



**THE CASE OF THE  
ROCK 'N'  
ROLL  
DOG**



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daughters of the first female president—and owners of a very  
rambunctious dog—play detective when a baton belonging to the director  
of the Marine Band goes missing at the White House.

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*For my own first kids,  
Sylvie, Rosa and  
Ethan*





## CHAPTER ONE



SOMETIMES I wish Mom had lost the election and I had never been forced to leave my real life.

Monday was like that.

At school, my friend Kyle said Mom's hair looked frizzy when he saw her on CNN. And Andrea said since my mom's the president, can't she make a law so dogs don't chase cats? Then it was my teacher Ms. Nicols' turn. She said teachers should make more money, and she was looking at me when she said it.

So far so bad . . . and then we got our spelling tests back.

Spelling is not my best subject.

I mean, isn't it weird the way you spell *w-e-i-r-d*?

And who put that extra *a* in *b-r-e-a-k-f-a-s-t*?

After school, the van picked us up to take us home to the White House. As usual, there was Nate, me and Tessa. That day Courtney came along, too.

Nate is my cousin who lives with us. Tessa is my little sister. And Courtney is my friend. She and I

and Nate are all in fifth grade. We were going home together to work on reports.

When your mom's the president, you can't ride the school bus or walk or drive with a relative the way other kids do. You have to go in a special Secret Service van. Usually, either my aunt or my grandmother comes along. Today it was Aunt Jen's turn. Aunt Jen is my mom's sister and also Nate's mom.

"I have some news I think you're going to like," Aunt Jen said when our seat belts were buckled. "The Song Boys are coming to the White House."

Tessa, Courtney and I squealed.

Nate snorted. "The Song Boys are total bubblegum."

Tessa crossed her arms over her chest. "Like there's something bad about bubblegum?"

I laughed. Nate always acts *so superior*; but for once it wasn't worth it to be annoyed. I was too happy.

The Song Boys, in case you don't know, are the best boy band in America. They used to be three ordinary brothers—Jacob, Paul, and Matthew Song—who sang in the kids' choir at their church. Then a few years ago, their pastor put up on the Web a video of them singing "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore," and it got like a billion hits because at the end Matthew sticks his pinky finger up his nose.

That video still cracks me up.

Anyway, after that The Song Boys took music lessons and got the right clothes and their own TV

show. I have every one of their songs and so do all my friends. At lunch we argue about which Song Boy is best.

In my opinion, Jacob and Matthew are fine, but Paul is better. He's the serious one. I have never met him, but if he called and asked me to marry him, I would say yes—as long as he waits for me to finish law school.

Since January when my mom became president, I have met a prince, the prime minister of England, two movie stars, and an opera singer. But if I get to meet Paul Song, I will probably faint.

“When are The Song Boys coming?” Tessa wanted to know. “Do I get to get dressed up?”

Aunt Jen said, “Saturday. And yes, you do, Tessa. It was all arranged in a hurry. The Song Boys had a concert date cancel.”

“Uh . . . could I maybe be invited?” Courtney asked.

“We'll see,” Aunt Jen said. “It's in the East Room so space will be limited. And the purpose is to promote literacy, so a lot of the guests will be librarians and teachers.”

Courtney frowned, and I knew why. She thinks that Aunt Jen doesn't like her on account of her father, Alan Lozana. He used to be a TV reporter. Now he has this blog about politics. Usually what he writes about Mom isn't nice.

Both Aunt Jen and my dad get annoyed with Alan Lozana.

But Mom says: “If you can’t stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen.”

That means you better not be president if you mind what people say.

“What’s ‘promote literacy’?” Tessa asked.

“Getting people to read more,” Aunt Jen explained.

My little sister can be a drama queen. Now she waved both hands the way she does. “*So why not just say that?!*”

The van always enters the White House grounds at the West Gate, and the driver stops to let the officer take a look inside and say hello. Then we pull up to the South Portico, get out, and go in through the Diplomatic Reception Room, called the Dip Room, which is on the ground floor. From there, we cross the hallway and either go up a spiral staircase or take the presidential elevator to the second floor.

That day Granny met us in the Dip Room, Aunt Jen went back to her office, and we took the elevator.

“Hi, Mr. Bryant,” Nate said when the doors opened. The presidential elevator isn’t automatic like other ones. It needs somebody inside to work it. That’s Mr. Bryant. He is bald with a fringe of white hair. He says he has worked in the same elevator since Washington was president.

I know that’s only a joke, though.

George Washington never even lived in the White House.

Mr. Bryant counted his passengers, “One, two,



three, four . . . five?” He squinted at Courtney through his glasses. “I don’t believe I’ve had the pleasure.”

Courtney held out her hand. “I’ve been here before, sir,” she said.

Mr. Bryant shook his head. “My apologies, dear. The old peepers aren’t what they used to be.”

“What’s a peeper?” Tessa asked.

“Eyes, *duh!*” Nate said.

“Duh yourself,” Tessa said, and she probably would have said more, but Granny was right there.

“Going up,” Mr. Bryant said, and the doors closed.

“Do you have new pictures?” Tessa asked.

Mr. Bryant pulled out his wallet. Inside were photos of two fluffy puppies. Mr. Bryant loves dogs.

Tessa said, “They’re growing!”

Mr. Bryant said, “They should be. They eat like nobody’s business.”

“Did you know The Song Boys are coming?” Tessa asked him.

“I had heard something about that, yes,” Mr. Bryant said. “Will the music be awfully loud, do you think?”

“I hope so!” Tessa said.

Mr. Bryant cringed, then said, “Second floor.” He opened the doors for us. Hooligan must have heard the elevator coming because he was right there waiting.

“*Puppy!*” Tessa fell all over him with hugs.

“Not exactly a puppy, Tessa,” Granny said. “More of a teenager—which explains a lot.”

Hooligan is big and skinny with too-long legs and a too-long tail. He also has too much energy, which is why—even though he really tries to be good—he gets into so much trouble. In fact, he’s a lot like the dog in “Rock’n’Roll Dog,” which just happens to be his very favorite Song Boys song.

Now he trotted along with us to the family kitchen for our after-school snack: cookies, milk and something healthy. The cookies come from a special small kitchen between the first and second floors of the White House. When we moved here in the winter, we ate cookies all the time. Then Mom decided so many aren’t good for us. And now we’re only allowed one each after school.

Sometimes I dream of cookies.

Today’s were snickerdoodles, which are sugar with cinnamon. I took a bite. *Yummy*. My bad day had gotten a whole lot better. But then Nate pulled his spelling test out of his backpack to show Granny. He had a perfect score. And Granny turned to me. “Didn’t you get yours back, too, Cameron?”

## CHAPTER TWO



WHEN Granny saw all the marks on my spelling test, she said we could practice on the way to school.

Then, when she wasn't looking, Nate stuck out his tongue at me.

Sometimes I hate my cousin.

If you're wondering why he lives with us, it's because when my mom was elected there was no one to be First Lady. I mean, no offense to my dad, but he would never make it as First Lady. Besides, during the week he has a job in California building airplanes. Most of the time, we only see him on weekends.

Anyway, just like my mom asked her own mom to take care of me and Tessa, she asked her little sister, Jen, to move from San Diego and be "White House Hostess."

The news guys call her "First Auntie."

I like Aunt Jen so that part was okay. Unfortunately, Nate came along in the deal.

Besides being good at spelling, Nate is some kind

of piano genius, and he is tall and gets good grades. Some people (like my mother!!!) say he's handsome, too.

I don't think he likes me and Tessa very much.

Granny says Tessa and I are too hard on Nate. She says it's tough to be the new kid and besides Nate is shy. I say the real problem is how Nate acts so superior all the time.



The something healthy part of our snack that day was apples, carrots and celery. When we were done eating, Courtney, Nate and I went up to the solarium. It's at the top of the White House, and it's like our family room—with the TV and the Ping-Pong table and a view of the Washington Monument.

Tessa and Hooligan came, too. Tessa's in second grade. She didn't have homework. But we were taking all the markers, and she wanted to draw pictures of outfits.

Upstairs, we kids settled in on the floor to work, and Hooligan settled in on the floor to nap.

Our assignment was to write and illustrate a report about a famous American. My famous American was Sandra Day O'Connor—the first woman justice on the Supreme Court.

Courtney's was Nellie Bly, a reporter from more than a hundred years ago.

Nate's was John Philip Sousa, a musician and

composer who wrote marches like “Stars and Stripes Forever.”

You might not think you know that song, but I bet you do. Somebody wrote silly words for it: “Be kind to your web-footed friends, for that duck may be somebody’s mo-o-other. . . .”

See, you do know it, right?

We had done most of the writing part of our reports in class, so now we were illustrating. My picture was Sandra Day O’Connor’s ranch in Arizona. I started to draw a cactus.

Courtney was drawing something called a typewriter that looks like a computer keyboard.

Nate was drawing a fat brown line.

Nate is not a very good artist, but still. A fat brown line?

He saw me looking.

“I’m drawing John Philip Sousa’s baton,” he explained.

Tessa looked over. “Was John Philip Who-za a baton twirler, too?”

It wasn’t that funny. But Nate laughed like he would bust a gut. When he finally stopped, I said, “Not that kind of baton, Tessa. The same word means the stick a band director uses.”

“And it’s Sousa, not Who-za!” Nate started laughing all over again.

Tessa narrowed her eyes at him. “Whatever,” she said.

Nate can never resist telling everything he knows.

“The Sousa baton is special,” he said. “John Philip Sousa used to be the director of the Marine Band. In 1892, when he retired, they gave him this baton. After he died, the baton was donated back to the band by his family. The book I read says the Marine Band director still uses it today. In fact, there’s a tradition that the band can’t play without it!”

All this time, Hooligan had been napping on the floor next to us. Now, for mysterious doggie reasons, his eyes blinked open.

Hooligan doesn’t wake up slow and groggy like me. He wakes up ready to rock’n’roll!

“Watch your markers,” I said. “Hooligan thinks they’re chew toys.”

Courtney said, “He can’t have mine!” and made a sudden move to corral them.

This was a mistake.

Sudden moves are specialties of squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. Hooligan loves squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. He thinks they’re chew toys, too.

Now our dog was not only wide awake, he was excited. And sometimes when he’s excited, he does this thing we call the *frenzy*: He lunges forward, thumps his paws, springs high in the air, then spins so fast he turns blurry.

You can never tell for sure when he’s going to do it, but if he does—*blam-o!*

Tessa knew the signs. “Uh-oh.” She grabbed for his collar . . . but it was too late!

Hooligan lunged, thumped, sprang and spun—this time with an extra added marker grab in the middle.

I thought the grab was a nice touch; Courtney was not a fan. “No!” she squealed, which Hooligan heard as: “Let’s play!” There was a fast tug of war. Courtney lost. Then Hooligan sprinted off with three markers in his fearsome jaws.

Nate stayed put, but Courtney, Tessa and I chased Hooligan once around the solarium then down the ramp that leads to the floor below. Two markers fell, but he kept the pink one. We know it was pink because every once in a while he bumped the wall and it left a stripe. Finally, we rounded a corner, and he was gone.

“What happened to him?” Courtney was breathing hard.

I shook my head. “He’s been disappearing a lot lately—going AWOL my dad calls it.”

There are six floors in the White House, and 132 rooms not counting all the offices, storage rooms and workspaces. It’s not that hard to hide, even for a too-big dog.

“Hoo-hoo-hooligan!” Tessa’s holler was a yodel. “Hoo-hoo-hooligan—*fetch!*”

Hooligan is not exactly well trained. Tell him to sit, stay or heel, and you might as well be speaking Cat. But *fetch* he understands. You never know what he’ll fetch or where—but some kind of fetch will happen.

Courtney shook her head, disgusted. “My dog Rex *never* behaves this way.”

Tessa said Courtney’s dog Rex was about as fun as a sofa cushion.

Courtney told her to take it back.

Tessa said she wouldn't—and this could have gone on a while except here came the sound of galloping doggie toenails, and a second later Hooligan appeared at the end of the hallway, bounding toward us at top speed.

There was something in his mouth—something bigger than a marker.

I sidestepped the same way I'd sidestep a soccer defender.

But Courtney takes tap not soccer, and—*blam!* Hooligan caught her in the knees. Then—*ooof!* Down she went.

At least the rug was soft.

Courtney lay on the floor as if she were dead. "Are you okay?" I asked.

"I hate your dog," she said.

"What hurts? Do you need a Band-Aid?" Tessa asked.

Courtney opened her eyes. "Everything hurts! Do you have a whole-body Band-Aid?"

I reached down and helped Courtney up. She didn't look that bad—except for the big, fat frown on her face.

Back in the solarium, Hooligan was sitting on his haunches, thumping his tail and smiling a big doggie smile at Nate. He was hoping for a dog yummy—since he'd done such a great job at fetch. But he hadn't brought back the pink marker. He'd brought Skateboard Barbie.



No way would Nate touch a Barbie, so it was Tessa who rescued her. When Hooligan didn't go crazy or fight her for it, I knew he was tired out, too.

Tessa did a quick inspection. "No teeth marks on her face at least."

"You *told* him to fetch," I reminded her.

"I want my marker back," Courtney said.

"At least he didn't eat our homework," I said.