARION

Can I just tell you that you look really pretty right now?

OLIVIA

That's not really what I'm here for.

MARION

I think you're so cute when you get on T.V. Do you have a hair person?

OLIVIA

There actually is one, but that's not what I'm here to talk about.

MARION

I wish I had a better hair person. Sometimes my hair is a mess, you know? Like, are you serious, I have to talk to the whole student body looking like this? Are you kidding me? So let me ask you this question: is there like a special guy in your life?

OLIVIA

No –

MARION

I know! It is so hard to date when you're in a position like this, you know? Tell you what: I have a friend, his name is Gregor – he's an exchange student from Switzerland, and he is amazing. I'm not attracted to him because I hate the Swiss, but he is probably perfect for you. He's stunning. And he yodels. Can I tell you how arousing that is? He starts in and I'm like – whoah! Feelings! Except not, because I don't think of him that way. So I'm going to set you up on a date. This was a great chat. Bye.

OLIVIA

I'm here about the bobblehead fundraiser.

MARION

That was cold.

OLIVIA

What?

MARION

I'm being like really friendly with you, and now you're all business. Like, what the heck? Don't you have any friends you want to set me up with? I just handed you Gregor. Gregor is like Grade A Man. Seriously. How about a little reciprocity?

OLIVIA
I don't know that I have any friends I want to set up with you.

MARION
Why is that? You don't think I'm good enough for your friends?

OLIVIA
That's not what I said. I'm not really here about dating –

MARION
Don't need a man! Miss Independent! You're like a Kelly Clarkson song come to life.

OLIVIA
I want to talk about the bobblehead fundraiser.

MARION
It was nice. It was a successful fundraiser. People like bobbleheads.

OLIVIA
Great. I know for a fact that there were 1.2 million dollars in sales, and yet the school only received $53,000.

MARION
I don't know if those are the actual numbers.

OLIVIA
I'm telling you those are the numbers. I have the actual proof right here.
(She hands the papers to MARION)

MARION
Proof can kind of mean anything.

OLIVIA
No it really can't. It's sales and disbursements. Right there.

MARION
Disbursements! Big word. Somebody's in AP English. Whoah.

OLIVIA
So what happened to the 1.15 million that's missing?

MARION

How did you get that number?

OLIVIA

1.2 million minus 53,000. It's math.

MARION

That's your math. That's one way to do math. There are other ways to do math.

OLIVIA

It's math! There's only one way!

MARION

You're bossy. Maybe that's why you're single.

OLIVIA

Where did that extra money go?

MARION

I think the real question is: who told you about this? To me, that seems like the real problem.

OLIVIA

There's over a million dollars missing.

MARION

According to your biased math.

OLIVIA

Math isn't biased!

MARION

Sometimes when math doesn't show the numbers you want it to show, it's because of bias.

OLIVIA

Who was responsible for the bobblehead fundraiser?

MARION

All the fundraisers are handled by DECA club.

OLIVIA

What's DECA club?

MARION

Nobody knows. But they meet afterschool in a secret room. I would start with them.

(Lights change to the DECA club.)

(LOUIE, dressed like he's in mafia, guards the door.)

OLIVIA *(into her phone)*

Olivia St. John reporting from the headquarters of the mysterious, "DECA Club." No one knows what they do. No one knows who they are. But it appears they were in charge of the bobblehead fundraiser, and this reporter will stop at nothing to get to the truth.

LOUIE

Can I help you?

OLIVIA

I'm here to talk to the DECA Club.

LOUIE

DECA Club talks to no one. Get out.

OLIVIA

Oh I think you're gonna talk to me. Because if you don't I will tell the whole world what you do here!

LOUIE

And what's that?

OLIVIA

I'm not sure, but I'll make up something!

LOUIE

I'm gonna tell you this once – get out of here while you still can.

KAYLA

Who is it, Louie?

LOUIE

Nobody. She's just leaving.

(OLIVIA pushes past)

OLIVIA

I'm a reporter actually, Olivia St. John for the Presley High Intelligencer – and I'm doing a story on why DECA is so awesome. And specifically on how awesome you are, as the leader of the DECA Club.

KAYLA

Let her in.

LOUIE

Kayla –

KAYLA

I said let her in.

LOUIE

All right boss.

KAYLA

And get her a Sprite.

LOUIE

Yes, Ma'am.

(KAYLA sets on chair down.)

KAYLA

Have a seat.

(MYLAR enters in a trenchcoat and sunglasses. MYLAR stands right behind OLIVIA in an intimidating way.)

You got questions? Ask away.

OLIVIA

So um…

(LOUIE opens a sprite right behind OLIVIA's head. She jumps.)

LOUIE

Your Sprite.

(LOUIE hands the Sprite to OLIVIA.)

OLIVIA

Thanks um… what does DECA stand for, anyway?

KAYLA

Don't Expect Convenient Answers.

OLIVIA

Okay. Good to know.

MYLAR

Write it down.

(OLIVIA writes it down.)

KAYLA

That it?

LOUIE

I think she's done.

OLIVIA

I'm not done, actually. So what kind of activities does the DECA club do?

KAYLA

Legitimate business activities.

LOUIE

Totally legitimate.

MYLAR

Completely legitimate. Wink.

KAYLA

Don't say "wink."

MYLAR

Can't help it, sorry.

OLIVIA

Um…. Was one of these completely legitimate businesses the bobblehead fundraiser?

LOUIE

Who wants ta know?

KAYLA

Louie, she's right here. She wants to know. We didn't do the bobbleheads. We subcontracted that out.

MYLAR

We do health insurance mostly. It's totally legitimate. Wink.

KAYLA

She's not even asking that. Stop answering questions she's not asking.

MYLAR

Sorry boss. I just like to share. Health insurance is totally not a mafia-run system. Not at all. It's completely legit. Wink wink.

KAYLA

Not the time.

MYLAR

We are also completely not in charge of the teacher retirement plan. Since that is also legit.
(short pause)
Wink.

KAYLA

Mylar!

MYLAR

Sorry. I'll just be over here not cooking the books on that.
(MYLAR moves to the side.)
Wink.

OLIVIA

So do you know who ran the bobblehead fundraiser then, if it wasn't you guys?

KAYLA

That was handled by the P.T.A. They wanted to be in charge of it. But you didn't hear it from me.

LOUIE

But you said it.

KAYLA

It's an expression, Louie.

LOUIE

It's not fair how you get to tell her stuff and I don't get to tell her stuff.

KAYLA

What do you want to tell her?

LOUIE

That I enjoy… smiles.

KAYLA

Great. That's deep. That's real important.

OLIVIA

Is it normal for a P.T.A. to control the fund-raising?

KAYLA

All right, that's enough. Get out.

LOUIE

Skipping Forward

Oh the money. Yes, the money.
(BETTY starts dancing again)

OLIVIA

Do you mind not dancing please?

BETTY

I'm multi-tasking.

OLIVIA

Mrs. Lewis – we can do this the easy way, or the hard way.
(The music stops abruptly.)
(BETTY stares at OLIVIA.)
You can give me the receipts nicely, or I can come back with a Freedom of Information request and do a full audit of the P.T.A. and find out exactly how you've been affording all those cookies. You think they let you take rhumba lessons in prison, lady?

BETTY *(pure gangster)*

Are you threatening me, little girl?

OLIVIA

Just promises. Things are about to get very bad for all you mothers.

BETTY

Oh really?

OLIVIA

I've already got enough information to bring in the police. Every one of you is going down. No kindergarten graduation, no elementary school graduation, no middle school graduation, no actual high school graduation – the whole P.T.A. is going to be wearing matching orange jumpsuits and breaking rocks at a maximum security prison upstate. And when you go down, I'm gonna be right there, videotaping the whole thing and streaming it live to my followers. We're going viral. Everyone's gonna know the name Betty Lewis, and everybody's gonna associate it with the pile of puke that's left on the floor of a prison cell after someone gets beaten unconscious.

BETTY

You done?

OLIVIA

I'm just getting started.

BETTY

Let me tell you something, girly: you don't get to be the head of the P.T.A. without breaking some skulls.

(BETTY cracks her knuckles. She whistles.)
(LARGE MARGE enters.)

LARGE MARGE

Is there a problem out here boss?

BETTY

This is Big Marge.

LARGE MARGE

Actually I go by Large Marge.

BETTY

Sorry. Large Marge.

LARGE MARGE

It's got kind of a rhyming thing. I like it.

BETTY

Large Marge is the P.T.A.'s secretary slash enforcer. And she's about to secretary slash enforce you off the premises.

OLIVIA

Are you stealing money from the school? Is that's what's going on here?

BETTY

All right. Get her out of here.

OLIVIA

You can't silence the truth! I'm gonna be back, and I'm…. whoah…

BETTY

Hey you know what my second favorite ingredient in snickerdoodles is? Mescaline. It's a highly potent psychoactive agent that's currently wreaking havoc on your nervous system.

(OLIVIA staggers)

OLIVIA

Ohhhh…

BETTY

You're about to go a little trip, courtesy of the P.T.A. And I don't think you're ever coming home. Dump her in a garbage can near the YMCA, Marge.

LARGE MARGE

Please would be nice.

BETTY
Please dump her in a garbage can near the YMCA.
(OLIVIA passes out.)

(LARGE MARGE drags OLIVIA off-stage.)

BETTY
Nobody messes with me. YOU GOT IT!? I WILL END YOU AND EVERYONE WHO EVER LOVED YOU!!
(she settles down)
(The rhumba music comes back on. She starts dancing again.)
All right I gotta crochet something or I'm gonna lose it.
(Lights change.)

(A large garbage can.)
(LARGE MARGE enters, dragging an unconscious OLIVIA.)

LARGE MARGE
All right, here you go. Your new home in the dumpster.
(She tries to lift OLIVIA.)
Ugh.
(she tries to lift OLIVIA again, fails.)
I can't do it.
(she pushes OLIVIA against the garbage can.)

OLIVIA
…what's going on?

LARGE MARGE
Shhh… get in the garbage can.

OLIVIA
I'm not getting in the garbage can –

LARGE MARGE *(fierce whispers)*
I'm trying to help you! Get in the garbage can! The PTA has snipers everywhere. Get in the can.
(Reluctantly OLIVIA gets in the can.)
(LARGE MARGE lifts the lid and holds it over their heads.)
I need to tell you something, but don't let Betty know, she's violently insane.

OLIVIA
You're not violently insane?

LARGE MARGE

No. I'm the nice one! I didn't get into the PTA to be an enforcer slash secretary. I just wanted to be the secretary period with no enforcing duties at all. Plus, I don't really enjoy the nickname Large Marge. It's kind of insulting.

OLIVIA

Okay, what do you want to tell me?

LARGE MARGE

In the bottom of the can there's an envelope. That's the evidence you need to prove everything.

OLIVIA

To prove what?

LARGE MARGE

The PTA got paid off.

OLIVIA

What?

(LARGE MARGE takes out an envelope.)

LARGE MARGE

This is the statement from a bank account in the Cayman Islands. If you look, you'll see a deposit over a million dollars, from the P.T.A., into a personal account.

OLIVIA

Whose account is it?

LARGE MARGE

Christy Martin's.

OLIVIA

What?

LARGE MARGE

The money went to her. That's why she can afford a Porsche. And a mansion. And those kale smoothies that are really expensive.

OLIVIA

Christy Martin stole the money?

LARGE MARGE

You didn't hear it from me. I have to go. Betty Lewis has spies everywhere. She multi-tasks all the time! You can't get away from her! Hide in the garbage can for an hour, and then roll away slowly.

OLIVIA

How do I thank you?

LARGE MARGE

Tell the truth. Expose the fraud. Maybe get me a scone. But a good one. I have to go!

(She runs off)

(OLIVIA sinks into the garbage can and puts the lid over her head.)

(Lights change to the set of Beacon.)

(CADE and ALYSSA are speaking.)

CADE

Breaking News! A new scandal rocked the Martin Administration today as a shocking video came to light!

ALYSSA

What we have tonight is terrifying footage from Sam's Burger-palooza. I'll let the video speak for itself.

(lights up on JOSEPH and CHRISTY having dinner.)

JOSEPH

Sprite is awesome.

CHRISTY

Yeah.

JOSEPH

So is this burger.

CHRISTY

Sure.

JOSEPH

Sometimes you get a burger and it's not awesome, but this one is like… awesome.

CHRISTY

Can you pass the mustard please?

(JOSEPH picks up the mustard)

CADE

Freeze it right there.

(JOSEPH and CHRISTY freeze)

ALYSSA

It appears that Christy Martin is using mustard on a burger.

CADE

Disgusting. What have we come to as a society when our President can put mustard on a hamburger and no one objects? Is this America? Is this the kind of school that President Christy wants? A school where she can just put any condiment she wants on a burger and get away with it? Our Founding Fathers didn't die just so that you could have mustard on a hamburger, woman! THEY DIDN'T DIE FOR YOUR MUSTARD!

ALYSSA

What I don't get is why First Boyfriend Joseph doesn't say anything. She's having mustard right in front of him! He doesn't do anything! He doesn't try to talk her out of it! WHAT IS WRONG WITH HIM?!

CADE

If I could speculate – I think she's blackmailing him. She's got his cousins locked up in a basement somewhere – if he doesn't play along, they'll be force-fed mustard.

ALYSSA

That's certainly a possibility, Cade.

(The garbage can tips over and begins rolling slowly towards the side of the stage, making a lot of noise.)

CADE

We'll be on this story all night as –

(the garbage can rolls some more.)

ALYSSA

Prepare for five hours of live coverage of Mustardgate –

(the garbage can rolls off the way off.)

CADE

Really?

(Lights change to the room of the Intelligencer.)

(TIA, TODD, and LUKE are in a meeting.)

LUKE

All right, who's got something?

TODD

I've got a piece on how the people who don't like the gluten changes are whiners.

LUKE

Let's have a look.

(TODD steps to the side. SARA enters.)

TODD

This is Todd Brizniac reporting on the so-called Gluten-apocalypse. I'm here with champion whiner Sara, who is one of these "no gluten freaks." Hi Sara.

SARA

Hi.

TODD

Does the school owe you food you can eat? Why do you think that? If this were caveman times, you would just die. How do you respond to that?

(she's about to say something, he cuts her off)

Maybe your genes are destined to be eliminated, did you ever think of that?

(she's about to say something, he cuts her off)

Why do you think the rest of us have to tolerate your existence when you're the one who's making all these demands!?Don't you understand YOUR EXISTENCE IS INCONVENIENCING US?! How dare you! Have you no shame?!

(she's about to say something, but he cuts her off)

You're basically a terrorist. You're a terrorist, aren't you?!

(she's about to say something, but he cuts her off)

No answers from the gluten-free mafia! Back to you, Tia.

(He steps away and heads back to the desk.)

TIA

I like it.

LUKE

Seemed a little one-sided.

TODD

Look, if she can't find a way to speak, that's not my fault.

TIA

Maybe we could have a scientific expert way in on how much gluten-free people suck.

LUKE

I like where you're going.

(OLIVIA enters, all messed up.)

OLIVIA

Hey everybody.

LUKE

What happened to you?

OLIVIA

Journalism happened to me.

LUKE

Well get your hair fixed – I hope you've got that piece on exercise ready.

OLIVIA

Luke, I've got information on a new story. A killer story. The biggest story of the year.

LUKE

Tell me you have pictures of Beyonce's children.

TIA

OMG. That is amazing. Just thinking about them I start shaking.

OLIVIA

Why would I – what do Beyonce's children have to do with this school?

TODD

Um… they're beautiful. And – hello? Beyonce.

OLIVIA

She doesn't go here.

TIA

She goes wherever she wants. She's Beyonce.

(TIA looks up to the sky, whispers a silent prayer.)

Beyonce is around us, and inside us, everywhere and nowhere.

TODD

Amen.

OLIVIA

I have a story about President Christy.

LUKE

Did you do that thing where you combine her and Joseph's faces to make a weird picture of their children?

TIA

I did that. But their babies had goatees so it was kind of weird.

OLIVIA

I'm pretty sure Christy's never getting a boyfriend again.

LUKE

She's gay. Whoah.

TODD

Awesome. I love it. I respect her so much.

OLIVIA

No!

TODD

Thank goodness. For a minute I was freaking out.

OLIVIA

It doesn't matter if she's gay –

TODD

I know, and if she were gay I would totally respect that. But since she's not gay I can keep my Christy heart journal next to my desk. With the lock of hair I happened to acquire. Maybe.

TIA

You have a heart journal to Christy?

TODD

Like this is a surprise to you. I also made pictures of our children. They're amazing.

OLIVIA

Guys.

(OLIVIA drops the papers on the desk.)

I have proof that there is a conspiracy involving Christy. She's stolen money from the bobblehead fundraiser, funneled it through two countries, and has embezzled over a million dollars. That's how she affords her Porsche and mansion and those kale drinks. President Christy is a criminal, and after I do this report, she's going to prison.

(Pause)

LUKE

Whoah.

OLIVIA

Yeah. Journalism. Mic drop.

(she drops the papers, then picks them up again.)

LUKE

Can I… talk to you alone for a minute?

OLIVIA

Sure.

TIA

Oh you want us to leave? Okay.

(TODD and TIA exit.)

OLIVIA

Do they give out Pulitzers for high school reporting? I think they probably do. They will now.

LUKE

You're one hundred percent sure this is true?

OLIVIA

This came to me in a garbage can while I was affected by psychoactive drugs, so yes, one hundred percent true.

LUKE

Nobody could have forged these papers?

OLIVIA

Why would they do that? It's true. We need to run the story. Christy is going down. Woo! I mean, it's crazy, cause I am a huge Christy supporter, but like my whole opinion just did a one eighty and now I'm like, oh my gosh why didn't I see this? She had that picture of the mansion in her locker – she gave First Boyfriend all that plastic surgery –

LUKE

He's had plastic surgery?

OLIVIA

Oh yeah, he's had work done. A lot. Top notch. So now – we run this story – our ratings go through the roof – we bury the Beacon – we win all the prizes – I get a scholarship to an Ivy League university. Boom. Mic drop.

(she drops the papers again.)

LUKE

We're not gonna run this story.

OLIVIA

You aren't gonna run it?

LUKE

Why would I run it?

OLIVIA

Because it's the truth.

LUKE

Is that what you think we do here?

OLIVIA

Isn't it?

LUKE

There are two teams right now. Two. And there's only one question the news is designed to answer: "is our team winning?" Our show's answer is yes. Our show's answer is always yes. People tune in so we can tell them that what they already believe is true. We're telling them they're right. We're telling them that Christy is a good leader and the other guys are stupid and mean. What do you think's gonna happen if they tune in and we tell them the opposite?

OLIVIA

I don't know.

LUKE

They're gonna turn off the T.V. They're gonna find someone else, someone who tells them that they're right, that what they've believed is true, that their team is the winning team.

OLIVIA

But… then nobody's mind is gonna change.

LUKE

Nobody wants their mind to change.

OLIVIA

So what should I do?

LUKE

Throw this away. Ignore it.

OLIVIA

I'm not gonna do that. This is the truth!

LUKE

According to you.

OLIVIA

According to the evidence!

LUKE

Evidence can be faked. And evidence can be made fake. Now I want you to forget about this, and get me a story on exercise.

OLIVIA

No.

LUKE

Do it. Do it or you're fired.

OLIVIA

Then I'm fired.

(She snatches the envelope and leaves.)

(Lights change to the set of the Beacon.)

ALYSSA

In some primitive cultures, mustard seeds were smeared on the bodies of fresh corpses, to make them more acceptable to the death gods they worshipped.

CADE

Do you think that's what Christy was referring to when she put mustard on her burger?

ALYSSA

I think there's at least a possibility she's in a death cult. I think mustard use is a pretty clear sign.

(OLIVIA rushes in.)

OLIVIA

Hey.

CADE

What are you doing here?

(She holds up the envelope.)

OLIVIA

I've got some breaking news for you.

(Lights down)

(End of act one)

Act Two

(Lights up on The Beacon.)

(CADE and ALYSSA are in front of their studio audience. They audience continues to have Anti-Christy signs that say things like "Christy is kind of mean" "Christy = The Devil" and "Christy, Our Greatest Failure as a Species")

(CADE and ALYSSA are more excited than they have ever been in their lives.)

CADE

BREAKING NEWS!

ALYSSA *(pointing at the audience)*

TONIGHT!

CADE *(pounding on his desk)*

TONIGHT!

ALYSSA *(climbing onto her desk)*

TO-NIIIIIGHT!

CADE

Alyssa?

ALYSSA

Sorry?
(mysterious)
Tonight.

CADE

This is GREATEST scandal to ever rock ANYONE EVER. PERIOD!

ALYSSA

What we have for you tonight will bring the Christy Administration toppling down – just like the Colossus of Rhodes in 226 B.C. which tumbled into the sea due to an earthquake, leaving only the feet standing as a testament to the overweening hubris of those who sought to reach into the heavens only to be pulled down by the cold, hard, hand of REALITY.
(CADE stares at her.)

CADE

Wow.

ALYSSA

I've been working on this for a while.

CADE

LET'S GET TO IT!

ALYSSA

BUT FIRST – A little context –

AUDIENCE MEMBER

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

YOU BETTER NOT DRAG THIS OUT!

ALYSSA

All right all right all right – with us tonight is Olivia St. John.

(BOOS from the Audience.)

(OLIVIA enters.)

CADE

Reporter with the Presley High Intelligencer.

(More BOOS)

AUDIENCE MEMBER

She's a tool of the administration!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

She's basically Hitler!

CADE

Now I know, Olivia and I have had our differences in the past, basically because she was a fawning mouthpiece of this corrupt president with no standards, decency, or brains, BUT… now – I am going to change my mind. Olivia, welcome to the Beacon.

OLIVIA

Thank you.

ALYSSA

Before we start, I want to let you know that Cade is taken. So don't start getting any ideas.

OLIVIA

That's not what I'm here for.

CADE

I'm not actually taken –

ALYSSA *(interrupting)*

Yes you are. Off the market.

CADE

Actually –

ALYSSA

Cade? You're off the market. Let's put that out there.

OLIVIA

Can I just tell you what I've discovered?

CADE

Tell away.

OLIVIA

The big picture: There was a sale of bobblehead dolls that made 1.2 million dollars.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

LOVE ME SOME BOBBLEHEADS!

ALYSSA

Now, if you're not familiar with the concept of the Bobblehead Doll, we're gonna take some time here to talk about the history of bobbleheads –

CADE

Bobbleheads were actually developed by Christopher Columbus -

AUDIENCE MEMBER

JUST TELL US THE IMPORTANT STUFF!

OLIVIA

Right. There were 1.2 million in profits. It was supposed to be a fundraiser and the school received only 53 thousand dollars. I have here the bank deposit receipts showing that the money was transferred to two shell companies overseas, and then returned directly to Christy's personal bank account. Which she has then used to buy a porsche, a mansion, and three or four kale smoothies.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Wow. That was really clear and succinct.

OLIVIA

Thanks.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

I'm like, informed now.

OLIVIA

Yep. That was the point.

ALYSSA

This is the end of Christy.

CADE

The end.

ALYSSA

You've done a great thing today. A brave thing.

OLIVIA

Thank you.

(The AUDIENCE cheers)

Guys, guys. I take no pleasure in this. I don't want to see Christy destroyed. I just want the truth. And my Pulitzer. Thank you.

(Lights change to the Intelligencer. TIA and TODD are at the desk.)

(An AUDIENCE is watching. They are a decidedly Pro-Christy group with signs like "Christy 4-Eva" "Christy is a very nice person" and "Christy > You"

TODD

Tonight's story!

TIA

Shocking news!

TODD

Tonight's story – the wild and reckless accusations made by a once-respected news organization!

TIA

I'm sad, Luke. I'm really sad, today.

TODD

I know. I never thought it would come to this.

TIA

If you haven't heard the story, famous conspiracy theorist Olivia St. John raved on the Beacon earlier today about some kind of crazy money laundering scheme.

TODD

Skipping Forward

TODD

That's good enough for me. I trust you. Our student government is built on trust.

MARION

Absolutely. And now I think it's time we turn our attention to the evil people among us: The Beacon. Why do they hate our school? Why do they hate our freedom? Why do they tell lies?

TIA *(interrupting)*

Cause they're mean!

TODD

Tia, shhh… Marion is speaking.

TIA

Sorry.

MARION

But this is a free and open school. They are free to say what they want, and I am free to say what I want, and no one can stop me from telling you their phone numbers and email addresses and embarrassing facts about them. Which I'm not going to do – but you can find that information on our website. So, you know, do what you want with that information, I can't stop you.

TODD

Thank you.

MARION

And there will be a rally in support of President Christy tonight in the gym!

(The AUDIENCE cheers)

I will be selling these "Christy is Awesome" t-shirts, which you can buy for thirty bucks. All the proceeds go to people who want money. Thank you.

(She stands and waves. The Audience cheers.)

(Lights up on ALYSSA, filing a report from the hallway.)

ALYSSA

This is Alyssa Montgomery with continuing coverage of the fallout from Bobbleheadgate! The mood in the halls is filled with radioactive electricity!

(She looks around. There's no one else there.)

CADE

Thank you, Alyssa. What else can you tell us? Are there any statues of Christy Martin about to be toppled by the forces of justice?

ALYSSA

I don't believe there are any statues of Christy, but I'm going to simulate that now with our special Beacon technology.

(She takes out a piece of paper with a crude drawing of Christy on it.)

"Nooo don't topple me… ahhhhh!"

(She makes it look like the piece of paper is sliding down, and then crumples it.)

Boom. Aaaaah. Smash.

CADE

Awesome work, Alyssa.

ALYSSA

Thank you, and I'm sure you'll make a fine husband some day to another reporter who loves you.

CADE

Thank you, Alyssa, and I would like to remind you that I am not interested.

ALYSSA

People change and you will change. I have a tarot reading to prove it.

CADE

Once again, Alyssa, this is creepy harassment.

(A STUDENT enters)

ALYSSA

Hold on, we have a student!

(ALYSSA runs up to him.)

Hi there! Before today, would you consider yourself a Christy supporter?

STUDENT

Yes. Absolutely yes. She is an angel.

ALYSSA

And now that you know about Bobbleheadgate, how do you feel?

STUDENT

I love her even more.

ALYSSA

Really?

STUDENT

I don't believe it. I mean, first of all, the Beacon is totally biased against Christy. They've hated her all along, so I don't trust anything they say.

ALYSSA
But the reporter was actually on staff at the Intelligencer –

STUDENT
Yeah, but then she moved over to the Beacon, so obviously she had a bone to pick against Christy. And I've heard she's evil and delusional.

ALYSSA
I guess, but –

STUDENT
And then, like, how do you make a million dollars from bobbleheads? That's crazy. That doesn't make any sense.

(STUDENT 2 runs in.)

STUDENT 2
I love Christy! I think she needs our love now more than ever. The fact that they're trying so hard to get rid of her proves she's doing something right.

ALYSSA
I'm not sure that's true.

STUDENT 2
A million dollars for bobbleheads? Who does this reporter think we are? Idiots?

ALYSSA
Okay –

STUDENT 2
If it was reported on the Intelligencer, I might believe it. But from the Beacon, I don't trust anything they say.

STUDENT
Plus, have you heard about Olivia St. John? She's a menace.

STUDENT 2
She's the worst. I wouldn't feed her corpse to my vultures.

ALYSSA
You have vultures?

STUDENT 2
Maybe.

(Lights change back to the Beacon. CADE and OLIVIA are on their phones.)

(Elsewhere on stage, CALLERS come forward with phones.)

CADE

Okay, that's about all for today's episode – let's take a few callers.

CALLER

You are everything that's wrong with this school!

OLIVIA

Great.

CALLER 2

I hope you're happy with yourself! You scum!

CADE

All right then.

CALLER 3

You are the worst. You are worm droppings. Everything you stand for is putrid! And please pick up some milk on the way home.

OLIVIA

Mom?!

CALLER 3

Sorry. Um… yeah…. Uh never mind.

(Lights down on the callers.)

CADE

And we're off the air.

OLIVIA

This is not going how I imagined it.

CADE

I told you they were going to attack.

OLIVIA

You didn't say that! You just rubbed your hands together and went sweet!

CADE

Well, mentally, I was telling you that this was gonna get ugly.

OLIVIA

Maybe you could've done that un-mentally!

CADE
You wanted to be a real journalist. This is what it is.

OLIVIA
Like you know.

CADE
What's that supposed to mean?

OLIVIA
Like you've done any actual journalism! The reason people don't believe the real story is that you've been pushing every possible anti-Christy story you could! You've been crying wolf so much no one is listening anymore!

CADE
I haven't been crying wolf!

OLIVIA
The report card thing? You did a whole special on that and it was nothing! You had nothing! And you aired it anyway!

CADE
Our followers ate that up!

OLIVIA
Your followers did. *Your* followers believe anything!

CADE
And all you've been doing is stories about how great Christy is! No wonder nobody will believe you when you tell the truth! You've been making people stupid!

OLIVIA
I didn't make people stupid! They started out that way!

CADE
You didn't inform them! You didn't tell them anything! You didn't bother to ask them to think about anything! You just put up that Christy puked rainbows and they believed it!

OLIVIA
That was like one filter on our Instagram!

CADE
And they thought it was real! It was like, `OMG, Christy actually pukes rainbows, isn't that wonderful?!', NO IT'S AN INSTAGRAM FILTER YOU MORONS!

OLIVIA

You're the problem here!

CADE

Oh *I'm* the problem!? I've been saying all along Christy was corrupt! You didn't believe me! You chose not to believe me!

OLIVIA

Because you didn't prove anything!

CADE

I did prove stuff! You just had your eyes closed!

OLIVIA

You proved she got a B- minus and was conscientious in World Geography! That's not exactly a scoop!

CADE

Well your proof isn't convincing them!

OLIVIA

I've got the documents. I've got the proof.

CADE

No one believes the documents are real.

OLIVIA

But what if we could prove it. What if we could find someone to examine them and tell us whether or not they're legitimate?

CADE

Who is the student body going to believe?

OLIVIA

We need to find somebody neutral, somebody above the student body, that they trust more than Christy.

CADE

Who? Who is that?

(PRINCIPAL WEEMS enters)

PRINCIPAL WEEMS

Hi there, I couldn't help but notice that you were having an argument, looking for someone neutral, whom the student body happened to respect.

(pause)

OLIVIA

This is a private conversation, Principal Weems.

PRINCIPAL WEEMS

Oh sure yes of course, BUT… if you were looking for someone neutral, maybe there's someone standing in front of you who is a *principal* actor in this.

(pause)

CADE

Seriously, dude. Private conversation.

PRINCIPAL WEEMS

I actually have a master's degree in authenticating financial documents… let me just throw that out there.

OLIVIA

Why is that important to us?

PRINCIPAL WEEMS

Just seems to me, as principal of the school with a special degree, I might be able to settle this.

CADE

I've got it! I know who we can ask! The one person who commands respect from everyone – whose will and truth cannot be ignored.

OLIVIA

Who?

CADE

Beyonce.

(Pause)

OLIVIA

I'm gonna do my eye-roll again in slow motion in case you didn't catch it the first time.

CADE

Oh come on! We tweet at her! She has a twitter!

OLIVIA

She's busy! She has a billion followers! She has adorable, gorgeous babies! She's not going to weigh in on whether or not my documents are authentic!

CADE

But maybe she could! Maybe if we got enough people to tweet her, and we tagged her over and over again, then maybe –

OLIVIA

You are insane!

CADE

Well I'm out of ideas then!

OLIVIA

We're just going to work harder to convince the students, that's all. We show them a rational, reasonable argument – it will work.

(Lights change to the set of the Intelligencer. TIA and TODD are behind the desk.)

TIA

Welcome to tonight's special report!

(The AUDIENCE is rowdy.)

It has been a wild day here at Presley High School and we have more breaking news for you!

(The AUDIENCE cheers.)

TODD

Stunning developments!

TIA

We have here, today, with us, in the studio, Olivia St. John's boyfriend!

(Shock from the AUDIENCE)

I know! It's hard to believe that someone that physically repulsive would attract a man, but –

TODD

Men are garbage. We have no standards. Seriously.

TIA

Speaking of which, here for an exclusive interview on the Beacon, Gregor! The Swiss foreign exchange student!

(The AUDIENCE boos as GREGOR enters. He wears lederhosen.)

GREGOR

Ja. Hello. First, we are broken up, okay?

(The AUDIENCE cheers.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You seem smart!

TIA

All right guys. All right. I know we're all wanting to get to the questions. First one: what is her deal?

GREGOR

Oh boy. Oh where to start?

TIA

Like, is she just really horrible?

GREGOR

Ja.

TIA

That's what I figured.

GREGOR

Okay, so. We are going to roller skating disco bowling, right? Very romantic. Neon lights. I'm wearing my sexiest socks. You know how it is. I put them on very slowly. They have stripes. I am watching her face while I do this? Looking at me like I am a hamburger. Oh yes. She is hungry for Gregor.

TODD

Okay, maybe we could skip this part –

TIA

Tell me more.

GREGOR

Here go my socks. Verrry slowly. And then… roller skates. I tie them like this. Ohhh… you like this? You like the laces?

TODD

Gregor, please. What would you say is Olivia's largest personality defect?

GREGOR

There are so many.

TODD

Pick one.

GREGOR

Her main problem is that she thinks she's better than other people.

(The AUDIENCE reacts badly)

AUDIENCE MEMBER

She's not!

GREGOR

She looks at me and says Gregor – I am better than everyone else.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

What!

GREGOR

They are so dumb. The other people.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

She's wrong!

GREGOR

That's why I can tell them anything. I am in honors classes and they are in stupid regular classes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Boo!

GREGOR

And then she said, Gregor, you are the greatest of men. Your socks are thrilling. Your lederhosen are enchanting. I want to go steady.

TIA

She said she wanted to go steady?

GREGOR

She's crazy this girl. She starts messing up her hair like this.

(GREGOR puts his hands through his hair sexily)

Why? Why are you doing this? Mental problems, most likely. She's rubbing her face. Licking her palms like a cat. I think she has diseases.

TIA

Okay, well that's the time for –

GREGOR

`Oh Gregor you are the best man, yodel for me.' `I don't yodel on first date' `Please yodel.' `I'm going to do roller skating disco now woman let me go' She cries. Big tears on her face. Doing the hair thing again. I don't want to be near that mess.

TODD

Thank you Gregor. This was very enlightening.

GREGOR

I am now single.

TODD

We're going to have to move on.

GREGOR

Check this out.

(He starts unrolling one of his socks)

You like this, ladies? Gregor can do this all night.

TIA

Thank you. Please leave.

GREGOR

All right then.

(He leaves, very slowly.)

TODD

For our second guest on our special report on why Olivia St. John is a terrible person, we have Betty Lewis, President of the P.T.A.

(BETTY enters, with cookies.)

BETTY

It is so great to be here! I just want to say that I love your little show and you are all so cute.

TIA

That helps me because I have low self-esteem.

BETTY

Some people should have low self-esteem. It's a rational response.

(TIA looks sad)

But not you! You are wonderful!

TODD

So you're here to talk about an encounter with Olivia St. John. Can you tell us about it?

BETTY

I can do more than tell you about it. I made a recording of it, actually.

TIA

You have a recording of people in your home?

BETTY

I multitask all the time. Here we go!

(We hear OLIVIA's voice recorded)

VOICE OF OLIVIA

Things are about to get very bad for all you mothers… Every one of you is going down – the whole P.T.A. is going to be wearing matching orange jumpsuits and breaking rocks at a maximum security prison upstate. And when you go down, I'm gonna be right there, videotaping the whole thing and streaming it live to my followers. We're going viral. Everyone's gonna know the name Betty Lewis, and everybody's gonna associate it with the pile of puke that's left on the floor of a prison cell after someone gets beaten unconscious.

(The recording stops)

TODD

That's disgusting.

TIA

She has mental problems.

BETTY

I'm not a psychiatrist, but if I was going to diagnose her, I'd say she's a sociopathic degenerate who is acting out of a clinical sense of entitlement and rage. And then that's paired with her pathological lying, her cruelty towards small animals, and her low sense of self-esteem due to the fact that she's a miserable slut.*

("slut" may be changed to "skank" or "cow")*

TIA

Wow.

BETTY

I hope she gets the help she needs in the proper prison.

TODD

You have such a good heart.

BETTY

Thank you.

TIA

Todd, I hate to interrupt, but President Christy is going to make a speech!

BETTY

I love her speeches! They have so many words!

TODD

Let's go to the live coverage!

(Lights change to FIRST BOYFRIEND JOSEPH, standing behind a lectern. A CROWD of Pro-Christy supporters has gathered. CHRISTY stands nearby.)

JOSEPH

WHAT UP, PRESLEY HIGH SCHOOL?!

(The Crowd cheers like at a pep rally)

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME AWESOME STUFF?

(The Crowd cheers)

CAUSE MY LADY

(he turns to her)

My sweet, sweet lady –

(he blows a kiss to her)

IS ABOUT TO DROP SOME TRUTH ON Y'ALL! WOOO!

(he's about to leave, then comes back)

WOOOO! PRESLEY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL RULES!

(he cheers for himself, then exits, gives Christy a high-five.)

(CHRISTY approaches the lectern.)

CHRISTY

Hello, everyone! And before I start, I want to thank you for all of the cash donations you've given to me over this difficult time. Your money is appreciated and please keep giving it to me. But I'm not here today to talk about your generosity, I'm here to talk about the mean people. The people who are causing division in this school.

(she starts to cry)

Sorry. When I think about all the injustice in the world, and the people starving in other countries, and then these so-called "news" organizations are spending their time making up stories about me… it hurts me inside. So – today – I am calling for an investigation into the Beacon. They love investigations, so let's have one about them. Already, we have learned that "reporter" Olivia St. John -

(the crowd boos)

No no, don't boo for her until you know everything. Olivia St. John concocted this story while she was trapped in a garbage can high on drugs. Here's a dramatic recreation.

(MABEL enters, dressed like a terrible version of OLIVIA.)

MABEL

Whoah I'm crazy, whoah. I live in a garbage can. Whoah.

(She climbs into the garbage can.)

Now I'm going to make up stories about President Christy.

(she rolls off-stage in the garbage can)

CHRISTY

Thank you. What other secrets is the Beacon hiding? As your president, I vow not to rest until the truth is discovered! Thank you!

JOSEPH

Let's hear it for the hottest president this school has ever had! Christy Martin! Wooooo!

(The crowd cheers)

(Lights change to the Beacon.)

(OLIVIA and ALYSSA and CADE trudge in, totally defeated.)

OLIVIA
Nobody changed their mind. Not one person.

ALYSSA
Look on the bright side. Now your reputation is trashed.

OLIVIA
How is that the bright side?

ALYSSA
Oh. Sorry. That's just the truth.
(CADE puts his head on the table.)

CADE
I thought we had her. I thought this time we'd bust her. Nope.
(ALYSSA starts rubbing his shoulders and stroking his hair.)

ALYSSA
Aw, there there.

CADE
Can you not do that please?

ALYSSA *(still doing it)*
Shhhh….
(MYLAR, KAYLA, and LOUIE enter, looking like the mafia.)

KAYLA
Knock knock.

MYLAR
DECA Club in the house.

LOUIE
Yo.

OLIVIA
What do you guys want?

KAYLA
For starters, we're here to threaten and bully you.

MYLAR
Legitimate business activities. Wink.

KAYLA
But after that I'm here to tell you that –

MYLAR
Like our involvement in the teacher pensions. Wink.

KAYLA
Mylar –

MYLAR
Sorry.

KAYLA
We just came from the budget committee –

LOUIE
A sick budget committee meeting!

KAYLA
And the committee didn't really like all the lies you're spreading. So, you're going off the air.

CADE
You can't do this.

KAYLA
I didn't do it. The budget committee did it.

LOUIE
It was crazy.

MYLAR
And we totally didn't influence them at all. Wink.

KAYLA
So effective immediately, your budget is zero. You guys need to pack up and get out of here and go back to AP History.

ALYSSA
I'll fight this. We'll fundraise.

KAYLA

Oh. I've heard bobbleheads are good.

(They laugh)

LOUIE

Do we trash the place now?

KAYLA

Sure, I guess.

(The DECA Club trashes the place.)

MYLAR

I apologize for this. We're usually more civilized. Wink.

KAYLA

Have a nice day. And also do you happen to have the Bio homework?

ALYSSA

Sure. We're lab partners.

KAYLA

Thanks.

LOUIE

DECA Club out.

(They make gang signs and leave.)

CADE

Well Olivia – you've been here two days and you've basically destroyed our entire operation.

ALYSSA

We had a good thing going here. We were hip. We were cool. There was a lot of potential between me and Cade -

CADE

No –

ALYSSA

People were wondering, "Are they gonna date?"

CADE

They really weren't.

ALYSSA

They were writing fan-fiction about us. Check it out. Cade and Alyssa and the Great Sexy* News Story.

**this may be changed to "romantic"*

CADE

You wrote that.

ALYSSA

Maybe.

CADE

You wrote a fan fiction romantic piece about us?

ALYSSA

It's a slow news night. We're both at the anchor desk. And then the news breaks – about each other: We leap into action.

CADE

All right.

OLIVIA

I'm not giving up.

CADE

You should. Do a different extra-curricular. Maybe we should all do Yearbook instead -

(OLIVIA's phone boops.)

What's that? Did my story get a like?

ALYSSA

You have a notification on that?

OLIVIA

No it's my phone, it's –

(she checks her phone)

Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh!

(She jumps up)

IT'S NOT OVER YET!

(She runs out)

(Pause)

CADE

You wrote fan fiction about me?

ALYSSA

It's mostly tasteful.

(OLIVIA runs back in.)

OLIVIA

I need you guys to get on the air right now.

ALYSSA

What's going on?

OLIVIA

I'm gonna file a story from the road.
(She runs out again.)

(Lights change to MARION's office.)
(OLIVIA runs in, readies her microphone.)

OLIVIA

This is Olivia St. John, reporting from the command center of embattled student body President Christy Martin. We anticipate a statement at any moment because of the ground-breaking, bombshell news just about to drop! So far nothing. Nothing yet. But at any moment, President Christy, humbled, beaten, and destroyed, is going to admit to the crime of the century.
(Pause)
Any moment now! Just a second. Stay tuned!
(MARION enters)

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com