

SECRET BALLOT

Written by

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INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

HUNTER, 17, a tall, lanky boyish man-child dressed in a flannel and khakis, walks down a long hallway.

CORY, 17, Hunter's shorter boyish man-child best friend in a t-shirt and khakis a backwards baseball cap, trails behind a few steps.

HUNTER

It's up.

CORY

What is?

HUNTER

Senior Class President election sign ups.

CORY

You're going to run for Senior Class President?

HUNTER

Why not? I'm a good leader, I run the Comic Book club.

CORY

Hunter, you and I are the only people in the club. Shouldn't you just be focusing on your college applications?

HUNTER

Well all the more reason to be president. I need something bigger for my college applications than president of a two person club.

CORY

It's just... you just aren't the most presidential. Do you really think you can handle a class of over four hundred students? We're supposed to have one meeting a month and we haven't had once since last year.

HUNTER

Cory, I'm quite presidential. I can handle it.

He straightens himself out and fixes his imaginary tie.

He and Cory laugh.

Hunter approaches the SIGN UP SHEET. He reaches his hand out in what seems like slow motion.

Just as he is about to grab the pen he is bumped out of the way.

BRITTNEY

Excuse me.

BRITTNEY, 17, tall, skinny and "perfect" in every sense of the word, bops in. She's dressed in a checkered skirt, a white button down with a matching checkered vest, knee high socks with brand spanking new Mary Janes on her feet. Her hair is in a pristine high pony-tail that swings like a pendulum as she moves in on the sign-up sheet.

She pushes the dirty, old BIC PEN hanging from a string out of the way and pulls out a HOT PINK MARKER.

Brittney puts her Johnny Hancock over the first four slots on the sign up sheet: "Brittney Cooper." She dots the "I" with a heart.

BRITTNEY

Sorry, did I cut you? Were you planning on signing up too? Wow, I've won Class President the past three years. Who would have thought someone would wanna take me on? Senior year of all years.

(beat, then phony smile)

Well, best of luck, Harry!

She bops away with her pack of CLONES, 16/17, dressed in matching tops and skirts that slightly less glamorous than Brittney's, in tow.

HUNTER

(through his teeth)

Thanks.

The clones swarm her and begin prying her with questions.

CLONE 1

So do you get, like, an office when you win Senior Class President?

CLONE 2

What about a private bathroom? "Senior Presidential Bathroom", I could use that!

(MORE)

CLONE 2 (CONT'D)
 I need somewhere to fix my hair
 that has some qual lighting.

The questions get more and more vapid as they walk away.

HUNTER
 My God, they're the worst. She's
the worst.

Cory's eyes are glazed over, watching the pack walk away.

CORY
 They're perfect. She's perfect.

HUNTER
 Pull yourself together, Cory.
 Remember, she's the competition.

Still glazed-

CORY
 Yeah, competition, yeah.

Hunter bumps his arm and Cory snaps out of it.

He grabs the old BIC pen, grimaces at the bite marks on it,
 and in big block letters writes his name: "Hunter Farrell."

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Hunter and Cory have trays in hand. They slide down the food
 lines of the cafeteria. Each new food plopped on their trays
 is more questionable than the last.

Hunter and Cory make their way to a small table in the back
 corner of the cafeteria.

On their way to the table they pass by multiple cliques.

They pass by a table of TWO ARTSY PEOPLE who are making
 sketches in their notebooks as they twirl their food on their
 forks.

ARTSY GIRL
 I mean I'm voting for Brittney
 Cooper. Who even is Hunter Farrell?
 Literally never seen him before in
 my life.

They continue past a HUDDLE OF FOUR JOCKS in their varsity
 jackets and flicking their food at one another as they
 discuss the election.

JOCK

I mean it would be pretty rad to have a bro for pres, but damn... that Brittney.

The jocks nod and high five.

They pass by a table of TWO NERDS playing cards.

Hunter looks relieved, they may be the guys who will throw him a vote or two.

NERD

I hear if Brittney wins she's gonna get the Dungeons and Dragons club a bigger classroom for our meetings, and a new version of the game!

As they walk to the table many more comments like these are made.

HUNTER

How does she have such a hold over everyone? Even they're under her spell.

CORY

What's not to like about her? She's amazing.

HUNTER

Cory, name one time she's ever been nice to you.

CORY

Uh... Well she said "excuse me" when she pushed you out of the way to sign up.

HUNTER

Yeah, but she pushed me out of the way.

The loud speaker turns on. A squeaky old woman begins to speak.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

(yelling)

Is it on?

The SECRETARY taps on the microphone. All the students in the cafeteria wince at the banging sound coming from the speakers and cover their ears.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

If you are running for any student council positions please see Principal Georgeson sixth period.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Brittney and an assemblage of other students are walking into the PRINCIPAL GEORGESON's office.

BRITTNEY

Hi Principal Georgeson! How are you? How's Mrs. Georgeson? Did she like that recipe I gave her for blueberry scones?

PRINCIPAL

Loved it! She makes them every Sunday.

Hunter walks in.

HUNTER

Hi Principal Georgeson.

PRINCIPAL

Hunter, can't you see I'm having a conversation? Please be a little more courteous next time.

(beat)

We'll catch up later, Brittney.

He pats her on the shoulder and she gives him a phony smile.

PRINCIPAL

OK, so you're all gathered here to discuss some campaign protocol.

He plops himself on the corner of his desk.

PRINCIPAL

Now, I want a clean campaign from all of you. No bribery, especially no illegal substances.

He glares at Hunter as if this is something he would likely do.

BRITTNEY

Can we hand things out to students?

PRINCIPAL

Of course!

(chucking)

As long as of course you bring anything you plan to pass out to me first. Especially if it's one of your delicious treats!

They smile at each other.

BRITTNEY

Obviously!

PRINCIPAL

Well I guess that's about it. Any questions?

HUNTER

Yeah uh--

PRINCIPAL

Good, see you all election day! Now outta here, get campaignin'!

Hunter and Brittney begin to exit.

Brittney grabs Hunter's arm.

BRITTNEY

Harry...

HUNTER

It's Hunter.

BRITTNEY

I just wanted to wish you luck.

She reaches her hand out.

He reciprocates and they shake hands.

BRITTNEY

Truly, good luck. I've won the past three years. I mean good for you for running and all; it's good experience for your future I guess, but like you just need to prepare yourself for the inevitability of your loss.

HUNTER

Good luck, Brittney.

BRITTNEY

Toodles.

She bops away. Clones come from the wings and flock to her side.

INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Hunter is sitting on his bed, his backpack thrown on the floor. Cory is sitting at Hunter's desk flipping through last year's yearbook.

HUNTER

You should have seen how
condescending she was.

CORY

(disinterested)
Mmhmm.

HUNTER

The nerve of her to just assume
she's got this election in the bag.

CORY

(disinterested)
So rude.

HUNTER

Ugh and her relationship with
Principal Georgeson, so creepy.

CORY

(disinterested)
Gross.

HUNTER

Tomorrow I'll get some voters. I'll
pass out some buttons, tell the
people my plans for senior year.

CORY

(disinterested)
Disgusting.

HUNTER

Are you even listening to me?

CORY

(disinterested)
Unbelievable.

Hunter stands up, walks over to his desk.

Cory is flipping through every page that Brittney is on.

Hunter slams the book shut on his hand.

CORY

Ow!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Hunter is stationed at a table with QUARTER SIZED PINS for people to take. He has a STACK OF PAPER that outlines his campaign.

HUNTER

Vote Hunter Farrell for Senior
Class President!

He holds out a piece of paper with a pin attached to it, nobody stops.

A SWARM OF PEOPLE look as if they are coming towards him, but they go right past him.

Brittney has a table set up. She has LARGE CAMPAIGN BUTTONS and has her campaign printed on HOT PINK PAPER that matches her pen.

BRITTNEY

Vote Brittney Cooper if you want
the most rocking senior year of
your lives! Woo!

She and her clones pass out buttons.

She takes pictures with loyal students. They throw up their fingers as if to say, "we're number one."

Hunter sees a familiar face among the swarm of people at Brittney's table.

HUNTER

Cory?!

Cory turns around, he has one of Brittney's giant buttons pinned to his shirt.

CORY

Sup!

Cory trots over to Hunter's table.

HUNTER
Are you kidding me?

Hunter points at the button.

CORY
Oh, well she asked me if I wanted
one and I just didn't want to be
rude, ya know? Gotta be a
gentleman.

Cory takes off the button, slightly ashamed. He places one of
Hunter's buttons on.

CORY
You know you have my vote!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Hunter walks down the hallway which is littered with POSTERS
of Brittney.

Hunter sets up his table in the most prime location in the
hallway. He puts up a BANNER behind his table.

Brittney rolls in, clones in tow, and puts out THREE TABLES.
All covered in pink paraphernalia. She has out BUTTONS,
CUPCAKES, PENS, the works.

HUNTER
Vote Hunter Farrell for Senior
Student Body President.

The students all pass him by and snag a cupcake and other fun
trinkets from Brittney.

Cory walks over to Hunter, crumbs on his face.

HUNTER
What were you eating?

CORY
Nothing.

HUNTER
Are you kidding me, Cory?

CORY
What?

HUNTER
You're obsessed!

CORY

So what?!

HUNTER

I'm your best friend and you literally do not care about this election at all!

CORY

I'm in love, Hunter! The heart wants what the heart wants! I told you that you have my vote, isn't that enough?!

HUNTER

Cory, you're supposed to be on my side and helping me win this election. Not swooning over Brittney friggen Cooper every second of the day.

CORY

I honestly don't understand why you're so mad.

HUNTER

You're insane! She's not this perfect amazing human everyone thinks she is!

CORY

How do you know that!?

HUNTER

Nobody's perfect! She definitely has some dirt in her past!

They're starting to cause a scene. Brittney turns to watch.

CORY

You know, Brittney was right about you.

Hunter is stunned.

HUNTER

Brittney was right about me?!

CORY

Yeah, I was talking campaigning with her earlier and she said she knew you were gonna be a sore loser! Everyone's been saying it!

(MORE)

CORY (CONT'D)

It's not her fault she's perfect,
and you're well... you!

HUNTER

I can't believe you right now.
You're wrapped around her finger!
She's not perfect, what do I have
to do to get that through your
thick skull?!

CORY

Name one bad thing she's done?
Prove it Hunter, you're just upset
you can't have what she has.

HUNTER

Nobody has a perfectly clean record
and she's no exception.

CORY

What are you going to do? Break
into the main office tonight and go
through her permanent record? Comb
through it just to find absolutely
nothing?!

HUNTER

Well, I...
(beat)
Yeah, I am!

Hunter storms away, he turns back only to see Brittney
rushing to Cory's aid.

Hunter stops and watches.

Brittney holds Cory's hand and leads him away.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hunter is creeping down the hallway. He turns the corner that
is right before the main office door.

HUNTER

(startled)
AH!

He walks right into a GIANT HANGING BANNER of Brittney's
face. He swings at it and yanks it down from the ceiling.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Hunter walks into the main office. He spots the door labeled "RECORDS ROOM."

He sneaks to the door, grabs the handle and slowly pulls it down.

He opens the door and slips inside.

He opens the filing cabinet labeled: "LAST NAMES A-G" and flips through the files until he gets to "COOPER, BRITTNEY."

He pulls the file out of the stack so carefully that one might think a boulder is going to come barreling down at him if he shakes the filing cabinet.

He opens it. "Perfect Attendance K-10th Grade," "Freshmen President," "Sophomore President," "Junior President."

Among what is a seemingly endless list of accolades he finally finds it, "SUSPENSION RECORD: CONFIDENTIAL."

HUNTER

(to self)

"Brittney Cooper, Suspension
Length: Three Days. Reason...

(beat)

Gotcha.

There are footsteps. Hunter turns around and-

BRITTNEY

Gotcha.

HUNTER

Hello, Brittney.

BRITTNEY

Hello, Hunter. So you've found my record, are you going to share it with the whole senior class? You know nobody likes a tattler tail.

HUNTER

Nobody likes a girl who gets into fist fights with other girls either.

Brittney looks a little bit taken aback.

She loses the color in her face.

BRITTNEY

I... I can explain that.

HUNTER

Try explaining it to the whole student body, because I'm going public with this in the morning.

She looks like she's about to start crying

BRITTNEY

No please. You don't understand. You see, my parents had just told me they were getting a divorce.

HUNTER

Everyone has problems.

BRITTNEY

Someone cracked a wise comment about my dad, and well I just wasn't gonna take it. It was a really hard time for me. It has been a really hard time for me. I need this, Hunter.

HUNTER

Why is this my problem?

BRITTNEY

I need a little bit of control in my life. This position will give me some control. I need something stable. Please, don't ruin my chances. I need this.

Hunter takes a moment. Plops himself down in a chair.

HUNTER

Fine. I won't say anything. Just promise me one thing.

BRITTNEY

Sure.

HUNTER

Please release Cory from whatever spell you have him under.

BRITTNEY

Oh, of course. Anything to keep this between you and me.

She chuckles.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Brittney is on stage behind a podium.

Hunter and Cory sit in the auditorium next to one another.

CORY

Can you believe that girl?!
Apparently she was never into me.
Do you even believe that for a
second?

HUNTER

Sorry, man.

They quiet.

Brittney taps on the microphone.

BRITTNEY

I am truly honored to be speaking
before you today as your new Senior
Class President. I wouldn't be here
if it weren't for you all. I would
like to also take a minute to thank
my parents, who are the picture of
a perfect marriage. They have
always taught me right from wrong
and I will use their years of
guidance to make this Senior year
the best of our lives! Woo!

Hunter is briefly stunned, then laughs to himself.

HUNTER

(to self)
Quite the actress.

Hunter and Cory stand and proceed to exit.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

CORY

You good, man?

HUNTER

Yeah, it's only a high school
election. I'm still president of
the Comic Book Club. Speaking of
which, when's our next meeting?

FADE TO BLACK.