

From The Election by Don Zolidis

Act One

(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 study 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?

Who? INDEPENDENT VOTER

What? INDEPENDENT VOTER 2

No. INDEPENDENT VOTER 3

(The others look at her.)
I just don't like that name.

Hi. I'm Mark. MARK

Okay, we'll vote for him. INDEPENDENT VOTERS

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. KYLI

Step two: Filing for your candidacy. MARK
(MARGE, the secretary is wheeled in.)

Next. MARGE

Hi. MARK

No you can't get out of detention. MARGE

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

Okay. MARGE

Is that it? MARK

You want me to throw you a parade? MARGE

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 plan 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.)

(KYLII 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.)

VOICE-OVER

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.

(MARK addresses the audience as the first debate is set up. KYLI enters.)

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 was surged in recent polls and could be considered the front-runner. 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.

(Pause.)

KYLI

You have forty seconds left.

MARK

I cede the rest of my time to let my opponent lay out her crazy plans.

CHRISTY

My opponent just called my plans crazy. Personally, I would have liked to keep this campaign about the issues and not resort to negative name-calling. I think the voters deserve an election that is about substance, not style. What we need in this school is change. Change of culture at the very top, and through all levels of the school. And when someone is negative, that creates a negative culture that filters down through all levels. And that's what I aim to change. Thank you.

MARK

You didn't actually say anything there.

CHRISTY

I'm not going to sink to your level of negativity, Mark.

MARK

But you didn't actually say what you're going to do. You didn't answer the question.

KYLI

All right all right.

CHRISTY

The frustration you're feeling is understandable because you're losing, but you don't need to get hostile. I'm not getting hostile towards you.

KYLI

Let's take another question. How about one for Christy first?

MALE STUDENT 2

Yeah um... you're super hot. Um... Will you go out with me?

MARK

How is that appropriate?

CHRISTY

I'll answer that, since I've been accused of dodging the issues. What's your name?

MALE STUDENT 2

Uh... Ben.

CHRISTY

Okay. I will make this pledge to voters out there. If you vote for me, you can put your name in a hat, and after the election, I will select a name out of the hat and I will go on a date with that person.

MALE STUDENT 2

Awesome!

KYLI

Mark, your response?

MARK

To what?

KYLI

To the question.

MARK

Will I go out with Ben? No.

MALE STUDENT 2

Dude. That's weird.

MARK

No hey – she can't do that. She can't just go out with people who voted for her – that's insane.

CHRISTY

Am I insane or am I crazy, Mark? Make up your mind. My opponent can't even figure out which names to call me.

MARK

You can't just get people to vote for you cause you're hot now. And by the way, she wasn't hot like two days ago.

CHRISTY

You know, I thought I'd heard everything from you. But now you've made a sexist attack on me.

KYLI

That was pretty sexist, Mark.

FEMALE STUDENT

That was totally sexist.

MARK

What? How?

CHRISTY

Why is it that you feel it's necessary to comment on a female candidate's looks? Hm? Why is that? Do I stand up here and say, wow, Mark, you look skinny and your hair isn't combed right and you look about as attractive as roadkill? No, I don't do that. I don't judge you based on the fact that you're plain and don't have good muscle tone. I don't judge you on that. Who knows what that says about your attention to detail and general mental health? But because I happen to be extremely good-looking, now I'm suddenly using my looks to get votes.

MARK

You are using your looks to get votes! You just did that! I saw you do it!

CHRISTY

Slow down Mark, you don't want to sound crazy.

(Applause from the audience.)

KYLI

And that's all the time we have! Thank you for being in the debates!

(Lights change. CHRISTY and everyone leave the stage. KARL and MARK sit on the side.)

KARL

Wow.

MARK

Yeah.

KARL

You really came off looking like a jerk.

MARK

I don't get it. I was actually talking about issues. She said nothing the whole time.

KARL

She destroyed you.

(This play will soon be published by Playscripts, check out their website or email me at donzolidis@yahoo.com to purchase the full script.)