

From I have the Utmost Respect for my Opponent (who happens to be a Godless Radical Marxist sure to destroy America), by Don Zolidis

MARKUS, 40ish, campaign manager

MAGGIE, 40ish, a candidate for city council

MARKUS

We've got him by the balls. Literally.

MAGGIE

What?

MARKUS

I happen to have here Jack Whitby's home laptop.

(He produces the laptop.)

Ta-da.

MAGGIE

How did you get that?

MARKUS

Um... his house was undefended. A couple of guys I know happened to be mowing his lawn. They happened to realize that his house didn't prevent burglaries. And ta-da.

MAGGIE

You stole it?

MARKUS

I didn't steal it! Someone took it and then I gave them money for it. Here we have the smoking gun. You know what his password is? Password. Real original, right?

MAGGIE

That's my password too.

MARKUS

Me too, but it's probably a bad idea. Look, if he didn't want his laptop taken he should've made more of an effort to keep people from breaking into his house.

MAGGIE

I don't think we should be stealing his computer.

MARKUS

You should've thought of that before we stole it. I just assumed, since you conveniently hadn't mentioned that you didn't want us to break into his house and steal his computer, that you had given us the implicit go ahead.

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MAGGIE

I don't like this at all.

MARKUS

That's all right. I like it for both of us. So – here's what we do – we go through his computer, reconstitute his browsing history, check out his online porn habits, and then launch attack ads after that.

MAGGIE

How do you know he has online porn habits?

MARKUS

That's a joke, right? Then we scour his records to see if he's been in any chat rooms, sending pictures over twitter, sexually harassing interns, that sort of thing.

MAGGIE

I don't know about this.

MARKUS

Maggie – you have to think of the voting public as a bunch of horny fourteen year old boys. Policy stuff, that's confusing, 'I have to pay attention and understand what's going on! My brain hurts!' It's like homework. But a good sex scandal? That's candy. Everyone pays attention as soon as a penis comes out. This will be like my Mona Lisa.

MAGGIE

No.

MARKUS

I'm sorry, what?

MAGGIE

I don't think we should do that.

MARKUS

You were fine with us inventing conspiracy theories and making up cancer kid statistics but now you have a problem?

MAGGIE

I feel like this is going to destroy him personally.

MARKUS

Of course it is! That's the only way you win.

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MAGGIE

It feels over the line to me.

MARKUS

Line? This is a concept I don't understand. There's a line?

MAGGIE

Yes there's a line.

MARKUS

And he didn't cross that line when he called you a slut? When he said Destiny was going to be a stripper? When he claimed you were going to forcefully abort babies? That wasn't over the line?

MAGGIE

Those things were pretty despicable but –

MARKUS

And none of those things were actually true! Personally, I was hoping on the slut thing because I've been kind of lonely and desperate lately, you know, and we've been spending a lot of time together – I figured late at night, we'd be celebrating something with a little bubbly, things would get a little hot, maybe your blouse would slip off –

MAGGIE

Oh my God!

MARKUS

But I didn't act on it! I was just fantasizing! Just to clarify are you saying that's never going to happen?

MAGGIE

That's never going to happen.

MARKUS

Damn it! But he's free to lie about anything personal about you and you're not free to tell the truth about him, is that it?

MAGGIE

It's a felony to steal his computer –

MARKUS

You have been given a nuclear option. All you have to do is use it. One video detailing his time on a few S&M chat rooms, and it's over. In the final analysis, is it going to matter who played by the rules and who didn't? Or are we just going to see the score?

(Pause.)

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You're fired. MAGGIE

I'm sorry, what? MARKUS

You're fired. I'm dropping out of the race. MAGGIE

Are you kidding me? MARKUS

I'm not doing this. I'm dropping out of the race. You're fired. MAGGIE

No. MARKUS

You are fired. MAGGIE

You can fire me, but you can't fire Progress Breckenridge. And you're already on the ballot. You're going to win this election. MARKUS

You are Progress Breckenridge. MAGGIE

No. Progress Breckenridge is a non-partisan political action committee that is unaffiliated with your campaign. We're not legally allowed to coordinate. MARKUS

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

I disagree. You are running. MARKUS

Good luck with that. MAGGIE

MARKUS

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You think Progress Breckenridge needs you to do anything? You think anyone's going to vote for you because of your sparkling personality or your oh-so-awesome after-school program for disadvantaged youth? Nobody cares about that, Maggie. They care about flash. And we're going to steamroll Jack Whitby and you're going to win, whether you like it or not. So go ahead and quit. And remember who won this election.

MAGGIE

If you use that computer at all I will go straight to the police.

MARKUS

You don't tell me what to do. That would be coordination. We'll both go to prison for that one, sweetheart.

(to read the rest of this play, contact me at donzolidis@yahoo.com)