

ROVER JACOBSON: CANINE PRESIDENT

"Grumble Beginnings"

Written by E.J. Rupert

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Jimmy Rupe Productions
Milwaukee, WI
(414) 550-0547
ejrupert@yahoo.com

INT. STADIUM - DAY

Crowds of people gather, sit, and CHAT. A MAN and his young SON, carrying food and drinks, sit down.

SON

Thanks for bringing me here, Dad! I can't wait to see the Tacoma Sounds in person!

MAN

Baseball's meant to be seen in person. Especially Opening Day! Look around you! Can't you feel the excitement?

A HUSBAND and WIFE YELL from afar.

WIFE (O.C.)

(to husband)

That's cuz you a dumb ass!

HUSBAND (O.C.)

Yo mama!

The husband and wife make up the JACOBSON family: PHALON and his wife MYA, both 30's, black. With them is their daughter, BROOKE, 15, and their dog, ROVER.

MYA

My mama's dead!

PHALON

Lucky her!

BROOKE

Will ya'll knock it off? You guys been arguing all the way from Coupeville!

MYA

We wouldn't have needed to go to Coupeville if your dad had manned up and drove directly here!

PHALON

Well, excuse me, Mya, if I wanted to take the ferry instead of driving from Oak Harbor to Tacoma! None of ya'll would've helped me drive!

MYA

Brooke's only 15!

PHALON

She can still drive better than you! Hell, Rover probably could!

Rover BARKS and GRUNTS.

MYA

Rover, don't take his side!

MAN

Excuse me, but this isn't "Bring Your Pup to the Game Day"!

MYA

And this isn't "Idiot Mess with the Jacobsons Day", either! Mind your business!

BROOKE

Calm down, everyone!

MYA

Hmmph. It ain't our fault the dog sitter canceled at the last minute!

MAN

It ain't ours, either!

MYA

(to man)

Hey, I'm warning you!

She looks over the rail.

MYA (CONT'D)

Hey, Phalon, go get us some snacks. The line ain't long.

PHALON

(scoffs)

Please! By the time I get back, it'll be the 8th inning!

MYA

But the game didn't even start yet!

PHALON

Hmmph. I know!

Standing in a stairwell is CEDRIC BRINKLEY, white, and his campaign manager, HUGO VALDEZ. They both wear suits and hold fliers.

CEDRIC

Vote Cedric Brinkley!

HUGO

He wanna be yo' man!

Cedric nudges him.

HUGO (CONT'D)

President!

CEDRIC

This ain't working, Hugo.

HUGO

What, coming to a ballgame wearing suits
isn't winning voters over?

CEDRIC

(yells)

Hey, voters! Cedric Brinkley endorses
your Tacoma Sounds!

HUGO

(yells)

And Obama endorses Cedric Brinkley!

CEDRIC

(to Hugo)

What? No he doesn't!

HUGO

Yes he does!

(low voice)

Donald Obama. He makes good donuts at
that shop. And when we visited the other
day, he said you had on nice shoes.

CEDRIC

Hugo...

HUGO

Well, we gotta do something, before you
have to drop out.

CEDRIC

I'm doing what I can! I go to sporting
events, I can even be "down" with the
younger people!

HUGO

"Down"? Mr. Brinkley, if you were any
whiter, you'd be see-through!

CEDRIC

You finished? Let's visit these people
one-by-one. Give it a personal touch.

HUGO

Hopefully they don't touch us with a beer bath.

They approach the Jacobsons.

CEDRIC

Excuse me, people, here for the exciting game?

PHALON

Lemme stop you right there. I don't know anything about politics, and I especially don't wanna discuss them during a crappy Sounds game!

HUGO

Fair enough. Excuse us.

Cedric and Hugo exit.

BROOKE

Dad, why are you calling them crappy already? The season didn't even start yet!

PHALON

They never do anything! And they're playing the Wisconsin Cattle! They're even worse! That's why my boss keeps giving us free tickets!

MYA

So it's not because you keep asking her for a promotion?

Rover stares at Brooke and MOANS.

BROOKE

Quit moaning, Rover. This licorice is mine.

MAN

You guys need to follow Cedric Brinkley out!

MYA

(to the man)

Lemme tell you something...

PHALON

No, Mya, allow me.

(clears throat)

Now listen here, man.

(MORE)

PHALON (CONT'D)

Baseball is the only time that me and my family can get together and not kill each other. And I'm not gonna let some annoying jerk ruin it for us! So shut your freakin' mouth and watch it with your kid, while we watch it with ours!

INT. JACOBSON HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

PHALON

That's what I should've said to him!

It is revealed that Phalon and Mya are sitting in their bed.

MYA

You know what your problem is, Phalon? Your current problem?

PHALON

Meaning, not you?

MYA

You don't know how to assert yourself. That's why you're stuck at that going-nowhere job.

PHALON

What about you at the hospital? They won't even let you take a day off!

MYA

I'm just an assistant. But it's all good. Today, I called in well!

PHALON

If you're done with this "Ted Talk", I'd like to go to sleep. I gotta go to this "going-nowhere" job tomorrow.

MYA

Fine.

They both lay down and roll over to their sides.

SFX: Rover BARKS off-screen.

Phalon jumps up and GROANS.

PHALON

Stupid dog!

MYA

Calm down! It's just Ludwig dropping off Brooke.

PHALON

Well, at least it's better than her dating that no-good Rodney Fuller.

He lays back down.

INT. JACOBSON HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brooke enters the front door. Rover continues to BARK.

BROOKE

I had a great time, Rodney.

RODNEY FULLER, 18, black, donning a red hoodie and sagging jeans, follows her inside.

RODNEY

Can you get your dog to shut up?

BROOKE

Rover, quiet!

Rover STOPS and whimpers.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

It's just 'cuz he ain't used to you being here.

(pause)

Wait, why are you here?

RODNEY

Ludwig couldn't drop you off, remember? He had a date of his own!

BROOKE

Wow. What girl would wanna date him?

RODNEY

I don't know, but he and Darryl are very happy together.

BROOKE

(gasps)

Really?

RODNEY

See you later.

They kiss.

RODNEY (CONT'D)
Hopefully, I'll get to see that bedroom
of yours soon!

BROOKE
What, you want my dad to catch you?

RODNEY
No, and that makes it more exciting!

BROOKE
Bye, Rodney!

He begins to exit.

RODNEY
Oh yeah, when are we gonna go to a Sounds
game?

BROOKE
No time soon. We got kicked out again for
disorderly conduct!

RODNEY
Dang, not even a playoff game?

BROOKE
(chuckles)
Playoffs? That'll be the day!

INT. JACOBSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

SUPER: "SEVEN MONTHS LATER"

The Jacobsons sit around the TV. They wear Sounds gear
and accessories, and carry Sounds pennant flags.

PHALON
This is great!

MYA
Yeah! Who would've thought that both the
Sounds and the Cattle would play each
other in the World Series?

BROOKE
Especially since both started off 2-16!

PHALON
I never doubted my Sounds for a second,
ya'll! Now we just need to score another
run!

MYA

"We"? I didn't realize you were on the team!

PHALON

"We" when we win, "they" when they lose! You know that!

LUDWIG BEST, 15, black, struts into the home, with his chest poked out.

LUDWIG

(deep, exaggerated voice)
What's up, Jacobsons? I see you watchin' the game! Like what I should be doing!

PHALON

Yeah, Ludwig. Wanna join us? Game 7, baby!

MYA

They said that it's already the most watched program in history!

LUDWIG

Thank you, guys, but I came to pick up your daughter.

BROOKE

You didn't get my text? It's the biggest game of the year!! I can't miss it!

PHALON

Everybody who's everybody is in the stands! And the box seats!

Ludwig looks at the TV and GASPS.

LUDWIG

(regular voice)
Is that Lady Gaga??
(resumes deep voice)
That's cool, Brooke, as long as you excuse me whenever I want to watch other manly sports like football! Especially if you expect to be Mrs. Ludwig Best!

MYA

Ludwig, either stay or leave. We tryin' to watch this!

LUDWIG

(regular voice)
Sorry. I gotta go back to my man, anyway!

The family looks at him.

LUDWIG (CONT'D)
(resumes deep voice)
Meaning, my main man! Rather, my homey,
my G! Peace out!

He struts out of the house and EXHALES.

LUDWIG (CONT'D)
(regular voice)
That was brutal!

He walks past a bush. Rodney jumps out of it and startles him.

RODNEY
Where's Brooke?

LUDWIG
AAAGGHH! She's watching the game!

RODNEY
Oh, dang, that is today. How could she
stand us up like this?

LUDWIG
Rodney, how much longer do I have to do
this?

RODNEY
Hey, calm down! I hook you up with wine
from my mother's closet, don't I?

LUDWIG
I don't care! I'm sick of this!

RODNEY
What about some "stimulation" from my
father's stash?

PAUSE.

LUDWIG
Okay, that'll work.

RODNEY
Come on.

They exit.

EXT. OUTDOORS - EVENING

Rodney and Ludwig stumble while walking. They talk with slurred speech throughout.

RODNEY

Walk upright, Ludwig! So the cops won't stop us!

LUDWIG

(chuckles)

What cops? It's a ghost town around here!

RODNEY

What ghost? I ain't afraid of no ghost!

LUDWIG

What?

They both LAUGH and approach a school building.

RODNEY

There's my "almond matter". Let's go in.

LUDWIG

Oh, now you like going to school?

RODNEY

I wanna pay my respects.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

They stumble down the hall.

RODNEY

Ah, memories. That locker where I met Brooke. I was a senior, she was a freshman.

(burps)

And over there, where I got to second base. And over there, where her dad threatened me.

LUDWIG

That's beautiful, man.

RODNEY

I don't get what the deal is. When Brooke turns 18, we'll both be adults! Her dad is just trippin'.

LUDWIG

That's right!

RODNEY

I'm a grown man! I'm very responsible,
too!

LUDWIG

That's right!

They both strut with their chests poked out. They approach a LADY sitting in a chair next to an open classroom door.

RODNEY

What's going on here, ma'am?

LADY

The polls are open.

LUDWIG

Where's everybody else?

LADY

Most likely watching the game.

RODNEY

I'm gonna prove how responsible I am,
Ludwig. I'm gonna cast my vote!

LUDWIG

Now?

RODNEY

Yeah, before the polls close!

LADY

Yeah, and do it before I ask why ya'll
smell like Seattle.

The boys enter the classroom.

LUDWIG

But I can't vote, Rodney. I'm still a
kid.

RODNEY

Not the way you been drinkin'!

They both GUFFAW and try to slap hands but miss.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Seriously, I'll go in and vote.

LUDWIG

Who are you gonna vote for?

RODNEY

You not supposed to ask me that!

LUDWIG

Really?

Rodney shrugs and MAKES the "I don't know" sound.

RODNEY

But that right there sounded responsible, huh?

(pause)

I know! I'll put down Brooke's dog! It'll be dedicated to her!

They LAUGH.

LUDWIG

That'll be great! Do it!

RODNEY

Okay!

LUDWIG

After that, let's get outta here. Darryl gets suspicious. I can hear him now...

(fey voice)

"Where you been, boo-boo? You can't answer your phone?"

RODNEY

I get it, man. You're gay, Darryl's gayer, but me and Brooke will be together soon, all the time.

LUDWIG

"Gayer"?

RODNEY

You know what I mean! Hold on.

Rodney goes in the booth.

INT. JACOBSON HOME - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Rover sits on the couch. A pair of pants are underneath him. Phalon tries to push him aside.

PHALON

Rover, get up! Those are my good pants!

Rover sits still.

PHALON (CONT'D)

Stupid dog. I need to Febreze them and wear them tomorrow.

Mya enters the apartment with bags of groceries. Outside the hallway are various people FLASHING cameras.

MYA

Phalon, there are all kinds of people outside taking my picture! I know I look good, but come on!

Brooke enters from the bathroom.

BROOKE

Same here, at school! I hope they didn't notice the shirt I normally wear on Tuesdays and Thursdays!

(pause)

And some Fridays.

Mya puts the groceries on the kitchen table. Phalon approaches her.

PHALON

Mya, what's all this? I told you to only get the stuff on the grocery list!

MYA

I know, but I lost my pen in the store. I panicked, so I just picked up anything!

Phalon pulls out a can from the bag and reads it.

PHALON

What the heck is "turkey mix"?

MYA

I don't know, but it was on sale! It must be good!

SFX: KNOCK on door.

PHALON

(calls out)

Yeah, yeah, come in!

Cedric and Hugo enter.

CEDRIC

What a welcome.

MYA

Cedric Brinkley? What are you doing here?

CEDRIC

My campaign manager, Hugo, suggested I come here.

HUGO

It's the right thing to do.

PHALON

Look, quit trying to get votes from us! I told you that I don't know nothin' about no politics!

CEDRIC

Funny! I had the same remark reserved for you, right when you move into office!

PHALON

What are you talking about?

CEDRIC

Hugo, show him!

Hugh pulls out his phone and shows it to the Jacobsons.

PHALON

(reads aloud)

"Rover Elected President of the United States"?? Is this a joke?

CEDRIC

I wish!

MYA

There are plenty dogs named Rover! How do we know it's ours?

BROOKE

(reads aloud)

"Rover Jacobson Elected President of the United States."

MYA

Oh.

CEDRIC

You guys happy now?

Everyone looks at Rover, who rolls over and MOANS.

PHALON

Now wait a minute! He didn't run! He can't run!

MYA

He doesn't run.

HUGO

Somebody must've written his name in! And I do mean, "somebody"! It says only one person voted!

MYA

You mean to tell me that nobody else voted?

HUGO

Well, it was the game of the year last night! Even we watched it!

CEDRIC

And this would sting a lot less had we won the game!

PHALON

Ain't no way we're moving into no White House! In fact, let me call, what do you call that place?

BROOKE

Electoral college?

PHALON

Right! Hold on!

BROOKE

I wonder if it's hard to get into the electoral college.

MYA

Brooke, your grades don't even qualify for school.

Phalon pulls out his phone and dials. A ROBOTIC VOICE answers. At the same time, Rover looks at a bird land on the window sill.

ROBOTIC VOICE (O.C.)

(stilted speech)

Welcome to--

SFX: Rover BARKS once at the bird. SILENCE on the phone.

ROBOTIC VOICE (O.C.)

(CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Please...try again.

PHALON
(clicks his teeth)
Rover!

SILENCE on the phone.

ROBOTIC VOICE (O.C.)
Please try--

PHALON
(simultaneously with the
robotic voice)
Representative!

SILENCE.

ROBOTIC VOICE (O.C.)
Sorry you're...having trouble.
Good...bye.

Phalon throws the phone down.

PHALON
Stupid dog.

CEDRIC
Well, we need to go down there and demand
a recount!

HUGO
How do you recount "one"?

CEDRIC
Shut up, Hugo!
(to the Jacobsons)
This isn't over!

He storms out. Hugo follows him.

HUGO
Nice place you got, guys!

Phalon closes the door behind them.

PHALON
(to himself)
My job is all I know. Oak Harbor's all we
know. Naw, man, we're staying right here!

He approaches his family.

PHALON (CONT'D)
(to the family)
And I know my family got my back!

MYA

Hmmph!

Mya, Brooke, and Rover look at him, then turn around and walk away, with their noses up.

PHALON

(sotto voce)

Why start now, huh?

INT. HALL - DAY

Cedric and Hugo cautiously walk down the hallway.

CEDRIC

Okay, Hugo, the guy on the street said the Electoral College is located on this floor.

HUGO

But we can't just walk in there!

They approach a broom closet. They jump in there and close the door. Two JANITORS approach the closet. Cedric and Hugo snatch them both and drag them in the closet.

SECONDS LATER

All four of them exit the closet.

HUGO

So it's around the corner, you said?

JANITOR #1

Yep.

CEDRIC

Thanks.

JANITOR #2

Next time, just ask us nicely!

Cedric and Hugo walk around the corner and to a door.

INSERT - THE DOOR, WHICH SAYS:

"Electoral College"

BACK TO SCENE

HUGO

Wow! This is the Electoral College! I
heard so much about it!

Cedric turns the doorknob and opens the door.

CEDRIC

Not a lot of security around here, huh?

They sneak inside.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

(hushed tone)

Alright, Hugo, let's start looking!

HUGO

(hushed tone)

Sir, what exactly are we looking for?

CEDRIC

Ballots, papers, anything that'll help me
win!

HUGO

We're gonna need a lot of help! I'm still
doing damage control over that tweet you
sent, endorsing that "Murder Murphy" guy!

CEDRIC

(sighs)

I said he was a good rapper! And I know
it has two "P's" in it! Stupid
Autocorrect!

HUGO

But you never tried to clarify it!

CEDRIC

Wrong! I got this guy I found online to
generate a professional response.
Somebody named Al.

Hugo looks confused.

HUGO

You mean, "A.I."?

CEDRIC

Yeah, him!

SFX: FOOTSTEPS getting closer.

HUGO
Somebody's coming!

CEDRIC
Quick! Out the window!

They both climb out of an open window. They stand on a ledge, close to the building. Wind blows. Cars in traffic HONK. The men try to keep their balance.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)
(regular voice)
Easy...we don't wanna fall. Don't look down.

SFX: Hugo's cell phone RINGS.

The men jump up and try to keep balance.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)
Why don't you have your phone on vibrate?

HUGO
(regular voice)
I didn't know we'd be breaking the law, sir!

CEDRIC
You have a lot to learn about politics.

Hugo answers it.

HUGO
For the last time, the election is over!
Stop asking us for votes!

CEDRIC
Again? Man, those calls really are annoying.

PHALON (O.C.)
No, it's me, Phalon. Tell Mr. Brinkley to come back to my place. I think I made my decision. But I guess there's an official way to do it.

HUGO
Will do! Thanks, Mr. Jacobson!

They hang up.

HUGO (CONT'D)
Mr. Jacobson wants you to come over.

CEDRIC

He must be ready to concede!

HUGO

But he won, sir.

CEDRIC

No, his mangly dog won! Jacobson must've come to his senses. Let's go!

They both step off of the ledge and walk on the ground, which is revealed to be very close to the window. They exit.

EXT. JACOBSON HOUSE - BALCONY - LATER

Phalon enters the house from the balcony with a tray of food. Mya and Brooke sit at the table. Rover follows Phalon around and SNIFFS in the air.

PHALON

Time for Phalon's patented ribs! Burnt and charred just the way ya'll like them!

He PLOPS the plate down. The ladies look depressed.

PHALON (CONT'D)

Hey, what's wrong? You guys usually like these!

MYA

Nothing. Just that this is all that we got to look forward to.

PHALON

We got extra-crispy hot dogs on the grill, too.

MYA

Phalon, you don't wanna take that next step and make something out of yourself?

PHALON

Is this about that president thing again? I thought we agreed that I wouldn't take it!

MYA

No, you agreed! You always do what you want, no matter how we feel! Frankly, I'd like living in a bigger house!

BROOKE

Or any house! I'm tired of sleeping in my
bedroom-slash-living room!

MYA

And do you really wanna deal with these
fools around here?

Phalon looks out the patio door.

PHALON

Hey!

Rodney stands in front of the grill.

RODNEY

You don't want your charcoal to go to
waste!

PHALON

It's an electric grill!

RODNEY

Too late! Already started burnin' the
burgers!

PHALON

How'd you even get up here? We're on the
third floor!

RODNEY

Well, I didn't spend the night in your
daughter's room, I'll tell you that!

Phalon turns to Brooke, who turns away.

MYA

That's another thing, Phalon. We can
barbecue on level ground! We could have
it all!

PHALON

But I didn't get elected! Our dog did!

RODNEY (O.C.)

(gasps)

That worked??

PHALON

What was that, Rodney?

RODNEY

I'm surprised the grill works! It cooks
so fast, ya'll! Propane all the way!

Phalon cuts his eyes at him, then turns to Mya.

PHALON

I don't know anything about running a country!

BROOKE

Insert political jab there.

MYA

We can help you. Just think: this is your chance to stick it to all the people that did you wrong.

PHALON

Even you?

MYA

No. I don't do anything wrong.

PHALON

But what about my job? And yours?

MYA

Not to worry. I got fired weeks ago.

PHALON

What??

SFX: Doorbell RINGS! Rover BARKS REPEATEDLY.

MYA

I'll get it!

She dashes to the door.

PHALON

Knock it off, Rover. You've done enough.

Mya opens the door. Cedric and Hugo enter.

CEDRIC

Hello, Mrs. Jacobson. Your husband has some news for me.

PHALON

Yeah, I wanna talk to you privately.

REPORTERS barge in with flashing cameras, phones, and notepads.

MALE REPORTER

Hello!

PHALON
(sighs)
Okay, it's about my decision.

CEDRIC
(smiles)
I'm waiting!

Phalon walks up to a podium with a microphone.

PHALON
(in the mic)
Ladies and gentlemen...

He looks at the podium.

PHALON (CONT'D)
Where did this podium come from?
(clears his throat)
I, rather, our dog, Rover...Jacobson...
(pause)
...accepts his nomination!

Reporters CHATTER. Cameras FLASH. Brooke and Mya CLAMOR
EXCITEDLY.

CEDRIC
What?? This isn't fair!

MYA
(in the mic)
I believe the people have spoken!

PHALON
Oh, speaking of that, Rodney, get in
here!

Rodney enters.

PHALON (CONT'D)
(in the mic)
Since Rodney is so interested in
democracy, he will be coming with us to
be Rover's assistant! Ain't that right?

He pulls Rodney close to him and holds him tightly.

RODNEY
(giggles nervously)
That's right! Anything for the new
"Prez"! And I already live down the
street from the White House!

PHALON

What? No you don't!

BROOKE

Rodney, we're going to Washington, D.C.

RODNEY

I know. Isn't that here?

MYA

(to Rodney)

You graduated from school, right?

CEDRIC

This is ridiculous! Herman, you ran, too!
Aren't you gonna say anything?

Cedric's opponent, HERMAN, white, replies.

HERMAN

I already moved on. Now if you'll excuse
me, I have an Instacart order to fill.

He exits.

CEDRIC

Fine, then I should be president by
default!

MYA

Please! It ain't like your campaign was
goin' all that well! What about when you
tried to take my church to that Christian
rock concert?

CEDRIC

It was an honest mistake! Besides, I'm
sure some of those people saw Chris Rock
before! Right, Hugo?

Hugo looks away from Cedric.

PHALON

Brooke, I know this is gonna be tough for
you.

BROOKE

No, I'll be fine.

She and Rodney look at each other and smirk.

PHALON

Yeah, maybe we can fly Ludwig in
sometimes.

BROOKE
Oh yeah, Ludwig. Right.

PHALON
(in the mic)
My fellow Americans, you're gonna see a lot of changes being made! Me and my family will make sure of it! And to my fellow Oak Harbor residents, you won't have me to kick around anymore! None of you smarmy, backstabbing crabs will get to me! We're going to Washington, the better Washington, and you all can kiss my butt!

Cameras FLASH.

CEDRIC
(sighs)
"Rover" doesn't start his term until January, you fool!

Phalon looks stunned. Mya moves him away from the podium.

MYA
(in the mic)
So, uh, where the victory party gonna be at, ya'll?

She CHUCKLES nervously. Rover GROANS and puts his paws over his eyes.

THE END