

WHO IS CLAY CAMPBELL?

Written by

Ben Tuschman

**INT. REGAL OFFICE - DAY**

CHARTS. GRAPHS. FINE PRINT. AND NUMBERS. NUMBERS GALORE.

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON (70s-110s) scans over pages of a college application behind his mahogany desk. Remington is a gargoyle of a man, a being of the ancients that somehow drips with vitality.

Sitting opposite the desk is CLAY CAMPBELL (18). Clay is a prep. A boy, in fact. Supposedly made of skin, flesh, and blood, though every move, every breath, is a cold calculation made to please Mother.

A swinging desk toy CLICKS and CLACKS in the silence.

Remington scans further over the pages. His eyes widen.

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON

Janine!

A squawky assistant, JANINE (40s), opens the door and pokes her head in.

JANINE

Yes, sir?

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON

Janine, it's my heart...

JANINE

Did you take your medication today?

He clutches his chest. Face flushes red.

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON

(faint voice)

Janine.

Remington collapses in a pained heap on the desk. Janine rushes over to his phone and dials.

JANINE

Yes, hello. My boss is having a heart attack... Uh huh... Uh huh.

He taps her on the wrist. Pulls her closer. Whispers into her ear with eyes fluttering:

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON

Those are some damn good numbers.

And he POPS back up, completely fine.

CHANCELLOR REMINGTON (CONT'D)

I mean, seriously, look at those numbers.

Janine's mouth hangs open. She looks down to the numbers. Hangs up the phone. And walks away.

JANINE

I can't do it. I can't do it anymore.

Janine powers through the door and SLAMS it behind her.

REMINGTON

Yes. Yes. We try to keep it light here. My gosh these test scores. Oooooh weee. These are some high numbers. You've got extra curriculars. Community service. Recommendations. And those numbers! Mister Campbell, you're either a very bright boy or a wonderful, wonderful cheater. Both of which we hold in high esteem at this institution.

CLAY

Thank you, sir.

REMINGTON

Well. We know what the numbers say. We know what the papers say. Now. Mister Clay Campbell. I'd like to know what you have to say.

Remington waits. Tom COUGHS. Smiles.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)

Just who is Clay Campbell?

Clay gestures to his body. "Here I am!" Remington CHUCKLES. Waits for Clay to say something. Anything. He waits for a while. Smiling. Waiting.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)

Mister Campbell.

CLAY

Sir?

REMINGTON

Tell me about yourself. Tell me about Clay Campbell.

Clay opens his mouth to say something. He stops himself.  
Reaches across the desk. TAPS on the numbers.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)  
No need to be shy, boy-o. The  
interview at this stage is nothing  
more than a formality.

Remington scratches his ear. Clay licks his teeth.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)  
Let's just -- chat.

CLAY  
Let's... not.

REMINGTON  
Not... what?

CLAY  
Not continue with the interview.  
Sir.

Remington's brow furrows.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
If it's just a formality, then I'd  
rather not continue. Conversation  
is not my strong suit.

REMINGTON  
This isn't an interrogation, mister  
Campbell. Just conversation. Now,  
what makes you, *you*?

Clay smiles.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)  
Clay, I feel as though you're  
mishearing me, or perhaps I'm  
misrepresenting myself.

CLAY  
Never, sir.

REMINGTON  
You're a wonderful applicant.  
Wonderful, truly. We'd love to have  
you. You come all the way out here  
touting some fine numbers --

CLAY

(over)

They're good numbers. Damn good numbers. Those are your words.

REMYINGTON

-- But now -- but now -- it's time to meet the man behind the numbers.

Clay stares at the CLACKING desk toy.

REMYINGTON (CONT'D)

What do you like? What do you hate? What keeps you up at night? How do you take your coffee?

CLAY

I don't drink coffee.

Remington leans back in his chair. Clay stares at the toy.

REMYINGTON

I'm just looking for a conversation, Clay.

Clay's lips quiver. A tear streaks down his cheek.

REMYINGTON (CONT'D)

....Have I upset you?

Clay forces a vacant smile.

CLAY

No. Do I look upset?

Remington shuffles his papers. He looks down to the numbers.

REMYINGTON

If you'd like to take a minute to compose yourself.

Clay shrugs.

CLAY

My mother is outside. I'm sure she'd be more than happy to talk to you about my personality.

REMYINGTON

I'd like to talk to you, Clay.

CLAY

Yes. Well. We're not getting anywhere are we.

REMINGTON

What issues are you passionate about? What future do you envision for this nation?

Clay rises out of his chair.

CLAY

I'll just go get my mother if that's okay.

REMINGTON

How was the traffic?

Clay exits the room, leaving the Chancellor alone for a bit.

Remington lifts the application. He looks at the numbers. He considers them. Damn good numbers.

Clay re-enters with his mother, MRS. CAMPBELL (50s). She extends a hand toward the Chancellor.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Hello, Chancellor Remington. How'd he do? My little Clay.

REMINGTON

Mrs. Campbell.

CLAY

He'd like to know who I am, mother.

Mrs. Campbell stares at Clay. Then looks to Remington.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Did you not see his scores?

REMINGTON

He has fine scores.

CLAY

Damn good scores. He said damn good scores.

REMINGTON

They are damn good scores.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Damn good scores! Pah! Wonderful! My little Clay!

REMINGTON

We've just had a little trouble opening up to each other, haven't we Clay?

CLAY

I told him I don't drink coffee. I told him that. Fair and square.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Clay isn't the most verbose young man. Surely that wouldn't exclude him from consideration. Chancellor?

REMINGTON

We have many quiet students.

MRS. CAMPBELL

See, baby? You're throwing an absolute fit over nothing.

CLOSE ON: Clay's face. It displays no emotion.

REMINGTON

Mrs. Campbell. I'd like to continue the conversation with your son.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Wonderful.

REMINGTON

In private.

CLAY

Don't leave, mother.

MRS. CAMPBELL

The boy wants his mother.

Remington lightly rests his hands on Clay's shoulders.

REMINGTON

Clay.

CLAY

They're good numbers, sir.

REMINGTON

The best I've seen. All I want is a little small talk. Otherwise... I'm sorry.

MRS. CAMPBELL

You're what?

CLAY  
God help us.

REMINGTON  
I'm sorry.

Remington looks to the boy. His last chance.

The boy looks to Remington. Then to his mother. He's lost.

Remington extends a hand. Clay shakes it.

REMINGTON (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. My four o'clock should  
be coming in.

Remington extends a hand towards Mrs. Campbell. She walks to him, declining the hand. Gets right up in his face, shaking with pent up rage.

MRS. CAMPBELL  
You... You... You cunt. You  
absolute cunt. You cunt of a man.  
Shame on you.

Mrs. Campbell exits, sobbing.

Remington LAUGHS then freezes. He doubles back. Shoots a hand to his chest.

CLAY  
It was nice to meet you.  
Chancellor.

REMINGTON  
My heart -- My heart -- Get Janine.

CLAY  
Janine left, sir.

Remington turns this over. He looks to the phone -- out of arm's reach. He tries to move towards it but GROANS in pain.

REMINGTON  
Clay. Call nine one one.

CLAY  
Of course, sir.

Clay lifts the phone. He pauses. Stares at the CLICK CLACKING desk toy.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
What's the number, sir?

REMINGTON

What? You tin fucking -- It's nine  
one one.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK. Remington squirms on the ground.

CLAY

That's a good number.

The chancellor grits his teeth. Narrows his eyes.

REMINGTON

Mister Campbell. Dial. Nine. One.  
One.

CLAY

I'm sorry, sir. We don't value  
numbers here at the institution.

Clay sets the speaker back down on the receiver. He picks up  
the phone and sets it far out of reach of Remington.

REMINGTON

(weak voice)  
Janine... Janine...

Clay picks up his application. He looks at the numbers. Down  
to the flailing Remington in disgust. And exits.

WE PUSH IN on the desk toy still CLICK CLACKING on  
Remington's desk.

Push in. Push in closer and closer on the desk toy. It grows  
in volume and deepens in pitch until it becomes a steady,  
thumping DRUM. A heartbeat.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK.

Until it stops.

CUT TO BLACK.