

POLITICAL OPERATOR

by Japheth Gordon

INT. BAND REHEARSAL SPACE - AFTERNOON

The empty room where REBECCA (15) reads through her sheet music. VIVIAN (15) enters, surprised to see her.

VIVIAN

Oh. I didn't realize you were going to be here. I'll go.

REBECCA

Wait. You can stay.

VIVIAN

Look, I know there's like this weird thing between us, or whatever. I don't want you to think I hate you or anything.

REBECCA

That's nice of you to say. I think that was all just a misunderstanding. Totally in the past.

VIVIAN

Great.

BEAT. They sit in silence.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Well I'm going back to class.

As Vivian stands to exit:

REBECCA

Did you call me a "chubby freak" in a group text?

VIVIAN

What are you taking about?

REBECCA

Are you denying it?

VIVIAN

Yes. I didn't write -- Whoever told you that is lying. People spread this kind of gossip all the time because they want to see the drama when --

Rebecca pulls out her phone and displays the screen to Vivian.

REBECCA
Kelsey sent me a screenshot.

BEAT.

VIVIAN
That was a private conversation.

REBECCA
So it's better to talk shit behind my back?

VIVIAN
I'm sorry, okay? I didn't think you were gonna read that.

REBECCA
Well I did. So here's what's going to happen - Kelsey is no longer your friend.

VIVIAN
Yeah right. She's practically my best fr--

REBECCA
-- Kelsey has no loyalty. She took your secrets and gave them to me; your enemy. She betrayed you... and she will again.

VIVIAN
And what, I just stop hanging out with a girl I've known since elementary school?

REBECCA
You replace her.

VIVIAN
'Replace her'? With who?

Rebecca smiles - mischievous.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
You?!

REBECCA
Then I get access to your dad.

VIVIAN

This is about my dad?

REBECCA

You think I care about hanging out with you? You barely break the top fifteen in popularity. But the Vice Principal controls Homecoming and I'm his daughter's new best friend.

VIVIAN

You think I'm gonna do that? Let you get close to my family?

Rebecca shows the phone again.

REBECCA

Unless you want me to post this hideous language for everyone to see? Or I can put on a few extra pounds and make a couple sad videos about how your bullying makes me feel like hurting myself.

VIVIAN

You're messed up. Like, seriously, you need help. Suicide is not a topic to joke about.

REBECCA

Who's joking?

Rebecca reveals scratch marks from where she has been cutting the insides of her arms.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

These are from all the stress you've caused me.

Vivian is mortified by the extremes Rebecca is willing to go to.

Rebecca smiles and starts to leave.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

The big Labor Day BBQ at your dad's beach house? I expect an invite... bestie.

Rebecca is gone. Vivian is alone, confused and angry.