THE ELECTION

A COMEDY BY

Don Zolidis

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Cast of Characters

MARK DAVENPORT, a senior, running for student body president

CHRISTY MARTIN, a senior, running for student body president

KARL MERRIWEATHER, a senior, Mark's friend

GARY MCMASTER, Mark's slick campaign manager

KYLI, the host of a cable access news channel

(Every other role in the play may be double cast as much as necessary.)

SKIP, embattled current president

SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND, embattled current president's girlfriend

MARGE, the school secretary

ANIMAL SHELTER GUY

BIRD MCBEAN, commentator

CHARLES MOORE, commentator

SALLY, anchorperson

CHIP, anchorperson

MIRANDA, unhinged conspiracy theorist

SASHA, Mark's fake girlfriend

CHORUS, (plays roles like Independent Voters, Students, Reporters, Protestors, Audience Members, etc…)

PEOPLE IN COMMERCIALS (includes Sister, Childhood Friend, Grandma, Farmer, Elderly Woman, Ominous Male voice, Ominous Female Voice, and others)

Character Notes

Most of the parts may be either gender. Change names and pronouns as appropriate. It is important, however, that Christy is female and Mark and Gary are male.

Setting

A high school near you. *Note—this play is currently set to take place in the United States of America. Feel free to change any of those references if necessary.

Production Notes

This play can contain video elements (the campaign commercials) if you wish to film the commercials and project them on your stage, that would be perfectly acceptable.

Acknowledgments

The world premiere of *The Election* was performed at Del Campo High School and directed by Jennifer Brenner. The original cast was as follows:

MARK . . . . . Jordan Ferguson
CHRISTY . . . . . Danielle Britschgi
KYLI . . . . . Autumn Poling, Shelby Turner
KARL. . . . . Marcus Rubio, Anthony Gomes
GARY (GINA) . . . . . Ian Salazar, Laura Prete
SASHA . . . . . Amber Mann, Hannah Guinn
ENSEMBLE. . . . . Abigail Campbell, Alicia Cornell, Dasha Yatsenko, Giovanna Perricone, Gabby Macari, Jackie Parker, Karissa Elliott, Katie Tinley, Kristofer Clark, Nick Adams

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ACT I

(A bare stage.)

*(*KYLI, *a reporter, stands to the side and addresses an imaginary Television audience.)*

KYLI. *(Into microphone:)* And the scandal continues to grow, Chip. The people here are incensed.

(She looks around.)

The people here are incensed.

(Two STUDENTS *stumble in with signs reading, "Resign" and "What he said.")*

And the calls for the embattled student body president to resign grow ever-louder.

(She holds the microphone in their general direction.)

STUDENT 1. Resign.

STUDENT 2. What he said.

KYLI. *(Into microphone:)* I just don't see how much longer Skip Chumley can hold on to power. Wait—it looks like he's going to make a statement.

*(*SKIP *enters, dressed in a suit, with handlers.)*

SKIP. I'd like to make a statement.

STUDENT 1. You just did!

STUDENT 2. What he said.

SKIP. First, I'd like my girlfriend by my side, who can cry liberally during this.

*(*SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND *rushes to his side.)*

Second, I want to apologize to my school.

*(*SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND *sobs loudly.)*

My conduct has been inexcusable.

*(*SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND *sobs loudly.)*

I should not have punched out the mascot during the halftime show. That was wrong. I also should not have said the things I did, or

made the Facebook comments that I did—also wrong. I have not behaved like a good representative of Presley High School. But, I will say—I did what I did because I love this school. I love it so much that when I see a kid dressed up like a Cougar not exhibiting the proper amount of school spirit, I punch that kid's lights out. However, because I have violated the conduct policy, effective immediately, I am resigning as student body president.

*(*SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND *sobs loudly.)*

I'm not going to take questions. I'm going to need some private time with my girlfriend, who is going to stick by me during this because she doesn't have any other good choices.

SKIP'S GIRLFRIEND. I'm dumping you!

(She runs off.)

SKIP. I would also like to mention that I'm now single—

*(*SKIP *slinks off.)*

KYLI. There you have it folks. Just like in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, popular protests have brought down the regime.

STUDENT 1. Yay.

STUDENT 2. What he said.

(They exit.)

KYLI. I've been told that we'll have a replacement election for student body president in one month. The administration will be taking applications immediately.

(Lights down on her. Lights up on MARK*, a pretty normal guy, talking to the audience.)*

MARK. That's when it occurred to me: Pickles are actually cucumbers. And then another thought occurred to me: I should run for student body president. You see—I had a vision—a vision of a college application that needed a little more oomph to get me over the hump. But seriously, I thought I could make the school better. I knew I could make the school better.

(He stops.)

I'm getting ahead of myself. My name is Mark. And I want to be president. Of Presley High School. My first problem: name recognition.

*(*KYLI *approaches a group of three* INDEPENDENT VOTERS*.)*

KYLI. If the election were held today, would you vote for Mark Davenport?

INDEPENDENT VOTER. Who?

INDEPENDENT VOTER 2. What?

INDEPENDENT VOTER 3. No.

(The others look at her.)

I just don't like that name.

MARK. Hi. I'm Mark.

INDEPENDENT VOTERS. Okay, we'll vote for him.

KYLI. Well—there doesn't seem to be much point for anyone else to enter the race—Mark Davenport is the clear choice of the people.

MARK. Step two: Filing for your candidacy.

*(*MARGE, *the secretary is wheeled in.)*

MARGE. Next.

MARK. Hi.

MARGE. No you can't get out of detention.

MARK. I don't have detention. I'm running for student body president.

MARGE. Okay.

MARK. Is that it?

MARGE. You want me to throw you a parade?

MARK. No I just thought there would be a little more to the process.

MARGE. No.

MARK. Great. Is anyone else running?

MARGE. No.

MARK. All right then.

*(*CHRISTY, *a nerdy girl with glasses enters.)*

CHRISTY. I'd like to register to be a candidate for student body president.

MARGE. The filing window is closed.

CHRISTY. What?

MARGE. No. I'm just kidding. Go ahead.

CHRISTY. For a second there I thought you were serious.

MARGE. You don't even have to be passing your classes to be student body president. No standards at all over here. Nope. None at all.

CHRISTY. Oh. I'm actually quite smart.

MARGE. Don't really care.

CHRISTY. So I just register here?

MARGE. That's what I said. Sheesh. You're not that smart.

*(*CHRISTY *fills out the form.)*

MARK. Hi there. I'm Mark. I'm also running for president.

CHRISTY. Oh. Wow. I'm Christy. I've always wanted to be president.

MARK. That's great.

CHRISTY. I know it's just one big popularity contest.

MARK. Well, you know—what are you gonna do?

CHRISTY. I don't really have any friends. But maybe people will vote for me because they like my policies.

MARK. Sure. That's what they're gonna do.

CHRISTY. Like—I think we should all be studying harder, and have more homework, and less free time.

MARK. Uh huh. That's a great platform.

CHRISTY. And maybe the school has too much focus on football, so I was thinking we could eliminate all the sports programs.

MARK. Yep. Maybe we could reduce the quality of the food in the cafeteria too.

CHRISTY. Well, you know how they talked about bringing in an actual pizza company to run things? I think that's a terrible idea. We should be serving organic, vegetarian food.

MARK. Yeah. Yeah that's gonna appeal to most people. Once they don't have any sports to watch and have a lot of homework, there won't be time for meat eating, so everyone will just munch on carrot sticks like bunnies. Good plan.

CHRISTY. I thought so. Well—I'm going to get to work.

MARK. Good luck, Christy.

CHRISTY. Good luck, Mark.

(She leaves as MARK *speaks to the audience.)*

MARK. Step three: Destroy pathetic opponent in landslide.

(He sits back and relaxes. KARL *enters.)*

KARL. Hey can I be your campaign manager?

MARK. Sure, why not?

KARL. What are you doing?

MARK. Playing video games.

KARL. Don't you think you should be out there campaigning?

MARK. Why?

KARL. So that we can win.

MARK. Whatever. Have you seen my opponent? Christy what's-her-face? She couldn't win an election inside a paper bag.

KARL. How would you win an election inside a paper bag?

MARK. I don't know. But she couldn't do it. She's pathetic. Nobody is going to vote for her. She wants to eliminate sports.

KARL. What do you want to do?

MARK. I don't know.

KARL. You don't have like a campaign platform or anything?

MARK. Do I have to?

KARL. Well I mean, people want to know what they're voting for, right?

MARK. I guess.

(He talks back to the audience.)

All right all right—Step two-point-five. Come up with killer campaign platform. And as I started to think about what I would do as student body president, I really started to get into it. I mean, I had good ideas, and I think I could make the school a better place. So I gave my first stump speech.

(A crowd of students, including the INDEPENDENT VOTERS, *gathers.)*

For too long Presley High School has been mediocre.

STUDENT. Yeah!

MARK. I say, we're better than that.

STUDENT. Yeah!

MARK. That's why I've come up with a three-point plan to improve—

STUDENT. Yeah!

MARK. Can you stop doing that? I'm giving a speech up here.

STUDENT. Sorry—I was just trying to be a vocal supporter.

MARK. Okay, well, and point 1—

STUDENT. I guess you don't want vocal supporters. You only want silent supporters. You only want cave dwellers who only emerge at night and eat earthworms.

MARK. Anyway, Point 1: I think it's time for teacher evaluations from students. They evaluate us. I believe that we should also evaluate them.

(A small smattering of applause from the gathered crowd.)

STUDENT. You didn't yell at *them.*

MARK. Point Two: I want greater school spending on the arts. Our band, choir, and theatre programs don't have enough money.

(A small smattering of applause.)

Point Three: I want candy and soda vending machines in the hall.

(The crowd goes crazy. Some of them hug each other.)

And also fast food options for lunch!

(More applause.)

And PRESLEY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL RULES!!

(The crowd tries to hoist him on its shoulders, fails, gives up, and leaves.)

*(*KYLI *approaches the* INDEPENDENT VOTERS.*)*

KYLI. If the election were today, who would you vote for?

INDEPENDENT VOTERS. *(In unison:)* Mark Davenport!

KYLI. There you have it folks, Davenport has surged into a huge lead in the polls. This election is going to be a landslide.

(She exits. KARL *approaches* MARK.*)*

KARL. That was awesome.

MARK. Thank you.

KARL. The stuff about how you liked the football team was really great.

MARK. Yeah, well, I was inspired. I hadn't even written that stuff down—it was just like magic, you know?

KARL. Well—we got three weeks to the election, now we just make a few posters and coast to victory.

MARK. Sounds good.

(They get out markers and poster board to start making posters.)

KARL. Let's think of a slogan: We need three adjectives to describe you.

MARK. How about awesome, awesome, and awesome?

KARL. Um…

MARK. Okay, fine. Hardworking.

KARL. You're a B student.

MARK. Which requires me to work hard.

KARL. Okay.

MARK. Responsible.

KARL. Isn't that the same as hard-working?

MARK. No. And um…Awesome.

KARL. So your slogan is: Mark. Hard-Working. Responsible. Awesome.

MARK. I like it. It's catchy. Time to watch some TV.

(To the audience:)

And that's when I saw it:

(Lights up elsewhere on stage. Stirring, emotional campaign music. Two students enter and hold up an American flag. Perhaps they wave it. CHRISTY, *who is now completely gorgeous and barely recognizable as the same girl, enters.)*

CHRISTY. America. Land of opportunity. Land of freedom. At least it was. Now, I don't know that I even recognize it anymore. But I say: America's best days aren't behind her. I say we will build a nation, and build a school that is still the greatest in the world. I'm Christy Martin, stand with me, and we will stand tall once again. Vote for me for Presley Student Body President.

(She looks wistfully off into the distance. Perhaps a breeze blows her hair.)

I love you America. I love you so much.

(The patriotic music swells and the lights go out on her.)

VOICEOVER. Paid for by the committee to elect Christy Martin.

*(*MARK *and* KARL *sit there for a second.)*

MARK. What the heck was that?

KARL. Wow.

MARK. That didn't even look like the same girl.

KARL. That chick was hot.

MARK. I know!

KARL. I would totally vote for her.

MARK. Karl: She didn't say anything. She just said she loved America.

KARL. Well I love America, and I love her.

MARK. She didn't actually have any proposals Karl—I have three points on my platform. She doesn't even care about the America stuff, she wants to eliminate sports and make us all eat broccoli.

KARL. I would eat broccoli for her any day. I'd be like, yes, ma'am, broccoli, whatever you say.

MARK. Snap out of it. She just had like forty plastic surgery operations or something and bought television time—how the heck did she buy television time?

KARL. Who cares? Just—all right—you'll crush her in the debate, right? Just crush her in the debate.

MARK. Sure.

*(*KYLI *enters as the debate is set up.)*

KYLI. And welcome to our first presidential debate! The future of our school hangs in the balance—the stakes could not be higher, unless this happened to be the final presidential debate—

MARK. Um…how many debates are we having?

KYLI. Who knows? Tonight will feature the two candidates for president: Mark Davenport and mysterious newcomer Christy Martin, who has surged in recent polls and could be considered the frontrunner. We will be featuring a town hall style tonight, in which the moderator, that's me, will solicit questions from our town hall audience, that's you. Each candidate will be given one minute to speak, and their opponent will be given a thirty-second rebuttal. All right? LET'S GET READY TO RRRRRRRRUMBLE!

(Pause.)

I've just kind of always wanted to say that.

*(*CHRISTY *enters, wearing high heels and looking great. She walks toward* MARK *and gives him a hug.)*

CHRISTY. I will crush you like a bug.

(She waves and smiles and heads back to her podium. MARK *retreats to his.)*

KYLI. Okay, question number one.

(A FEMALE STUDENT *steps forward.)*

FEMALE STUDENT. Yes—my question is for both candidates: What are your qualifications to be president?

MARK. Um…Well uh…I think I'm qualified because I have good ideas—and um…I'm hardworking, and responsible…and awesome.

KYLI. You have forty-five more seconds.

(Pause.)

MARK. Oh. Um…and also…because um…I have good ideas. And I like sports.

(He stops.)

KYLI. You have thirty-five seconds left.

MARK. Oh come on! That was more than ten seconds. How much time do I have left now?

KYLI. I'm not counting arguing time against you. You still have thirty-five seconds.

MARK. Can I cede the rest of my time to my opponent?

KYLI. Sure.

CHRISTY. I'm glad you asked this question. And thank you, Mark, for the opportunity to expound on my qualifications. When my family came to this country, they had nothing. My grandfather had a fourth-grade education—and still, he managed to open his own hair salon with just a pair of rusty scissors and a dream. A dream that someday he could provide for his children. That's what America is about, my friends. A nation where if you worked hard enough, you could provide a better life for your family. He worked twenty-hour days, cutting and styling hair long into the night, long after the other salons had closed, he worked so hard he would come home with his fingers bleeding and my grandmother would wrap them in bandages and say, "Go get them Salvatore. Go bring home America." Thank you.

(Applause.)

KYLI. Great answer. And now we'll take another question.

MALE STUDENT. How would you change things here at Presley High School?

MARK. Well—I have a three point plan. One—student evaluations for teachers. Two—increased funding for the arts. Three—soda and candy machines. And Three point five—fast food in the cafeteria.

Skipping Forward

KARL. I wouldn't use that word anymore.

MARK. Yeah.

KARL. We've still got two and a half weeks to turn this thing around. It'll be all right.

*(*GARY, *dressed in a suit, enters.)*

GARY. It will NOT be all right.

MARK. Who are you?

GARY. Gary McMaster—professional campaign strategist. I'm your new campaign manager.

KARL. I'm the campaign manager.

GARY. You're fired.

KARL. But—

GARY. Your idea of managing a campaign is to play with Markers while your boy gets slaughtered like a turkey in prison. You want to play in the sandbox, little boy? Run campaigns in kindergarten and cry to the teacher when someone throws sand in your eye. This is the big leagues now. And Mark needs a grown-up with experience to run the show.

MARK. This really isn't the big leagues—

GARY. It is. And it will be. How much money have you raised?

KARL. We don't have any money.

GARY. I wasn't talking to you, Little Bo Peep.

KARL. I don't even know what that means.

GARY. I'm calling you nursery rhyme names to insult you and generally demean you. Got it, Goldilocks?

KARL. Yeah.

MARK. We don't have any money. But this is a high school election, we don't need money.

GARY. You don't need money? Where do you think Christy's war chest is coming from? The Tooth Fairy? Have you seen her latest ad?

MARK. She has another ad?

*(*GARY *clicks on the remote control.)*

(Lights up elsewhere on stage.)

(Scary, ominous music.)

FEMALE VOICEOVER. Who is Mark Davenport?

(Lights appear on a CHILDHOOD FRIEND, *mostly in darkness.)*

CHILDHOOD FRIEND. I remember him. It's so painful.

FEMALE VOICEOVER. Is he the same person who cheated on his fourth grade math test?

CHILDHOOD FRIEND. I gave him the answers.

FEMALE VOICEOVER. The same Mark Davenport that forgot to feed his sister's fish?

SISTER. They died! THEY DIED!!!

(She breaks into sobs.)

FEMALE VOICEOVER. Will he forget to feed Presley High School like he forgot to feed his sister's fish? Do you want to see your school go down the toilet? Mark Davenport. Wrong on Fish. Wrong for Presley High School.

(Lights fade.)

MALE VOICEOVER. Paid for by Forward Presley, a non-partisan political action committee.

MARK. What was that?!

KARL. You killed fish?

MARK. They were fish, who cares?

(Lights suddenly back to the other side of the stage. The ominous music plays again.)

FEMALE VOICEOVER. Mark Davenport says he doesn't care about fish.

SISTER. I care! I CARE!!!

(Breaks into sobs again.)

FEMALE VOICEOVER. Mar**k** Davenport. Fish Killer. Big Jerk. Total Loser. Wrong for Presley High School.

MALE VOICEOVER. Paid for by Forward Presley.

(Lights back to the other side of the stage.)

GARY. Way to step in it, Mark.

MARK. What? I—what?

GARY. Take the pacifier out of your mouth, kid. She means business.

KARL. What's Forward Presley?

GARY. It's a non-partisan political action committee.

KARL. Oh, um—

GARY. You don't need to pretend you understand what's going on, kid. Let's just say it's an infinite amount of untraceable money that can be used to do whatever Christy wants. And at the moment, it's being used to make you look like a fish-killing cheater.

MARK. Where's she getting all this money?

GARY. Donors. Lobbyists. Corporations. People who want to see her win and you lose. It's called democracy.

MARK. That's not democracy, that's just money.

GARY. If you want me to hold your hand and sing to you about rainbows, you got the wrong guy. She's got a pile of money the size of the Empire State Building, and she's going to use it to make sure you couldn't win a popularity contest with a flying cockroach.

MARK. Well, what can I do?

GARY. Well—I just so happen to have my own political action committee—Rise Up Presley—which has a pile of money the size of two Empire State Buildings. Hire me—and we fight fire with fire.

MARK. Where'd the money come from?

GARY. Where'd the money come from? Happy Land, where do you think it came from? It's money. It comes from the skies to help you. Take it.

MARK. But am I going to have to be responsible to the people who gave the money?

GARY. Not at all. They give you money expecting you ignore them. That's how it works.

KARL. Really?

GARY. Were you dropped on your head? Of course you have to pay them back. We're not living in fantasyland.

MARK. I don't really feel comfortable doing that.

GARY. Doing what?

MARK. Doing favors for people I don't know.

GARY. What do you think politics is?

MARK. It's people trying to do the right thing.

GARY. Yeah, and how's that working out for you?

MARK. But at least it's fair.

GARY. Fair? It's fair? Did you cook your brain in a microwave or something? Let me explain the situation to you, and I'll try to use small words so you can keep up. Number one: You are facing the worst kind of opponent: A pretty girl. The boys want to date her, the girls want to be like her. You say anything mean, you're a sexist. You get too aggressive, you're a horrible person. She's bulletproof. Number two: She's got a pile of money and she isn't afraid to use it. Let's say you're playing baseball, and your opponent has been gargling with steroids since the age of eight. They're an eight-hundred pound oozing mass of muscle tissue, and the bat looks like a toothpick in their hands. Now here's the deal. There's no umpire. There's no one watching. The only thing that matters is if you win or if you lose. What do you do? Do you sit back and wait for them to annihilate you, or do you take my steroids and have a fighting chance?

MARK. I don't want to win if I have to cheat.

GARY. Cheating? Who said anything about cheating? *There are no rules.*

MARK. Sorry. Go find somebody else.

GARY. Your loss, kid. And I mean that. Your loss.

*(*GARY *exits.)*

KARL. Well that was dumb.

(Lights shift.)

MARK. *(To the audience:)* If being dumb means being smart, then I don't want to do it. Wait. I'm not even sure what I'm saying. But I wasn't about to sell my candidacy to some shadow organization just because I wanted to win. I can win on the merits of my ideas. But first things first—

(Lights up on another portion of the stage. CHRISTY *enters.)*

CHRISTY. You wanted to see me?

MARK. Yeah. What's going on with that fish killer ad?

CHRISTY. I totally don't know. It was Forward Presley that did that. I'm totally not responsible for that.

MARK. Well it's wrong.

CHRISTY. I know. I'm in complete agreement with you.

MARK. Really?

CHRISTY. I think it's unfair, honestly. I'm sure you didn't mean to kill those fish.

MARK. I didn't.

CHRISTY. And the stuff about cheating on tests was way off-base.

MARK. So I cheated on one test, that shouldn't disqualify me.

CHRISTY. Absolutely. We've had a lot of elected officials with weak moral character.

MARK. Yeah—and—I don't have weak moral character.

CHRISTY. Can I give you a bit of advice? I'd hold a press conference, and say that you're sorry for killing fish and for having weak moral character. The voters love that.

MARK. I'm not doing that.

CHRISTY. Well, then—

MARK. Christy. Do you think this election should be about stupid personality things, or should it be about the issues?

CHRISTY. The issues. Obviously.

MARK. Me too. Let's make a deal: Let's both run positive campaigns.

CHRISTY. I've been running a positive campaign. It's those guys who are doing the negative stuff.

MARK. I bet if you told them to stop they would.

CHRISTY. Well I can try.

MARK. And I won't run any negative ads against you. Let's let the voters decide between our plans for the school.

CHRISTY. Absolutely. I think that's a great idea.

MARK. I'm so glad you're reasonable about this.

CHRISTY. Hey look. What does it matter if we win or lose, if we lose our souls?

MARK. Yeah! Right.

CHRISTY. It's good talking to you Mark.

MARK. Thanks.

*(*CHRISTY *exits.)*

See? There is a place for responsible behavior in elections. An election determined by educated voters making a choice on the issues.

*(*CALLER *enters with phone.)*

CALLER. Hi there. This is Amanda with Polling Research Strategies. Can I speak to Karl please?

KARL. This is Karl.

CALLER. We're doing a poll on the Presley High School Election. Would you say that you are likely to vote?

KARL. Probably.

CALLER. Wonderful. We like informed voters. And which candidate to you prefer?

KARL. Davenport.

CALLER. Are you aware that Mark Davenport has called for redistribution of test scores?

KARL. No.

CALLER. And are you also aware that Davenport's plan would take points from the highest scorers and give them to the students who scored the lowest?

KARL. No.

CALLER. Now that you know about Mark Davenport's anti-American point redistribution plan, are you more or less likely to vote for him?

KARL. Less Likely.

CALLER. Thank you!

*(*CALLER *exits.* MARK *enters.)*

KARL. What are you doing?

MARK. What are you talking about?

KARL. A point redistribution plan? Who told you to do that?

MARK. What point redistribution plan?

KARL. Where you take points from the highest-scoring kids and give them to the lowest-scoring kids?

MARK. Where'd you hear that?

KARL. On the phone just now. There was a poll.

MARK. That's a lie. I never said I was going to do that.

KARL. You didn't?

MARK. No.

KARL. Ohhhhh.

MARK. *(To the audience:)* So much for a fair fight.

*(*KYLI *enters with a microphone and a desk.)*

KYLI. Welcome to our new show, Shooting Range. A recent poll of likely voters found that Christy Martin leads Mark Davenport ninety-one percent to three percent, with six percent undecided. I wonder who those three percent are that like him, you know? Kind of makes you wonder. I mean, not to say that some people are stupid or anything, but you have to be pretty courageous to like a guy that wants to take points from the highest scoring kids and give them to the lowest scoring kids. Because when you think about it, that's pretty evil—Here to explain himself is embattled candidate, Mark Davenport.

*(*MARK *enters.)*

MARK. Thanks for having me on the show. I just really wanted a chance to clear the air here.

KYLI. Mark—why are you proposing such an insane and anti-American plan?

MARK. I'm not. That is not my plan.

KYLI. Looks like Davenport has reversed himself on the point redistribution plan.

MARK. It's not my plan.

KYLI. A strong denial.

MARK. It never was my plan. That's not my plan. My plan is clear.

KYLI. The voters don't like flip-floppers Mark. You used to be for the plan, and now you're against the plan.

MARK. I was never for the plan. There is no plan.

KYLI. I've heard there's a plan.

MARK. Did I say it?

KYLI. Other people are saying you said it.

MARK. But I didn't say it! I didn't say it! The plan was made up by Christy's campaign to make me look bad.

KYLI. Oh. Oh really?

MARK. Yes.

KYLI. That's a pretty strong accusation against a candidate who's run a very positive campaign so far.

MARK. She called me a fish killer!

KYLI. I think you're missing the distinction between Forward Presley and Christy's campaign.

MARK. Forward Presley is Christy's campaign!

Skipping Forward

CHRISTY. Whoah, hold on. I think we're blowing this out of proportion. When I said that you said that you had a point redistribution plan, I didn't mean that as a factual statement.

MARK. What?

CHRISTY. I did not mean that as a factual statement.

MARK. How can you make a statement if you don't think it's a fact?

CHRISTY. It was a statement of opinion.

MARK. What?

CHRISTY. It is my opinion that you said that at the last debate.

MARK. So it's a lie.

CHRISTY. It's an opinion. Opinions can't be lies.

MARK. You can't have an opinion about whether or not I did or didn't say something.

CHRISTY. Who made that rule? So when you're president, you get to decide which opinions people can hold, is that what you're saying?

MARK. I'm saying that you told a lie—

CHRISTY. In a school ruled by Mark Davenport, people aren't allowed to express opinions, that's what you mean. Well let me tell you something you fascist, we have freedom of speech in America. That's the first amendment if you've ever heard of a little thing called the Constitution. And in this country, I have a right to my opinion!

MARK. No you don't!

CHRISTY. Because I'm a woman, is that it? I should just shut up and go make sandwiches or something! That's what you want! But I'm not shutting up, Mark, I'm not shutting up because there are little girls out there looking up to me, and when they ask their Mothers if they can be student body president some day, I want those mothers to look at those girls, and say, "yes, princess, yes, because Christy Martin did it. So you can do it too." I have millions of sisters out there you sexist fascist communist thug, and WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED.

KYLI. ALLELUJIAH!

(Pause.)

Oh. Sorry. And that's all the time we have today for Shooting Gallery. Join us next time when we have a special program dedicated to the inspirational story of Christy Martin.

(Lights change as CHRISTY *and* MARK *exit.)*

And now it's time for the focus group section of the evening.

(Focus group of five VOTERS *enters. They sit in a semi-circle of chairs.)*

All right, here we have a group of uniformed voters who haven't made up their minds yet. Can I ask why you haven't decided who you're voting for yet?

(She hands them her microphone and they pass it around.)

VOTER 1. I don't ever come to school. So I don't pay attention to anything.

VOTER 2. Um…I don't know.

VOTER 3. What are we talking about?

KYLI. The election.

VOTER 3. What election?

KYLI. For student body president.

VOTER 3. Oh. Wait. What?

VOTER 4. I'm undecided because I'm disgusted with the electoral process and I think that big business has—

*(*KYLI *grabs the microphone and hands it to* VOTER 5.*)*

VOTER 5. I'm just pretending to be undecided so I can be here. I'm really a huge Christy Martin fan. I have a poster of her in my room. Go Christy! I love you. I'll wait for you! I know that you don't know who I am, but I am your biggest fan and I will never, EVER LEAVE YOU. I will be outside your window at night—

KYLI. Okay, thank you. Now—if you thought Christy didn't win the debate, stand up.

(The VOTERS *look at each other.* VOTER 4 *starts to stand up.)*

VOTER 5. What are you doing?!

VOTER 4. Sorry, I just—

KYLI. Perhaps we didn't exert enough peer pressure on you. If you think Christy didn't win the debate, say, I am a complete moron.

VOTER 4. I'm not saying that.

KYLI. Okay, so we're unanimous that Christy won the debate. Why do you think that is? And if you could please confirm the narrative I've been peddling, that would be great.

VOTER 2. I'll answer that. I really didn't like Mark's plan to take points from the highest-scoring students and give them to the lowest-scoring students.

VOTER 3. Yeah. And what I didn't like is that Mark didn't even own up to his own plan, you know? I mean, like, take some credit for it.

VOTER 1. Right.

VOTER 3. Cause I hate it when candidates say one thing and then say the opposite thing the next day.

VOTER 4. But okay—were you listening to the debate? He said that it wasn't his plan.

VOTER 3. Why does he have to deny his own plan, though? If it's his plan, shouldn't he say it's his plan?

VOTER 4. But it's not his plan.

VOTER 2. Why is it called his plan, if it's not his plan? That doesn't make any sense.

VOTER 4. I can't believe your vote counts the same as mine.

VOTER 5. Can I just say something here? I just don't like the way Mark thinks he's better than everyone else.

VOTER 1. I know!

VOTER 5. Like, I'm so great so I'm going to run for student body president. What is that?

VOTER 1. I know! He acts like he's so smart with his facts and stuff.

VOTER 5. I want someone who I can relate to, you know? Who's not any smarter than me.

VOTER 4. What? That's stupid.

VOTER 5. You're condescending too.

VOTER 4. You don't want a smart person in the job?

VOTER 5. Not if they're gonna act all smart and be like, I'm so smart, and you're so dumb.

VOTER 4. But you are dumb. I mean, that's a fact.

VOTER 1. There you go with facts again!

VOTER 3. What is a fact, anyway?

VOTER 4. A fact is something real! I want to vote for the smartest person. You know what? I want to vote for someone that's smarter than me, I really do.

KYLI. So are you voting for Mark?

VOTER 4. I'm not sure. I have a problem with his sexist attitude.

(Lights up on the other side of the stage.)

MARK. Arrrgh! Turn it off!

*(*KARL *hits the remote control and lights go down on them.)*

KARL. I think you did better.

MARK. Really? How?

KARL. You didn't call her crazy. Maybe if you just keep repeating she's a liar over and over, people will start to believe it. The more you say something, the more true it is.

MARK. Well she is a liar.

KARL. There you go. Keep it up. By the way, the latest poll numbers are out.

MARK. They did a poll after the show?

KARL. Yep. You're down to two percent.

MARK. Darn it.

KARL. On the bright side, you have some really hardcore supporters who are staying with you despite your abysmal performance.

MARK. That makes me feel a lot better.

KARL. Maybe we should start a Facebook page or something.

MARK. Yeah, that's gonna help.

KARL. Or MySpace.

MARK. MySpace? Seriously? Does that still exist?

KARL. Or, as an option that might actually work, you could go to Gary and take piles of money from shadowy corporations.

MARK. I'm not doing that, Karl. That's why she's winning.

KARL. Yeah. And also because she's whipping your butt every time you get in a room with her.

MARK. There's got to be something we can do.

KARL. What about puppies?

MARK. What are you talking about?

KARL. I've got it. Let's go to an animal shelter, and we film a campaign commercial of you with puppies. Everybody loves puppies. And then we say—a vote for Mark is a vote for free puppies in the school. And then we just have puppies lick your face.

MARK. That's so crazy it just might work.

KARL. Awesome.

MARK. *(To the audience:)* So I made my first campaign commercial. Karl's uncle had a really cool phone with some sweet apps that he wasn't guarding very well, so we stole it, and we went to the shelter—

(Crazy looking ANIMAL SHELTER GUY *enters.)*

ANIMAL SHELTER GUY. You can't film here.

MARK. Just a little video—

ANIMAL SHELTER GUY. I will break you into tiny pieces and eat them.

MARK. Okay, we're leaving.

(To the audience:)

So that idea was out.

KARL. Got it. We make everything fuzzy. And we use stuffed animals. No one will be able to tell the difference. Maybe we add some extra links to YouTube puppy videos later. It will be awesome.

MARK. That's a really bad idea.

KARL. Hey—at some point all leaders have to choose really bad ideas. This might be yours.

MARK. I don't know, Karl.

KARL. Be decisive!

MARK. All right! Let's do it!

KARL. I'll write up your lines on these cue cards! And we can direct stream it to Facebook from my uncle's cool phone!

*(*MARK *steps out to the audience.)*

MARK. So we made the commercial. And it looked like this.

*(*MARK *steps into some warm, fuzzy lighting.* KARL *gets a whole bunch of stuffed animals and drapes them around him.)*

Hi. I'm Mark Davenport. And these little fellas are puppies. Adorable, aren't they? They sure are. And that's what I'm going to bring to Presley High School. Puppies, puppies, puppies. Are you voting for me, Buddy?

KARL. *(Off-camera:)* Arf!

MARK. I knew you would. Puppies love me. And I love puppies just as much as I love Presley High School. So if you want to see these puppies live, vote for me.

(Lights fade on him. KARL *turns off the phone.)*

KARL. Did you just say "if you want to see these puppies live?"

MARK. That's what it said on the cue card.

KARL. I wrote, "if you want to see these puppies live." *(Pronounced as in "live and in person.")*

MARK. What?

KARL. Like, these are just stuffed animals, but if you vote for Mark, we'll bring in real, live puppies.

MARK. Oh.

KARL. Not, if you don't vote for me, I'll kill puppies.

MARK. Yeah, that does mean something different. Well can't we just edit it?

KARL. We were streaming live to the web, Mark.

MARK. Oh. Do you think anyone was watching that?

(Lights shift over to KYLI, *with microphone.)*

KYLI. And the Puppygate scandal has rocked Mark Davenport's campaign!

(A crowd of PROTESTERS *enters, some with signs.)*

PROTESTORS. *(Chanting:)* Hey hey. Ho ho. Puppy killer has got to go. Hey hey. Ho ho. Puppy killer has got to go.

(They exit as the set for Shooting Range is set up.)

KYLI. As the anger of the crowd intensifies, here on Shooting Range, we've brought in two political experts to talk about Davenport's troubled campaign. On the left, Harvard political science professor Bird McBean, and on the right, angry talk show host, Charles Moore. Gentlemen?

BIRD. Thanks for having me.

CHARLES. I'm really going to enjoy being here on the show today.

KYLI. What do you make of Davenport's threat to kill puppies if he isn't elected?

BIRD. Although I admire his audacity, I think this is going to backfire on him.

CHARLES. I agree. This is the desperate act of a desperate man.

BIRD. Yes.

CHARLES. Yes.

BIRD. In fact, I'd say he's doomed.

CHARLES. I completely agree with you on this.

*(*BIRD *and* CHARLES *look at each other.)*

BIRD. That's the…first time we've ever agreed on anything.

CHARLES. I know.

BIRD. I've wanted to say this for a long time: sometimes I'm wrong.

CHARLES. Sometimes I'm wrong too.

*(*BIRD *stands up.* CHARLES *stands up. They hug.)*

BIRD. I love you, man!

CHARLES. I love you, man!

KYLI. Wow. And there you have it. Mark Davenport's terrible campaign has united the right and left. I never thought I would see the day.

BIRD. Let's go solve the country's problems, Charles.

CHARLES. Yes. Let's do that. Would you like to go get some ice cream with me?

BIRD. I thought you'd never ask.

(They leave, hand in hand.)

KYLI. Incredible. And I've just received word Mark will be holding a press conference. Speculation is rampant that he's going to quit the campaign in shame. Well—that's my speculation anyway. It's very rampant.

(A crowd of reporters enters. MARK *enters and stands behind it.* KARL *is off to the side.)*

MARK. Hello? Is this thing on? I'm going to address some of the controversy regarding my campaign ad—

KYLI. *(Interrupting him:)* We're calling it Puppygate.

MARK. Right, but it's just a campaign ad, so—

KYLI. If you could call it Puppygate that would be awesome.

MARK. Okay, fine. I would like to put Puppygate to rest.

REPORTER 1. In the same way that you killed those puppies?

MARK. I didn't—can I just talk? This is all a big misunderstanding. I never hurt any puppies. What happened was—my campaign manager Karl put the word "live" *(pronounced as in "live to see another day")* and I thought it said live. *(As in "live and in person.")* So it was just an accidental slip of the tongue. So I'll take questions now.

(The REPORTERS *raise their hands furiously.* MARK *points to them in turn.)*

REPORTER 2. How many puppies have you killed?

MARK. None. I just misspoke.

REPORTER 3. Have you apologized to the owners of the puppies?

MARK. There were no owners of the puppies. The puppies weren't real.

REPORTER 4. How can the Presley High School public ever trust you again?

MARK. I don't think it's a question of trust. It's just a question of reading the cue cards right.

REPORTER 5. Are you planning on killing kittens or other cute animals?

MARK. No, I'm not—there was no plan to kill puppies—

REPORTER 1. When did you decide not to kill the puppies?

MARK. That was never—

REPORTER 1. Was it before or after the public outcry against it?

MARK. They were stuffed animals.

REPORTER 2. What gives you the right to kill puppies?

MARK. I was never going to kill puppies!

REPORTER 3. How could you, sir? How could you?

MARK. How could I what? What are you talking about?

REPORTER 4. Why are you a horrible person?

MARK. That doesn't have anything to do with it!

REPORTER 5. How can you possibly say that your plan to kill puppies doesn't have anything to do with making you a horrible person?

MARK. Are you listening to a word I'm saying?

REPORTER 2. Do you regret killing the puppies?

MARK. I never killed the puppies! No more questions if you're not going to listen to the answers!

*(*MARK *storms off.)*

KYLI. And there you have it, folks. Mark Davenport turned angry and dismissive as he refused to answer questions about Puppygate. No doubt this will be the final nail in his electoral coffin.

(Lights up on MARK *and* KARL.*)*

MARK. Aarrrrrhg!

KYLI. And secret footage reveals his backstage nervous breakdown! Exclusive film next!

(Lights down on her.)

MARK. What is going on?!

KARL. You can get through this.

MARK. Are you crazy? How'm I gonna get through this?

KARL. You just have to hope Christy makes a bigger gaffe.

MARK. Oh yeah that's gonna happen! She's practically a robot!

KARL. Well—

*(*GARY *enters.)*

GARY. Why are you talking about killing puppies?

MARK. I said something wrong in a campaign ad.

GARY. So why are you taking questions? Just say—I made a mistake, I take full responsibility for it, oh, and by the way, my opponent hired illegal immigrants to mow her lawn. Bingo. Problem solved.

MARK. I tried to say that—except for the illegal immigrant thing—

GARY. If you don't add the illegal immigrant thing, they're not going to listen to you. They're sharks. There's blood in the water, and they're going to keep chewing on you until there's just shoes left.

MARK. That's a pleasant thought.

GARY. Of course, if you take my offer—

MARK. I'm not taking your offer, forget it.

KARL. Yeah, we're doing just fine on our own!

(Pause.)

Well…okay, maybe not just fine. But we're doing okay.

(Pause.)

We're lucky an angry mob hasn't smashed in the windows and killed us.

(Sound of window smashing. A brick drops on stage, with a note wrapped in it.)

At least they missed.

*(*MARK *picks it up.)*

MARK. *(Reading the note:)* Dear Slimeball. I am against your plan to kill puppies. I enjoy puppies as both companions and as pictures on my shirts. You will die before you touch them. Sincerely, an independent voter.

KARL. At least it's a polite death threat.

MARK. Always looking on the bright side, Karl.

KARL. That's how I get through my life.

MARK. Look, Gary—I know you mean well—

GARY. No I don't.

MARK. Okay, well, I know you have a very tempting offer, but—

GARY. Have you seen Christy's newest campaign ad?

MARK. Do I want to see it?

GARY. Everybody else is. It's running four times a night on all local channels.

MARK. Four times a night?

KARL. What about on the school's public access channel?

GARY. It's on repeat.

KARL. Wow.

MARK. All right, let me see it.

(Lights change to the other side of the stage.)

*(*If you are filming these, this one should be in black and white.)*

(Ominous music. The sound of dogs barking. Perhaps footage of puppies from YouTube.)

(Various people stand, facing the audience, holding stuffed dogs, (or real dogs if it's video.)

ELDERLY WOMAN. My dog keeps me safe at night.

GIRL. My dog is there for me.

MAN. My dog keeps me fit.

BOY. My dog is my best friend.

ALL. *(In unison:)* I love my dog.

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICEOVER. Mark Davenport doesn't love your dog. Mark Davenport wants to kill your dog.

(A FIGURE *in black leaps onto the stage and pushes the* ELDERLY WOMAN *down. He throws the stuffed dog off-stage.)*

(In turn, he steals the other dogs, stomps on them, generally fights them, and tosses them off-stage.)

ALL. *(In unison:)* I loved my dog. But Mark Davenport killed him.

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICEOVER. Isn't it time someone stopped Mark Davenport? Isn't it time we sent him a message?

ELDERLY WOMAN. Please. I'm old. Do it for me.

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICEOVER. Isn't it time someone vandalized his house?

MAN. That sounds like the right thing to do.

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICEOVER. Do it now. Before he kills again.

(Barking noise, cut off.)

(Lights fade on a frozen image of a dog.)

VOICEOVER. Paid for by Forward Presley. Mark Davenport's home address is 2166 Rollingwood Court. Take Chicago Avenue north to Pikes Road, Rollingwood is half a mile down on the right. Mark's house is light blue.

(Lights down on them.)

KARL. Oh hey—I just checked the news. Your house is on fire.

(Pause.)

GARY. Well?

MARK. All right Gary. I'll take your money. Let's take her out.

GARY. Good choice.

(He laughs evilly.)

MARK. Why are you laughing like that?

GARY. Oh. Um…democracy makes me laugh. But seriously, let's destroy that chick.

(Lights down.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Lights up on American flag.)

MALE VOICEOVER. America. Home of the free. Land of the brave.

(A FARMER *enters, holding a handful of dirt.)*

FARMER. I grew up in a small town. I've lived in a small town all my life. That makes me real. And see this dirt in my hands? This is good, American dirt. I may not have a lot of book smarts, but I've got common sense, and my common sense tells me Mark Davenport is the guy for me. Davenport is the name of a city in Iowa. And you can't get more American than Iowa. It's right in the middle. Mark Davenport. American. Oh, and that opponent of his? Christy Martin? Let's just say she follows a different flag.

(The French National Anthem plays ominously in the background.)

MALE VOICEOVER. And now, a special thirty minute investigative piece of journalism: Christy Martin, or should we say *Christy Martin?**

*(*pronounced Krees-TEE Mar-TAN.)*

(A FRENCH PERSON *enters.)*

FRENCH PERSON. *(In French:)* <Oh yes, I remember Christy Martin, she was born in Lyons.>

MALE VOICEOVER. I don't even know what that person just said, but I know one thing: she said it…in French.

FRENCH PERSON. *(With French accent:)* I said—I remember Christy Martin—she was born in my home town on Lyon. Which is in France.

FARMER. Maybe I'm a simple person, but I just don't see how you can be born in France and call yourself an American. It ain't right, and frankly, it ain't American.

MALE VOICEOVER. Join us now as we explore the controversy of Martin's true origins—

(Lights fade on the farmer. Lights up on MARK, GARY, *and* KARL *watching this.)*

MARK. Wow.

KARL. I thought her grandfather was a hair stylist?

GARY. Right.

KARL. Doesn't that mean she was born in America?

GARY. I don't know. I don't really care, actually.

MARK. But what's the truth?

GARY. The truth is that I'm entitled to an opinion about what I believe is true. Okay? That's how it works. Maybe she was born in France. I don't know. I can't be expected to do research into this thing. And besides, I didn't say she was born in France, Rise Up Presley said she was born in France.

MARK. Don't you control Rise Up Presley?

GARY. Can anyone control anything? I mean, yes, I am President of the Board of Trustees, and I also happen to be all four members of the Board of Trustees, but still—it has its own momentum. Now—while we let the French thing marinate, we go into phase two.

KARL. Phase Two?

GARY. It comes after Phase One, Einstein. Try to keep up. We attack Christy's main strength.

MARK. Right. Good idea. What's her main strength?

KARL. Her complete annihilation of Mark in the debates?

GARY. Nope.

KARL. The series of terrible gaffes Mark made on the campaign trail?

GARY. Those are all really good reasons why she's beating the pants off you—

KARL. The puppy killer thing!

GARY. No, but the real reason—

KARL. Her superior intelligence and charisma?

MARK. Karl!

GARY. Your real problem is that she's a lot hotter than you. Now I know blah blah blah people aren't voting on looks, ri-iiight, nobody votes for a candidate just because they look attractive, and I've got a great bridge over a volcano I can sell you.

MARK. So I get a makeover?

KARL. Yes!

*(*MARK *looks at* KARL.*)*

I've been wanting to do a makeover on you for a while now.

*(*MARK *looks at* KARL *again.)*

You know, like a bromance thing. I guess. Um…Football!

GARY. No—you don't get a makeover. You get a girlfriend.

KARL. Yes!

GARY. Not you.

KARL. Dang it.

MARK. I don't get it.

GARY. Have you ever seen *Grease?* How many attractive girls are there in *Grease?*

MARK. One.

GARY. How many attractive girls are there in *Grease 2?*

KARL. One.

MARK. You've seen *Grease 2?*

KARL. I get lonely.

GARY. My point is that the public can only conceive of one attractive girl at a time. If you get a hotter girlfriend than Christy, they will stop paying attention to her.

MARK. Oh. Well in that case. How am I supposed to get a girl like that to like me?

GARY. Two words for you: Kim Kardashian…

KARL. Awesome!

GARY. …Esque.

MARK. Huh?

GARY. We find someone like that. Correction: we *hire* someone like that.

(Lights change. MARK *approaches the audience.)*

MARK. Remember when you were a little kid and people tried to tell you right from wrong? Yeah. I had this gnawing feeling in my stomach, this empty spot from where my soul was supposed to be. I guess I felt like…a politician.

*(*CHRISTY *enters, with handlers.)*

CHRISTY. Well well well. Looks like the little doggie found a big bark. I was born in France? That's the best you can come up with?

MARK. I didn't come up with it. Rise Up Presley came up with it. They're an independent political action committee with an unlimited supply of money that I have nothing to do with whatsoever.

CHRISTY. You don't scare me, Davenport.

Skipping Forward

MIRANDA. Oh sorry. I don't spend much time among people so I CAN'T MODULATE.

KYLI. Too loud again. Well—you are one of the leading proponents of the France Controversy.

MIRANDA. I AM.

KYLI. And since we're fair on this network, we're going to give you a chance to air your case. Why do you believe Christy was born in France?

MIRANDA. IT'S OBVIOUS! WHY WOULD SHE DENY IT? That's all I'm saying! The more she denies it, the more I think she has something to hide!

CHRISTY. I'm denying it because it's not true!

KYLI. Hey! You had your chance to speak! It's the crazy woman's turn.

MIRANDA. What's WRONG WITH BEING FRENCH? I LIKE FRENCH FRIES. They have some body odor issues, but other than that, I enjoy French people.

CHRISTY. Can I address that?

KYLI. Nope.

MIRANDA. Okay! And my next point! You ever see those marks in the sky from planes?

KYLI. Uh—we're getting off the point here.

MIRANDA. DONE BY NASA. SEEDING THE ATMOSPHERE. TRYING TO MAKE IT EXTRA HOT.

KYLI. Well there you have it folks! Two viewpoints. What is the truth? Who can say?

CHRISTY. I can say!

KYLI. Let's go to our analyst, Chip.

*(*CHIP *enters.)*

Chip, you're not prejudiced by having any of the facts, what's your opinion?

CHIP. Well…I really want to be fair about this. I'd say the truth is probably somewhere in between. Maybe she wasn't born in France, maybe she was born in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Has anyone considered that she might be a mermaid? Not that I have anything against mermaids.

(Lights shift back to Davenport campaign headquarters. GARY *is looking through headshots.)*

MARK. What was that?

GARY. Hmmm?

MARK. That crazy Miranda woman?

GARY. Oh. We hired her. She's an actress.

MARK. Isn't that a little shady?

GARY. Your Super PAC hired an actress to spread mysterious lies about an opponent? Why would you think that would be shady? Totally in-bounds. Now it's time to make some crazy videos and make sure they go viral. Here are my ideas: we have a baby spit at her.

MARK. You know Gary, it's just a little…

GARY. You think she doesn't lie? You think she isn't bending the truth? What about the puppy killer stuff? And the point redistribution thing? She's doing it. You need to do it. End of story.

MARK. All right. I don't like it though.

GARY. You don't have to like it. I like it for the both of us.

MARK. All right.

GARY. Good! You up for some debate training?

MARK. All right fine.

GARY. Number one. Do not answer any question. Every question is merely an opportunity for you to go to your talking points. And your talking points are these: You are running a positive campaign. Christy is an evil French-dweller that will destroy the high school. Got it?

MARK. All right. Don't answer the question.

GARY. Point two: It doesn't matter what you say, as long as you get a zinger in. You need something memorable that the voters are gonna remember. Some little moment that effectively destroys Christy. Doesn't have to make any sense at all.

MARK. Okay. Don't make any sense.

GARY. When all else fails: say something totally outrageous that is blatantly false.

MARK. Right. Are you sure this is the way to debate?

GARY. How did she debate you?

MARK. Kind of like that.

GARY. And how did she do?

MARK. All right I see your point.

(Lights down. KYLI *enters with audience.)*

KYLI. And we're ready for our third debate—everything you ever wanted to know about the candidates but didn't learn in the first debates because you weren't paying much attention! I'm Kyli and once again, we will be bringing you the action! With five days left to the election, the race has begun to tighten!

MARK. We're having four debates?

KYLI. Let's welcome Mark Davenport and Christy Martin.

(The audience cheers wildly for CHRISTY.*)*

AUDIENCE MEMBERS. Christy! Chris-Tee! Chris-Tee!

MARK. Objection! Objection! I would like to enter a chant of Mark. Mark. Mark. Anyone? A separate chant for Mark?

(No one else chants for MARK.*)*

KYLI. All right then, let's get to it. The first question is for Mark: If the school had to eliminate one of its subjects, which one would you eliminate and why?

MARK. Thanks for that question, Kyli, and I'll gladly answer it. But first I would like to say thank you to this wonderful school and our audience here tonight. You are the blood of democracy. Without your participation in this grand American experiment, our nation and our school wouldn't function. Now, as to eliminating one of the programs, I think we need to carefully look at our subjects and see what's working and what's not, and then make our decision from there. And also, let's show a little support for our troops. Can you join me in a round of applause?

(He claps. The audience claps.)

KYLI. Christy, your response?

CHRISTY. I would also like to thank our troops. Can we have another round of applause for them?

MARK. You can say that you support the troops, but I don't see you wearing a flag tie.

CHRISTY. I don't wear ties because I'm a girl.

MARK. I'm sure our brave men and women fighting overseas will be proud to learn that a candidate can't support them because she's a girl.

CHRISTY. I just said I supported the troops!

MARK. Well, it's one thing to say it, it's another thing to wear a tie. Isn't it possible that you don't support our troops because you would rather be supporting the French Foreign Legion!

KYLI. And time's up. Next question:

CHRISTY. I didn't get a chance to answer that question! He took all my time!

MARK. I'm sure in your socialist economy, everyone has the same amount of time, but here in America we allocate time by the free market. Don't blame the winners.

KYLI. Next question. For Christy: What should be done to unruly and disruptive students? Should they be kicked out of school?

CHRISTY. I'm glad you asked that question, Kyli. And I would like to make it very clear that I do support the troops, and that is why I am wearing this flag pin here. And in fact, I would like to point out that making a tie out of a flag is actually desecrating the flag, and therefore all of our brave men and women out there who are dying for our freedom would be horrified to know that Mark's tie even exists.

MARK. Can I respond to that?

CHRISTY. As for unruly students—we have to do whatever we have to do.

KYLI. Time's up. Mark?

MARK. I find your tie comment so laughable that I'm not even going to address it. I'm actually going to answer the question, which you failed to do. Listen to what she just said: Do whatever we have to do? What does that mean? Torture? Is that what that means, Christy?

CHRISTY. No, I'm opposed to torture.

MARK. Because you're weak. You're not committed to a safe school. I say, if we need to torture the graffiti artists, I'm not afraid to authorize that.

CHRISTY. Maybe in Mark's insane universe the student body president has the power to torture students, but in my world, where we respect the school constitution, that decision is left to the police.

MARK. What world would that be? France?

CHRISTY. France isn't a world, idiot. It's a country.

MARK. For someone who claims not to be from France, you sure know an awful lot about it.

CHRISTY. Because I happen to pay attention in my classes.

MARK. Oh really? You *happen* to pay attention? Isn't it true you've gotten straight A's for the past three years?

KYLI. Can we just stick to the actual—

CHRISTY. Yes, Mark., that is true. I do get good grades. Is that some kind of problem?

MARK. No no problem at all—you just clearly think you're better than everyone else, that's all.

CHRISTY. I'm not better than everyone else.

MARK. Then why get straight A's?! I'm sure in your perfect world over there you know all the answers, but in my world, and the world that our student body lives in, we struggle in school. We need to work hard on homework, we don't just have straight A's handed to us like some little smart girl. We need to search the internet to cheat on papers and get answers to quizzes from our friends, and not turn our work in time! We don't even care that much about our grades! And that's what this student body is looking for, someone who's just like them, who works just as intermittently as they do, who doesn't care about grades, but someone who cares about *life!* So if you want some elitist, out-of-touch honor student with perfect hair, then go ahead and vote for Christy, but if you want a normal, salt-of-the-earth, mediocre student then Mark Davenport is your president!!!

(Wild cheers from the audience.)

CHRISTY. Can I actually have some time to respond to that?

KYLI. Technically, you've used your time.

CHRISTY. Technically, he used all of my time and now I need extra time.

KYLI. I'll allow it.

MARK. Wow. Talk about bias.

KYLI. You used her time last time.

MARK. How can someone *own* time? Have you even thought about that? Who made you the owner of all time?

KYLI. Christy, go ahead.

CHRISTY. Thank you. My opponent had made a lot of outrageous claims tonight. He doesn't really think much of the intelligence of the voter out there, but I know that they can see through his lies. Mark wants you to react from your gut and not think about things—but I want you to think about this: First Mark was for killing pup-

pies, now Mark is against killing puppies. Mark was for cheating on tests then he was against cheating on tests, now he's for it again. Mark was for a points redistribution system and now he's against it. He's for torture today but when he finds out that it's illegal he'll probably be against it. Do you want someone who changes his mind every five minutes, or do you want someone who made up their mind years ago and will never, under any circumstances, change it? Like most of you, I believe what I believe, and no amount of facts or reasons or arguments will ever change my mind.

(Cheers from the audience.)

And also—if you volunteer for the Christy Martin campaign you could win a dream date with me, or…with a number of really attractive friends of mine that go to other schools in the district.

(Bigger cheers from the audience.)

Thank you!

(She walks off-stage.)

(Lights down on MARK. *Lights up on* KYLI *and* CHIP *on one side of the stage.)*

KYLI. All right, and now for some instant analysis of the debate for our expert analyzer, Chip.

CHIP. Thanks, Kyli!

KYLI. Can you tell us what to think of what we just saw? Please, make up our minds for us.

CHIP. I gotta tell you: I thought Mark came on strong, But ultimately, Christy flattened him in the end. I really don't see how Mark wins this election.

KYLI. But the expectations for Mark were so low.

CHIP. Well that's one thing he's got going for him. Because of his horrible performance in previous debates, the fact that Mark didn't wet himself up there actually is a huge positive for him. He didn't seem to be the bumbling, nervous, idiotic fool we've seen previously. And he did nail her on the tie thing.

KYLI. Could we call that tiegate?

CHIP. No.

KYLI. Flaggate? Troopgate?

CHIP. And I happened to like his impassioned defense of mediocrity. I think that's really going to resonate with a lot of terrible students who don't try very hard at school.

KYLI. But do those people show up to vote?

CHIP. Not at all. They're too lazy to vote, so they don't really count.

KYLI. Okay then. Now, to give the appearance of being fair, we're going to go to someone with a diametrically opposed viewpoint. Our newest reporter, Sally.

*(*SALLY *enters. She's extremely cheerful and more than a little strange.)*

SALLY. Woop!

KYLI. Sally is here to use hip lingo to make it seem like we appeal to young people.

SALLY. Check it! Word! Who Dat?

KYLI. What did you think of the debate tonight, Sally?

SALLY. I'm tweeting about it right now! And updating my Facebook page! Woot!

KYLI. But what did you think of the debate?

SALLY. Oh. I thought Mark looked awesome tonight. I mean, like, a Greek god. Really, really yummy. Hair. Nice hair.

KYLI. But what about he said?

(Pause.)

SALLY. He looked great.

CHIP. I'd say—

KYLI. Wait—we're getting word the Davenport campaign is holding a press conference!

SALLY. Awesome! I love their press conferences!

*(*KARL *emerges, with* MARK *to the side of the stage.* KYLI *and* SALLY *rush up with microphones.* CHIP *remains in the studio.)*

KARL. So…my name's Karl and I'm uh…

MARK. *(Whispering loudly:)* A member of my campaign staff.

KARL. Yeah I'm working with this dude here. And I've got some super-sweet news for all you junkies out there.

MARK. Political junkies.

KARL. Oh right political junkies. So check this out! Mark has a new girlfriend! Sasha.

*(*SASHA *enters. She is stunning. She is also clearly an actress.)*

SASHA. Hi. We are very much in love.

*(*MARK *approaches her. He takes her hand awkwardly.)*

Any questions?

KYLI. What do you see in him?

SALLY. How did you meet?

*(*SASHA *begins an overwrought monologue she's been rehearsing for some time.)*

SASHA. Where did we meet? Well, that is a story. I was walking amongst the trees on my family farm, appreciating the gentle breezes of autumn and taking a glance at a solitary deer that had crested a nearby hill. Luckily I was carrying my pump-action repeating shotgun, and I hit the beast mid-chest from forty yards. And let me tell you ladies out there, after you've shot and killed one of God's magnificent creatures, you need a man, a real man, to field dress that animal and tie it to the hood of your Jeep. And that's when I heard the sound of hooves approaching. From my vantage point, I saw him silhouetted against the setting sun, riding a powerful grey stallion. His voice, you've heard it, it rumbled through my core as he said, "are you in need of some aid?" Then he dismounted, removed the shot from the deer's chest with his teeth and proceeded to clean that animal like he was sweeping aside bureaucracy. Then he took me to the coast and we danced through sea foam and he told me about his dreams for this high school: such beautiful, beautiful dreams. And then came the saddest part: He said…

(She begins to tear up.)

He said…he was in a tough election…and he might not win…I said NO! NO it cannot be TRUE! Yes, he said. I'm afraid so. And I said, if there is a world where you don't become student body president, I don't want to live—I'll join my Grandma in heaven and never return to the land of the living. Oh!

(She loses the ability to speak.)

MARK. Yeah, it was great.

(They exit. Focus back on CHIP *and* KYLI.*)*

CHIP. Well I don't know about you, but that makes me feel a lot better about Mark's campaign.

KYLI. I never really pegged him for the rugged type.

CHIP. We'll just have to take that incredibly attractive girl's word for it.

KYLI. I find it interesting that Mark has managed to—

CHIP. She was total First Lady material.

KYLI. It's not like they're actually married or something.

CHIP. But wouldn't that be special?

(Lights up on the campaign headquarters. SASHA *is on her iPhone.* KARL, GARY, *and* MARK *are strategizing.)*

MARK. So your name is Sasha?

SASHA. That's my screen name.

MARK. Oh. What's your real name?

SASHA. Let's just keep this professional, shall we?

MARK. Right. Um…

*(*GARY *approaches.)*

GARY. That was brilliant!

KARL. Hey, when we're done with this, can I hire you to pretend to be my girlfriend in public?

SASHA. Nope.

KARL. Okay then.

GARY. Now we begin Operation Catfight. We send Sasha out on the campaign trail to talk about Christy's hair and clothes. It's a standard female takedown technique.

SASHA. Which reminds me: I'm gonna need another ten grand for my hair and clothes.

GARY. Take twenty. Just to be sure.

MARK. This is really a little lame, I gotta say.

GARY. I'm sorry, what?

MARK. Can't we just…I mean…Really? We talk about her clothes?

GARY. No. You're a dude. It would sound weird. Sasha goes after her clothes. And hair. And skin tone. You know, the important issues.

*(*MARK *sighs.)*

Oh stop it. I'm so tired of this "I'm trying to have morals and compunctions" thing you're doing—you know you're gonna cave, so do us both a favor and cave quick.

MARK. But she's not talking about my clothes.

GARY. She doesn't have to. Your clothes are not an issue.

MARK. But—

GARY. Look, there's different standards here okay. She's female, therefore, her looks are a serious campaign issue. You're a guy, so nobody cares what you look like. You are aware of this, right? And the only way we assault her looks is with a more attractive female surrogate. I'll go more slowly if you're having trouble figuring this out.

MARK. This just seems like a really sexist and superficial way to go after someone.

GARY. Right. Yes. And your point is what?

MARK. I don't know. It just feels low.

GARY. Mark, buddy—let me paint you a scenario: You're a guy, the devil shows up, he says, hey, can I buy your soul from you for a million bucks? And you're like, sure Mister Devil, you can have my soul, and then after you've spent nine hundred thousand, you go back to the devil and say, hey—um…I'm not feeling so good about this soul-selling stuff, can I have it back now? And do you know what the answer is? No. The answer is no.

MARK. This is my campaign. Nobody talks about clothes.

SASHA. But hair is okay?

MARK. No hair either.

SASHA. Skin tone?

MARK. No talk about appearances at all! That's final!

*(*MARK *starts to stalk off.)*

KARL. So after we're done with the campaign does that nope mean maybe? Or does it mean—

SASHA. It means no.

KARL. Is that like a hopeful no? Or is it—

SASHA. No.

KARL. Dang it.

*(*MARK *steps away.)*

MARK. It was all getting away from me. I mean, okay, I had authorized some shady things, but talking about her hair and clothes? Come on. And I know I was deliberately twisting her record, but at least I wasn't calling her a puppy killer or something. Somewhere inside me I wanted to run a decent campaign and be a decent person. How can you be elected president if you're a lying, cheating jerk?

(Thinks about that for a second.)

Okay that seems to be a prerequisite. But I didn't want to be that. I wanted to be different. And if being president means that you have to descend into the depths of slime to get elected…then…I don't want to be president.

(Lights up on GARY*, on his cell phone.)*

GARY. Right. I want a full-out media blitz. I don't want anyone to be able to turn on the television without seeing our ads. I want them on every channel. I don't care how much it costs.

MARK. Gary, can I talk to you?

GARY. Right. Real giraffes. From Africa. Fly 'em in. I don't care. See if Spielberg is available.

MARK. Gary. Gary.

GARY. I want all the Kardashian sisters. Kim, that other one, and the other one nobody likes. I want them all on the campaign.

MARK. GARY!

GARY. Hold on.

(To MARK*:)*

What?

MARK. I'm quitting the campaign.

GARY. *(To the phone:)* I'll call you back, Jim.

(To MARK*:)*

What did you say?

MARK. I said I'm quitting the campaign.

GARY. I thought that's what you said. Have you lost your mind?

MARK. No. I've regained my senses. I mean, I wanted to be president so I could make a difference in this school—

GARY. You wanted to be president so it would look good on your college applications.

MARK. That too. But I've had enough. Let Christy win. Call off the ads. I'm not going to run. And you're fired.

(He starts to leave.)

GARY. No.

*(*MARK *stops.)*

MARK. It's my campaign and I say you're fired.

GARY. You can fire me, but you can't fire Rise Up Presley. And you're already on the ballot. You're going to win this election.

MARK. You are Rise Up Presley.

GARY. No. Rise Up Presley is a non-partisan political action committee that is unaffiliated with your campaign. We're not legally allowed to coordinate.

MARK. Well, your candidate isn't running for president anymore, so coordinate that.

GARY. I disagree. You are running.

MARK. Good luck with that.

GARY. You think Rise Up Presley needs you to do anything? You think anyone's going to vote for you because of your sparkling personality or your oh-so-awesome three and a half point plan for improving the school? Nobody cares about that, Mark. They care about flash. And we're going to steamroll Christy Martin and you're going to win, whether you like it or not. So go ahead and quit. And remember who won this election. Look. The ads are just starting.

*(Lights change to Mark's campaign ad blitz. *Feel free to film some of these.)*

(Ominous music plays.)

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICE. Storm clouds are gathering over Presley High School. The time has come. An evil is rising against us in the east. An evil named…Christy Martin.

(A HOODED FIGURE *runs on to the stage.)*

HOODED FIGURE. Freedom! You can take our lives…but you can never take…our FREEDOM!

*(*Sound clips [or video clips] from classic movies play.)*

PATTON. *(Overlapping:)* When you stick your hand into the pile of goop—

ARAGORN. *(Overlapping:)* There may be a time when the light fades from the west, but not this day! And not this time!

WILLIAM WALLACE. *(Overlapping:)* They can take our lives…but they can never take our Freedom!

(Cheering sounds from an army.)

(Gunshot. The sound goes out. The HOODED FIGURE *clutches his chest and falls to the ground. An* EVIL CHRISTY MARTIN SUPPORTER *with a French accent appears.)*

EVIL CHRISTY MARTIN SUPPORTER. Stupid American. We have ways of making you enjoy European-style socialism.

OMINOUS FEMALE VOICE. When Election Day comes, will you be ready?

MALE VOICE. Paid for By Rise Up Presley.

(Lights up on KYLI *and* CHIP.*)*

KYLI. Breaking News! Kim Kardashian* has endorsed Mark Davenport for Student Body President!

**(If Kim Kardashian's ten minutes of fame have expired (please!), feel free to use another vapid current celebrity and change the references as needed.)*

CHIP. And so has Kourtney Kardashian and that other one.

KYLI. And if there's anything we know about Kim, it's her integrity and she would never…ever do anything just because she was being paid a giant pile of money.

CHIP. And in other news, if you sign up as a Davenport supporter, you'll get access to the new Kim Kardashian and Kourtney Kardashian and the other's one swimsuit calendar set in beautiful Maui.

(Lights change to another campaign commercial.)

MARK. *(To the audience:)* It got crazy. Christy's Super PAC started buying time during American Idol. Every other commercial on the television was for one of us. I couldn't stand it.

MALE VOICE. Mark Davenport claims to have a vision for this school. But will his vision…be a nightmare?

*(*MARK'S GRANDMA *enters.)*

MARK'S GRANDMA. Hi there. I'm Mabel Davenport. I'm Mark's MeeMaw. He was such a darling little baby. Really cute little toes. And the most adorable nose you've ever seen. Which is why I'm particularly disappointed in what he's become today. Students of Presley High: If you want real leadership, don't vote for my grandson. Vote Christy Martin instead. Thank you.

(Lights change to MARK.*)*

MARK. MeeMaw?!

MARK'S GRANDMA. Oh hi. Marky Mark.

MARK. How could you endorse Christy?

MARK'S GRANDMA. MeeMaw's gotta pay some bills, baby.

MARK. I'm not even running anymore, but—really?!

(More ominous music.)

OMINOUS MALE VOICE. Global Warming. Overpopulation. AIDS. Earthquakes. Christy Martin. Volcanoes. One of these will lead to the end of our civilization as we know it. Do you really want to take the chance it's Christy Martin?

MALE VOICE. Paid for by Rise Up Presley.

*(*MARK *comes center stage.)*

MARK. All right ENOUGH! Everybody! I'd like to make a statement!

*(*VOTERS *gather.)*

I just want to say that I'm not running for president anymore. I'm done. I've quit. Please—vote for Christy Martin. I don't want to be your president.

(The VOTERS *are stunned.)*

I mean it. I wanted to run a decent, honest, positive campaign. And now we're in the middle of this slime. I don't want any part of it. I don't want any part of Rise Up Presley. I don't want to be in this election. Please do not vote for me. I can't actually get my name off the ballot at this point, so please just vote for Christy. I'm sure she'll do a great job. She's a straight A student and nice to look at and all, so just vote for her. I repeat: Do not vote for Me. Vote for Christy. Thanks.

(He steps down.)

(Lights up on KYLI *at the news desk, with* CHIP.*)*

KYLI. A stunning development in the election of the century!

CHIP. I've got two words, Kyli: Game-Changer.

KYLI. No doubt. No doubt. In fact, we decided to go to our focus group of undecided voters and see what they thought

(The UNDECIDED VOTERS *enter.)*

So—how does Mark's decision to quit the campaign and endorse Christy Martin affect your vote?

VOTER 1. I love it. I love everything about Mark. I'm totally voting for him now.

VOTER 2. Absolutely. He doesn't want to be president anymore? He's got my vote.

VOTER 3. Wait. There's an election? For what? Sorry I haven't been paying attention.

VOTER 4. Although I respect Mark's decision to quit the race, I think I'm still going to go with him on this one. I just don't see—

VOTER 5. I'm still a Christy supporter—big Christy supporter. DON'T LEAVE ME Christy! I'LL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU!

KYLI. So if you're planning on not voting for Mark, could you please stand up?

*(*VOTER 5 *stands up reluctantly.)*

Do you notice that everyone else is sitting down? Doesn't this put you on the spot? Aren't you feeling peer pressure to change your mind?

*(*VOTER 5 *sinks down.)*

Wow. There you have it, Chip. With just two days before the election, Mark Davenport has launched into the lead in the polls.

CHIP. That wasn't actually a poll, Kyl**i.**

KYLI. Shut up, Chip.

(The VOTERS *get signs that support* MARK. MARK *tries to address them again.)*

VOTERS. *(Chanting:)* Davenport! Davenport! Davenport!

AWKWARD VOTER. Mark! Mark! Mark! Wait? We're doing Davenport? I thought it was Mark.

MARK. Guys. Guys. Come on. Stop chanting my name. It's not a ploy to actually get elected. I don't want to be elected. I just can't get my name of the ballot. Please do not vote for me.

(The CROWD cheers.)

Seriously. No. Don't cheer.

(They cheer.)

I'm not going to be your president.

(They cheer.)

VOTER. Finally! Someone who doesn't want to be elected!

VOTER 2. You're the candidate we've been waiting for all along!

MARK. I can't solve the problems of this school. The President doesn't actually have that much power.

VOTER. Someone who speaks the truth!

VOTER 5. I still love Christy! But I kinda like you too Mark!

MARK. Go home. Get out of here. I hate you all.

(They cheer. MARK *shakes his head and escapes.)*

KARL. Man, you are brilliant.

MARK. No, I'm really not.

KARL. Like, I never would've thought of fake quitting the campaign, you know?

MARK. I'm not fake quitting the campaign, I'm actually quitting the campaign.

KARL. Sure you are.

MARK. No I am.

KARL. Well your ads are still running.

MARK. I hate my ads.

KARL. Brilliant.

MARK. It's not an act, Karl! I don't want to win this way.

KARL. But you are winning this way. The latest poll has you up by forty points. It's going to be a landslide.

MARK. I don't want to win, Karl.

KARL. And that's why you're winning. Genius. I'm going to apply this principle to dating.

(Lights up on CHRISTY*, addressing a small crowd.)*

CHRISTY. I would like to take this time to thank everyone out there who has supported me. And at this point, one day before the election, I would like to say…I'm quitting the race. Please do not vote for me. Vote for Mark instead. He's run a very positive campaign, and I have the utmost respect for him—that's why I'm quitting, and I want you to all to vote for Mark tomorrow. Thank you.

(Lights down on CHRISTY.*)*

KARL. No way!

MARK. She's a total liar!

KARL. She totally just out-quit you.

MARK. She didn't out-quit me. I quit first.

KARL. Yeah, but then she doubled down on the quitting. She's totally blowing you out of the water with that.

MARK. She's not—She's—Karl—I really don't want to win.

KARL. Neither does she. Except more so.

MARK. Arrrghgh!

*(*MARK *storms off.)*

MARK. *(To the audience:)* And that's when it occurred to me: After all the madness, I had a chance to do something different. You know what the voters were responding to? Honesty. Finally. After all this time, the voters were responding to honesty. They wanted a candidate who was real, not someone who was spending millions of dollars on misleading campaign ads and crazy debate tricks. They wanted someone who was just going to get up there and tell them the truth. After all that. And maybe, if I could just tell the truth—maybe I could still win and not lose my soul.

*(*CHRISTY *approaches.)*

CHRISTY. You wanted to talk to me?

MARK. Yeah. Um…look, I wanted to apologize for all those ads that said a vote for you was a vote for the apocalypse. Those were totally inappropriate.

CHRISTY. Thanks. And I wanted to apologize for the puppy killer stuff. I know you just misspoke.

MARK. And I know you're not French.

CHRISTY. Thanks. I didn't mean to run all those crazy ads. I just… there was this guy…I hired him to be my campaign manager and all of a sudden we had all this money.

MARK. That's crazy. Me too. I hired a guy to be my campaign manager and he just got out-of-control.

CHRISTY. Wow. I shouldn't have listened to him. I should've just said, "Gary, I want this to be a clean campaign. I want the voters to vote on the issues."

MARK. Me too…I should've…Gary?

CHRISTY. Yeah.

MARK. Your campaign manager is named Gary?

CHRISTY. Yes.

MARK. Greasy guy? About this tall? Gary McMaster?

CHRISTY. That's him.

MARK. He's my campaign manager too.

End of excerpt.
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