“The Chess-Boxers”
Written by Josie Palmarini

Characters

➢ Congresswoman Harley “The Viper” Gapinski
➢ Senator Memphis “White Lightning” Leblanc
➢ Announcer

Setting: Chess-Boxing Ring
AT RISE: Black. A singular spotlight follows a microphone that comes from the ceiling down into the hand of a sharply dressed announcer who faces the audience standing DCS.

ANNOUNCER
LET’S GET READY TO RUMBLE!! (an unseen crowd goes wild. spotlights begin to flash around the stage.) Welcome, one and all, Democrats and Republicans, Snowflake Liberals and Neo-Nazi Conservatives, to the most highly anticipated event of this election season: (Lights go up to reveal a boxing ring with a chess board.) THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL CHESS-BOXING MATCH! (crowd screams.) After years of only having boring old debates with no physical carnage, we’ve finally kicked it up a notch! Now, are you ready to meet your-- PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES! (crowd screams.) Her own party calls her a “snake-in-the-grass,” turns out she’s actually a full blown viper! She’s the whaler of Wall Street fat cats and the Oprah of free healthcare! Please welcome to the ring: Congresswoman Harley “The Viper” Gapinski! (crowd cheers, but some boos can be heard. GAPINSKI enters from USR and climbs into the ring. She’s dressed in a pantsuit, but is also wearing boxing gloves and headgear.) He’s known for being a radical Pro-Lifer battling to overturn Roe v. Wade but tonight, the only right-to-life he’ll be fighting for is his own! He has six guns, excluding his muscles, and collects sexual assault allegations like Pokemon, it’s Senator Memphis “White Lightning” Leblanc! (LEBLANC enters from USL and climbs into the ring. Like before there are screams and boos. He’s dressed the same as GAPINSKI. The candidates non-verbally threaten each other.) For those of you who don’t know, Chess-Boxing combines the intelligence and quick wit of chess (beat. hesitant clapping), with the unbridled bloody brutality of boxing! (crowd screams.) There are four rounds! Two rounds of boxing, two rounds of chess! The winner of the game must either lock their opponent in a checkmate, or blugem them so hard they K.O! (crowd cheers.) Candidates, to your corners. (GAPINSKI and LEBLANC move to opposite corners.) Are you ready? (The crowd screams.) I said, ARE YOU READY? (crowd screams louder. the bell dings signifying the beginning of the round. They dance around the ring, fists up.)

LEBLANC
What’s wrong, Harley? Scared of little ol’ me?

GAPINSKI
That’s Congresswoman Gapinski to you, Leblanc. And hardly. I’ve been looking forward to getting my hands on you all election.

LEBLANC
Why Congresswoman, I do believe you’re flirtin’ with me.

GAPINSKI
You slimy son of a bitch---

LEBLANC
Hey, if you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen. Oh, wait. That’s a woman’s place. Guess you’ll have nowhere to go.

GAPINSKI
Just like the American patriarchal regime, I’m gonna dismantle you bit by bit. (lunuges forward and upcuts LEBLANC in the jaw. Crowd cheers. his lip splits. he tastes the blood with his tongue.)

How’s that taste?
LEBLANC

Like true blue American blood.

GAPINSKI

Gimme a break.

LEBLANC

If you insist. *(LEBLANC hook punches GAPINSKI’s shoulder. She falls.)* You’re welcome.

GAPINSKI

I didn’t thank you.

LEBLANC

Typical. All Democrats want to do is rid America of good ol’ fashion values. Apparently that includes manners too! *(to crowd.)* Do you want your children to grow up with no manners? To become hooligans? *(crowd boos. to GAPINSKI.)* Do yourself a favor and stay down. Just like the economy when you people are in charge.

GAPINSKI

*Standing up slowly.*

 Unless I’m remembering my U.S. history incorrectly, the lowest point in our economy was under a Republican administration. *(crowd gasps.)*

LEBLANC

Oh, please. Herbert Hoover was a Republican back when Republicans were still pro-- *(gags.)* progressives. He’s all yours.

GAPINSKI

Fine. We’ll take Hoover. But, I’m afraid that means you don’t get Lincoln anymore, either

LEBLANC

*Mortified.*

You can’t-- you’re not allowed to--

GAPINSKI

*To crowd.*

You heard it here folks. Free-er of slaves, wearer of dope-ass top hats, founder of the Republican party: Aberham Lincoln was a Democrat.

LEBLANC

How dare you!? *(LEBLANC lunges at GAPINSKI, but the bell rings, signifying the end of the round.)*

ANNOUNCER

And that is it for Round 1! With both candidates down two points, they each proceed into our first chess round on even footing! Pick your colors and take your seats.

GAPINSKI

I’ll take black, *(to crowd.)* because I’m dedicated to fighting for the rights of all groups, no matter the skin color. *(crowd cheers. she sits.)*

LEBLANC

*Scoffs. Stands up. To crowd.*
And I’ll take white. For it is the color of the purity and sanctity of God whom our grand nation was built under. (*crowd cheers. he sits.*)

**ANNOUNCER**

Are you ready?! (*crowd claps hesitantly.*) Just a reminder that, after this, they do get to continue beating the shit out of each other. (*crowd cheers.*) As always, white get’s to go first! (*bell dings.*)

**LEBLANC**

*Moves pawn forward.*

*Beat that. (*hits chess clock.)*

**GAPINSKI**

Unlike you Senator, I’m unafraid to set positive progress into motion in this game… (*moves her knight.*)… and in government. (*hits the chess clock. *crowd claps.*)

**LEBLANC**

That’s the problem with you liberals. You never think about anything long term. (*LEBLANC takes GAPINSKI’S knight with his pawn.*) And it always comes back to bite you in the ass. (*hits the chess clock.*)

**GAPINSKI**

Name one thing that’s ever come back to bite us in the ass.

**LEBLANC**

Hm, I don’t know. How about Obamacare? (*crowd “ooooooo”s.*)

**GAPINSKI**

Leblanc, I believe-- (*beat*) actually, you know what? *I know* you lack a lot of the qualities that are commonly desired in a President, but, damn, I never once thought you lacked originality. (*crowd gasps.*) Obamacare? Seriously? That’s all you got? You might as well have just pulled out a copy of Conservative’s Greatest Hits! (*crowd claps. GAPINSKI takes LEBLANC’S pawn with her pawns. *hits the chess clock.*)

**LEBLANC**

Oh, I’m original, Gapinski. Apparently you’ve forgotten that I was the first eggshell Governor of Alabama.

**GAPINSKI**

Eggshell?

**LEBLANC**

Before me all the previous Governors had only ever been peachy white, but then I came along, broke through that glass ceiling, and showed Alabama just, because I was eggshell white that didn’t mean I was any less valid. (*crowd “aww”s.*) Also, boom! (*his rook takes her pawn. bell rings. *crowd cheers.*)

**ANNOUNCER**

And that’s it for Round 2! Congresswoman Gapinski’s really gotta make the most of the final boxing round, in order to catch up to Senator Leblanc, who has already claimed one of her two knights!

**LEBLANC**

You ready, Gapinski? Or do you need to take a five minute break in your safe space?

**GAPINSKI**
Classy. Why don’t you just admit it? You’re threatened by me. By all powerful women, in fact!

LEBLANC

Am not!

GAPINSKI

Run home to your daddy, Senator. (hook punches LEBLANC. he falls.) The big girls are playing.

ANNOUNCER

We might have to call the game here--

LEBLANC

No! Look! I’m fine!

GAPINSKI

You’re insane! I won! Just drop out!

LEBLANC

You have not “won!” What is with you people declaring premature victories all the time?

GAPINSKI

Maybe it’s because Democrats actually believe in their politicians. Because the people trust us! Because we haven’t screwed them over nearly as many times as Republicans! (crowd cheers. LEBLANC laughs.) You got a problem with what I said, Senator?

LEBLANC

You are joking, right? They don’t trust you! The only reason you’re up here is cause you’re the best-worst option out of a list of other terrible choices! At least my party actually likes me! I could literally shoot someone on live television, and the polls would go up in my favor! Republicans are loyal! (LEBLANC uppercuts GAPINSKI in the jaw who looks upset.) Face it, Democrats would throw you over for the newer shinier model in an instant. (bell rings.)

ANNOUNCER

And that marks the end of our final boxing round! (crowd “awws” in disappointment.) Candidates, take your seats at the chessboard once more.

GAPINSKI

I got a better idea. (limps over to the chess board. to crowd.) You wanna see a fight? (crowd screams.) I’ll give ya a fight! (takes off boxing gloves. picks up chess pieces. begins to throw them at LEBLANC.)

LEBLANC

Oh, I see how it is! (crowd cheers. takes off his gloves. grabs the chessboard. uses the board as a shield to block chess pieces. he begins to throw pieces.)

ANNOUNCER

Smiling. Sarcastically.


GAPINSKI

That’s not fair! Why do you get a shield?!
LEBLANC
What can I say? I’m privileged!

GAPINSKI
Picks up discarded glove. Starts batting away pieces.
You’ll never win, Leblanc! I’m the underdog! Everyone loves an underdog!

LEBLANC
Can you really call someone with SuperPACS an underdog?

GAPINSKI
Hits LEBLANC in the head with a piece.
Ha! Stings doesn’t it?

LEBLANC stumbles back. But then uses the board to smack GAPINSKI down. Both tumble to the ground. Both sit there for a second, wavering.

ANNOUNCER
Alright, alright. Play times over! (to crowd. the candidates start to crawl towards each other. they start to wrestle, and end up holding each other in a choke hold. ) Wasn’t that great? (crowd screams.) I said, wasn’t that great!? (crowd screams louder. laughs. turns to face the candidates.) Okay, shake hands and-- (beat.) uh oh. Hey! No! Actually, stop that! (climbs into the ring. tries to pull them apart, but pulls his hands back when LEBLANC tries to bite him. ANNOUNCER gasps.) Senator!

LEBLANC
We’re finishing this!

GAPINSKI
Yeah! I’m this close to putting this piece of shit in his place once and for all!

LEBLANC
As if!

Crowd is chanting “fight, fight, fight.” They continue to choke each other until they simultaneously pass out. Crowd goes silent. Murmurs can be heard. ANNOUNCER leans down to check the pulse of both candidates.

ANNOUNCER
They’re still alive! (crowd erupts.) And I’m getting word right now that they’re both up twenty-six-- twenty-seven-- twenty-six percent! Up next our in-house political analysts are going to break down-- (beat.) well, this! And make sure to tune in next week, when we do it all over again! Maybe we’ll give them full on jousting sticks! Who knows? I certainly don’t. Thanks for watching, remember to vote, and goodnight.

LIGHTS DOWN. THE END.