

Round 2



"THE DIGITAL DIVIDE"

GENERAL FACTS:

Mustang High School is a small school nestled in the picturesque town of Meadows. It is situated in a tranquil, tree-lined neighborhood. The town is known for its close-knit community, where everyone knows each other's names. Mustang High is the top college preparatory school within 100 miles. Its curriculum is extremely vigorous and attracts many students from local affluent families.

The Dean of Mustang High is named Blake Klavil. Dean Klavil was formerly an English teacher for Mustang High who was very popular with the students. Dean Klavil is well-read, holds a PhD, and was widely recognized as the coolest teacher in school. Over time, Klavil made less jokes in class, started speaking very highly of other teachers, and became less close to the students. Klavil also began privately tutoring students in order to forge friendships with their wealthy and well-connected parents. Years later, Klavil did indeed become the Dean of Mustang High without any prior administrative experience.

As Dean, Klavil's first act was to overhaul the curriculum to make the classes more "experiential and simulation based." Dean Klavil didn't believe in busy work, tests, or quizzes as a marker of learning or success. Instead, Klavil insisted that all teachers implement weekly simulation-based exercises where students would have the opportunity to put their learning into practice. This was a very popular approach among students who seem to be more academically motivated.

In the fall of 2023, Rowan Quilty, a senior, was enrolled in the school's most popular course called Politics and Debate. The course was taught by Jamie Ritchfield and was designed to teach students about the methods of debating and how politics can often affect major issues in dispute. The course involved weekly debates among the students, often about political issues that arose during the week. Students were required to research the weekly topic of controversy, watch any debate or public announcements about the issue, and then prepare their own arguments for debate. Each student was also asked to sign up for an online application called "Vote Up" in order to leave their comments and vote for a winner.

On the week in question, Rowan Quilty was assigned to argue against Cameron Callahan, another senior in the class. During the debates, Rowan noticed a few targeted snickers and whispered comments during the argument. Not thinking much of it at first, Rowan assumed it was just typical teenage behavior. Little did Rowan know that several of the students in class were recording the debate on their smartphones and sharing it on social media with mocking captions. The videos quickly went viral within the school community, and Rowan became the subject of ridicule. Memes and cruel comments flooded the internet, turning Rowan into a laughingstock. What's more, students began to make comments about Rowan's family, ridiculing Rowan's dad's profession and calling Rowan a "poor charity case". They commented on Rowan's suspected scholarship status. Over time, the once-confident Rowan began to shrink under the weight of the online humiliation.

Mortified, Rowan went to Richfield expressing concern and humiliation. Rowan had discovered that Cameron had orchestrated the entire ordeal and had asked friends in the class to take videos. Cameron even went so far as to create the memes. Rowan shared all this information with Richfield including the impact of Cameron's actions, but Richfield failed to take any action. Instead, Richfield told Rowan that the posts were part of the normal course of debate, that participation in the debates were required, and that Rowan needed to grow thicker skin in order to prepare for the "real world." Feeling withdrawn and ashamed, Rowan turned to family for help. Rowan's parents immediately sent a letter to Dean Klavil about the ongoing cyberbullying and requested an investigation. Dean Klavil consulted the school's cyberbullying policy but hesitated to open an investigation. Cameron was one of the most popular students in school, whose father was a prominent surgeon in the community. In fact, the Callahans are big donors of Mustang High and the Dean wanted to stay in their good graces.

Instead, Dean Klavil called a meeting with the Callahans. Klavil informed them of the school's policy against cyberbullying which triggers an automatic investigation into every alleged instance of cyberbullying. Disciplinary measures could include suspension or expulsion from Mustang High. Concerned about Cameron's ability to be admitted into Stanford after being disciplined, the Callahans requested an opportunity for mediation with the school and Rowan to determine an alternative, mutually agreed upon disciplinary path.

The Dean and the the Quiltys are participating in the mediation which is led by a local well-known mediator who is a part of the American Arbitration Association. The school's goals during the mediation are to determine an appropriate disciplinary resolution that will be proportionate to the gravity of the offense and ensure that Cameron will not engage in such conduct in the future. Dean Klavil is concerned with not being too harsh on Cameron given the Callahans' position within the community. The process of mediation is confidential, so neither the process nor the outcome can be shared with other students.

The relevant Mustang High School cyberbullying policy is as follows:

“The Mustang High School Cyberbullying Board strives to provide a safe, positive learning climate for students in the schools. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the school to maintain an educational environment in which cyberbullying in any form is not tolerated. All forms of cyberbullying by students are hereby prohibited. Anyone who engages in cyberbullying in violation of this policy shall be subject to appropriate discipline.”

“Students who have been the target of cyberbullying shall promptly report such incidents to any staff member, teacher, or other employee of the school. Complaints of cyberbullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when a complaint is verified.”