

NIXON

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY

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and

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NINTH DRAFT (Shooting Script)

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ILLUSION ENTERTAINMENT
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Consultancy by Robert Scheer,
Christopher Scheer, and John Newman

A PROLOGUE APPEARS on black screen:

This film is an attempt to understand the truth of Richard Nixon, 37th President of the United States. It is based on numerous public sources and on an incomplete historical record.

In consideration of length, events and characters have been condensed, and some scenes between protagonists have been conjectured.

On a portable screen, we read the famous words from Matthew: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" This FADES into:

A BLACK AND WHITE 16mm sales training FILM. At the moment, the sales manager, BOB, is chatting with EARL, a rookie salesman.

BOB

Sure you've got a great product Earl. But you have to remember what you're really selling. (then) *Yourself.*

1 INT. WATERGATE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

1

Seven men in shirts and ties are seated around a table in the darkened room. They are smoking Cuban cigars, idly watching the film.

TITLE: "JUNE 17, 1972". Then: "THE WATERGATE HOTEL"

A BUSBOY yawns as he clears away the remains of dinner. A WAITER starts pouring Margaritas from a pitcher.

A balding man in his early fifties tosses a five onto the table. He is HOWARD HUNT.

HUNT

Just leave it.

The waiter puts down the pitcher, picks up the five and follows the busboy out of the room.

The moment the door closes behind them, GORDON LIDDY is on his feet, locking the door. OTHER MEN are visible, putting on jackets, securing technical equipment from briefcases and bags. They are: FRANK STURGIS, BERNARD BARKER, EUGENIO MARTINEZ, VIRGILIO GONZALES and JAMES MCCORD.

LIDDY (checks his watch)
Zero one twenty-one. Mark.

Sturgis rolls his eyes, drains his Margarita. Liddy pulls out a wad of cash from his pocket, starts passing out hundred dollar bills to his men.

LIDDY
Just in case you need to buy a cop. But don't spend it all in one place. We're going to do McGovern's office later tonight.

McCord shakes his head.

LIDDY
Orders from the White House, partner.

Liddy bypasses Hunt, browsing a folded Spanish language paper.

LIDDY
Howard... What the hell? What're you doing?

HUNT
Dogs... season starts tomorrow. (off Liddy's look)
It keeps me calm. I don't like going back into the same building four times.

Liddy mutters something didactic in German.

HUNT
Mein Kampf?

LIDDY (translates into English)
"A warrior with nerves of steel is yet broken by a thread of silk." Nietzsche.

HUNT
Personally I'd prefer a greyhound with a shot of speed.

LIDDY (to all)
Remember--listen up! Fire team discipline in there at all times. Keep your radios on at all times during the entire penetration. Check yourselves. Phony ID's, no wallets, no keys. We rendezvous where? The Watergate, Room 214. When? At zero three hundred.

STURGIS
Yawohl, mein fartenfuhrer.

LIDDY

Anything goes wrong, head for your homes, just sit tight -- you'll hear from me or Howard.

HUNT (aside)

Personally I'll be calling the President of the United States.

A nervous chuckle as Hunt follows Liddy out the main door. The rest exit the door behind the screen.

The FILM is ending. Bob puts a hand on Earl's shoulder.

BOB

And remember, Earl: always look 'em in the eye. (to the camera) Nothing sells like sincerity.

A BLACK SCREEN as the film rattles out, followed by a RADIO REPORT over the blackened room, the sounds of doors closing.

RADIO REPORT (V.O.)

Five men wearing white surgical gloves, business suits and carrying camera and electronic surveillance equipment, were arrested early today in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in Washington. They were unarmed. Nobody knows yet why they were there or what they were looking for...

FADE IN TO:

2 EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT - 1973

2 *

TITLES RUN -- A raw November night. We are looking through the black iron bars of the fence towards the facade of the Executive Mansion. A LIGHT is on in a second floor room.

We move towards it through the bars, across the lawn. Dead leaves blow past. A SUBTITLE READS: "NOVEMBER, 1973"

A black LIMOUSINE slides up to the White House West Wing. An armed GUARD with a black DOBERMAN approaches.

The window opens slightly. The Guard peers in. Then, he opens the door.

GUARD

Good evening, General Haig.

GENERAL ALEXANDER HAIG gets out, walks up the steps. He carries a manila envelope. As he enters the White House, we

hear an AUDIO MONTAGE of NEWS REPORTERS from the last year.
The VOICES fade in and out, overlap:

REPORTERS (V.O.)

Judge John Sirica today sentenced the Watergate burglars to terms ranging up to forty years... The White House continues to deny any involvement...

3 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

3 *

HAIG enters, starts up the stairs. The mansion is dark, silent. Like a tomb.

REPORTERS (V.O.: continues)

Presidential counsel John Dean testified before the Senate Watergate Committee that the scandal reaches to the highest levels...

MOVING: A low-angle shot of HAIG's spit-shined shoes moving down the long corridor of the second floor of the Residence.

REPORTERS (V.O.: continues)

Presidential aides Haldeman and Ehrlichman were ordered to resign today... In a stunning announcement White House aide Alexander Butterfield revealed the existence of a secret taping system...

CLOSE: on the manila envelope in Haig's hand.

REPORTERS (V.O.: continues)

The President has fired the Watergate Special Prosecutor, Archibald Cox, provoking the gravest Constitutional crisis in American history...

Haig stops at a door, quietly knocks. No answer.

REPORTERS (V.O.: continues)

Judge Sirica has ordered the President to turn over his tapes...

Haig opens the door.

4 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

4 *

The room is small, austere, dominated by a portrait of LINCOLN over the fireplace. HAIG stands in the doorway, holding the envelope.

HAIG

These are the tapes you requested, Mister President.

RICHARD NIXON is in shadow, silhouetted by the fire in the hearth. The air-conditioning is going full blast. Haig

crosses the room, opens the envelope, takes out a reel of tape.

Nixon sits in the small armchair in a corner. A Uher tape recorder is on an end table at his elbow, with a headset. Next to it is a large tumbler of Scotch.

Haig hands the envelope containing the tapes to Nixon.

NIXON

This is June twentieth?

HAIG

It's marked. Also there's June 23rd. And this year -- March 21. Those are the ones...

Nixon squints at the label in the firelight.

HAIG

...The lawyers feel...will be the basis of the...proceedings.

Nixon tries to thread the tape.

NIXON

Nixon's never been good with these things.

He drops the tape on the floor.

NIXON

Cocksucker!

Haig picks up the tape. Then steps to the table, reaches for the lamp.

HAIG

Do you mind?

Nixon gestures awkwardly. Haig turns on the lamp. For the first time we can see Nixon's face: he hasn't slept in days, dark circles, sagging jowls, five-o'clock shadow. He hates the light, slurs a strange growl -- the effect of sleeping pills.

HAIG

Sorry...

NIXON (gestures)

...go on.

Haig threads the tape. Nixon, looking at it, remembers.

NIXON

...Y'know Al, if Hoover was alive none of this would've happened. He would've protected the President.

HAIG

Mister Hoover was a realist.

NIXON

I trusted Mitchell. It was that damn bigmouth wife of his.

HAIG

At least Mitchell stood up to it.

NIXON

Not like the others -- Dean, McCord, the rest... We never got our side of the story out, Al. People've forgotten. I mean "fuck you, Mr. President, fuck you Tricia, fuck you Julie!" and all that shit, just words, but what violence! The teargassing, the riots, burning the draft cards, Black Panthers--we fixed it, Al, and they hate me for it--the double-dealing bastards, they lionize that traitor Ellsberg for stealing secrets but they jump all over me cause it's Nixon (repeats)...they've always hated Nixon.

Haig finishes threading.

HAIG

May I say something Mr. President?

NIXON

There's no secrets here, Al.

HAIG

You've never been a greater example to the country than you are now sir but... but you need to get out more sir, and talk to people. No one I know feels... close to you.

Nixon looks at him, moved by his concern.

NIXON

I was never the buddy-buddy type, Al. You know, "Oh I couldn't sleep last night, I was thinking of my mother who beat me" -- all that kinda crap, you know the psychoanalysis bag... My mother... (then) The more I'd spill my guts, the more they'd hate me. I'd be what... pathetic! If I'd bugged out of Vietnam when they wanted, do you think Watergate would've ever happened? You think the establishment would've given a shit about a third rate burglary? But did I? Quit? Did I pull out? (he stares, waits)

HAIG

No sir, you did not.

NIXON

Damn right. An' there's still a helluva lotta people out there who wanna believe... that's the point isn't it? They wanna believe in the President.

He suddenly tires of talking, rubs his hands over his face.

HAIG

You're all set sir. Just push this button. Good night, Mr. President.

NIXON

You know Al, men in your profession you give 'em a pistol and you leave the room. (then) I don't have a pistol. Night, Al...

*

Haig quietly closes the door. Nixon takes a generous slug of Scotch. Then he looks down at the tape recorder. He puts a pair of eyeglasses and the UHER headset on, and hits the fast forward button: high speed VOICES.

NIXON

Goddamn!

He hits "stop", studies the recorder a moment. Pushes the "play" button. He puts his eyeglasses on to see better. VOICES. Barely audible at first. Nixon leans closer, listening.

NIXON (on tape)

They did what! I don't understand. Why'd they go into O'Brien's office *in the first place?*

HALDEMAN (on tape)

Evidently to install bugs and photograph documents.

FLASHBACK TO:

5 INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BLDG-PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY (1972) 5

SUBTITLE READS: "JUNE 1972".

NIXON'S hideaway office. BOB HALDEMAN, his crewcut, hard-edged Chief Of Staff, sits across the desk, a folder open on his lap. Nixon, at his desk, seems a healthier man than in the previous scene. Also there are JOHN EHRLICHMAN, portly domestic advisor, and JOHN DEAN, blond, gentrified legal counsel.

NIXON (cont.)

But O'Brien doesn't even use that office! The Democrats've moved to Miami. There's nothing there!

HALDEMAN

It was just a fishing expedition. Apparently it was their fourth attempt at the DNC. (Nixon: "Their fourth!") It's possible they were looking for evidence of an illegal Howard Hughes donation to the Democrats, so the Democrats couldn't make an issue of your Hughes money.

NIXON

Contribution! It was a legal contribution. Who the hell authorized this? Colson?

EHRlichman (shakes his head)

Colson doesn't know a thing about it. He's pure as a virgin on this one. It's just not clear the burglars knew what they were looking for. They were heading for McGovern's office later that night.

NIXON

Jesus! Did Mitchell know?

EHRlichman

Mitchell's out of his mind right now. Martha just put her head through a plate-glass window.

NIXON

Jesus! Through a window?

HALDEMAN

It was her wrist. And it was through a plate glass door.

EHRlichman

Anyway, they had to take her to Bellevue. Maybe she'll stay this time.

A beat.

NIXON

Martha's an idiot, she'll do anything to get John's attention. If Mitchell'd been minding the store instead of that nut Martha, we wouldn't have that kid Magruder runnin' some third rate burglary! Was he smoking pot?

EHRlichman

Mitchell?

*
*
*
*
*

NIXON

No! Magruder! That sonufabitch tests my Quaker
patience to the breaking point.

DEAN

The bigger problem I see is this guy who was arrested, McCord -- James McCord -- he headed up security for the Committee to Re-Elect. He turns out to be ex-CIA.

NIXON

"Ex-CIA"? There's no such thing as "ex-CIA", John --they're all Ivy League Establishment. Is he one of these guys with a beef against us?

EHRlichMAN

McCord?...

NIXON

Find out what the hell he was doing at "Creep". This could be trouble. These CIA guys don't miss a trick. This could be a set up.

A5 Intercuts of all these people arise as the scene runs -- A5
McCord, Liddy, Magruder, Mitchell, Martha, Hunt, etc.

HALDEMAN (with a look to Ehrlichman)

We feel the bigger concern is Gordon Liddy...

NIXON

That fruitcake! What about him?

HALDEMAN

Well, you know sir, he's a nut. He used to work here with the "Plumbers" and now he's running this Watergate caper. You remember his plan to firebomb the Brookings, using Cubans as fireman? He wanted to buy a damned fire truck! Magruder thinks he's just nutty enough to go off the reservation.

NIXON

What's Liddy got?

HALDEMAN

Apparently he was using some campaign cash that was laundered for us through Mexico. The FBI's onto it. We could have a problem with that.

DEAN

...But it'll just be a campaign finance violation...

HALDEMAN

...And if Liddy takes the rap for Watergate, we can take care of him...

NIXON (looking at his watch)
I don't have time for all this shit! (to
Haldeman) Just handle it Bob! Keep it out of the
White House. What else? Kissinger's waiting --
he's throwing a tantrum, threatening to quit again
if I don't see him. (sighs)

EHRlichMAN (reluctant)
Well, sir... it turns out -- one of the people
implicated is *still*, you see, on our White House
payroll.

NIXON
Who? Not another goddamn Cuban?

HALDEMAN
No sir. A guy named Hunt.

Nixon stops, stunned.

NIXON

Hunt? Howard Hunt?

EHRlichman

He left his White House phone number in his hotel room.

*
*
*

HALDEMAN

He works for Colson. He used him on the Pentagon Papers. After the arrest he dumped his wiretapping stuff into his White House safe. We're trying to figure out when he officially stopped being a White House consultant.

NIXON (incredulous)

Howard Hunt is working for the White House? No shit! This is goddamn Disneyland! Since when?

EHRlichman

Chappaquiddick. You wanted some dirt on Kennedy. Colson brought him in.

DEAN

You know Hunt, sir?

NIXON (perturbed)

On the list of horribles, I know what he is. And I know what he tracks back to. (then) You say he was involved in the Plumbers?

HALDEMAN

Definitely. Colson had him trying to break in Bremer's apartment after Bremer shot Wallace, to plant McGovern's campaign literature.

NIXON

I had nothing to do with that. Was he... in the Ellsberg thing?

HALDEMAN

Yes, you approved it, sir.

NIXON

I did?

HALDEMAN

It was right after the Pentagon Papers broke. They went in to get his psychiatric records.

NIXON

Fucking hell.

HALDEMAN

We were working on China...

Nixon has taken a seat, shaken. He stares right at us as we:

SHARP CUT BACK TO:

6 INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY - (1971)

6

The PRESIDENT'S MEN are gathered in somber silence, sharing front page copies of the "New York Times". SUBTITLE READS: "JUNE, 1971 -- A YEAR EARLIER"

INSERT HEADLINE: "Secret Pentagon Study Details Descent Into Vietnam"; "Pentagon Papers Expose Government Lies".

The technique we've established of an AUDIO MONTAGE of REPORTERS' VOICES continues over the scene.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

The New York Times began publishing today the first in a series of forty seven volumes of top secret Pentagon Papers relating to the war in Vietnam. The papers reveal a systematic pattern of

REPORTERS (cont'd)
 Government lies about American involvement in the war...

NIXON throws down the paper in disgust and attempts to feed his Irish Setter, KING TIMAHOE, a biscuit, as HENRY KISSINGER paces the room, the most upset of all.

KISSINGER
 Mr. President we are in a revolutionary situation. We are under siege -- Black Panthers, Weathermen, the State Department under Rogers is leaking like a sieve. And now this insignificant little shit Ellsberg publishing all the diplomatic secrets of this country will destroy our ability to conduct foreign policy!

NIXON (feeding the dog)
 Here Tim... Tim. I'm as frustrated as you Henry, but don't you think this one's a Democrat problem. They started the war. It makes them look bad.

Kissinger lowers his voice for effect, pounds the desk.

KISSINGER
 Mr. President how can we look the Soviets or the Chinese in the eye now and have any credibility when any traitor can leak! Even the Vietnamese -- tawdry little shits that they are -- will never -- never -- agree to secret negotiations with us. This makes you look like a weakling, Mister President.

HALDEMAN
 He's right about one thing, sir. I spoke with Lyndon. This Pentagon Papers thing has knocked the shit out of him. Complete collapse, massive depression. He feels the country is lost, that you as President can't govern anymore.

Nixon is bent from the waist, stiffly extending the biscuit, but the dog still won't come.

NIXON (irritated)
 Goddamn! How long have we had this fucking dog! Two years he still doesn't come! We need a dog that looks happy when the press is around.

EHRlichMAN
 Well, he's photogenic. Let's try dog bones?

KISSINGER (end of his patience)
Mr. President, the Vietnamese, the Russians...

Nixon finally throws the biscuit at the dog, glares at Kissinger.

NIXON (to Ehrlichman)
Fuck it! He doesn't like me, *John!* (to Kissinger) It's your fault Henry.

KISSINGER
I beg your pardon --

NIXON
It's your people who are leaking to the Times. Wasn't this Ellsberg a student of yours at Harvard? He was your idea, why are you suddenly running for cover?

KISSINGER
He was. He was. We taught a class together at Harvard but you know these back-stabbing Ivy League intellectuals, they can't...

NIXON (cold)
No, Henry, I don't.

KISSINGER
He's turned into a drug fiend, he shot people from helicopters in Vietnam, he has sexual relations with his wife in front of their children. He sees a shrink in L.A. He's all fucked up. Now he's trying to be a hero to the liberals... If he gets away with it, everybody'll follow his lead. He must be stopped at all costs.

COLSON
Sir, if might?

NIXON
Go, Chuck.

COLSON
...for three years now I've watched people in this government promote themselves, ignoring your orders, embarrassing your Administration. It makes me sick! We've played by the rules and it doesn't work!

MITCHELL (to Nixon)
We can prosecute The New York Times, go for an injunction..

NIXON

...but it's not, bottomline, gonna change a goddamn thing, John. The question is how do we screw Ellsberg so bad, it puts the fear of God into all leakers?

COLSON

Can we link Ellsberg to the Russians?

NIXON

Good, I like that. The other issue is how the hell do we plug these leaks once and for all. Who the hell's talking to the press? (He looks directly at Henry.) Henry, for two goddamn years you've put wiretaps on your own goddamn people.

KISSINGER

To protect you, Mr. President.

COLSON (interjects)

...to protect yourself is more... the pot calling the kettle...

Kissinger throws COLSON a vicious look, while Nixon ignores it.

KISSINGER (aside)

Who you talking to like this, you insignificant shit...

NIXON

... and what do we get for it? Gobs and gobs of bullshit, gossip, nothing! Someone is leaking. We've got to stop the leaks, Henry, at any cost, do you hear me? Then we can go for the big play -- China, Russia.

COLSON

Mr. President, we can do this ourselves! The CIA and the FBI aren't doing the job! But we can create our own intelligence unit -- right here, inside the White House.

A slow move in on Nixon as he thinks about it.

NIXON

Well, why not?

HALDEMAN

Our own intelligence capability -- to fix the leaks?

COLSON

Yeah, like plumbers.

Nixon smiles.

NIXON

I like it. I like the idea.

EHRlichman

Is it legal? (a beat) I mean has anyone ever done it before?

NIXON

Sure. Lyndon, JFK, FDR -- I mean Truman cut the shit out of my investigation of Hiss back in '48.

MITCHELL

...it was illegal what he did.

NIXON

You know this kinda thing you gotta be brutal. A leak happens, the whole damn place should be fired. Really. You do it like the Germans in World War II. If they went through these towns and a sniper hit one of them, they'd line the whole goddamned town up and say "until you talk you're all getting shot." I really think that's what has to be done. I don't think you can be Mr. Nice Guy anymore...

COLSON

Just whisper the word to me, sir, and I'll shoot Ellsberg myself.

EHRlichman

We're not German, sir...

NIXON

Ellsberg's not the issue. The Pentagon Papers aren't the issue. (almost to himself) It's the lie.

A pause. Everyone in the room chews on this for a moment. MITCHELL, the oldest in the group, smokes on his pipe, stoned-faced.

MITCHELL

The lie?

NIXON

You remember, John, in '48 -- no one believed Alger Hiss was a Communist. Except me. They loved Hiss just like they love this Ellsberg character. East Coast. Ivy league. He was their kind. I was dirt to them. *Nothing.*

A6 As they talk, a MONTAGE arises of ALGER HISS and the days of old -- the photographs of the notorious 1948 Hiss case: HISS, CHAMBERS, the YOUNGER NIXON with the microfilm; a headline reading "HISS FOUND GUILTY"; TRUMAN, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, a beaming EISENHOWER shaking Nixon's hand. A6

MITCHELL (to the room)

... And Dick beat the shit out of them.

NIXON

But I wouldn't have if Hiss hadn't lied about knowing Chambers. The documents were old and out of date, like these Pentagon Papers. The key thing we proved was that Hiss was a liar. Then people bought that he was a spy. (then) It's the lie that gets you.

MITCHELL (to the room)

Hiss was protecting his wife. I've always believed that.

NIXON (cryptically)

When they know you've got something to protect, that's when they fuck you!

HALDEMAN

What's this faggot Ellsberg protecting?

COLSON

His liberal elitist friends. His Harvard Ph.D. I - shit - holier - than - thou attitude.

Kissinger waits. Nixon acknowledges him. Camera moving tighter and tighter on the President. His expression is furious, his words violent.

NIXON (cont'd)

Alright Henry -- we're gonna go your way. Crush this Ellsberg character the same way we did Hiss!

NIXON (cont'd)
 KISSINGER (interjects)
 There's no other choice.

NIXON
 We're gonna hit him so hard he looks like everything that's sick and evil about the Eastern Establishment. (to Colson) You and your "plumbers" are gonna find the dirt on this guy -- let's see him going to the bathroom in front of the American public! And when we finish with him, they'll crucify him!

FLASH CUT TO:

7 INT. FIELDING PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT (1971) 7

SUBTITLE READS: "ELLSBERG PYSCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - 1971"

ANOTHER BREAK-IN is in effect. LIDDY in wig, thick glasses, false teeth and THREE CUBANS (Barker, Martinez from Watergate, and Diego not at Watergate) are visible, moving through, smashing up the office. In CLOSEUPS, we see hands jerking open filing cabinets, pulling the drawers out of desk.

REPORTERS (V.O. cont)
 The Nixon Administration responded by filing an injunction against the New York Times to prevent further publication... President Nixon condemned the Pentagon Papers as the worst breach of national security in U.S. history... Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the papers, was charged today in Federal Court...

While this is going on, a powerful FLASHBULB keeps popping. The photographer looking for evidence, suddenly catches his partner in the light, his startled face buried beneath a 70's wig -- HOWARD HUNT. Hunt is pissed, "fuck you -- gimme that fucking film!"

BACK TO:

8 INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BLDG-PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY (1972) 8

RESUME -- CLOSE on NIXON remembering Howard Hunt, as HALDEMAN looks on.

NIXON
 Howard Hunt?... Jesus Christ, you open up that scab... and you uncover a lot of pus.

HALDEMAN
 What do you mean, sir?

Nixon chooses not to answer.

NIXON
Where's Hunt now?

EHRlichMAN

In hiding. He sent Liddy to talk to me.

NIXON

And?

EHRlichMAN

He wants money.

NIXON

Pay him.

EHRlichMAN

Pay him? I told him to get out of the country.
It's crazy to start...

NIXON

What the hell are you doing, Ehrlichman. --
screwing with the CIA! I don't care how much he
wants -- pay him.

HALDEMAN

But what are we paying him for?

NIXON

Silence!

HALDEMAN

But sir, you're covered -- no one here gave orders
to break in the damned Watergate. We're clean.
It's only the Ellsberg thing and if that comes
out, it's "national security".

NIXON

"Security" is not strong enough.

HALDEMAN

How 'bout a COMINT classification. We put it on
the Huston plan. Even the designation is
classified.

NIXON

"National Priority".

EHRlichMAN

"Priority?" How about "secret, top secret"?

DEAN

I was thinking "sensitive".

NIXON

"National security priority restricted and
controlled secret."

HALDEMAN

We'll work on it. I say we cut ourselves loose
from these clowns and that's all there is to it.

NIXON (a beat, looks out at the Rose Garden)
It's more than that. It could be more than that. I
want Hunt paid.

EHRlichman
Uh, We've never done this before, sir... How do we
pay? In... hundreds? (smirks) Do you fill a
black bag full of unmarked bills?

NIXON (snaps)
This is not a joke, John!

EHRlichman
No, sir.

NIXON
We should set up a Cuban defense fund on this,
take care of all of them.

HALDEMAN
Should we talk to Trini about paying these guys? *
Or maybe Chotiner? *

NIXON
No, keep Trini out of this. Chotiner's too old. *
And for god's sake, keep Colson out. (including *
John) It's time to baptize our young counsel. That *
means John can never talk about it. Attorney - *
client privilege. Get to it. And John -- you stay *
close to this.

DEAN
Yes, sir, don't worry --

Prompted, Ehrlichman and Dean leave. When the door closes:

NIXON
Bob, did I approve the Ellsberg thing? You know
I'm glad we tape all these conversations
because... I never approved that break-in at
Ellsberg's. Or maybe I approved it after the fact?
Someday we've got to start transcribing the
tapes...

HALDEMAN
You approved that before the fact because I went
over it with you. But...

NIXON
Uh, no one, of course, is going to see these
tapes, but...

HALDEMAN

That's right, and it's more a problem for Ehrlichman. He fixed Hunt up with the phony CIA ID's, but... what else does Hunt have on us?

Again, Nixon chooses not to answer.

NIXON

We've got to turn off the FBI. You just go to the CIA, Bob, and tell Helms that Howard Hunt is blackmailing the President. Tell him Hunt, and his Cuban friends, know too damn much, and if he goes public, it would be a fiasco for the CIA. He'll know what I'm talking about.

HALDEMAN (still confused)

All right.

NIXON

Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we're going to play it. Don't lie to Helms and say there's no involvement, but just say this is sort of a comedy of errors, bizarre, without getting into it. Say the President believes it's going to open up the whole Bay of Pigs thing again. Tell Helms he should call the FBI, call Pat Gray, and say that we wish for the sake of the country -- don't go any further into this hanky-panky, period!

HALDEMAN

The Bay of Pigs?... that was Kennedy's screw up. How does that threaten us?

NIXON

Just do what I say, Bob.

HALDEMAN

Yes sir, but... do you think Gray'll go for it?

NIXON

Pat Gray'll do anything we ask him. That's why I appointed him.

HALDEMAN

He'll need a pretext. He'll never figure one out for himself.

NIXON (sighs)

Christ you're right -- Gray makes Jerry Ford look like Einstein. (then) Just have Helms call him. Helms can scare anybody.

HALDEMAN

The only problem with that, sir -- it gets us into obstruction of justice.

NIXON

It's got nothing to do with justice. It's national security.

HALDEMAN

How is this national security?

NIXON

Because the President says it is. My job is to protect this country from its enemies and its enemies are inside the walls.

Pause. Haldeman is perplexed.

NIXON

I suppose you thought the Presidency was above this sort of thing.

HALDEMAN

Sir?

NIXON

This isn't a "moral" issue Bob. We have to keep our enemies at bay or our whole program is gonna go down the tubes. The FBI is filled with people pissed I put Grey in and not one of their own. Vietnam, China, the Soviet Union. When you look at the big picture, Bob you'll see we're doing a hell of a lotta good in this world. Let's not screw it up with some shit-ass, third-rate burglary.

HALDEMAN

I'll talk to Helms (looks at his watch). Oh, Pat asked if you're coming to the residence for dinner tonight? *

NIXON

Oh no, not tonight. Don't let her in here, I have too much to do.

HALDEMAN

Yes sir, I'll talk to Helms and uh...what's our press position on this Watergate thing? What do I tell Ziegler to tell them?

9 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT (1973) 9

RESUME SCENE -- NIXON takes another drink, looks up at Lincoln's portrait.

NIXON (on the tape, yelling)

Tell 'em what we've always told 'em! Tell 'em anything but the goddamn truth!

As the tape grinds on with hard-to-hear DIALOGUE, Nixon searches through a drawer in the rolltop desk next to the fireplace. He finds a small vial of pills, fumbling with the cap. He rips the cap off, the pills scattering clumsily on the desk.

NIXON

Shit!

He begins scooping them back into the bottle. His hands trembling with the effort.

NIXON (mumbles)

Put me in this position... Expose me like this.

He downs a couple of pills with the Scotch.

NIXON

Why don't they just fucking shoot me?

Nixon takes another drink, looks down.

SHARP CUT BACK TO:

10 INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT - (1960) 10

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- JOHN F. KENNEDY looking straight at the camera. Tanned, impeccable, confident.

KENNEDY

I do not think the world can exist in the long run half-slave and half-free. The real issue before us is how we can prevent the balance of power from turning against us... if we sleep too long in the sixties, Mr. Khrushchev will "bury" us yet... I think it's time America started moving again.

DISSOLVE TO:

NIXON does not look well. His clothes are baggy, and he has a slight sheen of perspiration around his lower lip. He seems

uncomfortable in his movements, robotic, falsely aggressive with his raised eyebrow and glaring demeanor. (The following essences are taken from four debates and various campaign material; in using a "documentary JFK", we will be cutting around him when off-debate material is used).

NIXON

...when it comes to experience, I want you to remember I've had 173 meetings with President Eisenhower, and 217 times with the National Security Council. I've attended 163 Cabinet meetings. I've visited 54 countries and had discussions with 35 presidents, 9 Prime Ministers, 2 Emperors and the Shah of Iran...

11 INT. TV STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

11

PAT NIXON, a year older than Dick, watches her champion through the glass booth. The "Mona Lisa" of American politics, she projects deep admiration and pride in her husband. But now she appears perturbed by what she's seeing.

A younger HALDEMAN sits watching the debates on monitors with HERB KLEIN, Press Secretary, and OTHERS in the Nixon circle. Through the glass we see the CANDIDATES.

MURRAY CHOTINER, campaign manager, overweight and bow-tied, moves down the row of monitors holding a cigar. He manages to drop ashes on an attractive KENNEDY STAFFER.

CHOTINER

Excuse me, sweetheart.

As he sits next to Haldeman, Nixon drones on.

NIXON (on TV monitor)

Let's take hydroelectric power. In our Administration, we've built more...

CHOTINER (privately)

Jesus Christ, has he told them how many pushups he can do yet? What the hell happened to him?

HALDEMAN

He just got out of the hospital Murray and he hasn't taken an hour off during the campaign, thanks to you.

CHOTINER

You could've at least gotten him a suit that fit for chrissake and slapped some make-up on him. He looks like a frigging corpse!

NIXON (TV)

...When we consider the lineup of the world, we find there are 590 million people on our side, 800 million people on the Communist side, and 600 million who are neutral. The odds are 5 to 3 against us...

HALDEMAN

He wouldn't do the makeup. Said it was for queers.

JFK's face is on the monitors now.

CHOTINER

Kennedy doesn't look like a queer, does he?
(then) He looks like a god.

HALDEMAN

Murray, it's not a beauty contest.

CHOTINER

We better hope not.

PAT (upset)

What are you doing to him, Murray! Look at him--
he's not well. He doesn't have to debate John
Kennedy.

HALDEMAN

Mrs. Nixon, we didn't...

CHOTINER

Pat, baby, listen, when it comes to...

PAT

He can win without doing this.

KENNEDY (TV)

... in attacking my resolve, Mister Nixon has
carefully avoided mentioning my position on
Cuba...

HALDEMAN

Oh shoot! He's going to do it! Here it comes.

KENNEDY (TV)

...As a result of administration policies, we have
seen Cuba go to the Communists... eight jet
minutes from the coast of Florida! Castro's
influence will spread through all of Latin
America. We must attempt to strengthen the
democratic anti-Castro forces in exile. These
fighters have had virtually no support from our
Government!

HALDEMAN (whispers to Klein, Chotiner)

Sonufabitch! He was briefed last week by the CIA.
He's using it against us! He knows we can't
respond.

CHOTINER
It's a disgrace.

MODERATOR
Mister Nixon?

NIXON looks, astounded, at JFK. He fumbles his response.

NIXON
I think...I think...that's the sort of very
dangerous and irresponsible suggestion
that...helping the Cuban exiles who oppose Castro
would uh... not only be a violation of
international law, it would be...

HALDEMAN (closes his eyes)
He's treading water. Don't mention Khrushchev.

NIXON

...an open invitation for Mister Khrushchev to become involved in Latin America. We would lose all our friends in Latin America.

KLEIN

He just violated national security, Dick! Attack the bastard!

KENNEDY

I for one have never believed the foreign policy of the United States should be dictated by the Kremlin. As long as...

Klein hangs his head; Chotiner shares a look with Haldeman.

The young Kennedy staffers applaud gleefully.

NIXON (V.O.)

The sonufabitch stole it!

12 INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - SUITE - LOS ANGELES - DAWN (1960) 12

NIXON stands at the center of a room crowded with his MEN. He is despondent, astounded. PAT NIXON watches silently, bitter, nearly in tears.

CHOTINER

He carried every cemetery in Chicago! And Texas -- they had the goddamned cattle voting!

The final ELECTION FIGURES are coming in over the television. They show Kennedy with a 120,000 voter margin -- 34.2 to 34.1 million, and run down the electoral college votes.

CHOTINER

Closest election in history, Dick, and they stole it. Sonufabitch!

NIXON

He outspent us and he still cheated. A guy who's got everything. I can't believe it. We came to Congress together. I went to his wedding. We were like brothers, for Christ's sake.

Pat leaves abruptly. She can't take it anymore. Chotiner looks at Dick as if he were incredibly naive. HALDEMAN and KLEIN are at a table, reams of returns before them.

KLEIN

We've got the figures, Dick! The fraud is obvious -- we call for a recount.

HALDEMAN

Nobody's ever contested a presidential election.

CHOTINER

Who's going to do the counting? The Democrats control Texas, they control Illinois.

KLEIN

We shift 25,000 votes in 2 states, and...

CHOTINER

How long would that take? Six months? A year?

HALDEMAN

Meanwhile, what happens to the country?

NIXON

That bastard! If I'd called his shot on Cuba I would've won. He made me look soft.

KLEIN (reading transcript)

"I feel sorry for Nixon because he does not know who he is, and at each stop he has to decide which Nixon he is at the moment, which must be very exhausting"...Jack Kennedy.

CHOTINER

Bullshit!

The CAMERA driving in on Nixon building to a rage. Klein knows how to get to him.

KLEIN (reading)

"Nixon's a shifty-eyed, goddamn liar. If he had to stick to the truth he'd have very little to say. If you vote for him you ought to go to hell"! Harry S. Truman... That's what killed us, Dick, not Cuba -- the personality problem. Are we gonna let these sonufabitch Democrats get away with this!

HALDEMAN (sotto voce)

You know, Herb, it's not the time....

Nixon in closeup, inner demons moving him. A brief IMAGE of something ugly... in Nixon. Himself perhaps drenched in blood or death imagery.

NIXON

Goddamn Kennedy! Goes to Harvard. His father hands him everything on a silver platter! All my life they been sticking it to me. Not the right clothes, not the right schools, not the right family. And then he steals from me! I have nothing and he steals. (softly,

NIXON (cont'd)

leathal)...and he says I have "no class". And they love him for it. It's not fair, Murray, it's not fair.

CHOTINER

Dick, you're only forty-seven. You contest this election, you're finished. You gotta swallow this one. They stole it fair and square.

Nixon looks at him, broken-hearted. He controls his reaction, and exits the room.

CHOTINER

We'll get 'em next time, Dick.

KLEIN

What makes you think there's gonna be a next time Murray?

Chotiner picks up the corner of a campaign poster with Nixon's face, the name in bold below.

CHOTINER

Because if he's not President Nixon, he's nobody.

13 INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - CORRIDOR & SUITE - DAWN

13

NIXON crosses the corridor, subdued in the morning light. He hesitates at the door, knocks softly.

PAT NIXON stirs quietly as her husband walks to her bed. They occupy separate beds.

NIXON

We lost...

PAT (bitterly)

I know...

NIXON

It's hard to lose...

She reaches out to touch him. He allows himself to be touched. It seems, between them, that intimacy is difficult.

PAT

It makes us human...

NIXON

It's not fair, Buddy. I can take the insults. I can take the name-calling. But I can't take the losing. I hate it.

PAT

We don't have to put ourselves through this again, Dick.

NIXON

What do you mean? We worked for it. We earned it. It's ours.

PAT

It is. We know that. (then) And it's enough that we know. Just think of the girls. They're still young. We never see them. I lost my parents. (then) I don't want them to lose theirs, I don't want them to grow up without a mother and father...

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NIXON

Maybe I should get out of the game, what do you think, Buddy? Go back to being a lawyer and end up with something solid, some money at the end of the line.... You know I keep thinking of my old man tonight. He was a failure too.

*
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PAT

You're not a failure, Dick.

NIXON

You know how much money he had in the bank when he died? (beat) Nothing. He was so damned honest... (then) But I miss him. I miss him a hell of a lot.

He seems like he is about to cry. Pat reaches out and cradles his head on her shoulder. On his eyes we:

CUT TO:

14 EXT. NIXON GROCERY STORE - DUSK (1925) 14

A few gas pumps in front, overlooking a dry western Edward Hopper landscape, a rundown residence at the back. A large man in a bloody butcher's apron, FRANK NIXON (46), crosses.

15 INT. NIXON GROCERY STORE - DUSK 15

HAROLD (16), tall, handsome, walks in whistling. He winks at RICHARD (12) who is sorting the fruit in the bins. HANNAH (39), a dour but gracious Quaker woman, is behind the counter with a CUSTOMER.

RICHARD (whispers)
What'd he say?

HAROLD
What do you think? He said in life there's no free ride.

RICHARD
What'd you say?

HAROLD
I said I didn't need a ride. (flashes a smile)
I need a suit.

Richard buries his face in his hands.

RICHARD
Oh no, Harold. He doesn't respond well to humor. (looks at his Mother worried)...if you talk to mother, she can...

HAROLD
I'd rather get a whipping than have another talk with her. *Anything* but a talk with her.

Richard is terrified Mom might overhear:

RICHARD
Shhhh!

But too late. Hannah looks over, very sharp, as her customer departs:

HANNAH

Richard...come with me, would you...

RICHARD (surprised, aloud)

Why me?

16 INT. NIXON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

16

RICHARD, obediently seated, pays his Mother heed. He seems like a gloomy, unsmiling child in her presence. We sense this is familiar territory for both. HANNAH very quiet, penetrating with her gaze.

HANNAH

... because Harold tests thy father's will is no reason to admire him. Let Harold's worldliness be a warning to thee, not an example.

RICHARD

Yes mother...

HANNAH

Harold may have lost touch with his Bible, but thou must never lapse.

Then, she extends her hand.

HANNAH

Now, give it to me...

Richard is about to plead ignorance.

HANNAH

Do not tell a lie, Richard...the cornsilk cigarette Harold gave thee behind the store this morning.

RICHARD (lying)

I don't...have them. Mother...I swear I...didn't smoke.

HANNAH (withdrawing)

I see...well then Richard, we have nothing more to talk about, do we?

RICHARD (fearful, blurts out)

Please, Mother, it...it was just one time, mother I'm...I'm sorry.

HANNAH

So am I. Thy father will have to know of thy lying.

RICHARD (terrified)

No, no! Please don't. Don't tell him. I'll never do it again. I promise. I promise...(on the edge of tears) Please, Mama...

HANNAH (pause)

I expected more from thee, Richard.

He buries his head in her skirt. The faintest smile on Hannah's face as she pockets the cigarette.

RICHARD

Please! I shall never let you down again, Mother. Never. I promise.

HANNAH

Then this shall be our little secret (she lifts his face to hers). Remember that I see into thy soul as God sees. Thee may fool the world. Even thy father. But not me, Richard. Never me. *

RICHARD

Mother, think of me always as your faithful dog...

17 INT. NIXON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

17

HANNAH puts the food on the table as FRANK NIXON, sleeves rolled up, waits at the head of the table, fuming. ARTHUR (6) and DONALD (9) join RICHARD and HAROLD. The fifth brother, Edward, has not yet been born.

Hannah takes the remaining food to TWO HOBOS who are standing outside the kitchen door. Harold reaches for his spoon impatiently.

FRANK

Don't you dare, Harold!

HAROLD (a little laugh)

I just thought, since the food was here...

HANNAH

We haven't said grace yet. Richard.

RICHARD (nervously)

Is it my turn?

Hannah nods. Richard puts his hands together, trying to please.

RICHARD

Heavenly Father, we humbly thank--

FRANK (interrupts)

I'll do it. There's a coupla things I wanna say.

HANNAH

Could thee at least remove thy apron, Frank?

FRANK

This blood pays the bills, Hannah. I'm not ashamed of how I earn my money. (clears his throat) Heavenly Father, you told Adam in the Garden, after that business with the snake, that man would have to earn his way by the sweat of his face. Well, as far as I can tell, Father, what was true

FRANK (cont'd)
 in Eden is true in Whittier, California. So we ask
 you now to remind certain of our young
 people... (glares at Harold) That the *only* way to
 get a new suit to go to the promenade with
 Margaret O'Herlihy, who happens to be a Catholic
 by the way, is to *work* for it. (then) Amen.

Little cute-faced Arthur looks up.

ARTHUR
 I like Margaret O'Herlihy too. She's very pretty.
 Can we pray now?

The boys start giggling.

HANNAH
 Arthur!

FRANK
 You think this is funny? (then) Pretty soon you
 boys are gonna have to get out there and *scratch*,
 'cause you're not gonna get anywhere on your good
 looks. Just ask those fellas...

Frank waves to the Hobos, now squatting and wolfing down the
 food. They look up, embarrassed.

FRANK
 Charity only is gonna get you so far--even with
 saints like your mother around. Struggle's what
 gives life meaning, not victory, struggle. When
 you quit struggling, they've beaten you, and then
 you end up in the street with your hand out.

Frank begins eating; the rest follow.

NIXON (V.O.)
 My mother was a saint, but my old man struggled
 his whole life. You could call him a little man,
 a poor man, but they never beat him. I always
 tried to remember that when things didn't go my
 way...

18 EXT. WHITTIER FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY (1932)

18

FOOTBALL MONTAGE: RICHARD (19), 150 pounds, is on the
 defensive line as the ball is hiked. ("Let's get fired up!")
 He gets creamed by a 200-pound offensive tackle. He jumps up,
 no face guard, hurting, and resets. AD LIB football chatter.
 We can tell from Richard's cheap uniform he is a substitute.
 But:

We go again. And again. Building a special RHYTHM of JUMP
 CUTS showing Nixon getting mauled each time. He doesn't have

a chance, this kid, but he has pluck. And he comes back for more. And more.

This image of pain and humiliation should weave itself in and out of the film in repetitive currents. As we CUT TO:

19	OMIT #19	19
20	INT. HILTON HOTEL - BALLRCOM - NIGHT (1962)	20

We move down past a blizzard of balloons and confetti blown by a hotel air-conditioner to a huge "NIXON FOR GOVERNOR" banner.

NIXON thrusts his arms in the air -- the twin V salute. The CROWD cheers wildly. SUBTITLE READS: "CALIFORNIA GOVERNORSHIP, 1962"

21 INT. HILTON HOTEL - SUITE - NIGHT

21

NIXON is slumped in an armchair, feet on a coffee table, holding a drink, again going through defeat once again.

HALDEMAN stands staring glumly at the TV. PAT sits across the room in grim silence.

ON TV -- a NEWSCASTER stands in front of a tally board with the network logo: "Decision '62".

NEWSCASTER

President Kennedy has called Governor Pat Brown to congratulate him...

HALDEMAN

Are we making a statement?

NEWSCASTER

ABC is now projecting that Brown will defeat Richard Nixon by more than a quarter of a million votes.

NIXON holds up his drink to the screen. Moves to a piano.

NIXON

Thank you, Fidel Castro.

PAT

You're not going to blame this on Castro, are you?

NIXON

I sure am. The goddamned missile crisis united the whole country behind Kennedy. And he was supporting Brown. People were scared, that's why.

PAT

I suppose Castro staged the whole thing just to beat you.

NIXON

Buddy, before you join the jubilation at my being beaten again, you should remember people vote not out of love, but fear. They don't teach that at Sunday School or the Whittier Community Playhouse!

HALDEMAN (interjects)

I should go down and check in with our people.

Haldeman leaves quickly.

ON TV: GOVERNOR BROWN steps to the podium. A band plays "Happy Days Are Here Again".

PAT (back at Dick)

I'm glad they don't, Dick. I'm glad they don't.
Because life is tough and it's unfair, and
sometimes you forget that...in your self-pity--
(He stares at her, then begins to play; raising
her voice) ...you forget sometimes I had a life
too, Dick, before you, before California... a much
rougher life than you ever had... (drowned out)

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Nixon drowns her out, playing the piano (well) and singing along bitterly.

NIXON

"--the skies above are clear again. Let's sing a song of cheer again--"...cocksucker!

Pat turns off the TV.

NIXON (continues to play)

Don't you want to listen to Brown's victory speech?

PAT

No, I'm not going to listen to any more speeches ever again.

NIXON

Amen, to that.

PAT

It's over, Dick.

NIXON

I'll concede in the morning.

PAT

Not that.

Nixon stops playing, looks at her.

PAT (coldly)

I've always stood by you. I campaigned for you when I was pregnant. During Checkers, when Ike wanted you out, I told you to fight. This is different, Dick. You've changed. You've grown more... bitter, like you're at war with the world. You weren't that way before. I'm 50 years old now, Dick. How many people's hands have I shaken that I just don't like. It's as if, I don't know, I went to sleep a long time ago and missed the years between...I've had enough.

He moves towards her awkwardly. Pat struggles. She goes to a window, her back to him. She is not one to enjoy "scenes". She tends to accommodate to others to preserve an aura of happiness.

NIXON (confused)

What are you saying? What are you talking about?

PAT

I want a divorce.

NIXON

My God, *divorce*?

(beat)

...what about the girls?

PAT

The girls will grow up. They only know you from television anyway.

NIXON

It would ruin us, Buddy, our family.

PAT

You're ruining us. If we stay with you, you'll take us down with you. (beat) This isn't political, Dick. This is our life.

NIXON

Everything's political, for Christ's sake! I'm political. And you're political too!

PAT

No, I'm not! I'm finished.

She is very serious. He sees it. It terrifies him. The same withdrawal he experienced from his mother..

NIXON

This is just what they want Buddy. Don't you see? They want to drive us apart. To beat us. We can't let them do it. We've been through too much together, Buddy... we belong together.

PAT (ironic)

That's what you said the first time we met. You didn't even know me.

A21 MARRIAGE MONTAGE: During this scene we have a series of SHOTS of their courtship -- the Whittier College Campus, 1930's Los Angeles; driving in a car together; the wedding; the FIRST CHILD; the Pacific NAVAL CAPTAIN underneath a palm tree; running as a first-time CONGRESSMAN with Pat; the EISENHOWER years...

NIXON (very tender)

Oh yes I did. I told you I was gonna marry you, didn't I? On the first date...I said it because I knew...I knew you were the one...so solid and so strong...and so beautiful. You were the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen...I don't want to lose you, Buddy, ever...

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INTERCUT WITH:

NIXON seeking tenderness. He puts a hand on her arm. He tries gently to pull her towards him, to kiss her.

PAT

Dick, don't....

NIXON

Buddy, look at me...just look at me. Do you really want me to quit?

*
*

She stares out the window. A long moment.

PAT

We can be happy. We really can. We love you, Dick. The girls and I...

NIXON

If I stop...there'll be no more talk of divorce?

A long moment. She finally turns her eyes to him, assenting

NIXON
I'll do it. (waves his hand) No more.

PAT
Are you serious?

NIXON
Yeah...I'm out.

PAT
Is that the truth?

NIXON
I'll never run again. I promise.

SHARP CUT TO:

22 INT. HILTON HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

22

NIXON stalks down the hallway, angry. HALDEMAN walks alongside.

NIXON
Where are they?

HALDEMAN (worried, points to a door)
Dick, you don't have to make a statement. Herb covered it for you.

NIXON
No!

He bursts through the door into:

23 INT. HILTON HOTEL - PRESS CONFERENCE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

23

A noisy CROWD of REPORTERS react, excitedly, to NIXON'S fast entry. The smell of blood in the air.

TIME CUT TO:

NIXON at the podium.

NIXON
...I believe Governor Brown has a heart, even though he believes I do not. I believe he is a good American, even though he feels I am not. I am proud of the fact that I defended my opponent's patriotism; you gentlemen didn't report it but I am proud I did that. And I would appreciate it, for once gentlemen, if you would write what I say.
(time dissolve)

NIXON (cont'd)

...For sixteen years, ever since the Hiss case, you've had a lot of fun -- a lot of fun -- but recognize you have a responsibility, if you're against a candidate, to give him the shaft, but if you do that at least put one lonely reporter on the campaign who will report what the candidate says now and then...

HALDEMAN glances at KLEIN.

NIXON

...I think all in all I've given as good as I've taken. But as I leave you I want you to know -- just think how much you're going to be missing: you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference...

A FEW REPORTERS shout questions. There is a loud confusion, but Nixon has vanished.

KLEIN

What the hell was that?

HALDEMAN (beat)

Suicide.

CUT TO:

A23 NIXON HISTORICAL MONTAGE:

A23

A grainy "NEWSREEL" treats NIXON as political history, now over. The ANONYMOUS REPORTERS return -- YOUNG NIXON, in his Navy uniform, is campaigning in California in the 1940's against Voorhis and Douglas.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

We can now officially write the political obituary of Richard Milhous Nixon...He came into being as part of the big post-war 1946 Republican sweep of the elections. People were weary of the New Deal and FDR's Big Government...

Images of FDR and TRUMAN and ACHESON, early Cold War imagery -
- the Soviets, Berlin.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

...The United States had been a strong ally of the Soviet Union which lost more than 20 million people in its fight against Nazism. But Nixon, coming from the South Pacific war, won his first term in the House by freely associating his liberal opponent Jerry Voorhis with Communism.

Images of Voorhis, Hoover...NIXON working a CROWD, standing on the tailgate of a station-wagon, debating Voorhis.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

...for Nixon, politics was war. He didn't have opponents, he had enemies. He didn't run against people, he ruined them...He won his California seat in the U.S. Senate in 1950 in a vicious campaign against liberal congresswoman and movie actress, Helen Gahagan Douglas...

B23 NEWSFILM of NIXON and CHOTINER at a rally with PAT. Images of DOUGLAS follow. CAMPAIGN WORKERS handing out smear literature. B23

NIXON ("newsfilm look")

How can Helen Douglas, capable actress that she is, take up so strange a role as a foe of communism? Why, she's pink right down to her underwear...

REPORTER 3 (V.O.)

...Nixon quickly became the Republicans' attack dog. He tore into Truman for losing Mainland China in 1949, and blamed the war in Korea on a weak foreign policy...His speeches, if more subtle than those of his Republican ally, Joe McCarthy, were just as aggressive..

C23 NIXON at another rally with PAT.

C23 *

NIXON ("newsfilm look")

...I promise to continue to expose the people that have sold this country down the river! Until we have driven all the crooks and Communists and those that have helped them out of office!!

Images of Truman, the Hydrogen Bomb, the Rosenbergs, Klaus Fuchs, Oppenheimer, the Chinese taking over in 1949...Mao.

NIXON ("newsfilm look")

The direct result of Truman's decisions is that China has gone Communist! Mao is a monster! Why! Why Mr. Acheson! Who in the State Department is watching over American interests! Who has given the Russians the atomic bomb!... today the issue is slavery! The Soviet Union is an example of the slave state in the ultimate development. Great Britain is halfway down the same road; powerful interests are striving to impose the British socialist system upon the people of the United States!

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

...Nixon became one of the leading lights on the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee, questioning labor leaders, Spanish Civil War veterans, Hollywood celebrities...

NIXON (questioning WITNESS)

Can you tell me today the names of any pictures which Hollywood has made in the last five years showing the evils of totalitarian Communism?

D23 NIXON surrounded by REPORTERS outside the HUAC Hearing Room D23

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

...but it was the Alger Hiss case that made Nixon a household name...

IMAGES of Alger Hiss' career: clerking for Oliver Wendell Holmes; with FDR at Yalta, with Churchill, with Stalin.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

...One of the architects of the United Nations, intimate of FDR and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Alger Hiss was a darling of the liberals. (then) But Whittaker Chambers, a former freelance journalist, said he was a Communist.

WHITTAKER CHAMBERS testifying before HUAC.

CHAMBERS (TV interview)

...if the American people understood the real character of Alger Hiss, they would boil him in oil...

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

...Hiss claimed he was being set up by Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover to discredit the New Deal's policies. The case came down to an Underwood typewriter and a roll of film hidden in a pumpkin patch.

DOCUMENTARY IMAGE -- A DETECTIVE TYPE reaches into a hollowed-out pumpkin and pulls out microfilm...in his Congressional office, NIXON examines the film with a magnifying glass, playing to the cameras with a deadly serious mien...shots of MRS. HISS, the Underwood typewriter.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

...Years later the Freedom of Information Act revealed the film showed a report on business conditions in Manchuria and fire extinguishers on a U.S. Destroyer -

REPORTER 4 (cont'd)

None of these documents was classified. Were they planted by Chambers, who seemed to have a strange, almost psychotic fixture with Alger Hiss?

NIXON ("newsfilm")

I asked Hiss if he'd ever known Chambers before. When he said 'no', that's when I knew he was lying. That's when I knew I had him...he was twisting, turning, evading, changing his story to fit the evidence he knew we had...but I tell you this, I vow that we're going to go after everyone responsible for selling this country down the river...

NIXON points to a headline -- "Hiss Convicted"

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

After two confusing trials, Hiss went to jail for perjury. To the right wing, Nixon was a hero and a patriot. To the liberals he was a shameless self-promoter who had vengefully destroyed a fine man. Eleanor Roosevelt angrily condemned him. It was to become a pattern: you either loved Richard Nixon or you hated him.

A brief IMAGE here that will re-occur through the film. An image of evil -- call it "The Beast".

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

Driven by demons that seemed more personal than political, his rise was meteoric. Congressman at 33, Senator at 35, Eisenhower's Vice-Presidential candidate at 39. Then came the Checkers Crisis...Nixon was accused of hiding a secret slush fund. About to be kicked off the ticket by Ike, he went on national television in an unprecedented appearance...

E23 INTERCUT CHECKERS SPEECH -- NIXON,

E23

looking and sounding like Uriah Heep, pleads with the American people on TV, as PAT sits uncomfortably in an armchair nearby.

NIXON (on TV)

...so now what I am going to do is to give this audience a complete financial history. Everything I've earned, everything I've spent, everything I owe...

Nixon forces a smile. Pat is clearly in pain, mortified.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

The list included their house, their Oldsmobile, Pat's Republican cloth coat, and lastly in what was to become history -- a sentimental gift from a Texas businessman...

NIXON (on TV)

You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog. Black and white spotted. And...our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it "Checkers". And you know, the kids love that dog and we're going to keep it...

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

Fifty-eight million people saw it. It was shameless. It was manipulative.

(then)

It was a huge success!

F23 DOCUMENTARY REPLACEMENT -- NIXON with IKE in triumph. F23
A clip of Eisenhower praising Nixon. NIXON and PAT standing up to rock-throwing STUDENTS in Venezuela. Pointing his finger at KHRUSHCHEV in the kitchen debate.

Reporter 3 (V.O.)

Eisenhower put Nixon back on the ticket... Responding to attacks on Truman, Acheson, and the entire Democratic Party for betraying American principles in China, Korea and elsewhere--it was two-time Democratic Presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson who perhaps best summed up the national unease with Richard Nixon...

DOCUMENTARY -- SHOTS of ADLAI STEVENSON campaigning in '52 and '56 against IKE. Images of JOE MCCARTHY precede. The HERBLOCK CARTOON of Nixon crawling out of the sewer system. Others of his cartoons follow.

STEVENSON (Radio V.O.)

...This is a man of many masks. Who can say they have seen his real face?.. He is on an ill-will tour, representing McCarthyism in a white collar. Nixonland has no standard of truth but convenience and no standard of morality except the sly innuendo, the poison pen, the anonymous phone call; the land of smash and grab and anything to win...What ultimately shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Ending with more recent SHOTS of Nixon campaigning in '60 and in '62. As the IMAGES spot out in newsreel style.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

It was a great story of its time and in California where it started, it has come to a crashing end. It is too bad in a way because the truth is we never knew who Richard Nixon really was. And now that he is gone, we never will...

"March of Time"-type music as we SLOWLY FADE INTO:

NIXON (V.O.)

"Your father stinks"... They actually said this to Tricia. Two girls wearing Kennedy pins. At Chapin!

24 INT. FIFTH AVE APARTMENT - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT (1963) 24

A New York cocktail party. Society DAMES. Rich, conservative BUSINESSMEN, platters of martinis and hor d'oeuvres carried by white-gloved BLACK BUTLERS. The fashions are Balenciaga and Courreges, tipping to the shorter hemlines; the mood is smoky and upbeat, the folks pressed into airtight packs of loud conversation.

NIXON is talking to JOHN MITCHELL (54), his wife MARTHA (40s), and TWO OTHER ASSOCIATES of the law firm he has joined.

NIXON (anguished)

...She was crying when she came home (shakes his head). She was devastated.

MARTHA

Poor little 'Tricia! Well, that's New York, makes for a tougher animal later in life.

NIXON (to the other lawyers)

...I told her, her daddy couldn't even get a goddamn job in this city when he got out of Duke. Every whiteshoe lawyer firm turned me down. Didn't have the right "look". Hell, I couldn't even get into the FBI.

MITCHELL (indicating)

Dick, we should catch Rocky 'fore he leaves.

NELSON ROCKEFELLER, Governor of New York, dominates the room, the star of the party. Big smile, horn-rimmed glasses. Next to him is HAPPY, his new wife, much younger.

NIXON (glancing)

Well, he can walk in this direction too.

MARTHA

Did you catch that picture of you in the "News"
last week, Dick? You were standing in a crowd on

MARTHA (cont'd)

Fifth Avenue, and you were looking straight ahead and everyone else was looking the other way like you'd just farted or something. (laughs) It said "Who Remembers Dick Nixon?" I was screaming. It was so funny!

NIXON

Yeah, that was hilarious Martha. (for the others) They were all looking the other way 'cause they were waiting for the light to change. I called AP on that-- typical of the press in this country, they wouldn't correct it. That or they print the retraction right next to the girdle ads.

LAWYER

Oh, I've read some very nice things about you.

MARTHA (puts her hand on Nixon's arm)

Maybe where you come from, but where I come from, Dick Nixon is as *misunderstood* as a fox in a henhouse. And you know why? (they all wait) Because, honey, they all think your smile and your face are never in the same place at the same time (nervous laughter). You and me-- we gotta work on that, sweetie...

MITCHELL (guiding Dick away)

Someone freshen Martha's drink. I think she's down a quart.

MARTHA

Well, zippety-fucking-doo-dah!

Mitchell moving Nixon away towards the Rockefeller GROUP.

MITCHELL

Sorry, Dick. She's a little tipsy.

NIXON

You mean *smashed*! She called up at *midnight* last week. Talking a bunch of *crap*! Pat can't stand her.

MITCHELL

It's a thing she does. She talks at night.

NIXON

Talks all day too! How the hell can you put up with her, John.

MITCHELL (sheepishly)

What the hell -- I love her. And she's great in bed.

Rockefeller holds court, not immediately noticing Nixon.

ROCKEFELLER

...There are no guarantees in politics. I'm going to roll the dice with everyone else.

HENRY KISSINGER (40's), intense, holds a martini.

KISSINGER

Well, if a Rockefeller can't become President of the United States, what's the point of democracy? (laughter)

NIXON

The point of democracy is that even the son of a grocer can become President. (laughs)

ROCKEFELLER

And you came damn close too, Dick. *

As Rocky clutches Dick, who doesn't like to be touched.

ROCKEFELLER

Howya doin'! New York treating you okay? I'm sorry I haven't been able to see you at all...

NIXON (cutting off the apology)

Well enough. You're looking 'happy', Nelson (with a look to Happy). *
*

ROCKEFELLER

Oh Happy! (introduces his new wife) Dick Nixon...you remember him.

NIXON

Hi Happy. Well, you're obviously making him happy.

ROCKEFELLER

Repartee, Dick, very good. Hey, I feel 10 years younger! It makes a helluva difference, let me tell ya! How's the lawyer life?

NIXON

Never made so much money in my life. But my upbringing doesn't allow me to enjoy it. I did get to argue a case before the Supreme Court.

ROCKEFELLER

Won or lost?

NIXON

Lost.

ROCKEFELLER

Someday, Dick.

OTHERS are pressing in on Rockefeller, who is obviously the "star" of the party, so there is pressure to talk fast.

NIXON

...But being out of the game gives me time to write.

ROCKEFELLER

To what?

NIXON

Write. You know, a book. I'm calling it "Six Crises". It's a good thing, Rocky -- take some time off and write.

ROCKEFELLER (busy shaking another hand),
Hiya fellow... What were they?

NIXON

What?

ROCKEFELLER

The "crises?"

NIXON

"Checkers" of course, Hiss, Ike's heart attack, Venezuelà, the Kitchen Debate, and Kennedy.

ROCKEFELLER

Sounds like you got a crisis syndrome. Aren't you exaggerating a bit, Dick? Call it three and a half, maybe four...

NIXON (laughs awkwardly)

Let's wait and see how you survive your first crisis, Rocky...

ROCKEFELLER

Whatcha mean by that?

NIXON

You know, how the voters are gonna play your divorce.

Rockefeller, who still clutches the visibly uncomfortable Nixon, gives him a squeeze before finally releasing him.

ROCKEFELLER

Don't you worry about it fellah, and I won't.
(about to rejoin his wife)

NIXON (smiling)

Well in any case, Rocky, I'll send you my book.
"Six Crises."

ROCKEFELLER (pauses, aside)

Whatcha predicting -- your boy Goldwater's going to split the party?

NIXON

Some say you are Rocky.

ROCKEFELLER

The Republican Party was never a home to extremists. You * should know better. This guy's as stupid as McCarthy, and McCarthy never did you any good in the long run, now did he?

A pause. It lands home on Dick. Rockefeller turns to Kissinger who's been listening.

ROCKEFELLER

Hey, you know Henry Kissinger -- he's down from Harvard. On my staff, foreign policy whiz...

NIXON (shakes hands)

No, but I liked your book on nuclear weapons. We have similar views on the balance of power...

ROCKEFELLER

Well, that's wonderful. So get me this "crisis thing" Dick, I'll be glad to take a look at it.

He raps Nixon one more time on the shoulder and moves off into a waiting GROUP.

NIXON

...as the old alliances crumble.

KISSINGER

Finally someone who's noticed! I'm a great admirer of yours too, Mister Nixon. You are an unusual politician. We share a mutual idol -- "Six Crises" sounds like a page from Churchill.

NIXON

Churchill, DeGaulle, Disraeli. They all went through the pain of losing power.

KISSINGER (smiles)

But they all got it back again, didn't they? (proffering a card) We should have lunch sometime.

TIME CUT:

NIXON and MITCHELL move to the edges of the PARTY which is now diminishing; they bypass PAT who is absently staring off in conversation with MARTHA and SEVERAL OTHER LADIES who lunch...Nixon looks back at ROCKEFELLER leaving--KISSINGER hovering near him.

NIXON (seething)

Rocky's full of shit! No way he's going to get nominated west of the Hudson with a new wife. He's gonna be drinking Scotches in retirement at some goddamn country club with the rest of the Republicans.

MITCHELL

Goes to show you all the moolah in the world can't buy you a brain.

NIXON (snags a drink from a passing tray)
Well, he seems to have bought Kissinger.

MITCHELL

The Jewboy's a Harvard whore with the morals of an eel -- sells himself to the highest bidder.

NIXON (brays loudly)
You're the one who should be in politics, John.
You're tougher than I am. You never crack

MITCHELL

That'll be the day.

NIXON

Let's get out of here, it's too painful. I hate it. (then) We went bowling last weekend. Next weekend we're going to the zoo. Whoever said there was life after politics was full of fucking shit.

MITCHELL

Make some money, Dick, prove yourself to the Wall Street crowd and let Goldwater and Rockefeller take the fall against Kennedy.

Nixon looks at him.

NIXON

Yeah. John, I'm in hell. (then) I'll be mentally dead in two years and physically dead in four. I miss--I don't know--making love to the people. I miss--entering a room. I miss--the pure "acting" of it. John. I've got to get back in the arena.

On Pat glancing over.

25 INT. DALLAS CONVENTION SITE - DAY (1963)

25

SPOTLIGHT on a sexy "Studebaker" car of the era. A DRUM ROLL and suddenly out of the various apertures of the car pop six half-naked HOSTESSES doing the twist. Wild cheers.

The ANNOUNCER describes the new gimmicks on the car (AD LIB) as we swing to reveal NIXON, looking uncomfortable in a Stetson cowboy hat shaking hands with AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS and car buffs, posing for cheesecake photographs. A banner behind him reveals: "Dallas Welcomes Studebaker Dealers".

The Studebaker GIRLS are fanning through the sales booths, whistling, swinging whips, as a large man in a Stetson, JACK JONES, accompanied by a suave looking Cuban-born businessman, TRINI CARDOZA, break through the autograph hounds to rescue Nixon. *

JONES

That's enough now, let him be. He's just like you and me, folks, just another lawyer...let's go, let's go, break it up...

Moving Nixon out of there.

NIXON

Thanks Jack, you sure throw a helluva party.

JONES

Party ain't started yet, Dick! Got these gals coming over to the ranch later for a little private "thing," y'know... There's some fellows I want you to meet.

NIXON

Well, uh, Trini and I got an early plane. We were hoping to get back to New York in time for... *

TRINI *

It'll be okay, Dick, these guys are interesting...real quiet. And the girls are too.

JONES

Y'know, it's not everyday we Texans get to entertain the future President of the United States.

NIXON

Like you said Jack, I'm just a New York lawyer now.

JONES (chuckles, with a look to Trini) *

We'll see about that.

New FANS circle up, their WIVES giggling.

FANS

Oh Mister Nixon, could you sign...? My wife and I think you are just the greatest. Please run again...

More fans flood in, encircling him. On Trini and Jack watching this. *

26 EXT. JONES RANCH - DAY

26

An entire LONGHORN STEER turns on a spit in a large barbecue pit, basted by black SERVANTS. We see a sprawling Spanish style RANCHHOUSE in the countryside. The parking area looks like a Cadillac dealership...the CROWD is a mixture of CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, CUBANS, and COWBOY TYPES, some WIVES.

BEBE is talking to TWO of the DANCERS, nodding his head in NIXON's direction. They look, and smile at him.

Across the lawn, Nixon smiles back awkwardly as JACK JONES nudges him. They both eat steaks and corncobs.

JONES

I know for a fact the one with the big tits is a Republican, and she'd do anything for the Party.

NIXON

She's quite pretty.

JONES

Her name's Sandy...

Bebe joins them, bringing the girls.

NIXON

By the way, Jack, this looks like a pretty straightforward transaction to me, but we should get into it soon -- take just a few minutes maybe up at the house...

JONES (to Bebe, coming up)

He's all business, ain't he, Bebe? (to Dick)
Dick, we could've had our own goddamn lawyers handle this deal. We brought you down here cause we wanted to talk to you...

BEBE

Dick, this is Teresa, and this is Sandy.

TERESA

Hi...Dick.

SANDY

Hi.

NIXON

Hello...

Pause.

27 INT. JONES RANCH - DAY

27

A walk-in stone fireplace dominates the room; the heavy beams hung with black, wrought-iron candelabras. Heavy cigar smoke impregnates the air, and the crowd has substantially thinned to the heaviest hitters. The MEN, now in shirtsleeves, drink bottles of Bourbon...

A man --MITCH-- emerges from one of the siderooms with a DANCER.

Off to the side in a semi-private alcove, SANDY, the dancer tries to make conversation, but NIXON is showing her a picture of his kids.

NIXON

That's Julie...and that's Tricia, she uh reminds me a little bit of you...

SANDY ("interested")

Oh yeah...she really is...wholesome. But what about you? (suggestive) What do you like?

NIXON

Oh, let's see...I like music.

SANDY

I like Jazz.

NIXON

Yeah...Guy Lombardo.

SANDY

Elvis too.

NIXON

Yea, he's good...

SANDY

...but it depends what I'm doing to the music, *Dick*. (Nixon hesitates, uncomfortable) So what's it like to be so famous and all -- a Vice-President?

(NOTE: OMIT PAGE 48A)

Trini interjects, trying to help out.

TRINI

So what's up?...uh, I get the feeling Sandy really likes you Dick.

SANDY

I like that name, *Dick*.

TRINI

Why don't you two disappear in the bedroom there. Come back in half an hour...

NIXON

Uh...Trini.

Trini smiles and leaving Dick the playing field, vanishes. Sandy, feeling the vacuum, holds Nixon's hand.

SANDY

What do you say? Do you like me, Mister Vice President?

Nixon swallows hard, blushing now. He sweats, very uncomfortable with this intimacy.

NIXON (croaks)

Yes, of course. But...uh..

A brief IMAGE flashes by -- beastlike, offensive, unworthy.

NIXON

Uh, it's not like that Sandy. You see the reason I got into politics in the first place was... well, to do something for the people, and what's really amazing about my story -- it's not so different from anyone else's -- I came from the wrong side of the tracks, you know, I grew up a butcher's son... and I think that's the great thing about America -- that you can turn your life around -- you can't do that anywhere else in the world, Sandy, believe me, I've travelled everywhere -- (genuinely) but here you can change... You can make a *difference*.

*
*
*
*

Trini intersects. Sandy seems bored.

TRINI

So...what are you two talking about? (to Dick)
You know there's more privacy back in the...

NIXON

No, Trini, we're fine right here...

*

CUT TO:

(NOTE: GO TO SCENE 28 ON NEXT PAGE)

28 Later. The CROWD has thinned further to a hardcore DOZEN. 28
The last man -- MITCH -- comes from the inner bedrooms,
zipping up; the SERVANTS chasing out the stragglng GIRLS.
Another round of drinks is served. The cigars are out.

JONES

Hell, Kennedy's pissed Cuba away to the Russians.
And he don't know what the hell he's doing in
Vietnam. These are dangerous times, Dick,
especially for business...

NIXON

Agreed.

A CUBAN in an Italian suit, one part sleazy, another part
dangerous, steps from the shadows.

CUBAN

We know what you tried to do for Cuba, Mister
Nixon. If you'd been elected in '60, we know
Castro'd be dead by now.

NIXON shares a look with TRINI. *

NIXON

Gentlemen, I tried. I told Kennedy to go into
Cuba. He heard me and he made his decision. I
appreciate your sentiments, I've heard them from
many fine Cuban patriots, but it's nothing I can
do anything about. Now it's a long drive back to
Dallas tonight, and Trini and I have got an early
flight tomorrow to New York... *

JONES (interrupting)

Dick, these boys want you to run. (The "boys"
mutter in unison.) They're serious They can
deliver the South and they can put Texas in your
column. That would've done it in '60.

(NOTE: OMIT PAGE 49B)

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Nixon. If you'd been elected in '60, we know
Castro'd be dead by now.

NIXON shares a look with BEBE.

NIXON

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Cuba. He heard me and he made his decision. I
appreciate your sentiments, I've heard them from
many fine Cuban patriots, but it's nothing I can
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flight tomorrow to New York...

JONES (interrupting)

Dick, these boys want you to run. (The "boys"
mutter in unison.) They're serious They can
deliver the South and they can put Texas in your
column. That would've done it in '60.

NIXON

Only if Kennedy dumps Johnson.

JONES

That sonofabitch Kennedy is coming back down here tomorrow. Dick, we're willing to put up a shitpot fulla money to get rid of him -- more money'n you ever dreamed of.

NIXON

Nobody's gonna beat Kennedy in '64 with all the money in the world.

A beat.

CUBAN

Suppose Kennedy don't run in '64?

Nixon looks at him. A subconscious IMAGE again -- something slimy, reptilian.

NIXON

Not a chance.

CUBAN

These are dangerous times, Mister Nixon. Anything can happen.

Another pause. Nixon gathers together his briefcase.

NIXON

Yes, well...gentlemen I promised my wife. I'm out of politics.

MITCH (insolent smile)

You just came down here for the weather, right Mister Nixon?

NIXON

I came down here to close a deal for Studebaker.

BEBE

What about '68 Dick?

NIXON

Five years, Bebe? In politics, that's an eternity.

JONES

Your country needs you, Dick.

Nixon shakes his hand, departs.

NIXON

Unfortunately, the country isn't available right now.

29 EXT. LOVE FIELD - DAY (1963)

29

A CROWD is waiting for Air Force One. People hold banners, signs: "Dallas Loves JFK", "We Love You Jackie".

A Cadillac pulls up at the far corner of the tarmac. NIXON gets out with REBOZO. They walk toward a small executive PLANE.

Nixon pauses, looks up. He feels something ominous in the air.

NIXON

Bebe, let's get out of here fast, go check on the pilot, or they'll hold us up till he's out of the airport.

As Bebe hurries off to the plane, Nixon takes one last look up at his fate written in the soft white clouds over Dallas. As we:

CUT TO:

30 DOCUMENTARY -- JOHN KENNEDY coming off the plane at Love Field with JACKIE, waving to the crowd. The sound of a rushing, monstrous engine. Then wind.

CUT TO:

31 INT. NIXON'S FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY (1963)

31

NIXON sits, subdued in an armchair in a small study, caught between the fire in the grate, the TELEVISION images of the assassination, and the phone call he's on.

NIXON (low-key)

Look, Edgar, these guys were really strange, I mean y'know...extremists, right-wing stuff, Birchers,...yeah? (listens several beats)

PAT, smoking nervously, watches from another chair. Newspapers are strewn all around.

DOCUMENTARY IMAGES on the TV show a grieving JACKIE, BOBBY, TEDDY, and the TWO CHILDREN.

NIXON

I see...Oswald's got a Cuba connection...to Castro? I see. A real communist. That makes sense. Thank you, Edgar.

He hangs up. It's evident he's still puzzled, but wants to believe.

NIXON

Hoover says this Oswald checks out as a beatnik type, a real bum, pro-Castro...

TV images of BOBBY KENNEDY.

PAT

Dick, you should call Bobby.

NIXON

He doesn't want me at the funeral.

PAT

You don't have to go.

NIXON (glances at TV)

DeGaulle's gonna be there. And Macmillan . And Adenauer. Nixon can't not be there.

PAT

Then call him. I'm sure it was an oversight.

NIXON

No. It's his way. He hates me. Him and Teddy. They always hated me.

PAT

They've lost their brother. You know what that means, Dick.

Nixon sighs, watches the TV -- images of a touch football game in Hyannis Port.

SHARP CUT BACK TO:

32 INT. NIXON HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (1925) 32

ARTHUR NIXON (7) cries in pain. RICHARD (12) helps FRANK, his father, hold him on the bed as a DOCTOR twists a long needle into the base of Arthur's spine.

ARTHUR

Daddy! Please! Make it STOP!!!

Arthur's eyes roll onto Richard for help, Richard can't bear it, pulls away.

33 INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY (1925) 33

FRANK comes down the narrow stairs, shocked, fighting tears. HANNAH sits reading her Bible. The BOYS linger nervously around their made-up cots in the parlor.

FRANK (sobs)

The doctors are afraid the little darling is going to die...

34 INT. ARTHUR BEDROOM - DAY

34

ARTHUR laps at some tomato gravy on toast, which makes him happy. His face is angelic, as if he were getting better.

HANNAH feeds him, cleans his lips with a napkin, as RICHARD sits close by, squeezing Arthur's hand, puzzled by it all. FLASHES run through his head -- Arthur sitting on his lap, learning to read; Dick swinging Arthur by his arms. DON and HAROLD are also there. The Doctor has gone.

ARTHUR (low)

Thank you Mama, I feel better...I'm sleepy.

HANNAH (removing the food)

We'll let thee rest now, my little angel.

She tucks him in. He yawns. The brothers are awkward, ready to leave. Arthur turns his loving eyes on Richard.

ARTHUR

Richard, don't you think...I should say a prayer before I sleep?

Richard is awkward, stutters.

HANNAH (nearly cracking)

Yes, Arthur, I do...

He smiles at her, then:

ARTHUR (murmurs)

If I should die before I wake, I pray the lord my soul to take...

He slips off, into coma.

Richard watches, devastated.

35 INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR -- ANOTHER DAY

35

RICHARD runs to his mother, HANNAH, who is coming down the stairs with FRANK. She seems very shaken, but quiet, off in another world. The moment Richard reaches her, throwing his arms around her skirt, she snaps him back. A harsh, angry voice.

HANNAH

No!... No. Don't...

Richard is shocked. As his mother sweeps by in her private grief.

36 INT. NIXON STUDY - NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAY 36

RESUME NIXON -- his face lost in the silence of the memory. The television SOUNDS fade back in alongside PAT'S voice.

TV IMAGE -- LYNDON JOHNSON being sworn in.

NIXON

...if I'd been President, they never would have killed me.

Pat is bewildered by the statement.

PAT (O.S.)

Dick? Are you going to call?

He looks at her, absent.

PAT

Bobby?

He looks back at the TV screen.

NIXON (quietly)

No...I'll go through Lyndon. We'll be invited.

We flash suddenly to Kennedy's head being blown apart. Then back to JOHNSON as we:

CUT FORWARD TO:

37 SUBTITLE READS: "FIVE YEARS LATER -- 1968" 37

DOCUMENTARY IMAGE -- CLOSE on LYNDON JOHNSON announcing:

JOHNSON

...accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President...

CUT TO:

38 INT. NURSING HOME - DAY 38

HANNAH NIXON, in her seventies, commenting on her son's chance for the Presidency:

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

...Johnson's withdrawal resurrects Richard Nixon as a strong Republican candidate against the war. His mother Hannah Nixon, just before her death last year, commented on her son's chances...

REPORTER 2 (OFF)

Mrs. Nixon, do you think your son will ever return to politics?

HANNAH

I don't think he has a choice. He was always a leader.

REPORTER 2 (OFF)

Do you think he'd make a great President, Mrs. Nixon?

HANNAH (unsmiling)

...if he's on God's side, yes. *

39 EXT. NEW YORK APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY (1968) 39

REPORTERS flock outside the building, as NIXON and his GROUP exit their car, trying to ignore the press.

40 INT. NIXON APARTMENT - DAY (1968) 40

NIXON enters, ebullient, with MITCHELL, HALDEMAN, ZIEGLER, taking off their winter coats.

MITCHELL

Jesus Dick, never seen anything like it! Even the goddman Times is saying you got it.

HALDEMAN

Vietnam's gonna put you in there this time chief.

ZIEGLER

We got the press this time!

NIXON

And we got the "big mo"! We're back!

PAT (O.S.)

So? You've decided?

They turn. PAT is in the corridor.

PAT

Were you planning to tell me?

NIXON

We...haven't announced anything...uh...

She's walking away, cold. Dick follows, with a look to his men.

NIXON

Uh, wait...

MITCHELL

You need her, Dick -- in '60 she was worth five, six million votes.

NIXON

Don't worry--I'll use the old Nixon charm on her.

As he goes:

HALDEMAN (to the others)

The old Nixon charm? Who could resist that.

41 INT. NIXON BEDROOM - DAY

41

NIXON enters. PAT is mechanically taking his identical grey suits from the closet and laying them on the bed.

NIXON

Buddy?...

PAT

You should be going...the primaries are soon, aren't they? New Hampshire....

NIXON

They love you Buddy. They need you, too.

PAT

I don't want *them* to love me.

NIXON

I need you out there. It won't be like the last time. The war's crippled the Democrats. I can win...We deserve it. Yeah, it's ours Buddy -- at last. Nobody knows that better than you. Frank Nixon's boy.

Pat slows her packing. Nixon takes her hand.

NIXON (genuine)

Remember what Mom said? We're not like other people, we don't choose our way. We can really change things, Buddy. We got a chance to get it right! We can change America!

*
*
*
*

She stops, looks at him, feels his surge of power.

NIXON

It was our dream, Buddy, together...always.

PAT
Do you really want this, Dick?

NIXON
This. Above all.

PAT
And then you'll be happy?

The briefest smile opens her face. He takes the inch, presses in, hugs her.

NIXON
Yes...you know it! Yes...I will. Yeah!

PAT (in his embrace)
Then I'll be there for you. We are going to win this time.

NIXON (exultant)
You're the strongest woman I ever met. I love you, Buddy.

PAT
Can I just ask for one thing?

NIXON
Anything.

PAT
Will you...would you kiss me?

He does so with all his earnestness.

42 INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY (1968)

42

NIXON, fielding questions, is on a small stage, surrounded by a STUDIO AUDIENCE in a semi-circle. A mike is around his neck, no separation from the people. PAT sits behind him, a campaign smile painted on. He is visible to us on TV monitors inside an engineer's booth.

NIXON (on TV)
I would never question Senator Kennedy's patriotism. But going around the country promising peace at any price is exactly what the North Vietnamese want to hear!

Cheers, applause.

HALDEMAN (to the TV DIRECTOR)
 Cue the crowd. Go to the women's group. Get the
 bald guy, he's great...

NIXON (TV)
 I, unlike Senator Kennedy, have a *plan* to end the
 war. But not for peace at any price but *peace with
 honor!*

INTERCUT:

43 EXT. LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - ESTABLISHING - DAY 43
 44 EXT. PRIVATE PATIO - LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - DAY 44

J. EDGAR HOOVER (60's), short and fat, covered with steam-
 room sweat, looks like a Roman emperor, as he watches the
 television intermittently, taking pictures of CLYDE TOLSON
 (50's), his long-time friend and associate. Tolson has a
 towel around his waist and one over his head.

CLYDE (sarcastic)
 What do you think this plan is, Edgar? A nuclear
 attack?

HOOVER (closing his eyes)
 He's lying, Clyde. Always has. That's why Nixon's
 always been useful. Hold still. And take your
 hand off your hip.

JOAQUIN, a very young, near-naked Hispanic boy, comes in with
 refreshments: orange slices, fruit and pastel drinks with
 parasols.

INTERCUT TO:

45 INT. TV STUDIO - DAY 45

RON ZIEGLER checks his scripts as NIXON continues across the
 glass.

DIRECTOR (turns)
 Who's next?

ZIEGLER
 The Negro. We gotta have a Negro.

A BLACK MAN appears on the monitors.

BLACK MAN
 Mister Nixon... (Nixon: "Yes sir!") You've made a
 career out of smearing people as Communist. And
 now you're building your campaign on the divisions
 in this country. Stirring up hatred, turning
 people against each other...

Ziegler and HALDEMAN are apoplectic.

HALDEMAN

What the fuck's he doing? He's making a speech.

ZIEGLER

Cut him off!

DIRECTOR

I can't cut her off! This isn't Russia!

The Black Man turns to the studio audience.

BLACK MAN

You don't want a real dialogue with the American people. This whole thing's been staged. These aren't real people. You're just a mouthpiece for an agenda that is hidden from us.

HALDEMAN (screaming)

Go to commercial!

DIRECTOR

There are no commercials. You bought the whole half hour, baby...

The Black Man is walking down the aisle toward Nixon.

BLACK MAN (impassioned)

When are you going to tell us what you really stand for? When are you going to take the mask off and show us who you really are?

Close on Nixon's upper lip, sweating.

Haldeman watches intently.

HALDEMAN

It's a high, hard one, chief. Park it.

Nixon gathers himself, looks firmly at the Black Man.

NIXON

Yes, there are divisions in this country (Black Man: "Who made them--you made them!") ...but I didn't create them. The *Democrats did!* If it's dialogue you want, you're more likely to get it from me than from the people who are burning down the cities! Just think about that...the great Doctor King said the same things. You know, young man, who a great hero is -- Abraham Lincoln. Because he stood for common ground, he brought this country together...

The audience applauds. Haldeman punches Ziegler's arm.

HALDEMAN

I love that man! I love him. (then) Fire the
sonufabitch who let that agitator in! *

ZIEGLER (relieved)
 Okay, go to the little girl. Can he see the little girl?

DIRECTOR
 She's right down front.

NIXON
 I don't know if you can see her but there's a little girl sitting down here with a sign. Could you hold that up, sweetheart?

ZIEGLER
 Bag the guy. Take the sign!

The Camera cuts to a LITTLE GIRL holding a hand-lettered sign.

NIXON
 The sign has on it three simple words. "Bring - us - together!" That is what I want and that is what the great silent majority of Americans want!

The audience loves it. APPLAUSE signs light up.

NIXON (shouts over)
 And that's why I want to be President. I want to bring us together!

46 EXT. PATIO - LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

46

Like a lizard, HOOVER eyes JOAQUIN, the Hispanic boy.

TOLSON
 ...give me a break, Mary.

NIXON (V.O.: continues)
 You all know me. I'm one of you. I grew up a stone's throw from here on a little lemon ranch in Yorba Linda...

HOOVER (mimics)
 It was the poorest lemon ranch in California, I can tell you that. My father sold it before they found oil on it.

NIXON (V.O.)
 It was the poorest lemon ranch in California, I can assure you. My father sold it before they found oil on it.

TOLSON (mimics)
 But it was all we had.

NIXON (V.O.)
...but it was all we had.

HOOVER
You're new. What's your name?

JOAQUIN
Joaquin, Mister Hoover.

Hoover selects an orange slice, puts one end between his teeth. Wiggles it. Joaquin bends over, bites off the other end. Tolson looks peeved.

NIXON (V.O.)
My father built the house where I was born with his own hands. Oh, it wasn't a big house...

HOOVER
Turn this crap off, Clyde. It's giving me a headache... you may go, Joaquin.

He takes a drink off Joaquin's tray as Clyde turns off the TV. Joaquin vanishes.

HOOVER
I want to see him tomorrow, Clyde.

CLYDE
Edgar, think twice. He works in the kitchen.

HOOVER
Not Joaquin, you idiot. Nixon. Did you hear what he said in Oregon? About me having too much power.

CLYDE
It's between Nixon and a Kennedy again, Edgar... who do you want?

HOOVER
Kennedy -- never. He'll fry in hell for what he did to me. But Nixon don't know that, which is why I'm gonna have to remind him he needs us a helluva lot more 'n we need him.

47 EXT. DEL MAR RACETRACK - STARTING GATE - DAY 47

THOROUGHBREDS explode out of the chutes.

48 EXT. DEL MAR RACETRACK - CLUBHOUSE - DAY 48

A private box just above the finish line. HOOVER raises his binoculars, watching the race. He is wearing a white tropical suit, Panama hat, white shoes. CLYDE is dressed similarly.

JOHNNY ROSELLI, white hair, deep tan, sharp dresser, sits with him in the box, spots someone...

ROSELLI

Your boy's on the way up... I met him years ago.
In Havana.

ON THE TRACK: TWO HORSES are in a terrific stretch drive.

HOOVER watches impassively.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.: frantic)

And down the stretch they come. It's "Sunday's
Chance" and "Olly's Boy" dueling for the lead... *

CLOSE: OLLY'S BOY puts a nose in front of SUNDAY'S CHANCE. *

HOOVER

He's folding, Johnny.

ON THE TRACK: Sunday's Chance is tiring, falling behind
Olly's Boy. *

ROSELLI

You just wait a second.

CLOSE: On Olly's Boy bandaged front legs. Then, Olly's Boy
right foreleg snaps. It sounds like a rifle shot. *

Olly's Boy goes down over his shoulder. The JOCKEY is thrown
across the track. *

The CROWD is stunned. Sunday's Chance wins easily. *

Hoover turns to Roselli.

TOLSON

A bit extreme, isn't it?

ROSELLI

It's the drama. (gestures to the crowd) The crowd
loves that shit. Hey! There's Randolph Scott,
you might like that guy, friend of mine. Wanna
meet him, Edgar?

SHOUTING and CHEERS behind them. They turn. NIXON is making
his way down the aisle, waving to the crowd. He is followed
by HALDEMAN.

Hoover passes Roselli a ticket.

HOOVER

Not now Johnny. Cash this for me, would you?

ROSELLI

It's a \$2 bet, Edgar. You got thousands coming on
this, what the fuck.

HOOVER

I told you just cash it, Johnny. And don't swear
around me...

A beat. Roselli crosses Nixon who enters the box.

NIXON
Edgar, wonderful to see you. Clyde...ha.

TOLSON
Mister Nixon...

HOOVER
Thank you for coming, Dick.

NIXON
Winning?

HOOVER
Actually, I've just had a bit of luck.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The management of Del Mar is saddened to announce
that Olly's Boy will have to be destroyed... *

Groans from the crowd.

NIXON
Oh my goodness...

HOOVER
How about you? Are you going to win?

NIXON
You should ask Bobby.

TOLSON (sarcastic)
...little Bobby.

HOOVER
Would you walk with me down to the paddock? I'd
like to look at the horses for the eighth.

NIXON
Can't we just talk here? I've got the police
chiefs in San Diego.

Hoover moves close.

HOOVER (whispers)
I'm trying to spare you an embarrassment. Johnny
Roselli is on his way back here.

Nixon looks sick.

NIXON
Roselli? Johnny Roselli?

HOOVER

Yes. Your old friend from Cuba.

NIXON

I never met the man.

HOOVER

I know you've been very careful not to. That's why I'm concerned.

Nixon glances at Hoover. Hoover smiles.

49 EXT. DEL MAR RACETRACK - PADDOCK - DAY (1968)

49

Moving with NIXON, HOOVER and TOLSON along the rail outside the walking ring. The HORSES for the next race are being saddled. FBI AGENTS have cleared a circle around them. Nixon waves and smiles to PATRONS of the track.

HOOVER

You'll win the nomination.

NIXON

It could be '60 all over again, Edgar. Bobby's got the magic, like a goddamn rock star. They climb all over each other just to touch his clothes! He'll ride his brother's corpse right into the White House.

TOLSON

Ummm....

HOOVER (nods)

If things remain as they are... he's got the anti-war vote.

NIXON

Or he'll steal it like his brother. He's a mean little sonufabitch Edgar... He had the IRS audit my *mother* when she was dying in the nursing home...

HOOVER

I know...

TOLSON (casually)

...somebody should shoot the sonufabitch.

NIXON

I wanna fight just as dirty.

TOLSON

...use his women.

NIXON

...any information you have, Edgar. The sonufabitch is *not gonna* steal from me again! Can you back me up on this? Can I count on your support?

HOOVER (amused)

I look at it from the point of view that the system can only take so much abuse. It adjusts itself eventually, but at times there are...savage

HOOVER (cont'd)
outbursts. The late "Doctor" King for example. A moral hypocrite screwing women like a degenerate tomcat, stirring up the blacks, preaching against our system... (shakes his head) Sometimes the system comes close to cracking.

Hoover stops in front of a huge GELDING, pats his muzzle.

HOOVER
We've already had one radical in the White House. I don't think we could survive another.

Nixon feels uncomfortable. Images, vague, disturbing. Even the nostrils on the horse seem to be emitting a devil's fire, and the noises of the snorting animal magnify...

NIXON (a beat, repeats himself)
Yeah well, as I said, Edgar...

HOOVER (precisely)
You asked if you could count on my support... As long as I can count on yours.

NIXON (V.O.: on tape)
The old queen did it on purpose.

50 INT. WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT (1974)

50 *

RESUME SCENE -- NIXON listens as the tape rolls.

NIXON (on tape)
He wasn't protecting me. He was putting me on notice.

HALDEMAN (on tape)
What? That he knew Johnny Roselli? Hoover knew a lot of gangsters.

NIXON (on tape)
Yeah, but Roselli wasn't just any gangster. He was the gangster who helped set up Track 2 in Cuba.

51 INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG-PRESIDENT'S OFFICE-NIGHT(1972)

51

NIXON and HALDEMAN are alone. The lights are on. Nixon's had a couple of drinks. The talk a little looser.

HALDEMAN (confused)
I don't understand. Track 2's Chile?

NIXON
Chile, Congo, Guatemala, Cuba. Wherever there's a need for an executive action capability, there's a Track 2. In Cuba, Track 1 was the Bay of Pigs invasion. Track 2... it was our idea.

(stands)
We felt the invasion wouldn't work unless we got rid of Castro. So we asked ourselves -- who else wants Castro dead? The Mafia, the money people. So we put together Track 2...

A51 CUBA MONTAGE

A51

Images begin to project from that long-ago time. A YOUNGER NIXON. Macho Cuban "FREEDOM FIGHTERS" in the Keys and Guatemala. The CIA, the MOB -- including JOHNNY ROSELLI. FAT CATS and CASINO BOSSES shaking hands with young Nixon on his visit in the 50's. A Rum and Coca-Cola SONG plays.

NIXON (softly)

The first assassination attempt was in '60 just before the election.

HALDEMAN (stunned)

Before! Eisenhower approved that?

NIXON

He didn't veto it. (then) I ran the White House side. The mob contact was Johnny Roselli. (then) One of the CIA guys was that jackass Howard Hunt. *

HALDEMAN

Jesus!

NIXON

Not just Hunt. Frank Sturgis, all those Cubans. All of them in the Watergate. They were involved in Track 2 in Cuba. (then) Hunt reported to my military aide. But I met with him several times as Vice-President. I don't know how much Hunt knows. Or the Cubans. But You never know. *

HALDEMAN

So? You wanted Castro dead. Everybody wanted Castro dead. If Hunt and the others are CIA, why don't we just throw this back in the CIA's lap? Let Richard Helms take the fall? *

NIXON (pause)

Because... because Dick Helms knows too much...If anyone in this country knows more than I do, it's Hoover and Helms! You don't fuck with Dick Helms! Period... *

Pause.

HALDEMAN

Alright. But why if Kennedy is so clean in all this, didn't he cancel Track 2?

NIXON

Because he didn't even know about it. The CIA never told him, they just kept it going. It was like...it had a life of its own. Like...a kind of "thing" that doesn't even know it exists. It just eats people when it doesn't need 'em anymore. (drops back in his chair) Two days after the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy called me in. He reamed me out... *

DOCUMENTARY INTERCUT: Brief, moving, live action image of JOHN KENNEDY.

NIXON (continued)
...he'd just found out about Track 2.

HALDEMAN
You never told him?

NIXON (softly)
I didn't want him to get the credit. He said I'd stabbed him in the back. Called me a two-bit grocery clerk from Whittier.

Nixon's face expresses the deep hurt of that insult.

NIXON
That was the last time I ever saw him.

IMAGE -- the "Beast" -- an image of Kennedy perverted, his head blown off...

HALDEMAN
If they didn't tell Kennedy about Track 2, how did Hoover find out?

NIXON
He had us bugged. Christ, he had everybody bugged. Yeah, he was gonna support me in '68, but he was also threatening me. (then) That was Hoover. He'd give you the carrot but he'd make damn sure the stick went right up your ass.

52 INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - PANTRY (1968) - DOCUMENTARY 52

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE of chaos in the pantry. The camera is jostled. Women screaming. A man is being wrestled to the floor.

ROBERT KENNEDY lies there, mortally wounded.

NIXON (V.O.)
When I saw Bobby lying there on the floor, his arm stretched out like that...

53 INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BLDG.-PRESIDENT'S OFFICE-NIGHT (1973) 53 *

RESUME SCENE -- NIXON and HALDEMAN

NIXON

...his eyes staring... (then) I knew I'd be President. (beat) Death paved the way, didn't it? Vietnam. The Kennedys. It cleared a path through the wilderness for me. Over the bodies...Four bodies.

Haldeman corrects him.

HALDEMAN

You mean two... two bodies?

54 INT. WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT (1974)

54 *

HALDEMAN (V.O. on tape)

You mean two... two bodies?

RESUME SCENE--NIXON takes a slug of Scotch, then he rubs the bridge of his nose, looks up at the portrait of Lincoln. A pause softly to Mr. Lincoln.

NIXON (slurs)

How many did you have? Hundreds of thousands...where would we be without death, hunh Abe?

Nixon stands, steadies himself.

NIXON (softly)

Who's helping us? Is it God? Or is it...Death?

CUT BACK TO:

55 EXT. SANITARIUM CABIN - PORCH - ARIZONA - DAY (1933)

55

A lunar landscape -- barren, scorched, silent. Suddenly violent, desperate COUGHING.

HAROLD NIXON (23) is doubled over the railing, a long string of bloody mucous hanging from his lips. He is shockingly emaciated -- the last stages of tuberculosis.

RICHARD (19) hurries out of the cabin with a cotton cloth. He holds HAROLD until he stops heaving. Then, he wipes his mouth.

HAROLD (gasps)

...that was a whopper.

Richard carefully folds the cloth, drops it into a metal container that is already full of them. He stands there, helpless, a solemn boy.

HANNAH NIXON, in background attending TWO OTHER PATIENTS,
looks on at Harold.

*
*

HAROLD (panting)
Hey... you'll be able to do it now.

RICHARD
What...?

HAROLD
Go to law school. Mom and Dad'll be able to afford it now...

Richard looks at him in horror.

HAROLD
Mom expects great things from you...

RICHARD
Harold... can I get you anything?

Harold throws a loving arm around Richard, who tenses. We sense Harold in some way could have helped Richard, taught him to laugh a bit. *

HAROLD (a gentle smile)
Relax, Dick, it's just me... The desert's so beautiful, isn't it? (then) I want to go home, Dick, time to go home. *

RICHARD (stiffly)
You're not gonna quit on me, are you, Harold? *

Harold looks out over the landscape. Silence.

56 INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT (1933)

56

RICHARD sits staring into the fire. He still wears his black suit from Harold's funeral. HANNAH enters quietly.

HANNAH
Richard?

He looks up at her.

RICHARD
I can't...

HANNAH
Thee must.

She moves closer. Casting a shadow over his face.

HANNAH
It's a gift, Richard. This law school is a gift from your brother.

NIXON (cont'd)
demonstration -- then it's time for new leadership
for the United States of America. (CHEERS)

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 1. Civil War. Tanks in the streets of
DETROIT. 2. A BLACK PANTHER safe-house in flames surrounded
by FBI AGENTS.

NIXON
As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in
smoke and flame. We see Americans dying on
distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans
hating each other at home. Millions of Americans
cry out in anguish: Did we come all this way for
this? Did American boys die in Normandy and
Valley Forge for this? It's time for some honest
talk about the problem of law and order in the
United States. I pledge to you that the current
wave of violence will not be the wave of the
future! (vast APPLAUSE.)

INTERCUT TO:

NIXON (V.O.)

...The long dark night for America is about to end...Let us begin by committing ourselves to the truth--to find the truth, to speak the truth. And to live the truth... A new voice is being heard across America today, it is not the voice of the protestors or the shouters, it is the quiet voice of a majority of Americans who have been forgotten, the non-shouters, the non-demonstrators. They're good people, they work hard and they save and they pay their taxes. They work in American factories, they run American businesses, they serve in government. They provide most of the soldiers who die to keep it free.

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DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 3. GEORGE WALLACE whips a DIXIE CROWD into a frenzy. 4. The WOUNDED KNEE SIEGE is under way -- FBI AGENTS and LOCAL MILITANTS pour fire in on the INDIAN MILITANTS. 5. The YIPPIE DEMONSTRATORS outside the CHICAGO DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION. Chicago POLICE wade in with nightsticks, tear gas.

NIXON (at the podium)

Who are they? Let me tell you who they are-- they're in this audience by the thousands, they're the workers of America, they're white Americans and black Americans...

We cut among the DELEGATES seeking to show the face of a populace that is torn by Civil War.

NIXON (cont'd)

...they are Mexican Americans and Italian Americans, they're the great silent majority and they have become angry, finally, angry not with hate but angry, my friends, because they love America and they don't like what's happened to America these last four years! We will regain respect for America in the world. A burned American library, a desecrated flag... Let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that!

This brings the house down! As we:

CROSSCUT TO:

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 6. CHICAGO is now a full-scale POLICE RIOT. The COPS have lost all control, swinging nightsticks wildly, breaking heads, dozens of arrests.

NIXON (cont'd)
tonight he stands before you -- nominated for
President of the United States of America.

*
*

CROSSCUT TO:

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 7. The young CHICAGO DEMONSTRATORS
are chanting rebelliously at POLICE.

DEMONSTRATORS
The whole world is watching! The whole world is
watching!

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 8. A B52 unloads BOMBS and NAPALM over
jungle.

SUBTITLE READS: "LAOS -- SECRET AIR BOMBING, 1969-70;
242,000 MISSIONS"

CUT TO:

58 OMIT

58

59 EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT 59

The lights are blazing late with war talk.

60 INT. SIDE OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT 60

In a small panelled room, the talk is angry; BILL ROGERS, Secretary of State, MEL LAIRD, Defense Secretary to one side; KISSINGER and HAIG, seen earlier but now Kissinger's assistant, to the other side of the desk, as NIXON listens; HALDEMAN takes notes. ZIEGLER listens. Though a stand-up chart displays a large map of Cambodia's border with South Vietnam, we may note there are no military personnel in the room.

ROGERS

...it'd be a disaster for us, Mister President. There's a lot of sympathy out there for Cambodia, a tiny, neutral Buddhist nation; there'd be protests in the streets, right out on your front lawn...

LAIRD

...building this Cambodian army up will be harder even than the Vietnamese Army. They have no tradition of... The government there would collapse if we...

Nixon's eyes narrow, furious.

NIXON

So you're saying 'do nothing', that's what you're saying. The same old shit. Well, that's not good enough. I'm sick of being pushed around by the

Nixon's eyes narrow, furious.

NIXON

So you're saying 'do nothing', that's what you're saying. The same old shit. Well, that's not good enough. I'm sick of being pushed around by the

NIXON (cont'd)

Vietnamese like some pitiful giant. They're using our POWs to hunker us. What we need now is a bold move into Cambodia, go right after the VC base camps, make 'em scream. That's what I think. You, Henry?

A pivotal moment for Henry. Nixon is clearly scrutinizing Kissinger who glances at his rivals.

KISSINGER

Well, as you know, most of my staff have weighed in against this "incursion". They believe it will fail to achieve anything fundamental militarily and will result in crushing criticism domestically...

NIXON (interrupts)

I didn't ask what your staff thinks, Henry. What do you think?

KISSINGER (pause)

What I think is...they're cowards. Their opposition represents the cowardice of the Eastern Establishment. They don't realize as you do -- that the Communists only respect strength and they will only negotiate in good faith if they fear the "madman," Richard Nixon.

Nixon lets a dark smile curl one side of his mouth.

NIXON

Exactly! We've got to take the war to them. Hit 'em where it hurts. Right in the nuts. More assassinations. More killings, right Al?

HAIG

That's what they're doing.

NIXON

These State Department jerks, Bill, don't understand you got to electrify people with bold moves. Bold moves make history, like Teddy Roosevelt -- "T.R." -- rushing up San Juan Hill. Small event but dramatic. People took notice.

ROGERS

They'll take notice all right.

NIXON

The fact is if we sneak out of this war, there'll be another one a mile down the road. (pause) We bite the bullet here. In Cambodia. We blow the hell out of these people!

ZIEGLER

So what should we tell the press?

*
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61 DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 9. BOMBS dropping over CAMBODIA. 61

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 10. Combined US and SOUTH VIETNAMESE
TROOPS invade CAMBODIA.

SUBTITLE reads: "APRIL 1970"

NIXON (V.O.)

Tonight, American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam. This is not an invasion of Cambodia. We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam...

CROSSCUT TO:

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 11. The Administration Building at BERKELEY is burning. POLICE in riot gear move in. A BATTLE between STUDENTS and POLICE is taking place.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Across the country, several hundred universities are in turmoil as students battle police in protest against the invasion of Cambodia...

CUT TO:

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 11. KENT STATE UNIVERSITY -- (1970) A phalanx of NATIONAL GUARDSMEN advances. They look very young and scared. A CROWD of STUDENT taunts them.

NIXON (V.O.: a speech)

When I think of those kids out there. Kids who are just doing their duty...

CROSSCUT TO:

62 INT. WHITE HOUSE -- EAST ROOM -- DAY

62

The end of a ceremony for a released VIETNAM POW. NIXON, with JULIE, stands before emotional WIVES, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES, and UNIFORMED OFFICERS. The POW sits in a wheelchair at NIXON's elbow, emaciated, the blue ribbon of the CMH around his neck. PAT is also there.

NIXON (continues)

I'm sure they're scared. I was when I was there. But when it really comes down to it..

(turns to the POW)

...you have to look up to these men. They're the greatest!

Applause. The POW manages a smile.

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- An ugly stand-off. The STUDENTS confront the GUARDSMEN, jeering. The GUARDSMEN lower their bayonets.

STUDENTS (chanting)
One - two - three - four. We don't want your
fucking war.

Someone throws a rock.

BACK TO SCENE:

NIXON (continues)
You see these bums, you know, blowing up the campuses,
burning books and so forth. They call themselves
"flower children". Well, I call them spoiled rotten.
And I tell you what would cure them -- a good old-
fashioned trip to my Ohio father's woodshed. That's
what these bums need!

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- More STUDENTS are throwing rocks. The
GUARDSMEN are momentarily panicked, confused.

Then, suddenly: they open fire. A melee. Screaming.
STUDENTS running.

Then: half a dozen BODIES lie on the ground. A young WOMAN
crouches over a BODY, crying.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
Today, less than 24 hours after President Nixon
called them "bums," four students were shot dead
today at Kent State University in Ohio.

63 EXT. POTOMAC RIVER- YACHT SEQUOIA- WASHINGTON DC - NIGHT

63

NIXON sits at the head of an outdoor dinner table with
HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN, ZIEGLER, KISSINGER. They are being
served steaks by MANOLO, Nixon's Cuban valet.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
...Enraged student groups across the country are
calling for a general strike tomorrow to shut down
the entire university system until the Vietnam War
is ended.

MITCHELL joins them.

NIXON (grim)
How many?

MITCHELL
Four. Two boys. Two girls. And eight wounded.

NIXON
Jesus Christ!

MITCHELL

One of the fathers was on TV, saying "My child was not a bum." And it's playing like gangbusters. Hell, Hoover told me one of the girls was a nymph.

NIXON

Shit, the press doesn't care about the facts. Cronkite's sticking it to me. It's their first big hit on Richard Nixon.

ZIEGLER

The Governor says they were rioting.

EHRlichman

The Governor's full of shit. Most of them were changing classes.

NIXON

Oh I suppose you would've just let them take over. These aren't fraternity pranks, John. It's anarchy. A revolution!

EHRlichman

I don't know if I'd go that far, sir.

NIXON

Why not?

EHRlichman

Is the war worth it! Is it worth a one-term Presidency? Because I think right now that's what we're looking at.

NIXON

I will not go down as the first fuckin' American President to lose a war! Going to Cambodia, bombing Hanoi, bombing Laos. It buys us time so we can get out and give the South Vietnamese a fighting chance.

KISSINGER

Exactly sir, that is your historical contribution, to lead boldly in an era of limits.

NIXON (drinks)

No one understands! -- even my own men. What do you think the Communists respond to? Honesty, liberal guilt soul wringing crap, fathers on TV crying? Hell no! I understand the Communist mind, I've studied it for thirty years. They grasp "realpolitik" better than any of us, right, Henry? (Henry nods). We gotta make 'em think we're just as tough as they are -- that Nixon's a mad bomber, he might do *anything*! I played a lot of poker in World War Two (Haldeman and Ehrlichman know

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NIXON (cont'd)

the story), and I won big and let me tell you this --
unpredictability is our best asset; that redneck
Johnson left me a shitty hand and I'm bluffing. I've *
got to play the hawk in Vietnam, and the dove in China. *
And if we keep our heads, we can win this thing. *

ZIEGLER

What, win Vietnam, sir?

ALL

No...

NIXON

No! But what we can do with Vietnam Ron, is drive a
stake through the heart of the Communist alliance!
Henry's getting strong signals from the Chinese. They *
despise the Vietnamese more than the Russians and *
they're worried about a unified Vietnam. The Russians *
despise the Chinese and are supporting the Vietnamese,
you understand? If we stick it out in Vietnam...we'll
end up negotiating separately with

NIXON (cont'd)

both the Chinese and the Soviets--and we'll get better deals than we ever dreamed of from both...(Kissinger nods) That's triangular diplomacy, gentlemen.

KISSINGER

Exactly, yes Mr. President. That is my contention. *

NIXON

That's what geopolitics is about-- the whole world linked by self interest...You tell me, Ron, how the hell I can explain that on television to a bunch of simple-minded reporters and weeping fucking mothers!

ZIEGLER

...but what am I telling the press about Kent State?

NIXON

Tell 'em what you like, they'll never understand anyway.

EHRlichman

Excuse me, are you talking about recognizing China, Mr. President? That would cost us our strongest support. *

NIXON

No...I can do this because I've spent my whole career building anti-communist credentials.

HALDEMAN

If Johnson or Kennedy'd tried it, they'd have crucified them, and rightfully so!

MITCHELL

It's damned risky Mr. President. Why don't we wait till the second term. *

HALDEMAN

This will get him a second term.

NIXON (repeats)

This will get me a second term. Damn it, without risk, there's no heroism. There's no history. Nixon was born to do this. *

KISSINGER

Mr. President, this cannot be breathed! Especially to our Secretary of State -- you know who I mean -- that cretin Rogers... the Chinese would never trust us again. The only way, I emphasize only way, to pull this off is in secret. *

NIXON (cackles)

This is a major coup gentlemen -- our own State Department doesn't even know. And if it leaks out of here tonight (pause, he eyes them)...

Pause. Discomfort.

HALDEMAN

Well, one way or the other, Kent State is not good. We have to get out in front of this thing. The PR is going to murder us. *

NIXON

Money. Follow the money. (Haldeman: "Sir?")
These kids are being manipulated by the Communists. Like Chambers and Hiss.

MITCHELL (smoking his pipe)
This isn't '48 Dick. They'll never buy it.

NIXON (angry)
How do you know that John? Did we try? Are we just giving up like the rest of 'em. What's Hoover found for God's sake?

HALDEMAN
Well, he called the other day. He asked for President Harding.

Laughter around the table.

KISSINGER
He's an idiot...

HALDEMAN
Seriously sir, he's gotta go, but...

NIXON
We can't touch Hoover.

EHRlichMAN
I thought the gloves were off.

NIXON
As long as he's got secret files on everybody. I don't want 'em used against us-- (frustrated)
What about the CIA! Helms's done nothing for us.
I want to see him.

HALDEMAN
Done.

MITCHELL
With Hiss, Mr. President, you had the microfilm, you had the lie. With the students, we got no proof. *

NIXON
The soldiers were provoked. The students started it for chrissake!

EHRlichMAN
Sir, there's dead American kids here. Let's say we don't apologize for Kent State but maybe we could have a national prayer day. *

HALDEMAN
...never complain, never explain, John...

NIXON (yells)

I tell you the soldiers were provoked. Now stop this pussyfooting around. (irritated) Dead kids! How the hell did we ever give the Democrats a weapon like this? (then) I mean if Cambodia doesn't work, we'll bomb Hanoi if we have to.

*
*

They all look at him. He is resolute.

NIXON

That's right! And if necessary, I'll drop the big one.

KISSINGER

We have to entertain the possibility...

NIXON (cont'd)

But then when you get to the top you find you can't stop playing the game the way you've always played it because it's a part of you like an arm or a leg. So you're lean and mean and you continue to walk the edge of the precipice because over the years you've become fascinated by how close you can get without falling... I wonder, John, I wonder...

Mitchell puts his hand on Dick's shoulder.

MITCHELL

Get off that. That leads nowhere. You should offer condolences to the families of those kids.

NIXON

Sure, I'd like to offer condolences.

He shrugs off Mitchell's hand and walks down the deck into the shadows.

NIXON

But Nixon can't.

65 INT. LIMOUSINE - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

65

Leaving the WHITE HOUSE, NIXON looks out at ANGRY DEMONSTRATORS giving him the finger, shaking placards -- "IMPEACH NIXON" (spelled with a swastika), "PEACE NOW". With him are HALDEMAN and EHRLICHMAN.

NIXON (exhilarated)

But hell, this is *nothing* compared to Venezuela. When I was Vice President, Ike sent me down there like a blocking tackle, they threw rocks, broke out our windows, almost overturned the car. Read "Six Crises", Bob. Boy! Pat was brave!

HALDEMAN

Yeah, we got to get our Vice-President off the golf course and back out there on the college circuit, that's top priority.

EHRLICHMAN

He's in the dumps, sir, Agnew. Every time you have him attack the press, they give it back to him in spades. He's become the most hated man in America.

NIXON (chuckles)

Yeah, good old Spiro. Well, better him than me. What the hell is he but an insurance policy?

HALDEMAN

We gotta keep reminding those media pricks if Nixon goes they end up with Agnew (they all laugh).

EHRlichman

He's begging for a meeting chief, he wants to go overseas for a while.

NIXON

Well, no place where they speak English. That way we can always say he was misquoted (emits a high manic laugh).

HALDEMAN

...is this such a good idea, sir? The meeting was scheduled for your office. That's where I think it should take place because...

NIXON (preoccupied)

No, Bob, let's get Helms in his office. He's a great bluffer but by coming to him, we'll surprise him -- he won't know what I really want... (noticing) Jesus, they're serious. Why are we stopping?

HALDEMAN (to the driver)

Run 'em over.

The presidential limousine has a difficult time negotiating its way through the BLOCKADING BUSES. A MAN with a NIXON mask runs up to the window and peers in before being peeled off by SECRET SERVICE. It is an ugly, violent scene, but Nixon seems to delight in the threat of action. He's in an upbeat mood.

NIXON

Get that little fucker! Great tackle! Reminds me of my days at Whittier. Most of these kids are useless.

HALDEMAN

Probably flunking, nothing to do 'cept come down here and meet girls, Henry's out there with them.

NIXON

There's a poison in the upper classes, Bob. They've had it too soft. Too many cars, too many color TVs...

HALDEMAN

Don't forget the South, sir, the West. Filled with good football colleges, straight kids. There's more of 'em with you than against you, not like these mudmutts.

NIXON

It's the parents' fault really.

EHRlichman

... let's not forget they're just kids, they don't vote.

HALDEMAN

It's the fall of the Roman Empire, are you blind?
And we're putting fig leaves on the statues...

PROTESTOR
Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh is going to win!

HALDEMAN
Get that fucker!

The limousine breaks through. *

66 INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY (1970)

66

The SEAL of the CIA: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". We CRANE BACK revealing that the seal is on the floor of the LOBBY as NIXON strides in with his ENTOURAGE.

LT. GENERAL ROBERT CUSHMAN hurries out, ruffled, to meet NIXON.

CUSHMAN
Mister President, I don't know what to say. As soon as we learned from the Secret Service you were in route, the Director was notified. He should be here any minute.

NIXON
Where the hell is he?

CUSHMAN
Uh, he's rushing back from his tennis game, sir...

LT. GENERAL ROBERT CUSHMAN hurries out, ruffled, to meet NIXON.

CUSHMAN

Mister President, I don't know what to say. As soon as we learned from the Secret Service you were in route, the Director was notified. He should be here any minute.

NIXON

Where the hell is he?

CUSHMAN

Uh, he's rushing back from his tennis game, sir...

NIXON (impatient)
So... Let's go...

CUSHMAN (walking with Nixon)
He told me to take you to his conference room.

NIXON
No. His office. (aside) I want a very private conversation. I don't want to be bugged.

CUSHMAN
Then his office will be fine.

67 INT. OPERATIONS CENTER & HELMS OFFICE - DAY

67

They walk past ANALYSTS laboring in isolation, behind plexi-glass walls, the hum of computers, a dark austerity to the place. They all glance up as NIXON strides past.

NIXON
How's the job coming, Bob?

CUSHMAN
Frankly sir, it stinks. I have no access. I'm lucky Helms lets me have a staff.

NIXON (ominous)
We'll see to that...

CUSHMAN (sensing change)
He's nervous, sir. He's heard you're looking for a new Director.

NIXON
Well, he certainly isn't acting like it.

CUSHMAN
That's Helms. He's "sang froid", a world class poker player.

NIXON (under his breath)
Yeah? Well, I own the fucking casino.

68 INT. HELMS OFFICE - DAY

68

A DUTY OFFICER opens the door of the director's office with a flourish. Nixon catches RICHARD HELMS throwing his trench coat and tennis racket on a chair, obviously hurrying in from a secret door. Helms spots Nixon, extends his hand with a reptilian smile.

HELMS
I'm honored Dick, that you've come all this way out here to Virginia to visit us at last.

NIXON

My friends call me "Mister President."

HELMS

And so shall I. (to Cushman) Arrange for some
coffee, would you General Cushman? *

Cushman stares back a beat, bitterly. Nixon signals to
Haldeman and Ehrlichman that he too wants to be alone. The
door closes. *

NIXON

Robert Cushman is a Lieutenant General in the Marine Corps, the Deputy Director of the CIA...and this is what you use him for?

HELMS

I didn't choose him as my deputy, Mister President. You did.

Nixon paces the office, which is festooned with photos, awards and an abundance of flowers, particularly orchids. A collector.

NIXON

You live pretty well out here. Now I understand why you want to keep your budgets classified.

Helms sits on a settee, a hard-to-read man.

HELMS

I suppose, 'Mister President' you're unhappy that we have not implemented your Domestic Intelligence plan, but...

NIXON

You're correct. I'm concerned these students are being funded by foreign interests whether they know it or not. The FBI is worthless in this area. I want your full concentration on this matter...

HELMS

Of course we've tried but so far we've come up with nothing that...

NIXON (stern)

Then find something. And I want these leaks stopped. Jack fucking Anderson, The New York Times, The State Department -- I want to know who's talking to them.

HELMS

I'm sure you realize this is a very tricky area, Mister President, given our charter and the Congressional Oversight Committees...

NIXON

Screw Congressional oversight. I know damn well going back to the 50's this Agency reports what it wants and buries what it doesn't want Congress to know. Pay close attention to this.

Nixon fixes him with his stare. Helms clears his throat.

HELMS

Is there something else that's bothering you, Mr. President?

NIXON

Yes... It involves some old and forgotten papers. Things I signed as Vice President. I want the originals in my office and I don't want copies anywhere else.

Now knowing Nixon's cards, Helms relaxes -- about an inch.

HELMS

You're referring, of course, to chairing the special operations group as Vice President.

NIXON

Yes...

Helms wanders over to his prize orchids, fingers them.

HELMS

As you know... that was unique. Not an operation as much as... an organic phenomenon. It grew, it changed shape, it developed...unsatiated, devouring appetites. (then) It's not uncommon in such cases that things are not committed to paper. That could be very... embarrassing.

Nixon is embarrassed, and does not like it. Suddenly, the beast is in the room.

HELMS (reminding him)

I for one saw to it my name was never connected to any of these operations.

On Nixon, waiting.

HELMS (fishing)

Diem? Trujillo? Lumumba? Guatemala? Cuba?... It's
a shame you didn't take similar precautions, *Dick*.

NIXON (very uncomfortable)

I'm interested in the documents that put your
people together with...the others. All of them...

A beat. This is the fastball. Helms pours himself a coffee.

HELMS

President Kennedy threatened to smash the CIA into
a thousand pieces. You could do the same...

NIXON

I'm not Jack Kennedy. Your agency is secure.

HELMS (stirs the coffee)

Not if I give you all the cards...

NIXON

I promised the American people peace with honor in Southeast Asia. That could take time, two, maybe three years... In the meantime, your agency will continue at current levels of funding.

HELMS (sips his coffee)

Current levels may not be sufficient.

NIXON

The President would support a reasonable request for an increase.

Helms smiles.

HELMS

And me?...

NIXON

Firing you, Mr. Helms, wouldn't do any good. Of course you'll continue as DCI. You're doing a magnificent job.

HELMS

Of course I accept. I'm flattered. And I want you to know I work for only one President at a time.

NIXON

Yes. And you will give General CUSHMAN full access.

HELMS (grudgingly accepts that)

It will take a little time but I'll order a search for your papers. Though it does raise a disturbing issue.

NIXON

What?

HELMS

Mister Castro.

NIXON (tense)

Yes.

HELMS

We have recent intelligence a Soviet nuclear submarine has docked at Cienfuegos.

NIXON

Well, we'll lodge a formal protest.

HELMS

I don't think we can treat this as a formality. Mister Kennedy made a verbal promise to the Russians not to invade Cuba. But you authorized Doctor Kissinger to put this *in writing*.

Nixon is taken aback by Helms' inside knowledge.

NIXON

Are you tapping Kissinger?

HELMS

My job, unpleasant sometimes, is to know what others don't want me to know.

NIXON (cold)

Not if you have spies in the White House it isn't your job.

HELMS

It is not my practice to spy on the President. Doctor Kissinger manages to convey his innermost secrets to the would at large on his own.

NIXON (absorbs this)

Mr. Helms, we've lived with Communism in Cuba for ten years.

HELMS

... but it has never been the policy of this Government to accept that. And it is certainly not CIA policy.

NIXON

CIA policy? The CIA has no policy, Mister Helms. Except what I dictate to you... (beat, they stare at each other) I try to adjust to the world as it is today, not as you or I wanted it to be ten years ago.

HELMS

Is that why you and Kissinger are negotiating with the Chinese?

A beat. Nixon stares.

HELMS

This is an extremely dangerous direction, Mister President. Terrible consequences can result from such enormous errors of judgement.

NIXON

But...if we were able to separate China from Russia once and for all, we can--we could create a balance of power that would secure the peace into the next century.

HELMS

By offering Cuba to the Russians as a consolation prize?

NIXON

Cuba would be a small price to pay.

HELMS

So President Kennedy thought.

A disturbing image suddenly appears in Nixon's mind -- KENNEDY with his head blown off in Dallas. Followed by an IMAGE of his own death. In a coffin.

The smell of the orchids in the room is overwhelming. Nixon feels himself dizzy.

NIXON

I never thought Jack was ready for the Presidency. But I would never, never consider... (then) His death was awful, an awful thing for this country. (then) Do you ever think of death, Mister Helms?

HELMS

Flowers are continual reminders of our mortality.
Do you appreciate flowers?

NIXON

No. They make me sick. They smell like death...I
had two brothers die young. But let me tell you,
there are worse things than death. There is such
a thing as evil.

HELMS

You must be familiar with my favorite poem by
Yeats? "The Second Coming"?

NIXON

No.

HELMS

Black Irishman. Very moving. "Turning and
turning in the widening gyre/The falcon cannot
hear the falconer/Things fall apart, the center
cannot hold/mere anarchy is loosed upon the world/
and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is
drowned/The best lack all conviction, while the
worst are full of passionate intensity"...but it
ends so beautifully ominous--"What rough beast,
its hour come round at last, slouches toward
Bethlehem to be born?"... Yes, this country stands
at such a juncture.

On Nixon, as we:

69 INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIXON BEDROOM - NIGHT

69

NIXON has just returned from a dinner party, his tuxedo
coming off, on the phone, a scotch in hand, in high spirits.
A series of JUMP CUTS of his phone self follows:

NIXON

It was sudden death, Bebe, but I think I kicked
Helms' ass. (laughs) Yeah and Kissinger's running
around like a scared chicken right now, he doesn't
know who's gonna grab his power, yeah...you should
see him. I call Haig, Kissinger shits! (laughs)

JUMP CUT TO:

NIXON (on phone)

Did you see the look on Hoover's face? He was redder than a beet. That little closet fairy's got no choice. He hates McGovern and Kennedy so much, he's got to love me. And Lyndon?

PAT enters, in a nightdress, smoking.

PAT

He looked old didn't he?

NIXON (hardly noticing)

I asked him, 'Lyndon, what would you do, on a scale of one to ten?' And he said, 'Bomb the shit out of Hanoi, boy! Bomb them where they live.'... John, do you think I was too soft on TV?...

JUMP CUT TO:

NIXON

Bob, I want to get on this energy thing tomorrow - we really have to rethink our needs to the end of the century. Let's do it at one. And don't forget the budget boys. I'm gonna carve the shit out of 'em. (beat) Well, no, clear the afternoon and tell Bebe I'll be in Key Biscayne by 4... No, alone...Pat's staying here with the girls.

Pat approaches, nuzzles him. She seems a little strange, tipsy... but sexy in her nightdress.

PAT

I'd like to go with you.

HALDEMAN (O.S.)

Hello?

NIXON (to Pat)

Uh, you should check with Bob... (to Bob) Listen, Bob I'll call you in the morning.

He hangs up, awkward.

NIXON

Hi, Buddy, what are you doing in here?

PAT

I've missed you.

NIXON (suspecting drink on her breath)

You okay?

PAT

Why don't we go down to Key Biscayne together? Just the two of us?

NIXON

Because... I have to relax.

PAT

...I was thinking tonight -- do you remember, Dick, do you remember when you used to drive me on dates with the other boys? You didn't want to let me out of your sight.

NIXON

Yeah, sure, a long time ago.

PAT

Yes, it's been a long time... (a signal given)

He recoils, embarrassed. A slight sweat.

NIXON

I don't need that, Buddy. I'm not Jack Kennedy.

PAT (rebuffed, distant)

No, you're not. So stop comparing yourself to him. You have no reason to... You have everything you ever wanted. You've earned it. Why can't you just enjoy it?

NIXON

I do. I do. In my own way.

PAT (cont'd)

Then what are you scared of, honey?

NIXON

I'm not scared, Buddy. (a pause) You don't understand. They're playing for keeps Buddy. The press, the kids, the liberals -- they're out there, trying to figure out how to tear me down.

PAT

They're all your enemies?

NIXON

Yes!

PAT

You personally?

NIXON

Yes! This is about me. Why can't you understand that, you of all people? It's not the war -- it's Nixon! They want to destroy Nixon! And if I expose myself even the slightest bit they'll tear my insides out. Do you want that? Do you want to see that, Buddy? It's not pretty.

PAT

Sometimes I think that's what you want.

NIXON

You've been drinking! What the hell are you saying? Jesus, you sound like them now!...

(a beat, quietly)

I've gotta keep fighting Buddy, for the country. These people running things, the elite...they're soft, chicken shit, faggots! They' don't have the long-term vision anymore. They just want to cover their ass or meet girls or tear each other down. Oh God, this country's in deep trouble, Buddy...and I have to see this through. Mother would've wanted no less of me....I'm sorry Buddy.

Pat stands, about to leave.

PAT

I just wish... you knew how much I love you, that's all. It took me a long time to fall in love with you, Dick. But I did. And it doesn't make you happy. You want *them* to love you...

Pat waves outward, indicating the world, the public.

NIXON (interjects)
No, I don't. I'm not Jack...

PAT
But they never will, Dick. No matter how many
elections you win, they never will.

She leaves. He is left in the middle of the room. He shuffles
to the phone, picks it up.

70 INT. WHITE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

70 *

NIXON (V.O.)
Manolo! Where the hell are you?

The lights come on, revealing MANOLO SANCHEZ, the valet, in
the doorway, wearing bathrobe and slippers.

MANOLO
I was asleep, Mister President. What can I get
you?

NIXON
Just... uh... you know.

MANOLO
Of course.

Manolo moves to a cabinet on the far side of the pantry.
Takes out a bottle of Chivas, puts ice into a tumbler.

NIXON
Do you miss Cuba, Manolo?

MANOLO
Yes, Mister President.

NIXON
We let you down, didn't we. Your people.

MANOLO
That was Mister Kennedy.

NIXON

You don't think he was a hero, do you?

Manolo pours Nixon a drink.

MANOLO (shrugs)

He was a politician.

NIXON (swallows the drink)

Did you cry when he died?

MANOLO

Yes.

NIXON

Why?

MANOLO

I don't know. (then) He made me see the stars...

NIXON (looks outside, to himself)

How did he do that? All those kids...why do they hate me so much?

71 EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - PRE-DAWN

71

NIXON gets out of the front of the Presidential LIMOUSINE.
MANOLO follows.

Nixon looks up: a surreal scene. The Lincoln Memorial has been turned into a pagan temple. FIRES burn on the broad marble steps, half-naked KIDS sleep on filthy blankets below the immense columns. Hendrix plays faintly on a portable radio. Nixon starts up the steps, picking his way among the sleeping forms.

He passes a GIRL, tripping, eyes closed, twirling a long scarf over her head. He stares at her, steps on a sleeping bag.

STUDENT ONE

Fuck, man. That's my fuckin' leg--

The BOY's jaw drops. Nixon towers over him. An apparition.

NIXON

You just go back to sleep now, young fella.

STUDENT ONE (rubs his eyes)

Whoa, this is some nasty shit...

Nixon reaches the top of the monument. Taped to one of the pillars is a poster: Nixon scowling and the motto "Would You Buy A Used Car From This Man?"

Nixon peers at it, moves inside. Nixon looks up at LINCOLN in the eerie firelight. Banners with peace signs have been draped over his shoulders, bunches of flowers between his fingers.

HALF A DOZEN of STUDENTS are talking among themselves. They see Nixon, stop. Stunned. Nixon strides toward them. *

NIXON
Hi, I'm Dick Nixon.

STUDENT TWO
You're shittin' me.

NIXON
Where you from?

STUDENT TWO
Syracuse.

NIXON
The Orangemen! Now there's a football program. Jim Brown. And that other tailback... The one with the blood disease...

STUDENT TWO
Ernie Davis.

NIXON
Right, right. I used to play a little ball myself at Whittier. (laughs nervously) Of course, they used me as a tackling dummy...

A self-possessed YOUNG WOMAN abruptly interrupts.

YOUNG WOMAN
We didn't come here to talk about football. We came here to end the war.

NIXON (chastened)
Yes, I understand that. *

Pause. Nobody responds.

NIXON
Probably most of you think I'm a real SOB. I know that. But I understand how you feel, I really do. I want peace too, but peace with honor. *

STUDENT THREE
What does that mean? *

NIXON

You can't have peace without a price. Sometimes
you have to be willing to fight for peace. And
sometimes to die.

STUDENT THREE

Tell that to the GI's who are going to die
tomorrow in Vietnam.

STUDENT TWO

What you have to understand, Mister Nixon, is that
we are willing to die for what we believe in.

NIXON (looks up at Lincoln)

That man up there lived in similar times. He had chaos and civil war and hatred between the races... Sometimes I go to the Lincoln Room at the White House and just pray. You know, the liberals act like idealism belongs to them but it's not true. My family went Republican because Lincoln freed the slaves! My grandmother was an abolitionist. It was Quakers who founded Whittier, my home town to abolish slavery! They were conservative Bible folk, but they had a powerful sense of right and wrong... Forty years ago I was looking, as you are now, for answers.

(then)

But you know, ending the war and cleaning up the air and the cities, feeding the poor -- my mother used to feed hobos stopping over at our house -- none of it is going to satisfy the spiritual hunger we all have, finding a meaning to this life...

HALDEMAN arrives with SEVERAL SECRET SERVICE AGENTS looking very worried. The crowd around Nixon has grown much larger. *

HALDEMAN *

Mister President!

NIXON

It's okay, Bob, we're just rapping, my friends and I. We actually agree on a lot of things... *

YOUNG WOMAN

No, we don't! You're full of shit! You say you want to end the war, so why don't you? My brother died over there last November. Why? What good was his death?

NIXON

I know. I know. I've seen a lot of kids die too, in World War II.

STUDENT TWO

Come on, man -- Vietnam ain't Germany. It doesn't threaten us. It's a civil war between Vietnamese.

NIXON

...but change always comes slowly. I've withdrawn more than half the troops. I'm trying to cut the military budget for the first time in 30 years. I want an all-volunteer army. But it's also a question of America's credibility, our position in the world...

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't want the war. We don't want the war. The Vietnamese don't want the war. So why does it go on?

Nixon hesitates, out of answers.

YOUNG WOMAN

Someone wants it... (a realization) You can't stop it, can you. Even if you wanted to. Because it's not you. It's the system. And the system won't let you stop it...

NIXON

There's a lot me at stake here than what you want. Or even what I want...

YOUNG WOMAN

Then what's the point? What's the point of being President? You're powerless.

The girl transfixes him with her eyes. Nixon feels it. The nausea of "the Beast" makes him reel. The students press on him from all sides.

NIXON (stumbling)

No. No. I'm not powerless. Because... because I understand the system. I believe I can control it. Maybe not control it totally. But...tame it enough to make it do some good.

YOUNG WOMAN

It sounds like you're talking about a wild animal.

NIXON

Maybe I am.

A silence. Nixon looks at her.

Haldeman and the SS MEN fill the succeeding beat of silence by moving Nixon off. He allows himself to be herded, waving absently to the protestors.

HALDEMAN

We really must go, Mister President. *

NIXON (to all)

Don't forget the most important thing in life is
your relationship with your Maker...

(over his shoulder to all)

Don't forget to be on God's side.

This doesn't go down well with the protestors. ("Bullshit!") *

As Nixon is led down the steps to the limousine:

NIXON

She got it, Bob. A 19 year-old college kid... *

HALDEMAN

What? *

NIXON

She understood something it's taken me twenty-five fucking years in politics to understand. The CIA, the Mafia, the Wall Street bastards...

HALDEMAN

Sir?

NIXON (climbing into the limo, mutters)
... "The Beast." A 19 year old kid. She understands the nature of "the Beast." She called it a wild animal.

The door closes. The LIMOUSINE is whisked away under searchlights and heavy security.

SUBTITLE READS: "JUNE, 1971 - A YEAR LATER"

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE --- The White House is still ringed. ARMED TROOPS patrol Pennsylvania Avenue. The BUSES are drawn up. SMOKE is in the air. The SOUNDS of cherry bombs going off. Signs that read: "End the war! Throw the facists out! Dick Nixon before he dicks you."

72 EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

72

Inside the barricades, a fairyland. A white lattice gazebo draped with flowers. TRICIA'S wedding is in preparation. GROUNDSKEEPERS and various PERSONNEL lay out the carpet to the altar.

73 INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

73

J. EDGAR HOOVER joins NIXON, pulling on his wedding tuxedo, at a window, looking out at the PROTESTORS. Intermittently, Hoover helps him with his clothes.

NIXON (musing)

There must be a quarter million out there, Edgar. They've been at it now for a year. Young kids just like Tricia. I don't know. Do you think they have a point, Edgar? Maybe this whole damned system of government is...

HOOVER (suspecting 'softness')

Remember what Lenin said in 1917, Mr. President: 'the power was lying in the streets just waiting for someone to pick it up!' The Communists have never been closer. Now is the time to go back to the old themes. The ones that made you President. Let the Communists know you're onto them.

NIXON(laughs)

The little bastards think they can ruin Tricia's
wedding by dancing naked in the Reflecting Pond.

HOOVER

Don't listen to 'em, don't quit. Remember --
Kennedy, Bobby and King were against the war.
Where are they now? Don't give 'em a goddamn inch
on the war. President Johnson bombed Laos for
years and nobody knew or said a thing. How the
hell the Times ever got a hold of this Ellsberg
stuff is a disgrace!

NIXON

We can't keep a goddamn secret in this government, Edgar. They're stealing papers right out of this office.

HOOVER

Johnson had the same damned problem till he bugged his own office.

NIXON (nods)

We took his system out.

HOOVER

That was a mistake. The White House was full of Kennedy people then. It still is.

NIXON

Who do you think is behind it?

HOOVER

Well, you have CIA people all over this place. Helms has seen to that.

(beat, Nixon remains poker-faced)

Then there's Kissinger's staff. Kissinger himself I believe may be the leaker.

NIXON (stunned)

Kissinger?

HOOVER

He's obsessed with his own image. He wants his Nobel Peace Prize a little too much. As the late 'Doctor' King proved -- even an ape can win a prize with good press.

NIXON

Jesus, I'd like to book him into a psychiatrist's office. He comes in here ranting and raving, dumping his crap all over the place... Could you prove it, Edgar?

HOOVER

I always get my man.

NIXON

Yeah, you do. (then) I'd be bugging myself, Edgar... Who'd get the tapes?

HOOVER

No one. Your property. It would prove your case. Why do you think Kissinger's taping your calls? For history. His word against yours--and right now he's got the records.

Nixon is stung by the comparison, fussing with his bowtie.
Hoover helps him.

*
*

NIXON

This damned tie, will you help me Edgar? (then) Churchill used to say to me, 'If you want your own history written properly, you must write it yourself'...(walking out) All right, Edgar, but just don't let it come back and haunt me.

HOOVER (a reminder)

It won't. As long as I'm here.

Nixon absent-mindedly shows Hoover through a small door into his BATHROOM...There is an awkward pause, as both men are too proud to pretend they are cramped in this place together. Hoover clears his throat and exits the regular door. As we hear the Love Theme from "Doctor Zhivago":

CUT TO:

74 INT. EAST ROOM - DAY

74

The White House GUARDS wear German comic opera uniforms including tall cylindrical hats with beaks. We see champagne, white lace, the MUSICIANS wearing morning coats. HOOVER and TOLSON are together, very happy. To the sound of wedding MUSIC, NIXON takes a turn with his daughter TRICIA in gown. He has never seemed happier.

NIXON

I am very proud of you today, princess. Very.

When one of the GROOMSMEN cuts in, Nixon asks several OTHERS to dance. He retreats to JULIE's side. Julie says something sweet but unheard to him.

PAT is at a window, upset, looking out at the PROTESTORS as Julie comes over to get her.

JULIE

Come on, mother, join the... (sees her look)
What's the matter?

PAT

We're just not going to buckle to these people.

Pat puts on her party face and rejoins the crowd.

75 INT. WHITE HOUSE - CABINET ROOM - DAY (1971) - RAIN

75

CABINET MEMBERS chat, lean back in their chairs, smoking -- as NIXON suddenly erupts into the room, a focused fury on his face. He sits, slams The New York Times down. CLCSE -- we can make out the words "Pentagon Papers."

NIXON

Gentlemen, we've had our last damned leak! This is no way to run a goddamn government. We're going to prosecute the hell out of Ellsberg and anyone else who wants to leak. And that means any one of you who crosses the line, I'm personally going after him...

INTERCUTTING among the faces -- KISSINGER predominant. Nixon glances in his direction, pauses on him.

NIXON

The permissiveness of this era is over. The belts are coming off and people are gonna be taken to the woodshed. The government cannot survive with a counter-government inside it. I know how traitors operate--I've dealt with them all my life. This bullshit to the effect--some stenographer did it--that's never the case. It's never the little people--little people do not leak. It's always a sonufabitch like Ellsberg who leaks! The Harvard boys with the private agendas who wanna be heros.

Nixon grabs the paper, shakes it.

NIXON

Ellsberg did this "for the good of the country". I suppose you've never heard that one before. Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs said the same damn crap, and you know what happened to them? They've always underestimated Nixon, the intellectuals. Well, we're gonna let them know we can fight just as dirty. This is sudden death, gentlemen. We're gonna get 'em on the ground, stick in our spikes and twist, show 'em no mercy!

Nixon looks around the room. The Cabinet Members are stunned.

NIXON

This administration is a goddamn disaster. We got bums out there at the gates. We've got 38 of 40 pieces of our domestic legislation defeated in Congress. Unless we turn things around, we'll all be looking for jobs next year.

(then)

Starting today, nobody in this room talks to the press without clearing it first with Haldeman. That means a complete freeze on the New York Times, CBS, Jack fucking Anderson and the Washington Post! From now on, Haldeman is the Lord High Executioner. So don't you come whining to me when he tells you to do something. That's me talking. And if you come to me, I'll be tougher than he is. Anybody tries to screw us, his head comes off. Good day, gentlemen...

He walks out, leaving them stunned and silent.

HALDEMAN

Well, I guess that's it for today's meeting...

76 INT. POULTRY PROCESSING PLANT - MIAMI - NIGHT

76

A chicken's head flies off. The CUBAN CROWD is going crazy as a FIGHTING COCK is moving in for the kill. The ring is surrounded by impromptu bleachers, the walls lined with metal cages filled with chickens. The slaughterhouse is adjacent.

HOWARD HUNT stands at the edge of the crowd, holding a greasy wrapper of churos, as the fight ends.

Cheers and groans. Fistfuls of money are exchanged.

FRANK STURGIS turns from the ring makes his way to Hunt, hands him a twenty.

STURGIS

How the fuck did you know?

HUNT

Injections. Even this noble sport's been fixed.

(pockets the twenty)

Seen the guys?

STURGIS

They're around.

Sturgis snags a piece of the churro, swallows it.

STURGIS

Why, you got a customer?

HUNT
The White House.

STURGIS (stops)
You're fucking me.

HUNT
We're gonna be plumbers, Frank. We're gonna plug leaks.

STURGIS
Who we working for?

HUNT
A guy named Gordon Liddy. Thinks he's Martin Borman. You wanna meet him? (He motions).

GORDON LIDDY comes out of the edges of the crowd, shakes hands with Sturgis.

HUNT
Gordon Liddy... Frank Sturgis.

They turn the handshake into a parallel of the cock fight, iron grips subtly crushing the other's hand.

LIDDY (after they break)
Y'ever put your hand over a fire?
(pulls out a zippo lighter)

HUNT
That's okay, Gordon (motions him off).

As Liddy drifts off.

STURGIS
Where'd you find him?

HUNT
Just don't tell him to do anything you don't want him to do.

STURGIS
So does Tricky Dick know about this?

HUNT
I won't tell him if you won't.

The HANDLERS throw TWO NEW FIGHTING COCKS into the ring. They start to rip at each other.

HUNT (chewing on his churo)
The claws are out, Frank.

77 INT. FIELDING PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT (1971)

77

As seen before. A GLASS shatters, a CROWBAR jacks open the door marked: "Dr. Lewis J. Fielding, Pschiatrist."

NIXON (V.O.)

History will never be the same.

Cabinets full of pills are overturned. The disguised HUNT and LIDDY with the three CUBANS go to work. A FILE FOLDER is ripped from a cabinet. In the flashlight beam, the file reads "Daniel Ellsberg." A VOICE calls out, "Howard, I got it!".

*
*

NIXON (V.O.)

We've taken a step into the future. We have changed the world.

*

"America the Beautiful" MUSIC takes us into:

78 INT. MAO-TSE-TUNG'S OFFICE - BEIJING - DAY (1972)

78

SUBTITLE READS -- "FEBRUARY 1972"

NIXON beams, standing under a huge red flag bearing the hammer and sickle. The "America" theme is being played on traditional Chinese instruments as CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHERS are allowed to take stiff portraits. The MEN chit chat.

NIXON

... I must say you look very good, Mister Chairman.

MAO

Looks can be deceiving...

NIXON

...We know you've taken a great risk in inviting us here.

MAO stares at Nixon and replies in Chinese, which the INTERPRETER repeats:

MAO (half smiles)

I took no risk. I'm too old to be afraid of what anyone thinks.

Nixon forces a rigid smile as they move to chairs.

TIME CUT TO:

MAO and NIXON are seated in armchairs opposite each other, KISSINGER and CHOU EN LAI to either side of Mao. An INTERPRETER between. In media res:

MAO

Don't ever trust them. They never tell the truth or honor their commitments. Vietnamese are like Russians. Both are dogs.

NIXON (clears his throat)

Mister Chairman, there is an old saying: 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.'

MAO (smiles)

That has the added virtue of being true.

Mao doesn't seem to be taking any of this too seriously; in fact, he seems a little medicated.

KISSINGER

You know, Mister Chairman, at Harvard I used your writings in my class.

MAO

What a waste of time. My writings means absolutely nothing.

KISSINGER

But your writings have changed the world, Mister Chairman.

MAO

Fung pi! (Bullshit!) I've only managed to change a few things around the city of Beijing. (then: to Kissinger) I want to know your secret. *

KISSINGER

Secret, Mister Chairman?

MAO

How a fat man gets so many girls? *

Mao howls at his own joke.

KISSINGER

Power, Mister Chairman is the ultimate aphrodisiac. (laughter)

MAO (turns to Nixon)

You know I voted for you in your last election.

NIXON (self-effacing)

I was the lesser of two evils.

A moment. Mao levels a gaze at him, deadly serious.

MAO

You're too modest, Nixon. You're as evil as I am. We're both from poor families. But others pay to feed the hunger in us. We're the new emperors. In my case, millions of reactionaries. In your case, millions of Vietnamese. *

NIXON (taken aback)

Civil war is always the cruelest kind of war.

MAO

The real war is in us. (then)
History is a symptom of our disease.

CUT FORWARD TO:

79 DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- The BOMBING of HANOI... SUBTITLE READS79
CHRISTMAS 1972...Hundreds of B-52 strikes, bombs pouring over
the city.

REPORTER (V.O. BBC accent)

In a surprise Christmas bombing to Hanoi,
President Nixon today delivered more tonnage than
was used at Dresden in World War Two..It is
without doubt the most brutal bombing in American
history.

CROSSCUT:

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE -- 1. HANOI -- the devastation of the
city. It's on fire. Bodies are being carried from a collapsed
HOSPITAL. 2. The USA -- in contrast, shots by the media of
Christmas trees (Rockefeller Center, etc.); families
shopping; a children's choir singing "Gloria in Excelsis
Deo."

REPORTERS (V.O.)

...This Christmas bombing has shaken up the Paris
peace talks and created a huge amount of criticism
across the globe. Newspapers are calling it a
"Stone Age tactic," and Nixon a "maddened tyrant"
... Nixon's only response: 'When the Vietnamese
take the peace talks seriously, I'll stop.'

STOCK FOOTAGE --moving through a bank of clouds towards the
sun.

80 INT. AIR FORCE ONE - MAIN CABIN - SUNSET (1972) 80 *

NIXON is looking out the window, PAT next to him. HALDEMAN
and EHRlichman are out of earshot. *

PAT

Penny for your thoughts?

NIXON

Is that adjusted for inflation?

(she laughs)

Think of the life Mao's led. In '52 I called him a
monster. Now he could be our most important ally.

(then)

Only Nixon could've done that.

PAT

You're a long way from Whittier.

A beat. He shares her look.

NIXON
Yes... yes, I am.

Pat puts her hand on his hand.

PAT
Congratulations, Dick.

NIXON (smiles)
How am I going to break this to Bob Hope?

KISSINGER walks into the cabin.

KISSINGER
We've got the Russians where we want them! They're calling us. We will have a SALT treaty with them this year.

HALDEMAN
In time for the election? Brezhnev's tough. He knows McGovern's right on our ass...

KISSINGER
He doesn't have a choice! He has to shift missiles from Europe to the Chinese border. With one stroke, the balance of power moves completely in our favor. This is a coup, Mister President!

EHRlichMAN
For you, Henry? Nobel Peace Prize, maybe... (sees the look on Nixon's face)

NIXON
Not for the Pentagon it isn't. I'm kissing Mao's ass. And the press is gonna find some way to shaft Nixon on this one. *

PAT
It's not the press that matters. Nixon's wife is proud of him.

He squeezes her hand.

HALDEMAN
And his staff. Come on, the copy they were filing from China was great. *

NIXON
Wait till the mai-tais wear off.

EHRlichMAN
The country's loving it.

NIXON

The hard-core four million "Nixon nuts" aren't gonna go for it.... They'll say I sold out to the Communists.

KISSINGER

You'll pick up the middle on this one -- the Jews and Negroes.

NIXON

Jews and Negroes don't win elections, Henry. Better to hang them around Democrat necks.

HALDEMAN

The Jews aren't the middle, Henry. They're the far left.

NIXON

You're talking too much about black Africa, Henry. It's killing us with the rednecks. *

HALDEMAN

The blacks are lost, the schwartzas are gone...

NIXON

Don't let it lose us the right-wing vote...

A silence as the sour notes depress everyone.

NIXON (feeling the deflation)

Hey, I sound like my father now. Let's have a drink!

Pat smiles. ZIEGLER pokes his head in.

ZIEGLER

Mr. President, the press guys asked if you could come back for a minute. *

NIXON

The hell with 'em. *

KISSINGER

I'll go back, Mister President.

Everyone glares at Henry.

ZIEGLER

No, they want you, Mister President. I really think it would be a good move.

Nixon puts aside his drink, gets up.

NIXON

Gentlemen, I go now to discover the exact length,
width and depth of the shaft.

'81 INT. AIR FORCE ONE - PRESS CABIN - SUNSET

81

NIXON closes the door behind him, turns.

DOZENS of REPORTERS stand, burst into applause.

He is momentarily stunned, then he moves down the aisle.
Shaking hands. The reporters continue applauding. Nixon, for
once, is deeply moved. On the sound of applause, we:

CUT TO:

82 EXT. JONES RANCH - TEXAS - DAY (MAY, 1972)

82

REPORTER VOICE

J. Edgar Hoover is dead at 77 years old. The legendary crime-buster served his country as Director of the FBI for almost half a century, from 1924 to 1972. *

An enormous BRAHMA BULL, red-eyed snorting, thrashing viciously against the reinforced walls of its pen. NIXON and JACK JONES watch as SECRET SERVICE hover nearby.

JONES (V.O.)

There's two kinds of bulls, Dick. Your good bull and your bad bull. This here's a bad bull. You piss him off, he'll kill everything in his path. Only way to stop him is shoot him.

A WRANGLER climbs carefully into the chute. The Brahma lunges for him.

JONES

Eddie, you be damned careful with that beast. His nuts are worth a helluva lot more'n yours.

He leads Nixon down the steps.

JONES (cagy)

So what's this about, Dick?

NIXON

It's me or Wallace, Jack. Wallace's third party is only going to help McGovern. I need your support.

JONES

Well, you sure been chock full of surprises so far, "Mister President".

83 INT. JONES RANCH - LIVING ROOM - DAY (1972)

83

NIXON and HALDEMAN are standing by the hearth. The years have gone by but in different clothing and hairstyles, it is much the same group of a DOZEN BUSINESSMEN gathered round, drinking Jack Daniels and smoking cigars. Among them we recognize THE CUBAN, MITCH. It's heated.

JONES

It looks like to me we're gonna lose a war for the first goddamn time and, Dick goddamit, you're going along with it, buying into this Kissinger bullshit -- "detente" with the Communists. "Detente" -- it sounds like two fags dancing.

NIXON

Jack, we're not living in the same country you and I knew in '46. Our people are just not gonna sacrifice in major numbers for war. We can't even get 'em to accept cuts in their gas tanks, hell, the Arabs and the Japanese are bleeding the shit outta of our gold...

JONES

And whose fault is that? If we'd won in Vietnam...

NIXON

It's nobody's fault, Jack. It's change -- which is a fact of history. Even that old cocksucker Hoover's dead. Things change.

*
*

An uncomfortable silence. A servant brings coffee to Nixon but Haldeman cuts him off. No one gets close to his guy.

MITCH

So...how's the food over there in China, Mister Nixon?

NIXON

Delicious, if you're President. (nervous laughter)

MITCH

What are you going to do about this Allende fellow nationalizing our businesses in Chile? You gonna send Kissinger down there?

NIXON

We're gonna get rid of him -- Allende, I mean -- just as fast as we can. He's on top of the list.

MITCH

How about Kissinger along with him?

NIXON

Kissinger's misunderstood, he acts like a liberal for his establishment friends, but he's even tougher than I...

CUBAN

So Kissinger stays. Just like Castro, Mister Nixon?

NIXON

Yeah, he stays...

An uncomfortable silence. Jones walks closer to Nixon.

JONES

Desi's got a point. What the hell we gonna do about the Communists right here in our backyard!

NIXON

What do you really mean, Jack?

JONES

I mean I got federal price controls on my oil. The ragheads are beating the shit out of me. And I got your EPA environment agency with its thumb so far up my ass it's scratching my ear.

HALDEMAN

Gentlemen, I think it's about time for us to be getting to the airport.

NIXON

Let him finish, Bob.

JONES

...And now I got a federal judge ordering me to bus my kids halfway cross town to go to school with some nigger kids. I think, Mr. President, you're forgetting who put you where you are.

NIXON

The American people put me where I am.

Jones smirks. They all smirk. A dreadful moment.

JONES

Really? Well, that can be changed.

Dead silence. Nixon moves closer to Jones.

NIXON

Jack, I've learned politics is the art of compromise. I learned it the hard way. I don't know if you have. And I tell you what Jack...If you don't like it, there's an election in November. And you can take your money out into the open, give it to Wallace.. How 'bout it Jack? Are you willing to do that? Hand this country over to some poet pansy socialist like George McGovern?

Nixon is right in Jones's face now.

NIXON

Because if you're uncomfortable with the EPA up your ass, try the IRS...

JONES

Well, goddamn, are you threatening me, Dick?

NIXON (softly)

Presidents don't threaten. They don't have to. (then) Good day, gentlemen.

As he walks out with Haldeman, there is a stone silence.

84 EXT. TEXAS LANDSCAPE - DAY

84

As the PRESIDENTIAL CAR pulls away in a three-car entourage, we hear:

REPORTERS (V.O.)

...With George Wallace out of the race, paralyzed
by an assassin's bullet, Richard Nixon has crushed
George McGovern in the 1972 Presidential election.
It is the second biggest landslide in American
history, but...

*
*

85 EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE)

85

The plane flying through clouds. A royal feeling.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

...the Democrats have increased their majority in the House and the Senate. As the new term begins, there is mounting evidence of strong hostility to President Nixon's mandate for a "new American Revolution". However, it does not seem the Watergate investigations have, up to now, damaged Nixon politically in any significant way...

86 INT. AIR FORCE ONE -- PRESIDENT'S CABIN - NIGHT

86

NIXON looks out the window, turns to HALDEMAN next to him making notes on his ubiquitous clipboard. ZIEGLER is nearby.

NIXON

You know they all miss the point. Probably our biggest achievement as an Administration, when it's all said and done, isn't China or Russia. It's pulling out of Vietnam without a right-wing revolt.

HALDEMAN

I believe you're right, boss.

NIXON

...but even the Presidency isn't enough anymore...

HALDEMAN

Sir?

NIXON

The Presidency by itself won't protect us, Bob. We're beyond politics now...

Haldeman is puzzled. EHRLICHMAN enters the cabin, excited, extending a cable. He is followed by long-haired JOHN DEAN.

EHRLICHMAN

Sir, just in from Paris -- the Vietnamese have accepted Henry's peace proposal. The bombing worked! They're caving.

Nixon reads Kissinger's cable, but he doesn't express any happiness.

HALDEMAN (excited)

Congratulations, boss (handshake offered) -- a great victory! The madman theory wasn't so crazy after all.

NIXON (to himself)

This could be it, this could be it... four long years...

EHRlichman

Henry's on his way back to meet us. He wants to make sure he gets in all the photographs. Incidentally...maybe this isn't the right time but...uh you should know... Bill Sullivan over at the FBI got back to us with his report on Kissinger.

Nixon looks up, interested.

EHRlichman (nods)

Yeah... Sullivan thinks Henry's leaking. He's the one...

HALDEMAN

Yeah, I knew it. I knew it from '69 on, and I said it all along, didn't I... *

Nixon's expression changes totally, narrowing, cold.

NIXON

No, you didn't, Bob...

EHRlichman

Looks like he talked to Joe Kraft... and to the Times. Told them he was dead set against the bombing and that you were... 'unstable'. Claims he has to handle you "with kid gloves"...

Waiting on Nixon who goes into some inner state alone, dark brows furrowing with built-up rage.

HALDEMAN (his darker side emerging)

So that explains his press notices. Working both sides of the fence, Jewboy Henry, always trying to get his Nobel Prize, get laid...

NIXON (in his own world)

My god, my god! He talked to the New York Times? *

HALDEMAN

We ought to fire his whining kike ass. Right now when he's on top. You know what -- it'll set the right example for the rest of this Administration. *

EHRlichman

I would personally enjoy doing that, sir.

NIXON (complicated)

No. No. He's our only 'star' right now. He'd go crying straight to the press. He'd crucify us -- the sonofabitch!... (lethal) Get someone from on our staff on his ass. Tap his phones. I want to know everyone he talks to. *

HALDEMAN

Then we'll see how long the Kissinger mystique lasts.

In a foul mood now, paranoia setting in like a storm cloud on his face, Nixon shifts back to Dean, who is scared of this Nixon and tries to pacify him.

NIXON

So, what about those Watergate clowns, John? This fucking Sirica's crazy. Thirty five year sentence! There were no weapons. Right? No injuries, there was no success! It's just ridiculous.

DEAN

Sirica's just trying to force one of them to testify. But they're solid.

NIXON

Then what about this Washington Post crap? Woodward and Fernstein? (Ziegler corrects him, "Bernstein") Who the fuck are they?

(to Haldeman)

Bob, are you working on revoking the Post's television license? (Haldeman nods, "Yes sir, I am") Good.

DEAN

Well, they're trying to connect Bob and John to a secret fund but they don't have much.

HALDEMAN (with a look to Ehrlichman)

They don't have anything on us.

DEAN

The FBI's feeding me all their reports. I didn't think you should lose anymore sleep on it, sir.

NIXON (mutters, relieved)

Good man, John, good man.

They all fall silent, feeling that false sense of security as the sound of the jet engines takes over. Suddenly, there is an air pocket and they rock back and forth.

87 INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESS CONFERENCE - EAST ROOM - DAY

87

SUBTITLE READS: JANUARY 1973

NIXON is concluding his statement to the PRESS, HALDEMAN in the background with ZIEGLER.

NIXON

...I can therefore announce that our long and tragic involvement in Vietnam is at an end. Our mission is accomplished, we have a cease-fire, our prisoners of war are coming back, and South Vietnam has the right to determine its own future. We have peace with honor.

The REPORTERS are immediately on their feet. A MONTAGE of QUICK CUTS follows to give the impression of a hostile and never-ending barrage of questions without satisfactory answers.

REPORTER 1 ("Dan Rather" type)

Sir, isn't it true little has been achieved in this peace agreement that the Communists have not

REPORTER 1 (cont'd)
been offering since 1969? That in fact your
Administration has needlessly prolonged the war
and at certain stages has escalated it to new
levels of violence?

JUMP TO:

REPORTER 2 ("Leslie Stahl" type)
 Mister President, what is your reaction to James McCord's statement that high White House officials were involved in the Watergate break-in?

JUMP TO:

REPORTER 3 ("Sam Donaldson" type)
 Sir, the Washington Post is reporting that Mister Haldeman and Ehrlichman have secretly dispersed up to \$900,000 in campaign funds. Is there any truth to that?

NIXON (snaps)
 I've said before and I'll say again, I will not respond to the charges of the "Washington Post" nor will I comment on a matter that's currently before the courts.

REPORTER 4
 Do you intend to cooperate with Senator Ervin's committee?

REPORTER 5
 Will you agree to the appointment of a special prosecutor?

The questions flood in. Nixon is overwhelmed. He gathers his papers and starts to move off. A darkly funny thing happens. ZIEGLER wanders into his path, almost colliding. Nixon, pissed, grabs Ziegler by the shoulders, and spins him back towards the REPORTERS, and pushes him at them. Ziegler stumbles, looks confused.

88 INT. OVAL OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - DAY (1973)

88

NIXON storms into his office, picking up an ashtray and hurling it across the room -- it shatters against a wall. Everyone in the room with him -- KISSINGER, HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN -- stunned.

NIXON
 I end the longest war in American history and they keep harping on this chickenshit! You know who's behind this, don't you -- it's Teddy Kennedy! He drowns a broad in his car and he can't run for President.

EHRlichman

He got pretty burned at Chappaquidick.

NIXON

My point exactly! Somebody had to die before his shit got in the papers! Fucking Kennedys get away with everything. Do you see me screwing everything that moves?

(then)

It's those dirty rotten Jews from New York that are behind it!

Kissinger blanches nervously.

NIXON

For chrissake! I did what The New York Times editorial page said we should do! I ended the war, I got Salt One with the Russians, I opened China! So why are these cocksuckers turning on me! Because they don't like the way I look! Where I went to school.

HALDEMAN

Because they're not Americans.

NIXON

Right. They don't trust! They don't trust America!

HALDEMAN (venting with him)

Why would they! Who the hell's Sulzberger anyway? Their parents are gold traders from Eastern Europe. They buy things. They come here to Jew York City and they buy up things. One of the things they buy is The New York Times (glares at Kissinger), And you know what -- be proud because they'll never trust you, sir, because we speak for the average American.

Ehrlichman shares a look with Kissinger as Nixon and Haldeman feed into each other.

NIXON

You know why they're turning on me? They're not serious about power, that's why. They're playing with power. They're forgetting the national interest. In the old days, people knew how to hold power, how to set limits. They wouldn't have torn this country apart over a third-rate burglary. All they care about now are their egos, looking good at cocktail parties...

HALDEMAN

...beating out the other papers, chasing girls...

NIXON

...worrying whether someone said something "nice" about them, all short term frivolous bullshit, Ben Bradlee worrying about Teddy Kennedy liking him...

Kissinger tries to get the focus back.

KISSINGER

Mr. President, I feel we're drifting toward oblivion here. We're playing a totally reactive game; we've got to get ahead of the ball.

KISSINGER (cont'd)

(pause, in an embarrassed voice)

We all know you're clean...Right? So let's do a housecleaning. Take the gloves off.

Haldeman shares a look with Ehrlichman. Is he referring to them? Nixon turns slowly on Kissinger, cryptic. *

NIXON

Housecleaning? It would be ugly, Henry, really ugly... *

KISSINGER

But it must be done; your government is paralyzed.

NIXON

All kinds of shit would come out. Like the Ellsberg thing. You knew about that Henry, didn't you? *

KISSINGER (vague)

I...I heard something...it sounded idiotic.

NIXON

Idiotic? Yes, I suppose it was.

EHRlichman

But you're the one who said we should expose him as some kind of sex fiend. Someone took you literally. *

KISSINGER (stung and suddenly knowledgeable)

I never suggested for some *imbeciles* to go break into a psychiatrist's office. How stupid of... *

NIXON

That doesn't fucking matter, Henry. The point is, you might lose some of your media darling halo' if the media starts sniffing around our dirty laundry. *

KISSINGER (indignant)

I had nothing to do with that, sir, and I resent any implication... *

NIXON

Resent it all you want, Henry, but you're in with the rest of us. Cambodia, Ellsberg, the wiretaps you put in. The President wants you to know you can't just click your heels and head back to Harvard Yard. It's your ass too, Henry, and it's in the wind twisting with everyone else's. *

A stony silence. The men, all clenched jaws, wait.
Kissinger icily, clicks his heels and withdraws.

KISSINGER (at the door)
Mister President, it is possible for even a
President to go too far.

NIXON
Yeah...

Nixon laughs maniacally. JOHN DEAN crosses in as Kissinger
exits. Dean closes the door behind him.

HALDEMAN
You played it perfect, sir -- cocksucker! He's
going to think twice before he leaks again.

NIXON (exultant)
He'll be looking in his toilet bowl every time he
pulls the chain.

They laugh madly, like hatters at a tea party.

DEAN (worried)
Mister President. Hunt wants more money. Another
hundred and thirty thousand.

NIXON
Son of a bitch. *

DEAN
He says if he doesn't get it right away, he's
gonna blow us out of the water. And he means it.
Ever since his wife died in the plane crash, he's
been over the edge.

NIXON
Pay him. Pay him what he wants. *

HALDEMAN
We've got to turn the faucet off on this thing.
It's out of control (as he crosses Dean, sotto
voice)... You might burden just me with this in
the future.

NIXON
It's Helms, it's got to be.

HALDEMAN
We could leverage Helms.

NIXON
How?

HALDEMAN
When I met with him, he said...

89 INT. CIA - HELMS OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

89

HELMS sitting across from HALDEMAN.

HALDEMAN

...this entire affair, the President wants you to know, is related to the Bay of Pigs, and if it opens up...

Helms grips the arms of his chair and leans forward, excitably, and yells at Haldeman.

HELMS

The Bay of Pigs had nothing to do with this! I have no concern about the Bay of Pigs!!

Haldeman is shocked by Helms' violent reaction, but very cool.

HALDEMAN

This is what the President told me to relay to you, Mister Helms.

HELMS (settling back)

All right...

BACK TO:

90 INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1973)

90

RESUME SCENE -- HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN, DEAN and NIXON.

HALDEMAN (fishing)

...I was wondering what's such dynamite in this Bay of Pigs story? (Nixon stares, nothing)...although it was clearly effective because all of a sudden, it was no problem for Helms to go to the FBI and try to put a lid on Watergate.

NIXON

What about the documents he promised?

HALDEMAN

He'll give us the documents. (then) But I think he should be offered an ambassadorship to Iran. Then he'll go without a whimper.

Nixon stares at him, distracted.

NIXON

I promised Iran to Townsend.

HALDEMAN

Put Townsend in Belgium, it's available.

NIXON

Townsend gave us 300 grand. Belgium's not worth
more than 100, 150...

EHRlichMAN

What about England!

NIXON

Forget it. Annenberg's paid three times that much...

HALDEMAN

Helms wants Iran or there might be problems. All his old CIA buddies are over there making a fortune off the Shah. *

NIXON

For God's sake, when does this end!

DEAN (suddenly)

Executive clemency...

NIXON

What?

DEAN

Hunt has nothing to lose now. Pardon all of them. Nobody's going to investigate a crime for which the criminals have already been pardoned.

NIXON

I like that. That's a solution.

EHRlichMAN

It'll never wash. Pardoning them means we're all guilty. The people, the press will go nuts.

NIXON

And what am I supposed to do? Just sit here and watch them coming closer? Eating their way to the center. (paces) Lyndon bugged! So did Kennedy! FDR cut a deal with Lucky Luciano. Christ, even Ike had a mistress! What's so special about me? What about Lyndon? He could make a couple of calls to the Hill and shut this whole thing down. Did anyone talk to him? *

HALDEMAN (hesitant)

I did. He hit the roof. No dice. He says if you come out with the story about how he bugged your plane, he's going to reveal... (he looks at Ehrlichman and Dean, pauses) *

We CUT ACROSS the room from Ehrlichman's point of view as Haldeman whispers the rest of the message in Nixon's ear.

Nixon's face goes ashen.

NIXON (low key)
All right...all right.

He walks to the window.

NIXON (to himself)
I don't know. I don't know... I just know we've
made too many enemies.

EHRlichMAN
Sir, Bob and I are gonna have to testify before
Ervin's Committee.

NIXON
No, you're not! You're going to claim executive
privilege and you're going to stonewall it all the
way -- plead the Fifth Amendment. I don't give a
shit. They can't force the President's people to
testify.

EHRlichMAN
Executive privilege will make it look like we're
covering up.

NIXON
We are covering up! For some petty, stupid shit.
(then) There are things I can say when other
people say them, they'd be lies...but when I say
them nobody believes me anyway...

Pause. A look between Haldeman and Ehrlichman, puzzled.

DEAN
Then we're going to have to give them Mitchell.

Nixon turns, stunned.

NIXON
Mitchell? Mitchell's... family.

DEAN
Either it goes to Mitchell or it comes here.

Nixon looks like he's been punched in the stomach.

HALDEMAN (softly)
John's right. It's not personal, boss. It's just
the way the game is played. Sometimes you got the
punt.

Nixon looks out the window. Suddenly, he looks very old and
very tired in the gray Washington light.

NIXON
Jesus, I'm so goddamn worn out with this...

91 INT. WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

91

HALDEMAN and EHRLICHMAN leave the President's office. They're pensive, on the move. They come to a huddle next to a window in an isolated alcove.

EHRlichman
Who's gonna tell Mitchell?

HalDEMAN
You do it.

EHRlichman
Why me?

HalDEMAN
Cause he hates you. It's worse when you get it
from someone you trust.

EHRlichman
He's wrong, you know--about Kennedy, LBJ, Truman.

HalDEMAN
How so?

EHRlichman
Sure, they did stuff, but nothing like this Bob --
forget Watergate, the break-ins, the enemies'
list. You got an attempted firebombing at the
Brookings Institution, planting McGovern stuff on
the guy that shot Wallace...trying to slip LSD to
Jack Anderson. *

HalDEMAN
The 'Old Man' plays politics harder than anybody
else.

EHRlichman
You think this is just about politics?

They go inanimate as a White House STAFFER passes.

EHRlichman (privately)
You think LBJ would ever have asked Hunt to forge
a cable implicating John Kennedy in the
assassination of the President of Vietnam?
(whispering fiercely)
How long have you know him Bob? Twenty years?
(then)
You ever shake hands with him? You ever have a
real conversation with him? We don't have a clue
what's going on inside that man. And look what
we're doing for him...

Ehrlichman glances around to make sure no one is listening.
He leans close.

EHRlichman
This is about Richard Nixon. You got people dying
because he didn't make the varsity football team.

EHRlichman (cont'd)

You got the Constitution hanging by a thread because the 'Old Man' went to Whittier and not to Yale.

(then)

And what the hell is this "Bay of Pigs" thing he goes white every time it gets mentioned?

Haldeman, more bothered than he pretends, looks around.

HALDEMAN

It's a code or something.

EHRlichman

Shit, I figured that out.

HALDEMAN (low whisper)

I think he means the Kennedy assassination.

EHRlichman

Yeah?

HALDEMAN

They went after Castro. In some crazy way it got turned on Kennedy. I don't think the "P" knows what happened. But he's afraid to find out. It's got him shitting peach pits.

*
*
*

EHRlichman

Christ, we created Frankenstein with those fucking Cubans.

Haldeman sighs, lets his guard down.

HALDEMAN

Eight words back in '72 -- "I covered up. I was wrong. I'm sorry." -- and the American public would've forgiven him. But we never opened our mouths, John, we failed him.

EHRlichman

Dick Nixon saying "I'm sorry?" That'll be the day. The whole suit of armor'd fall off.

HALDEMAN

So you tell Mitchell...

92 EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. BRIDGE - NIGHT

92

JOHN DEAN stands at the center of the bridge, looks down at the Potomac.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Lyndon Johnson passed away today at 74 -- one of the most tragic of American Presidents...

HUNT (O.S.)
You're early John.

Dean jumps. Turns. HOWARD HUNT is standing behind him.

DEAN
I was sorry to hear about your wife.

HUNT (a look)
Yes...I got the money.

DEAN
The President would like to know if that was the last payment.

HUNT
I'll bet he would.

DEAN
Is it?

HUNT (a beat)
In Richard Nixon's long history of underhanded dealings he has never gotten better value for his money. If I were to open my mouth, all the dominoes would fall.

Hunt starts to walk away.

DEAN
Can I ask you a question?

Hunt turns.

DEAN
How the hell do you have the temerity to blackmail the President of the United States?

HUNT
That's not the question, John. The question is: why is he paying?

DEAN
To protect his people.

HUNT
I'm one of his people. The Cubans are his people. And we're going to jail for him.

DEAN
Howard, you'll serve no more than two years, then he'll pardon you.

HUNT (smiles)

Maybe, maybe not. You don't leave your men on the beach, John. You don't make 'em beg for their money like thieves. You don't dump men with families who've served their country...

DEAN

But he didn't know! It got out of hand, he...

HUNT

Do you think a man as controlled as Richard Nixon would've allowed a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters without knowing about it? You really think John Mitchell or Bob Haldeman wouldn't have run it by him at least once? The President's men did nothing -- nothing -- without his permission... John, sooner or later -- sooner I think -- you're going to learn the lesson that's been learned by everyone who's ever gotten close to Richard Nixon... (pause) that he's the darkness reaching out for the darkness. And eventually, it's either you or him.

(Hunt walks off)

Your grave's already been dug, John.

93 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

93

JOHN DEAN, looking glum, walks down these corridors for his meeting with the President. Passing the SECRETARIES who look at him -- that furtive look of people who sense crisis.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

FBI Director-designate L. Patrick Gray shocked the Senate by revealing that John Dean has been secretly receiving FBI reports on Watergate... Gray also said that Dean lied when he claimed Howard Hunt did not have an office in the White House...

94 INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

94

SUBTITLE READS: MARCH, 1973

DEAN is explaining his new outlook to a quiet NIXON.

DEAN

... this is the sort of thing Mafia people can do: washing money, and things like that. We just don't know about these things because we're not criminals.

On Nixon listening behind his desk, hands cupped over his mouth, frown across his face -- the classic Nixon image of a deep thinker. The CAMERA drops to his desk. And moves towards a MIKE drilled in the edge of the desk.

INTERCUT TO:

95 INT. FILE ROOM - BASEMENT - DAY

95

A bank of TAPE RECORDERS labelled "Oval Office", "Lincoln Room", "Phones 1-6", "EOB," are rolling. BACK TO SCENE AT OPTION:

NIXON

How much do you need?

DEAN

Uh I would say these people are going to cost a million dollars over the next two years...

NIXON

We could get that.

DEAN

Uh huh...

NIXON

We could get a million dollars. We could get it in cash. I know where it could be gotten.

INTERCUT: the TAPE rolling.

DEAN (pause)

I'm still not confident we can ride through this. Some people are going to have to go to jail. Hunt's not the only problem. Haldeman let me use the 350,000 cash fund in his safe to make the payments. Ehrlichman had a role, a big role in the Ellsberg break-in. And I'm... uh. I think it's time we begin to think in terms of cutting our losses.

NIXON (worried about Dean)

You say John, cut our losses and all the rest, But suppose the thing blows and they indict Bob and the others. Jesus, you'd never recover from that John. It's better to fight it out instead, and not let people testify... *

DEAN

Sir, I still don't think, uh, we can contain it anymore. There's a cancer on the Presidency. And it's growing. With every day that...

NIXON

Jesus, everything is a crisis among the upper intellectual types, the softheads; the average people don't think it's much of a crisis. For chrissake it's not Vietnam...no one's dying here. Isn't it ridiculous? *

DEAN

I agree it's ridiculous but--

NIXON

I mean who the hell cares about this penny ante shit. Goldwater put it right, he said "Well for

NIXON (cont'd)

chrissakes, everybody bugs everybody else, we know that "...it's the cover-up, not the deed that's really bad here. (then) If only Mitchell could step up and take the brunt of it; give them the hors d'oeuvre and maybe they won't come back for the main course. That's the tragedy in all this. Mitchell's going to get it in the neck anyway, It's time he assumed responsibility.

Dean has a nervous look in his eye.

DEAN

He won't. He told Erlichman he won't.

A lightning-like IMAGE reveals MITCHELL, responding to EHRlichman. This is Nixon's mind at work. *

MITCHELL

You tell Brother Dick I got suckerd into this thing by not paying attention to what these bastards were doing. I don't have a guilty conscience... And he shouldn't either.

Nixon glances towards the microphone as he moves around the desk to get closer to Dean.

NIXON (loud and clear)

He's right. Maybe it's time to go the hang-out route, John. A full and thorough investigation... We've cooperated with the FBI, we'll cooperate with the Senate. What do we have to hide?

DEAN (prompted)

No, we have nothing to hide.

NIXON (repeating)

We have nothing to hide. (then) But the only flaw in the plan is that they're not going to believe the truth. That is the incredible thing!

Dean, who is worried about his own hide if the truth comes out, agrees.

DEAN

I agree. It's tricky. Everything seems to lead back here, and, uh...people would never understand.

Nixon awkwardly puts his arm around Dean's shoulder. Dean begins to sense a betrayal in the offing.

NIXON

John, I want you to get away from this madhouse, these reporters, and go up to Camp David for the

NIXON (cont'd)
weekend. And I want you to write up a report. I want you to put everything you know about Watergate in there. Say, Mister President, here it all is.

DEAN (over)
You want me to put it all in writing? Over my signature?

Another lightning-like IMAGE is Nixon's worst fear -- JOHN DEAN is at a table plea bargaining with TWO PROSECUTORS, their backs to us. *

NIXON (over)
Nobody knows more about this thing than you do, John.

A pause.

DEAN
I'm not going to be the scapegoat for this. Halde- man and Ehrlichman are in it just as deep as me.

NIXON
John, you don't want to start down that road. I remember what Whitaker Chambers told me back in '48 -- and he was a man who suffered greatly -- he said, "On the road of the informer, it's always night..." (then) This is beyond you or even me. It's the country, John. It's the Presidency.

DEAN
I understand that, sir.

NIXON
Good. You know how I feel about loyalty. I'm not going to let any of my people go to jail. That I promise you. (moves closer) The important thing is to keep this away from Haldeman and Ehrlichman. I'm trusting you to do that, John. I have complete confidence in you.

Off Dean's face we-

CUT TO:

96 TELEVISION SCREEN - NIXON - NIGHT (1973)

96

NIXON on the TV screen, shaken, ashen-faced.

NIXON
I was determined that we should get to the bottom of Watergate and the truth should be fully brought out no matter who was involved...

97 INT. CIA - HELMS' OFFICE - NIGHT (1973)

97

RICHARD HELMS, absently watching NIXON on TV, carries a handful of documents to the fireplace. He drops them in the fire, watches them burn.

NIXON (on TV, struggles)

Today, in one of the most difficult decisions of my Presidency, I accepted the resignations of two of my closest associates -- Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman -- two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know...The counsel to the President, John Dean, has also resigned.

CLOSE on Helms burning documents.

98 LIMBO - HALDEMAN watches TV, his WIFE and CHILDREN next to him. He thinks back to:

98

98A INT. EXEC. OFFICE BLDG-NIXON OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

98A

Haldeman's mind -- the last one-on-one session. HALDEMAN leaves the office, looking back over his shoulder at NIXON alone in the gathering shadows.

HALDEMAN

More light, chief?

NIXON (distracted, waves)

No...

Haldeman exits.

98B BACK TO SCENE:

98B

NIXON (V.O.)

...There can be no whitewash at the White House...two wrongs do not make a right. I love America. God bless America and God bless each and every one of you.

HALDEMAN (to himself)

Six...six bodies.

His wife puts her hand on his knees in support. He squeezes her hand.

99 LIMBO - EHRLICHMAN also watches, with FAMILY.

99

100 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

100

NIXON sits at his desk, holding a rigid expression.

FLOOR MANAGER (O.S.)

And... we're clear.

We stay on Nixon as the film lights go off, leaving him in shadow. He is very sad.

ALEXANDER HAIG, Nixon's new Chief-of-Staff, seen earlier, watches Nixon for a moment, turns to the VIDEO CREW.

HAIG (softly)

Out.

101 INT. NIXON WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT (1973)

101

NIXON at one end, PAT at the other eat in a dreadful silence, attended by MANOLO and SERVANTS who move nervously, anxious to have the dinner over with.

PAT (finally)

I'm giving a tea for the wives of the POWs.

Nixon doesn't respond.

PAT
Are you going to Key Biscayne?

Nixon doesn't look up.

NIXON
Yes.

PAT
When?

NIXON
Tomorrow.

PAT
Ron told me that Bob Haldeman's been calling. But you won't talk to him...If he's convicted, will you pardon him?

NIXON
No.

She looks at him.

PAT
...Why are you cutting yourself off from the rest of us? (then) Can't we discuss this?

Nixon slowly sets his spoon down, an icy stare.

NIXON
What exactly did you want to discuss, Pat?

PAT
You. What you're doing --

NIXON (interrupts)
And what *am* I doing?

PAT
I wish I knew. You're hiding.

NIXON
Hiding what!

PAT
Whatever it is you've always been hiding. You're letting it destroy you, Dick. You won't even ask for help! You're destroying yourself, Dick.

Nixon pauses, rings the dinner bell. MANOLO reappears at the door.

NIXON

Mrs. Nixon is finished.

Pat looks as if she's been slapped, slowly puts down her silverware. MANOLO clears away her plate.

PAT
I'm the only one left, Dick. If you don't even talk to me, you...

NIXON
Brezhnev's coming in three days. I don't want to deal with them. And *him*. And *you*.

Pat sits rigid for a moment.

PAT
How much more? How much more is it going to cost? When do the rest of us stop paying off your debts?

Nixon puts down his fork, embarrassed. Manolo has beat a hasty retreat.

NIXON
I'd like to finish my dinner in peace. It's not too much to ask.

Pat stands slowly.

PAT
No, it isn't. I won't interfere with you anymore. I'm finished trying.

NIXON
Thank you.

PAT (incredulous)
Thank you? (then) Dick, sometimes I understand why they hate you.

Nixon watches her walk out the door. Then, he picks up his fork and continues eating.

SENATOR SAM ERVIN (V.O.: drawls)
The Senate Select Committee on Watergate will come to order...

A gavel POUNDS O.S.

102 INT. WHITE HOUSE - HAIG'S OFFICE - DAY

102

NIXON STAFFERS are gathered around Haig's TV set as we:

CROSSCUT TO:

103 INT. COMMITTEE CHAMBER - (SEEN ONLY ON TV) - DAY (1973)

103

JOHN DEAN reads his statement to the COMMITTEE. Conservatively groomed, horn-rimmed glasses, shorter hair, Dean speaks in a monotone. A pretty blonde woman, his WIFE, sits noticeably behind him.

DEAN (on TV)

...it was a tremendous disappointment to me because it was quite clear that the cover-up as far as the White House was concerned was going to continue...

STAFFERS

Lying sack of shit! Little mommy's boy -- go tell the teacher will ya... *

HAIG looks at Dean on TV, shakes his head, disgusted and goes out.

HAIG

The weasel's got no proof. Just remember that it's still an informer's word against the President's.

104 INT. WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

104

HAIG walking past STAFF into the Oval Office:

DEAN (droning on, V.O./T.V.)

...it was apparent to me I had failed in turning the President around...I reached the conclusion that Ehrlichman would never admit to his involvement in the cover-up... I assumed that Haldeman would not because he would believe it a higher duty to protect the President...

105 INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1973)

105

HAIG slides into the room where NIXON and LEONID BREZHNEV, Premier of the USSR, are engaged in a friendly meeting through an INTERPRETER. ANDREI GROMYKO completes the glum Soviet threesome. *

BREZHNEV (in Russian)

...Mao told me in 1963: "If I have nuclear weapons, let 400 million Chinese die, 300 million will be left." (leans closer) Mao suffers from a mental disorder, we know this long time in my country. (then) This is the man in his dog heart you want to be your ally? *

NIXON

He was your ally for twenty years, Leonid.

BREZHNEV (makes a funny gesture)

Yes, yes, Dick, life is always the best teacher, you know this -- and you too will discover how treacherous he can be. But it must not interfere with the building of a Salt Two *

BREZHNEV (cont'd)

Treaty between our great countries. Peace in our era is possible...

Nixon looking to Haig who whispers something in his ear.

NIXON

Excuse me, Mister Chairman.

Nixon and Haig move to a corner of the room, whisper.

BREZHNEV (to Gromyko)

If Haldeman and Ehrlichman are indicted, it will wound him, perhaps fatally.

GROMYKO

That depends on who they believe -- Nixon or Dean.

Brezhnev looks at Nixon, who is visibly shaken.

BREZHNEV (shakes his head)

Incredible. He looks like a man with little time left.

105A EXT. STREET - DAY

105A *

MARTHA MITCHELL is acting strangely behind enormous sunglasses -- at an impromptu interview on the STREET.

MARTHA

...can you keep a secret, honey? 'Tween you, me, and the gatepost, Tricky Dick always knew what was going on...every last goddamn detail. And my husband's not taking the rap this time... They know they can't shut me up, so they'll probably end up killing me, but I depend on you, the press, to protect me...and my husband, because that's what it's going to come to...

INTERCUT TO:

105B EXT. STREET - DAY

105B *

JOHN MITCHELL, angry, beleaguered, bypasses cameras outside a COURTHOUSE.

MITCHELL

She doesn't know what she's talking about. Stop bothering her. She's not well. Hell, she's nuts--you bastards've seen to that (brushing past another question) You can stick it right back up your keester fella. Our marriage is finished, thank you very much (pushes on)...

106 INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIXON BEDROOM - NIGHT (1973)

106

Nixon's daughter, JULIE, earnest, bright-eyed, looks at her Dad.

JULIE (hesitantly)

Did you...Daddy? Did you cover it up?

NIXON looks at her steadily.

NIXON

Do you think I would do something like that honey?

Julie shakes her head vigorously, then puts her hands to her eyes.

JULIE

Then you can't resign! You just can't. You're one of the best Presidents this country's ever had! You've done what Lincoln did. You've brought this country back from civil war! You can't let your enemies tear you down!

(calmer)

You've got to stay and fight. I'll go out there and make speeches Dad. No one knows the real you. How sweet you are, how nice you are to people! I'll tell them.

She embraces him almost desperately, kissing him on the forehead, crying.

JULIE

Daddy, you are the most decent person I know.

NIXON (over her shoulder)

I hope I haven't let you down.

JULIE (hugging him through her tears)

They just don't know, they don't know the real you.

On Nixon -- CLOSE. *

107 INT. WHITE HOUSE - PAT'S BEDROOM - DAY (1973)

107

PAT's still wearing her nightdress, coffee and cigarette. in hand, as her press secretary, HELEN SMITH, runs through a sheaf of papers. A TELEVISION drones in the background. *

SMITH (cheery)

...ad on Friday we have the high school students from Ohio, Saturday is the Women's National Republican Club...

NEWSCASTER 1 (V.O.)

In a development that could break Watergate wide open, former White House aide Alexander Butterfield testifying today before the Senate Select Committee revealed the existence of a taping system that may have recorded conversations in the White House, the EOB, and the Camp David retreat... *

Pat glances up over the tops of her glasses.

SMITH (continues)

And on Sunday you're saying hello to the VFW Poppy Girl...

She realizes Pat is not listening.

SMITH

Mrs. Nixon....?

Close: on Pat as she slowly raises a hand to her lips.

NEWSCASTER 1 (V.O.)

White House sources say that for the past three years, President Nixon has recorded virtually every conversation he has had, including those with his staff, and even members of his own family...

Pat is horrified. *

108 INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

108

NIXON sits in his bed, alone, still in his pajamas. It's clear he hasn't slept. He looks shell-shocked.

NEWSCASTER 1 (V.O.)

This is a stunning revelation. If such tapes exist, they could tell us once and for all: what did the President know and when did he know it...

The CAMERA closing on NIXON. His deepest secrets are now being revealed. He begins coughing violently. He tries to cover his mouth, but notices now that his hand and the sheets around him are covered with blood. He screams, terrified.

NIXON

Oh God -- Pat!

HARD CUT TO:

109 INT. BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY (1973)

109

NIXON on a gurney, being wheeled down a hospital corridor. PAT, wearing dark sunglasses, is with him, very concerned. A plastic mask is over his face. He struggles to get up, but a NURSE gently presses him back down. SECRET SERVICE AGENTS surround the gurney. HAIG clears the corridors nervously.

HAIG

Clear the path! The President is coming thru.
Clear a path. I'm in charge here.

*
*
*

DOCTOR questions Pat on the move.

*

PAT

He woke up coughing, with blood.

*
*

DOCTOR

Has he had chest pains?

*
*

PAT

No. He's sure he has TB.

*
*

DOCTOR

Why TB?

*
*

PAT

His family had it, his brothers.

*
*

CLOSE on Nixon, eyes closed; the overhead lights reflect in the mask.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox has broadened his investigation to include President Nixon's business dealings and house payments. Nixon apparently paid no income tax in the years 1970, '71, and '72...and may

REPORTERS (cont'd)
have illegally used Government funds to improve
his San Clemente Western White House.

HAIG holds open the doors as the ORDERLIES push Nixon into
the respiratory unit.

110 INT. BETHSEDA NAVAL HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT - DAY 110

A DOCTOR and NURSE remove the mask from NIXON'S face.

REPORTERS (V.O.)
Attorney General Elliot Richardson will present
evidence to a grand jury that Vice President Agnew
is guilty of bribery, extortion and tax evasion...

Nixon immediately starts gasping. He again tries to rise, but
hands push him back. The doctor fits the mouthpiece of a
respirator into Nixon's mouth. Images of the beast pervade
the room.

Nixon begins breathing... His eyes going past PAT to...

A110 IMAGES of the PAST -- of his PARENTS, Frank, Hannah, A110
little Arthur, Harold...the GROCERY STORE.

BACK TO:

111 OMIT (SEE SCENE #105A) 111 *

112 OMIT (SEE SCENE #105B) 112 *

MITCHELL (cont'd)
your keester fella. Our marriage is finished,
thank you very much (pushes on)...

*
*

BACK TO:

113 NIXON breathing in the hospital. The Doctor returns, 113
intersecting Pat.

DOCTOR
It's not TB.

PAT
...but where's the blood coming from? He's not
okay. Something's wrong.

DOCTOR
He's got acute viral pneumonia and a very severe
phlebitis.

PAT
What's that?

DOCTOR
It's an inflammation of the veins in his leg, it's
very bad.

PAT
Is it dangerous?

DOCTOR
Yes it is -- if a clot broke loose, it could go to
his lungs and put him...

PAT
Oh no!

DOCTOR
We've got to get him to ICU right away.

They start to move.

REPORTER (V.O.)
Archibald Cox declared war on President Nixon
today by issuing a subpoena for nine of the
President's tapes...

NIXON (V.O., yells)
Never! Over my dead body!

114 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING CORRIDOR - DAY (1973) 114

NIXON, his leg swollen, limps down the corridor, furious.
HAIG walks with him, ZIEGLER and the lawyer, BUZHARDT
bringing up the rear. HAIG clears the corridor of potential
eavesdroppers.

NIXON

It's the President's personal property! I will never give up my tapes to a bunch of Kennedy-loving Harvard Democrat cocksuckers!

HAIG

This could trigger the impeachment. They'll go to the Supreme Court next.

NIXON

Let 'em try! I appointed three of those bastards! I'm not giving 'em my tapes!

HAIG

Can the President afford to ignore a subpoena?

NIXON

Who the fuck does Cox think he is? (fumes)
I never made a dime from public office! I'm honest. My dad died broke. You know the sonofabitch went to law school with Jack Kennedy... the last gasp of the Establishment! They got the hell kicked out of 'em in the election, so now they gotta squeal about Watergate cause we were the first real threat to them in years. And by God, Al, we would have changed it, changed it so they couldn't have changed it back in a hundred years, if only...

HAIG

Congress is considering four articles of impeachment, sir.

NIXON

For what!

BUZHARDT

Sir, the charges are serious -- first, abuse of power, second, obstruction of justice, third, failure to cooperate with Congress, and last, bombing Cambodia...

NIXON

They can't impeach me for bombing Cambodia. The President can bomb anybody he wants.

ZIEGLER

That's true...

BUZHARDT

Sir, we'll win that one, but the other three... *

NIXON

You know Fred, they sell tickets.

ZIEGLER

Sir?

NIXON

They sell tickets to an impeachment. Like a fucking circus... Okay, so they impeach me. Then it's a question of mathematics. How many votes do we have in the Senate?

HAIG

About a dozen.

NIXON (wounded)

A dozen? I got half of 'em elected. I still got the South and Goldwater and his boys. I'll take my chances in the Senate. *

ZIEGLER

We should...

HAIG

Then we'll have to deal with the possibility of removal from office, loss of pension, possibly... prison.

NIXON

Shit, plenty of people did their best writing in prison. Gandhi, Lenin... *

ZIEGLER

That's right. *

NIXON (beat, glowers darkly)

What I know about this country, I... I could rip it apart. If they want a public humiliation, that's what they'll get. But I will never resign this office. Where the fuck am I? *

They look at him strangely. They've stopped at the doors of the East Room. The SOUND of VOICES and a VIOLIN playing inside.

NIXON (to Ziegler)
What's in there?

ZIEGLER
POWs. And their families.

NIXON
So I'm supposed to be...

ZIEGLER
Compassionate. Grateful.

NIXON
Proud?

ZIEGLER (confused)
Sir?

NIXON
Of them.

ZIEGLER
Yes, yes.

NIXON (back to Haig, bitterly)
Fire him.

HAIG
Who?

NIXON
Cox! Fire him.

HAIG
But he works for the Attorney General. Only Richardson can fire him.

BUZHARDT (concerned)
Sir, if I may...echo my concern...

NIXON (ignoring Buzhardt, to Haig)
Then tell Richardson to fire him.

HAIG
Richardson won't do that. He'll resign.

NIXON
The hell he will! Fire him too. If you have to go all the way down to the janitor at the Justice Department, fire the sonofabitch! And...

ZIEGLER
He's asked for it.

HAIG
May I just say something, sir. I think you should welcome the subpoena. The tapes can only prove that Dean is a liar.

ZIEGLER
That's right, sir.

A moment.

NIXON

There's more... there's more than just me. You
can't break, my boy, even when there's nothing
left. You can't admit, even to yourself, that it's
gone, Al -- do you think those POWs in there did?
(pointing to the East Room)

ZIEGLER

No sir...

NIXON

Now some people, we both know them Al, think you can go stand in the middle of the bullring and cry, 'mea culpa,' 'mea culpa,' while the crowd is hissing and booing and spitting on you. But a man doesn't cry. (then) I don't cry. You don't cry...You fight!

INTERCUT soft IMAGES over NIXON being pounded at FOOTBALL...

Nixon straightens himself, puts on a smile, nods to Ziegler. Ziegler opens the door. A ROAR of CHEERS and MARTIAL MUSIC greet the President, as he disappears inside.

CUT TO:

115 TV SCREEN - NBC logo - LIMBO

115

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt this program for a special report from NBC News.

A REPORTER appears, stunned.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The country tonight is in the midst of what may be the most serious Constitutional crisis in history. In the wake of Vice President Spiro Agnew's forced resignation on charges of corruption, President Nixon has fired Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.

DOCUMENTARY IMAGES -- ARCHIBALD COX walking in the street, having heard the news, smiling.

REPORTER (V.O., cont.)

Attorney General Elliot Richardson has resigned rather than comply with the President's order and Deputy Attorney William Ruckelshaus was fired when he refused to carry out the order...

DOCUMENTARY IMAGES -- FBI AGENTS carrying boxes of files out of the Special Prosecutor's office. RUCKELSHAUS getting in a car, refusing to comment. ELLIOT RICHARDSON moving down a gauntlet of REPORTERS. We CUT BACK to the REPORTER on camera, grim.

REPORTER (on TV, cont.)

Tonight, the country, without a Vice President, stands poised at a crossroads -- has a government of laws become a government of one man?

116 EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT - 1973

116

As before, the black iron bars. The facade of the mansion. The light in the second floor. We move in slowly.

117 INT. WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING - NIGHT (1974)

117 *

NIXON is really drunk now, listening to some GIBBERISH on the tape. We move in on his profile, framed by Lincoln in the background. We should not be able to make it out -- occasional words like "Castro," "Kennedy." But that's about it... nothing more. And as we move closer on Nixon, bleary-eyed, we should feel he has no idea either of what he's listening to. It's just... noise. PAT's voice cuts in. She's standing at the doorway. She's been drinking too, but is sharp.

PAT

They're like love letters. You should burn them.

Nixon, startled, tries to shut off the tape, but he hits the wrong button and we hear high-speed VOICES in reverse.

PAT

Why didn't you?

NIXON (slurs)

You can't expect me to explain that to you.

PAT

What matters to me is whether you understand it.

A beat. He finally gets the tape stopped.

NIXON

They're evidence. You can't legally destroy evidence.

Pat stares at him.

PAT

You don't expect me to believe that for one minute, do you? (then) Does it matter what's on them? Really?...Murder, Dick? Sex? Your secrets, your fantasies? Or just me and you and...

NIXON

Don't be ridiculous!

PAT

I remember Alger Hiss. I know how ugly you can be -- you're capable of anything, but you see it doesn't really matter, at the end of the day,

PAT (cont'd)

what's on them. Because you have absolutely no remorse. No concept of remorse. You want the tapes to get out, you want them to see you at your worst...

NIXON

You're drunk! (Pat laughs, "yeah I am") No one will ever see those tapes. Including you!

A beat.

PAT

And what would I find out that I haven't known for years. (then) What makes it so damn sad is you couldn't confide in any of us. You had to make a record... for the whole world.

NIXON

They were for me. They're mine.

PAT

No. They're not yours. They are you. You should burn 'em.

She turns and walks out. Nixon is turbulent, upset. He turns and suddenly sees the ghost of his young mother, HANNAH, sitting there in the shadows, staring at him.

He jumps. Those eyes of hers. Penetrating, gazing right through him.

HANNAH

What has changed in thee, Richard... When you were a boy...

NIXON (blurts out)

No! Please! Please mother, don't start. Don't talk to me! Anything, but don't talk to me. *

A SHARP CUT snaps us from this reverie, and Nixon is alone in his sitting room, the door closed, the VOICE on the tape droning. He downs pills with the scotch.

NIXON (V.O. on tape)

...these guys went after Castro. Seven times, ten times...What do you think--people like that, they just gave up? They just don't walk away?

NIXON (cont'd)
 (then) Whoever killed Kennedy came from
 this...this thing we created. This beast...That's
 why we can't let this thing go any farther...

*
*

He looks over at the recorder, slowly turning. He pushes "Stop" and then runs it back on "Rewind". High-speed voices. He pushes "Stop" again. A series of TIME CUTS show Nixon getting drunker. Playing sections of the tape. The camera closes on the tape machine. It's all a blur as we hear a HUM growing louder and louder as we inch in on an abstract CLOSE-UP of the TAPE moving across the capstan.

REPORTER (V.O.)
 In the latest bombshell, the President's lawyers revealed that there is an 18 and a half minute gap in a critical Watergate tape...

118 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING - DAY (1974)

118

A frenzy of paperwork as the PRESIDENT'S LAWYERS -- BUZHARDT and ST. CLAIR -- sit hunched around a table piled with transcripts, helped by TWO YOUNG ASSISTANTS.

NIXON is aghast as he reads some of the highlighted sections. HAIG and ZIEGLER attend.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)
 ...In an attempt to head off impeachment proceedings, the President has agreed to release transcripts of 46 taped conversations...

*

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)
 ...In a simple ceremony, Gerald Ford was sworn in as Vice-President. A long-time, popular member of Congress, Ford reinforces a sense of...

*

REPORTER 3 (V.O.)
 ...citing White House wrong-doing, the Judge has dismissed all charges against Daniel Ellsberg.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)
 ...the Grand Jury has indicted former Nixon aides Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and former Attorney General, John Mitchell...

Nixon shakes the paper in the faces of Buzhardt and St. Clair.

NIXON
 You're lawyers. How can you let this shit go by!
 (points) Look! This? Nixon can't say this.

BUZHARDT
You did say it, sir.

NIXON
Never. I never said that about Jews!

Buzhardt glances at St. Clair.

BUZHARDT
We could check the tape again, sir. *

NIXON
You don't need to check the tape. I know what I said.

He grabs the magic marker out of the lawyer's hand and furiously blacks out an entire section.

NIXON
And this?! Good Lord, have you lost your mind? Nixon can't say this. "Niggers!"

ZIEGLER
Well, we could delete it.

ST. CLAIR
We're doing the best we can sir.

NIXON
Well it's not good enough...

ST. CLAIR
We can black it out. *

ZIEGLER
Or we could write "expletive deleted." *

NIXON
...and get rid of all these "goddamns" and "Jesus Christs!" *

ST. CLAIR
Sir, all these deletion marks in the transcripts will make it look like you swear all the time. *

Nixon grows cold, stares steadily at St. Clair.

NIXON
For Christ's sake, it soils my mother's memory. Do you think I want the whole goddamn world to see my mother like this. Raising a dirty mouth! *

BUZHARDT

But sir, we'll have to start over from the beginning. We don't have the staff to...

Nixon loses it, sweeps the piles of transcripts off the table. They fly around the office.

NIXON (screams)

Then start over! The world will see only what I show them. From page one!

119 INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT (1974)

119

NIXON sits at his desk, grimacing tightly into the TV CAMERA. Next to him is a stack of blue binders emblazoned with the Presidential seal.

NIXON

Good evening, my fellow Americans. Tonight I'm taking an action unprecedented in the history of this office...

120 INT. WHITE HOUSE - HAIG'S OFFICE - NIGHT (1974)

120

KISSINGER and HAIG watch NIXON on television. They share a drink.

*
*

NIXON (on TV, continues)

...an action that will at last, once and for all, show that what I knew and what I did with regards to the Watergate break-in and cover-up were just as I have described them to you from the very beginning...

HAIG

He's completely lost touch with reality.

NIXON (on TV, cont) ...

I had no knowledge of the cover-up until John Dean told me about it on March 21. And I did not intend that payment to Hunt or anyone else be made...

KISSINGER

Can you imagine what this man would have been had he ever been loved?...

NIXON (on TV, cont)

...because people have got to know whether or not their President is a crook. Well, I am not a crook. I have never made a dime from public service...

*
*

KISSINGER

Oh God, I'm going to throw up.

HAIG

They'll crucify him...

Kissinger turns to Haig.

KISSINGER

Does anybody care anymore? (then) What happens after...

They share a look.

INTERCUT TO:

121 INT. WHITE HOUSE - PAT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 121

PAT sits alone, drinking as the television drones on with the latest invasion of her privacy. As we move in, we see the spirit drawn out of her. She seems numb.

122 DOCUMENTARY IMAGE - EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT (1974) 122

REPORTERS (V.O.)

The Supreme Court ruled today 8-0 that President Nixon's claims of "executive privilege" cannot be used in criminal cases and that he must turn over all subpoenaed tapes...a firestorm on Capitol Hill as...

123 INT. WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDORS & STAIRS - NIGHT (1974) 123

SUBTITLE READS: JULY 1974 over EMPTY SHOTS of an EMPTY HOUSE, filled with gloom and dread. The FOOTSTEPS of two silhouettes crack the silence as they make their way towards the Lincoln Sitting Room. It is an eerie echo of the opening shots of the White House in the film. The silhouette now becomes apparent as GENERAL HAIG and HENRY KISSINGER.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

...The House Judiciary Committee has voted 27 to 11 to recommend impeachment to the full House. The deliberations now go to the House floor.

...In its report, the Committee offers evidence that Nixon obstructed justice on at least 36 occasions, that he encouraged his aides to commit perjury, and that Nixon abused the powers of his office... In a separate report, the Senate Select Committee details the misuse of the IRS, the FBI, the CIA and the Justice Department. It denounces the Plumbers, and it raises the question of whether the United States had a valid election in 1972.

HIGH ANGLE -- Haig knocks and enters the Lincoln Sitting room. A shaft of LIGHT from inside zigzags the darkness. And we hear a snatch of LOUD MUSIC before the door is closed.

124 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT (1974) 124

NIXON sits in his chair in a suit and tie, listening to "Victory at Sea" at top volume. In front of him is a picture album -- 1922 portraits of the NIXON FAMILY -- HAROLD holding ARTHUR. RICHARD stares glumly at camera between HANNAH and FRANK.

GENERAL HAIG, with KISSINGER behind, approaches with some papers held out in his hand. Nixon sees them, turns down the hi-fi.

NIXON
"Victory At Sea", Al... Henry. The Pacific
theatre. Christ, you can almost feel the waves
breaking over the decks. *

HAIG
I'm afraid we have another problem, Mister
President.

He hands him a paper. Nixon glances at it.

HAIG
June 23rd, '72, sir. The part that's underlined.
Your instructions to Haldeman regarding the CIA
and the FBI.

NIXON
So?

HAIG
Your lawyers feel it's the... "smoking gun."

NIXON
It's totally out of context. I was protecting the
national security, I never intended-

HAIG
Sir, the deadline is today. *

NIXON
Can we get around this, Al?

HAIG
It's the Supreme Court, sir, you don't get around
it.

Nixon, silenced, looks down at the paper in his hands and
sighs.

HAIG
If you resign, you can keep your tapes as a
private citizen...you can fight them for years.

NIXON
And if I stay?

A long moment.

HAIG
You have the army.

Nixon looks up at him, then over at Henry.

NIXON

The army?

HAIG

Lincoln used it.

NIXON

That was civil war.

HAIG

How do you see this?

Nixon closes his eyes. Haig takes the transcript back.

HAIG

We can't survive this, sir. They also have you instructing Dean to make the payoff to Hunt.

NIXON

There is nothing in that statement the President can't explain.

HAIG

Sir, you talked about opening up the whole "Bay of Pigs" thing again.

NIXON

That's right...

HAIG

Three days before, on the June 20th tape -- the one with the eighteen minute gap--

NIXON (interrupts)

I don't know anything about that.

HAIG (continues)

...You mentioned the "Bay of Pigs" several times. Sooner or later they're going to want to know what that means. They're going to want to know what was on that gap...

NIXON

It's gone. No one will ever find out what's on it.

Haig moves closer, and leans down, very low, whispers.

HAIG

They might...if there were another...recording. *

Nixon glances up at him.

HAIG

We both know it's possible. (then) I know for a fact it's possible.

Nixon stares up at him.

HAIG

I've spoken to Ford... And there's a very strong chance he'll pardon you...

Haig hands him a letter of resignation.

INSERT: "I hereby resign the office of President of the United States."

HAIG

This is something you will have to do, Mister President. I thought you would rather do it now... I'll wait outside.

Haig drifts out as Kissinger comes out of the shadows. Nixon looks down blankly at the sheet of paper in front of him.

KISSINGER

... may I say sir, if you stay now it will paralyze the nation and its foreign policy...

Nixon looks up at Kissinger. The Judas himself -- at least one of them. There is irony here that is apparent to Nixon but not Kissinger.

NIXON

Yes, you always had a good sense of timing Henry. When to give and when to take. How do you think Mao, Brezhnev will react? (sitting up, suddenly intense) Do you think this is how they'll remember me, Henry, after all the great things you and I did together? As some kind of...of..crooks?

KISSINGER (prepared response)

They will understand sir. To be undone by a third-rate burglary sir, is a fate of biblical proportions. History will treat you far more kindly than your contemporaries.

NIXON

That depends who writes the history books. I'm not a quitter... but I'm not stupid either... A trial would kill me -- that's what they want. (with some satisfaction) But they won't get it.

He signs -- the resignation paper. A pause. It lies there.

KISSINGER (grandiosely)
... if they harass you, I too will resign. And I
will tell the world why.

NIXON
Don't be stupid. The world needs you Henry, you
always saw the big picture. You were my equal in
many ways. (then) You're the only friend I've got
Henry... *
*
*

KISSINGER
You have many friends...and admirers...

NIXON
Do you ever pray? You know... believe in a Supreme
Being?

KISSINGER
Uh... not really. You mean on my knees?

NIXON
Yes. My mother used to pray... a lot. It's been a
long time since I really prayed.
(a little lost)
Let's pray, Henry, let's pray a little.

As Nixon gets down on his knees, Kissinger perspires freely.
He clumsily follows the President down to the floor.

NIXON
... Uh, I hope this doesn't embarrass you.

KISSINGER
Not at all. This is not going to leak, is it?

NIXON (looks at Henry)
Don't be too proud, never be too proud to go on
your knees before God.

He prays silently, then suddenly, he sobs.

NIXON
Dear God! Dear God, how can a country come apart
like this! What have I done wrong...

Kissinger is experiencing pure dread, his shirt soaked with sweat. He opens his eyes and peeks at Nixon.

NIXON

...I opened China. I made peace with Russia. I ended the war. I tried to do what's right! Why... why do they hate me so!

A silence. Nixon wraps his arms across his chest and rocks back and forth in an upright fetal position. Kissinger, looking very distressed, reaches over and touches the President, trying awkwardly to console him.

NIXON (woozily at his hands)

It's unbelievable, it's insane...

On that note, we:

CUT TO:

125 EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDORS AND ENTRY - NIGHT (1974) 125

A solitary SENTINEL -- a Marine Guard -- stands at strict attention, eyes forward, as we hear the VOICES of:

The THREE SILHOUETTES of NIXON, KISSINGER, and HAIG walking out. HIGH ANGLES allow us to hear their VOICES echoing off the empty rooms and sometimes catch a glimpse of a passing face. From the voice we can tell that Nixon has resumed his customary bluntness, a sense of bravado in the face of defeat.

NIXON (OFF)

...they smelled the blood on me this time, Al. I got soft. You know... that rusty, metallic smell...

HAIG (OFF)

I know it well, sir.

NIXON (OFF)

It came over from Vietnam, you know.

HAIG (OFF)

Sir?

NIXON (OFF)

That smell. I mean, everybody suffered so much, their sons killed. They need to sacrifice something, y'know, appease the gods of war -- Mars, Jupiter. I am that blood, General. I am that sacrifice, in the highest place of all... all leaders must finally be sacrificed.

They turn a corner, come into more light.

NIXON

Things won't be the same after this. I played by the rules, but the rules changed right in the middle of the game...There's no respect for American institutions anymore. People are cynical, the press -- god, the press -- is out of control, people spit on soldiers, government secrets mean nothing...

*
*

Nixon separates from Haig and Kissinger who bids him a last "Mr. President".

*
*

NIXON (remote)

I pity the next guy who sits here...Goodnight, gentlemen...

Haig and Kissinger depart.

Nixon shuffles back, alone, coming to a stop in front of a larger-than-life, full-length oil portrait of JOHN F. KENNEDY. Nixon studies the portrait, pads closer. Looks up.

NIXON

When they look at you, they see what they want to be.

(then)

When they look at me, they see what they are...

PAT, overhearing, comes from the shadows in a nightgown. She looks wearied, crazed.

PAT

Dick, please don't...

He half turns to her. He is unshaven, eyes red-rimmed, a wounded animal who can no longer defend himself.

*

NIXON

I can't...I just don't have the strength anymore...

His voice trails off. For a moment, it looks like he's going to collapse. Pat moves towards him, to support him.

PAT

It'll be over soon.

NIXON

No... it's going to start now... (looks into her eyes) If I could just... If I could just... sleep.

PAT
There'll be time for that...

He's barely aware of her.

NIXON
Once...when I was sick...my mother gave me this stuff...made me swallow it...it made me throw up. All over her...I wish I could do that now...

Pat puts her arm around him.

NIXON
I'm afraid Buddy... There's darkness out there.

Pat is crying now. She tries to soothe him, strokes his brow like a sick child.

NIXON
I could always see where I was going. But it's dark out there. God, I've always been afraid of the dark... *
*

Nixon breaks down. She slowly leads him up the grand staircase -- into the shadows of history.

126 INT. WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - DAY

126

The EPILOGUE and END CREDITS run over NIXON as he addresses the assembled WHITE HOUSE STAFF. PAT and the FAMILY flank him.

NIXON
...I remember my old man. I think they would've called him a little man, common man. He didn't consider himself that way. He was a streetcar motorman first, and then he was a farmer, and then he had a lemon ranch. It was the poorest lemon ranch in California, I assure you. He sold it before they found oil on it.

IMAGES of FRANK and HANNAH NIXON now arise in Nixon's consciousness -- a past he never really could connect his own life to. As if it were a storybook, a fabled America that never was. The MUSIC should in a sense accentuate this divorce of sentiment from reality.

NIXON (cont'd)
...and then he was a grocer. But he was a great man because he did his job, and every job counts up to the hilt, regardless of what happens... Nobody will ever write a book, probably, about my mother. Well. I guess all of you would say this about your mother: my mother was a saint. And I think of her, two boys dying of tuberculosis and

NIXON (cont'd)

seeing each of them die, and when they died...
Yes, she will have no books written about her. But
she was a saint...But now, however, we look to the
future.

Nixon is holding himself together by sheer force of will.
Many members of his STAFF are weeping. He pulls an old well-
leafed book open, puts a set of eyeglasses on to read from
it, the first time he's ever worn them in public.

NIXON (CONT'D)

... I remember something Theodore Roosevelt wrote
when his first wife died. He was still a young
man, in his twenties, and this was in his diary --
"T.R." --.. "She was beautiful in face and form
and lovelier still in spirit... When she had just
become a mother, when her life seemed to be just
begun and when the years seemed so bright before
her, then by a strange and terrible fate death
came to her. And when my heart's dearest died, the
light went from my life forever..." That was
"T.R." in his twenties. He thought the light had
gone from his life forever.

He puts down the book, nearly cracking.

NIXON

...But of course he went on, to become President,
sometimes right, sometimes wrong, always in the arena,
always vital...We sometimes think when things happen
that don't go the right way, we think that when someone
dear to us dies, when we lose an election, when we
suffer a defeat, that all is ended...but that's not
true. It is only a beginning, always; because the
greatness comes not when things always go good for you,
but the greatness comes and you're really tested when
you take some knocks, some disappointments, when
sadness comes...because only if you have been in the
deepest valley can you ever know how magnificent it is
to be on the highest mountain...To have served in this
office is to have felt a very personal sense of kinship
with each and every American. In leaving it, I do so
with this prayer: May God's grace be with you in all
the days ahead.

127 EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

127

A MARINE CORPS HELICOPTER waits at the end of a red carpet.
NIXON and PAT make their way towards it followed by the
FAMILY.

NIXON (V.O. CONT)

...Remember: always give your best, never get
discouraged, never be petty; always remember,

NIXON (cont'd)

others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them...and then you destroy yourself.

They climb the steps and Nixon turns on the top step and smiles bravely. Then he waves good-bye.

NIXON (V.O. CONT)

...Only then will you find what we Quakers call "peace at the center." "Au revoir" we'll see you again!

He raises his arms in his characteristic twin V-salute. And we FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE runs over a DARK SCREEN.

EPILOGUE

Nixon always maintained that if he had not been driven from office, the North Vietnamese would not have overwhelmed the South in 1975. In a sideshow, Cambodian society was destroyed and mass genocide resulted. In his absence, Russia and the United States returned to a decade of high-budget military expansion and near-war. Nixon, who was pardoned by President Ford, lived to write six books and travel the world as an elder statesmen. He was buried and honored by five ex-Presidents on April 26, 1994, less than a year after Pat Nixon died.

We include a DOCUMENTARY CLIP of his FUNERAL, eulogized by President CLINTON, the four other PRESIDENTS alongside him. ROBERT DOLE eulogizes him as a 'great American'.

EPILOGUE (cont'd)

For the remainder of his life, Nixon fought successfully to protect his tapes. The National Archives spent fourteen years indexing and cataloguing them. Out of four thousand hours, only sixty hours have been made public. *

We end on an IMAGE OF YORBA LINDA, CALIFORNIA...turn of the 20th Century where it began. We focus on the faces of the early pioneers who settled the land -- we drift over the faces of HANNAH and FRANK, in their stern postures -- past the BROTHERS, including the two deceased ones...to little RICHARD, eyes all aglow with the hopes of the new century. *

THE END