

Nixon (1995)

by Stephen J. Rivele, Christopher Wilkinson and Oliver Stone

A PROLOGUE APPEARS on a black screen:

"This film is an attempt to understand the truth of Richard Nixon, thirty-seventh 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 among 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 16-mm 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.

INT. WATERGATE HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Seven men in shirts and ties are seated around a table in a 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 a wad of cash from his pocket, starts passing out hundred dollar bills to his men.

LIDDY (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
Orders from the White House, partner.

Liddy bypasses Hunt, who is browsing a folded Spanish language paper.

LIDDY (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
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 is 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
(narrowing, waving his gun)
Don't start with me, Frank, I'll make
you a new asshole.

HUNT
(rising past them)
Let's get the fuck out of here, shall
we, ladies?

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 through 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 darkened room, the sounds of doors closing.

RADIO REPORT (V.O.)

Five men wearing surgical gloves and
business suits, and carrying cameras
and electronic surveillance equipment,
were arrested 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:

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT (1973)

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
previous year. The VOICES fade in and out, overlap.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

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

involvement ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - VESTIBULE - NIGHT

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

REPORTERS (V.O.)

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.) (CONT'D)

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

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

REPORTERS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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

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

REPORTERS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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

Haig opens the door.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

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, Mr.

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 a small armchair in a corner. A Uher tape recorder and a headset are on an end table at his elbow. 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 twenty third. And this year -- March twenty first. Those are the ones ...

Nixon squints at the label in the firelight.

HAIG (CONT'D)
... the lawyers feel ... will be the basis of the ... proceedings.

Nixon tries to thread the tape.

NIXON
Nixon's never been any good with these things.

He drops the tape on the floor.

NIXON (CONT'D)
Cocksucker!

Haig picks up the tape. Then he 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 (CONT'D)
Sorry ...

NIXON
(gestures)
... go on.

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

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

HAIG
Mr. Hoover was a realist.

NIXON
I trusted Mitchell. It was that damn
big mouth 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 tear gassing,
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 the 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 kind of crap, you know the psychoanalysis bag ... My mother ... 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. And 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.

HAIG

I don't have a pistol.

NIXON

'Night, Al.

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

NIXON (CONT'D)

Goddamn!

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

NIXON (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)

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:

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - DAY (1972)

SUBTITLE READS: "JUNE 1972."

Nixon's hideaway office in the Executive Office Building. BOB HALDEMAN, his crew-cut, 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

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!

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

EHRlichman
(shakes his head)
Colson doesn't know 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 to McGovern's office later that night.

NIXON
Jesus! Did Mitchell know?

EHRlichman
Mitchell's out of his mind 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 sonofabitch 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.

INTERCUTS of all of these people arise as the scene runs -- 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 firemen? 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

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 gonna throw a tantrum again if I don't see him, threatening to quit ... again.
(sighs)

EHRlichman

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. We're trying to
figure out when he officially stopped
being a White House consultant. After
the arrest he dumped his wiretapping
stuff into his White House safe.

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 horrors, 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 into Bremer's apartment after
Bremer shot Wallace, to plant McGovern
campaign literature.

NIXON

(lofty)

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

SHARP CUT BACK TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1971)

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 REPORTER'S 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 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 we can 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, Mr. President.

HALDEMAN

He's right about one thing, sir. I spoke with Lyndon. This Pentagon Papers business 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

(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 will follow his lead. He
must be stopped at all costs.

COLSON

Sir, if I 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, bottom-line, 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 people.

KISSINGER
To protect you, Mr. President.

COLSON
(interjects)
To protect yourself is more like it.
The pot calling the kettle ...

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

KISSINGER
(aside)

Who are 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 the 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 the Germans, 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, stone-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 loved this Ellsberg character. East Coast, Ivy League. He was their kind. I was dirt to them. Nothing.

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.

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 it 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. The camera is moving tighter and tighter on the President. His expression is furious, his words violent.

NIXON

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

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 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:

INT. FIELDING PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT (1971)

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

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

REPORTERS (V.O.)

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:

HUNT

Fuck you -- gimme that fucking film!

BACK TO:

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - DAY (1972)

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 into 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 about 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.

A beat. Nixon looks out at the Rose Garden.

NIXON
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 Dean)

It's time to baptize our young
counsel. That means Dean can never
talk about it. Attorney-client
privilege. Get to it. And Dean --
you stay close on 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
psychiatrist. 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 that 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 Mozart.

(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 (CONT'D)

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 who are pissed that I put Gray 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

No, 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?

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

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

NIXON (ON 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, fumbles with the cap. He rips the cap off, the pills scattering on the desk.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Shit!

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

NIXON (CONT'D)

(mumbles)

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

He downs a couple of pills with the Scotch.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Why don't they just fucking shoot me?

Nixon takes another drink, looks down.

SHARP CUT BACK TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT (1960)

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 eyebrows 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 fifty four countries and had discussions with thirty-five presidents, nine prime ministers, two emperors, and the Shah of Iran...

INT. TV STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

PAT NIXON, a year older than Dick, watches her champion through the glass booth. The "Mona Lisa" of American politics, she projects deep admiration for, 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 T.V. MONITOR)
Let's take hydroelectric power. In
our administration, we've built more
...

CHOTINER
(privately)
Jesus Christ, has he told them how
many push-ups 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 Christ's sake, and
slapped some makeup on him. He looks
like a frigging corpse!

NIXON (T.V.)
... When we consider the lineup of the
world, we find there are 590 million
people on our side, 800 million 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 (ON TV)

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

HALDEMAN

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

KENNEDY (ON 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)

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

CHOTINER
It's a disgrace.

MODERATOR
Mr. 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 Mr.
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 sonofabitch stole it!

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

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 (CONT'D)

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

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 two states, and ...

CHOTINER

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

HALDEMAN

Meanwhile, what happens to the country?

NIXON

The 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 is 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 sonofabitch Democrats get away with this?

HALDEMAN

(sotto voce)

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

Nixon in close-up, 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, lethal)

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 (CONT'D)

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 on it, the name in bold below.

CHOTINER

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

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - CORRIDOR & SUITE - DAWN

NIXON crosses the corridor which is 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 that, between them, 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. I don't want them to lose theirs; I don't want them to grow up without a mother and father ...

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.

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 about to cry. Pat reaches out and cradles his
head on her shoulder. On his eyes we:

CUT TO:

EXT. NIXON GROCERY STORE - DUSK (1925)

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

INT. NIXON GROCERY STORE - DUSK

HAROLD (16), tall, handsome, walks in whistling. He winks
at RICHARD (12), who is sorting 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 free 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)
Maybe 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 it's too late. Hannah looks over, very sharp, as her customer departs.

HANNAH

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

RICHARD

(surprised, aloud)

Why me?

INT. NIXON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

RICHARD, obediently seated, pays his Mother heed. He seems a gloomy, unsmiling child in her presence. We sense that 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 (CONT'D)

Now, give it to me ...

Richard is about to plead ignorance.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

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 expect 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'll 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. Thou may fool the world.
Even thy father. But not me, Richard.
Never me.

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

INT. NIXON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

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.) Harold reaches for a dish.

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 (CONT'D)
Heavenly Father, we humbly thank--

FRANK
(interrupts)
I'll do it. There's a coupla things I
wanna say.

HANNAH
Could thou 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 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.

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 (CONT'D)

Charity is only 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...

EXT. WHITTIER FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY (1932)

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 that 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:

OMIT SCENE #19

INT. HILTON HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT (1962)

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 cheer wildly. SUBTITLE READS: "CALIFORNIA GOVERNORSHIP, 1962."

INT. HILTON HOTEL - SUITE - NIGHT

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

HALDEMAN stares 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 at 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. You forget I had
a life before California, a rough,
rough life. Life isn't always fair,
Dick...

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 (CONT'D)
(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.
(then)
Us.

Nixon stops playing, looks at her.

PAT (CONT'D)
(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. You scare me sometimes... I'm fifty years old now, Dick. How many people's hands have I shaken -- people I didn't like, people I didn't even know. It's as if, I don't know, I went to sleep along time ago and missed the years between... I've had enough.

He moves toward 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 it? 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.

MARRIAGE MONTAGE: During this scene we have a series of SHOTS of their courtship -- the Whittier College campus, 1930s 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...

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 (CONT'D)
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:

INT. HILTON HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

NIXON stalks down the hallway, fuming. 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:

INT. HILTON HOTEL - PRESS CONFERENCE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

A noisy CROWD of REPORTERS reacts, excitedly, to NIXON'S fast entry. The smell of blood is 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)

... 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 (CONT'D)

... 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:

NIXON HISTORICAL MONTAGE:

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 1940s against Voorhis and Douglas.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

We can now officially write the political obituary of Richard Milhouse 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, TRUMAN, and ACHESON, early Cold War imagery - the Soviets, Berlin.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... The United States had been a strong ally of the Soviet Union, which had lost more than twenty 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 his 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...

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

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 Republican's 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 ...

Nixon at another rally with Pat.

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") (CONT'D)

The direct result of Truman's decision 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 its 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 of the notorious House Un American Activities Committee, questioning labor leaders, Spanish Civil War veterans, Hollywood celebrities ...

NIXON ("NEWSFILM LOOK")

(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?

NIXON surrounded by REPORTERS outside the HUAC hearing room.

REPORTER 4 (V.O.)

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

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

REPORTER 4 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... One of the architects of the United Nations, intimate with 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 the 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.) (CONT'D)
... Years later the Freedom of Information Act revealed that the film showed a report on business conditions in Manchuria, and fire extinguishers on a U.S. destroyer. None of these documents were classified. Were they planted by Chambers, who seemed to have a strange, almost psychotic fixation with Alger Hiss?

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 hated him.

A brief IMAGE here that will recur through-out 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 with an unprecedented appearance ...

INTERCUT Checkers speech - NIXON, 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 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!

DOCUMENTARY REPLACEMENT - Nixon with Ike in triumph. 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 the 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 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 '62. As the IMAGES spot out in newsreel style:

REPORTER 4

It was a great story of its time and, in California where it started, it has come crashing to an 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!

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

A New York cocktail party. Society DAMES. Rich, conservative BUSINESSMEN, platters of martinis and hors 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 (40's), 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 goddamned job in this city when I got out of Duke. Every white-shoe 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. 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 Newsweek last week, Dick? You were standing in a crowd on 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.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
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 moves 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 (CONT'D)

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 ten 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 to write.

ROCKEFELLER

(shaking another hand)

Hiya, fellow ... What were they?

NIXON

What?

ROCKEFELLER

The "crises"?

NIXON

"Checkers" of course, Hiss, Ike's heart attack, Venezuela, 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, fella, and I won't.

About to rejoin his wife.

NIXON

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

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

NIXON
Some say you are, Rocky.

ROCKEFELLER
The Republican Party was never 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 (CONT'D)
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 of into a waiting GROUP.

NIXON
... as the old alliances crumble.

KISSINGER
Finally someone who's noticed! I'm a great admirer of yours, too, Mr. 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 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:

CUT TO:

INT. DALLAS CONVENTION SITE - DAY (1963)

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 cheese-cake photographs. A banner behind him reveals: "Dallas Welcomes Studebaker Dealers."

The Studebaker GIRLS are fanning out 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, breaks 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 have 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 every day 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, Mr. Nixon could you sign ...? My wife and I think you are just the greatest. Please run again ...

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

EXT. JONES RANCH - DAY

An entire LONGHORN STEER turns on a spit in a large barbecue pit, basted by black SERVANTS. We see a sprawling Spanish-style RANCH HOUSE 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.

TRINI 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 that 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 ...

Trini joins them, bringing the girls.

NIXON

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

JONES

(to Trini, coming up)

He's all business, ain't he, Trini?

(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 ...

TRINI

Dick, this is Teresa, and this is Sandy.

TERESA

Hi ... Dick.

SANDY

Hi.

NIXON

Hello ...

Pause.

INT. JONES RANCH - DAY

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

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

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

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 in 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 (CONT'D)
... I don't really know you yet, Sandy
... What do you like? I mean, what
kind of clothes do you like? Do you
like blue ... red?

SANDY
Oh, I like satin, I like pink ...

NIXON
What kind of, uh ... music do you
like?

SANDY
I like jazz ...

NIXON
Yeah ... Guy Lombardo ...

SANDY

Elvis I like, too.

NIXON
Oh yeah, he's good.

Sandy puts her hands on his face and head.

SANDY
... but it depends on what I'm doing
to the music, Dick ...

NIXON
Uh, is your mother ... still alive?

SANDY
Yeah, she lives in Dallas ...

NIXON
She must be very attractive. Would
she like an autograph? She might
remember me ... Where's Trini?

Looking around desperately.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. JONES RANCH - DAY

Later. The crowd has thinned further to a hard-core dozen. The last man -- Mitch -- comes from the inner bedrooms, zipping up, the Servants chasing out the straggling 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,
Mr. Nixon. If you'd been elected

president 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.

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, Mr. Nixon.
Anything can happen.

Another pause. Nixon gathers together his papers and
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, Mr. Nixon?

NIXON

I came down here to close a deal for
Studebaker.

TRINI

What about '68, Dick?

NIXON

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

JONES

Your country needs you, Dick.

Nixon shakes his hand, departs.

NIXON

Unfortunately, my country isn't
available right now.

EXT. LOVE FIELD - DAY (1963)

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 CARDOZA. They walk toward a small executive
PLANE.

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

NIXON

Trini, 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 Trini 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:

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:

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

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?

Nixon listens for 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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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)
De Gaulle'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 a 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:

INT. NIXON HOUSE - ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - DAY (1925)

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.

INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY (1925)

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 ...

INT. NIXON HOUSE - ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

If I should die before I wake, I pray

the Lord my soul to take ...

He slips off, into a coma.

Richard watches, devastated.

INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR - ANOTHER DAY

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.

INT. NIXON'S FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

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 (CONT'D)

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:

DOCUMENTARY

SUBTITLE READS: "FIVE YEARS LATER - 1968"

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:

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

HANNAH NIXON, in her seventies.

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 (O.S.)
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 (O.S.)
Do you think he'd make a great
president, Mrs. Nixon?

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

EXT. NIXON'S FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY (1968)

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

INT. NIXON'S FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY (1968)

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

MITCHELL

Jesus, Dick, never seen anything like it! Even the goddamn 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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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.

INT. NIXON'S FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

NIXON enters. PAT is mechanically taking his identical
gray 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 last time. The war's crippled
the Democrats. I can win ... We
deserve it. Yeah, it's ours, Buddy --
at last. Nobody knows better than
you. Frank Nixon's boy.

Pat slows her packing. Nixon takes her hand.

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

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

NIXON (CONT'D)
It was our dream, too, 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.

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 the earnestness he is capable of.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY (1968)

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. Nixon 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 woman's
group. Get the bald guy, he's great
...

NIXON (ON T.V.)

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

EXT. LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - PRIVATE PATIO - DAY

J. EDGAR HOOVER (60's), short and fat, covered with steam
room sweat, looks like a Roman emperor, as he watches
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.

TOLSON

(sarcastic)

What do you think this plan is, Edgar?
A nuclear attack?

HOOVER

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:

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

RON ZIEGLER checks his scripts as NIXON continues on the
other side of the glass.

DIRECTOR

(turns)

Who's next?

ZIEGLER

The Negro. We gotta have a Negro.

A BLACK MAN appears on the monitors.

BLACK MAN

Mr. Nixon ...

NIXON

Yes, sir!

BLACK MAN

You've made a career out of smearing people as Communists. 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 him 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!

NIXON
... but I didn't create them. The Democrats did! If it's a 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!
(then)
Fire the sonofabitch 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 (CONT'D)
(shouts over)
And that's why I want to be president.
I want to bring us together!

EXT. LA COSTA COUNTRY CLUB - PRIVATE PATIO - DAY

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

TOLSON
... give me a break, Mary.

NIXON (V.O.)
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, Mr. 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 (CONT'D)

I want to see him tomorrow, Clyde.

TOLSON

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.

TOLSON

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
doesn't know that, which is why I'm
gonna have to remind him he needs us a
helluva lot more'n we need him.

EXT. DEL MAR RACETRACK - STARTING GATE - DAY

THOROUGHBREDS explode out of the chutes.

EXT. DEL MAR RACETRACK - CLUBHOUSE - DAY

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 his 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 Son and Olly's Boy
duelling 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 Boy's 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 two-dollar 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
... hi.

TOLSON

Mr. 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
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.

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

Moving with NIXON, HOOVER and TOLSON along the rail outside the walking ring. FBI AGENTS have cleared a circle around them. The HORSES for the next race are being saddled. Nixon waves 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 sonofabitch, Edgar ... He had the IRS audit my mother when she was dying in a nursing home.

HOOVER

I know ...

TOLSON

(casually)

... Somebody should shoot the little bastard.

NIXON
I wanna fight just as dirty as he does.

TOLSON
... Use his women.

NIXON
... Any information you have, Edgar. The sonofabitch 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 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 stop in front of a huge GELDING, pats his muzzle.

HOOVER (CONT'D)
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)
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.

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

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 set up Track 2 in Cuba.

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - NIGHT (1972)

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

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

NIXON
Chile, Congo, Guatemala, Cuba. Wherever's 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
...

CUBA MONTAGE

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 40's. A Rum and Coca-Cola SONG plays.

NIXON (CONT'D)

(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

And 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. That's what worries the shit out of me. I don't know how much Hunt knows. Or the Cubans.

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 "beast" 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 my ass ...

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

NIXON (CONT'D)

... 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 (CONT'D)

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

They 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.

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - PANTRY - 1968

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 outstretched like that
...

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - NIGHT (1973)

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?

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

HALDEMAN (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.

NIXON

(slurs, softly to Lincoln)

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

Nixon stands, steadies himself.

NIXON (CONT'D)

(softly)

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

CUT BACK TO:

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

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

HAROLD NIXON (23) is doubled over the railing, a long string of bloody mucus hanging from his lips. He is shockingly emaciated -- the last stages of tuberculosis. HANNAH NIXON, in background attending TWO OTHER PATIENTS, looks on at Harold.

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.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(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 (CONT'D)
Mom expects great things from you ...

RICHARD
Harold ... can I get you anything?

Harold throws a loving arm around Richard, who tenses. We sense that 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.

INT. NIXON HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT (1933)

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

Thou must.

She moves closer, casting a shadow over his face.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

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

RICHARD

(bitter)

Did he have to die for me to get it?!

HANNAH

It's meant to make us stronger.

(kneels)

Thou art stronger than Harold ...
stronger than Arthur. God has chosen
thee to survive ...

RICHARD

What about happiness, Mother?

HANNAH

Thou must find thy peace at the
center, Richard. Strength in this
life. Happiness in the next.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. REPUBLICAN CONVENTION - NIGHT (1968)

ON RICHARD NIXON (55) in his prime. A profile of his face,
as the vast crowd goes berserk. Nixon absorbs the
adoration: at last, he has arrived. He looks down at
someone in the audience. Points, smiles, waves.

Then he steps forward, thrusts his arms in the air -- the
twin-V salute. The cheers rattle the hall as PAT and their
DAUGHTERS join him, followed by Vice President SPIRO AGNEW
and his FAMILY. Nixon puts his arm around Pat. She waves.
The crowd is on its feet.

NIXON

(privately, to Pat)

Now tell me you didn't want this,
Buddy.

Pat smiles back at him, caught up in it. Then she kisses
him on the cheek.

TIME CUT TO:

NIXON addresses the DELEGATES (a composite of Nixon speeches).

NIXON (CONT'D)

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 WITH:

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

NIXON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... 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 voice of a majority of Americans who have been quiet Americans over the past few years ... a silent majority.

DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE - 3. GEORGE WALLACE whips a DIXIE CROWD into a frenzy. 4. The WOUNDED KNEE SIEGE is underway - 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 (CONT'D)

(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 the populace that is torn by civil war.

NIXON (CONT'D)

... they are the Mexican Americans and the 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.

Closing on NIXON at the podium.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Let's face it. Most Americans today, in a crisis of spirit, are simply fed up with government at all levels. All the Great Society activists are lying out there in wait, poised to get you if you try to come after them: the professional welfareists, the urban planners, the day-carers, the public housers. The costly current welfare system is a mess, and we are on the brink of a revolt of the lower middle class. The bottom line is -- no work, no welfare. Our opponents have exaggerated and over-emphasized society as the cause of crimes. The war on poverty is not a war on crime, and it is no substitute for a war on crime.

(pause)

I say to you tonight we must have a

new feeling of responsibility, of self discipline. We must look to renew state and local government! We must have a complete reform of a big, bloated federal government. The average American is just like the child in the family. You give him some responsibility and he is going to amount to something. If you make him completely dependent and pamper him, you are going to make him soft, and a very weak individual.

NIXON (CONT'D)

I begin with the proposition that freedom of choice in housing, education and jobs is the right of every American. On the other hand, I am convinced that while legal segregation is totally wrong, forced integration of housing or education is just as wrong! We simply have to face the hard fact that the law cannot go beyond what people are willing to support. This was true as far as Prohibition was concerned. It is far more true with regard to education and housing ... Yet those of us in public service know -- we can have full prosperity in peace time ... Yes, we can cut the defense budget. We can reduce conventional forces in Europe. We can restore the national environment. We can improve health care and make it available more fairly to all people. And yes, we can have a complete reform of this government. We can have a new American Revolution.

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 B-52 unloads BOMBS and NAPALM

over jungle.

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

CUT TO:

OMIT SCENE #58

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are blazing late with war talk.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - SIDE OFFICE - NIGHT

In a small paneled room, the talk is angry: BILL ROGERS, Secretary of State, MEL LAIRD, Defense Secretary, to one side; KISSINGER with HAIG, seen earlier, but now Kissinger's assistant, to the other side of the desk, as NIXON listens; HALDEMAN takes notes. ZIEGLER looks on. 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, Mr. 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 Vietnamese like some pitiful giant. They're using our POWs to humiliate us. What we need now is

a bold move to 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, Mr. President, 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

What should we tell the press?

DOCUMENTARY

FOOTAGE - 9. Bombs dropping over Cambodia.

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

SUBTITLE READS: "APRIL 1970"

NIXON

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 STUDENTS taunts them.

NIXON (V.O.)

(a speech)

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

CROSSCUT TO:

IN. THE WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - DAY

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 Congressional Medal of Honor 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 twenty-four hours after President Nixon called them "bums," four students were shot dead at Kent State University in Ohio.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - YACHT SEQUOIA - NIGHT

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 the 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 American president to lose a war! Going into 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.

NIXON (CONT'D)

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 II
(Haldeman and Ehrlichman know the
story), and I won big, and let me tell
you this -- unpredictability is our
best asset. That redneck Johnson left
me with 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 already getting strong signals
from the Chinese. They hate the Viets
more than the Russians, and they're
worried about a unified Vietnam. The
Russians hate the Chinese and are
supporting the Viets, you understand?
If we stick it out in Vietnam ...

we'll end up negotiating separately
with both the Chinese and the Soviets.
And we'll get better deals than we
ever dreamed of from both ...

Kissinger nods.

NIXON (CONT'D)

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 it 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 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?

NIXON

(repeats)

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

KISSINGER

Mr. President, this cannot be breathed! Especially to our secretary of state -- 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 ...

A pause. He eyes them. 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?

NIXON

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, sir. He asked for President Harding.

Laughter around the table.

KISSINGER
He's an idiot ...

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

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 Christ's sake!

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

KISSINGER
We have to entertain the possibility
...

Nixon looks down at his steak. It is oozing blood. Too
much blood -- something is very wrong. He shoots back,
momentarily terrified.

NIXON
Goddamn it! Who the hell cooked this
steak?
(yells)
Manolo, there's blood all over my
plate.

NIXON throws down his knife and fork and walks off.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - YACHT SEQUOIA - NIGHT (LATER)

NIXON is on the bow, alone, watching the city slip by.
MITCHELL slides up beside him, offering him a freshened
drink.

MITCHELL
You all right?

NIXON

My brother Harold was about the same age as those kids, John. Tuberculosis got him.

MITCHELL

It wasn't your fault. The soldiers were just kids, too. They panicked.

NIXON

They were throwing rocks, John, just rocks. They don't think I feel ... but I feel too much sometimes. I just can't let a whole policy get dominated by our sentimentality.

MITCHELL

You're doing the right thing, Dick ... don't let 'em shake you.

NIXON

It broke my heart when Harold died.

MITCHELL

That was a long time ago.

Nixon looks out at the water.

NIXON

I think that's when it starts. When you're a kid. The laughs and snubs and slights you get because you're poor or Irish or Jewish or just ugly. But if you're intelligent, and your anger is deep enough and strong enough, you learn you can change these attitudes by excellence, gut performance, while those who have everything are sitting on their fat butts ...

(then)

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 (CONT'D)
But Nixon can't.

INT. LIMOUSINE - THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

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.

HALDEMAN
(with clipboard)
... and we've got the economic guys at
five. The Dow lost another 16 points.
They're going to want a decision on
the budget. Sir? ... Are we holding
the line on a balanced budget?

NIXON
No ... a little deficit won't hurt.
Jesus, they're serious. Why're 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
except 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 the 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!

A glum moment. Haldeman stares at him. A PROTESTOR waves
a Vietcong flag in Nixon's face. He gets pulled off the
limo.

NIXON

(exhilarated)

But, hell, this is nothing compared to

Venezuela. When I was Vice President, Ike sent me down there like a blocking back. They threw rocks, broke out our windows, almost overturned the car. Read Six Crises, Bob. Boy, Pat was brave!

HALDEMAN

Yeah, we've got to get our vice president off the golf course and back 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 the 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 awhile.

NIXON

Well, no place where they speak English. That way he can always say he was misquoted.

Nixon emits a high, manic laugh.

The PROTESTORS are frustrated as the limousine breaks through.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY (1970)

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

Mr. President, I don't know what to say. As soon as we learned from the Secret Service you were en 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.

INT. OPERATIONS CENTER & HELM'S OFFICE - DAY

They walk past ANALYSTS laboring in isolation behind Plexiglass 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 about 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.

INT. HELMS OFFICE - DAY

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 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, Mr.
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
budget 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, Mr. 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 ... insatiable, 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 (CONT'D)

(reminding him)

I, for one, saw to it that my name was never connected to any of those operations.

On Nixon, waiting.

HELMS (CONT'D)

(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
And 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
Mr. Castro.

NIXON
(tense)
Yes.

HELMS
We have recent intelligence that 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. Mr. Kennedy made a verbal promise to the Russians not to invade Cuba. But you authorized Dr. Kissinger to put this in writing.

Nixon is taken aback by Helms's 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 world 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, Mr. 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 (CONT'D)

This is an extremely dangerous direction, Mr. President. Terrible consequences can result from such enormous errors in 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, Mr. 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 hours come round at last / Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" ... Yes, this country stands at such a juncture.

On Nixon, we:

CUT TO:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIXON BEDROOM - NIGHT

NIXON has just returned from a dinner party, this tuxedo coming off, on the phone, a Scotch in hand, in high spirits. A series of JUMP CUTS of his phone self as follows:

NIXON (ON PHONE)

It was sudden death, Trini, but I think I kicked Helms's 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!

More laughter.

JUMP CUT TO:

NIXON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
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 1:00. And don't forget the budget boys. I'm gonna carve the shit out of 'em.
(beat)
Well, no, clear the afternoon and tell Trini I'll be in Key Biscayne by 4:00 ... No, alone ... Pat's staying here with the girls.

Pat approaches him, 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 (CONT'D)
Hi, Buddy. What are you doing in
here?

PAT
I've missed you.

NIXON
(suspecting drink on her
breath)
Are 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 has been given. Nixon 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

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, chickenshit faggots! They don't have the long-term vision anymore. They just want to cover their asses 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 it. 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

NIXON (V.O.)

Manolo! Where the hell are you?

The lights come on, revealing MANOLO SANCHEZ, the valet, in

the doorway, wearing a bathrobe and slippers.

MANOLO

I was asleep, Mr. 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, Mr. President.

NIXON

We let you down, didn't we. Your people.

MANOLO

That was Mr. Kennedy.

NIXON

You don't think he was a hero?

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?
(then)
All those kids ... Why do they hate me
so much?

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - PRE-DAWN

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 1
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 1
(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. He 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 STUDENTS are talking among themselves. They see Nixon, stop. Stunned. Nixon strides toward them.

NIXON
Hi, I'm Dick Nixon.

STUDENT 2
You're shittin' me.

NIXON
Where you from?

STUDENT 2
Syracuse.

NIXON
The Orangemen! Now there's a football program. Jim Brown. And that other tailback ... The one with the blood disease ...

STUDENT 2
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 (CONT'D)
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 3

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 3

Tell that to the GIs who are going to die tomorrow in Vietnam.

STUDENT 2

What you have to understand, Mr. Nixon, is that we are willing to die for what we believe in.

NIXON

(looking 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 hometown, 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

Mr. 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 2

Come on, man -- Vietnam ain't Germany. It doesn't threaten us. It's a civil war between the 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 thirty years. I want an all-volunteer army. But it's also a question of American 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 (CONT'D)

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 more 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
in 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 SECRET SERVICE 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, Mr. President.

NIXON

(to all)

Don't forget, the most important thing
in your 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 (CONT'D)

She got it, Bob. A nineteen-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 nineteen-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 fascists out! Dick Nixon before he dicks you!"

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

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 alter.

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - DAY

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 day 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 ahold 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 his 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 the
place. Helms has seen to that.
(beat, Nixon remains poker
faced)
Then there's Kissinger's staff.
Kissinger himself, I believe, maybe
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 bow tie. 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."

(starts out)

All right, Edgar, but just don't let it come back to haunt me.

HOOVER

(a reminder)

It won't. As long as I'm here.

Nixon absentmindedly 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:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - DAY

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 the 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CABINET ROOM - DAY (1971) - RAIN

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. CLOSE - we can make out the words "Pentagon Papers."

NIXON
Gentlemen, we've had our last damn
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 ...

INTERCUTTING among the faces -- KISSINGER predominant.
Nixon glances in his direction, pause on him.

NIXON (CONT'D)
The permissiveness of this era is
over. The belts are coming off and
people are gonna be taken to the
woodshed. This 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, some
stenographer -- that's never the case.
It's never the little people -- little
people do not leak. It's always the
sonofabitch like Ellsberg who leaks!
The Harvard Hebrew boys with the
private agendas who wanna be heroes.

Nixon grabs the paper, shakes it.

NIXON (CONT'D)

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 -- ol' Sparky got 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 (CONT'D)

This administration is a goddamn disaster. We got bums out there at the gates. We've got thirty-eight of forty 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, 'cause 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. Do you understand? Good day, gentlemen ...

He walks out, leaving them stunned and silent.

HALDEMAN

Well, I guess that's it for today's

meeting ...

INT. POULTRY PROCESSING PLANT - MIAMI - NIGHT

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 churo, swallows it.

STURGIS (CONT'D)

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 a leak.

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 (CONT'D)

Gordon Liddy ... Frank Sturgis.

They turn the handshake into a parallel of the cock fight,
iron grips subtly crush each other's hand.

LIDDY

(after they break)

Y'ever hold your hand over a fire?

Liddy pulls out a Zippo lighter.

HUNT

That's okay, Gordon

Hunt 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 really 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 (CONT'D)

(chewing on his churo)

The claws are out, Frank.

INT. FIELDING PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT (1971)

As seen before: a GLASS shatters, a CROWBAR jacks open the

door marked: "Dr. Lewis J. Fielding, Psychiatrist."

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.) (CONT'D)
We've taken a step into the future.
We've changed the world.

"America the Beautiful" MUSIC takes us into:

INT. MAO TSE-TUNG'S OFFICE - BEIJING - DAY (1972)

SUBTITLE READS: "FEBRUARY 1972"

NIXON beams, standing under a huge red flag bearing the hammer and sickle. The "America" theme is being played on a traditional Chinese instrument as CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHERS are allowed to take stiff portraits. The MEN chit-chat.

NIXON
I must say you look very good, Mr.
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 the 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 (CONT'D)

Don't ever trust them. They never tell the truth or honor their commitments. Vietnamese are like Russians. Both are dogs.

NIXON

Mr. 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, Mr. Chairman, at Harvard I used your writings in my class.

MAO

What a waste of time. My writings mean absolutely nothing.

KISSINGER

But your writings have changed the world, Mr. 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, Mr. Chairman?

MAO

How a fat man gets so many girls.

Mao howls at his own joke.

KISSINGER
Power, Mr. 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. 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:

DOCUMENTARY

FOOTAGE - THE BOMBING OF HANOI ... SUBTITLE READS:
"CHRISTMAS 1972." HUNDREDS OF B-52 STRIKES, BOMBS POURING
OVER THE CITY.

BBC REPORTER (V.O.)
In a surprise Christmas bombing of
Hanoi, President Nixon delivered more
tonnage than was used at Dresden in
World War II ... It is, without a
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 in 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 toward the sun.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - MAIN CABIN - SUNSET (1972)

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, Mr.
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 the Democrats' 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 "schwartzes" are gone ...

NIXON

Don't let it lose us the right-wing vote ...

A silence as the sour notes depress everyone.

NIXON (CONT'D)

(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, Mr. President.

Everyone glares at Henry.

ZIEGLER

No, they want you, Mr. President. I really think it would be a good move.

NIXON

Gentlemen, I go now to discover the exact length, width and depth of the shaft.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - PRESS CABIN - SUNSET

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:

EXT. JONES RANCH - DAY (1972)

REPORTER (V.O.)

J. Edgar Hoover is dead at the age of seventy-seven. 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, thrashes 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 to
shoot him.

A WRANGLER climbs carefully into the chute. The Brahma
lunges for him.

JONES (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
(cagey)
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."

INT. JONES RANCH - LIVING ROOM - DAY (1972)

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
around, drinking Jack Daniels and smoking cigars. Among
them we recognize the CUBAN and MITCH. It's heated.

JONES
It looks like to me we're gonna lose
the war for the first goddamned time
and, Dick, goddamn it, 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 out 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, Mr. Nixon?

NIXON

Free, if you're the 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 the top of the list.

MITCH

How about Kissinger along with him?

NIXON

Kissinger's misunderstood. He pretends to be a liberal for his Establishment friends, but he's even

tougher than I am ...

CUBAN
So Kissinger stays. Just like Castro,
Mr. Nixon?

NIXON
Yeah, he stays ...

An uncomfortable silence. Jones walks closer to Nixon.

JONES
Desi's got a point. What the hell are
we gonna do about the Communists right
here in our backyard?!

NIXON
What do you 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 have 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 that politics is the art of compromise. I learned it the hard way. I don't know if you have. But I tell you what, Jack ... If you don't like it, there's an election in November. You can take your money out into the open, give it to Wallace ... How about it, Jack? Are you willing to do that? Give this country over to some poet-pansy socialist like George McGovern?

Nixon is right in Jones's face now.

NIXON (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. TEXAS LANDSCAPE - DAY

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 ...

EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY (STOCK FOOTAGE)

The plane flying through the 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 that the Watergate investigations have, up to now, damaged Nixon politically in any significant way ...

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - PRESIDENT'S CABIN - NIGHT

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 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 (CONT'D)
(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, 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 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

(conflicted)

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 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 fuck Sirica's crazy.
Thirty-five-year sentences! 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? Woodwind and Fernstein?

ZIEGLER

(corrects him)

Bernstein.

NIXON

Who the fuck are they?

(to Haldeman)

Bob, are you working on revoking the
Posts's television license?

(Haldeman nods)

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 any more 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - PRESS CONFERENCE - EAST ROOM - DAY

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 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)

Mr. 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 Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman have secretly disbursed 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, spins him back towards the REPORTERS, and pushes him at them. Ziegler stumbles, looks confused.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1973)

NIXON storms into his office, picking up an ashtray and hurling it across the room -- it shatters against the wall. Everyone in the room with him -- KISSINGER, HALDEMAN, EHRLICHMAN -- is 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 Chappaquiddick.

NIXON

My point exactly! Somebody had to die before his shit got in the paper! Fucking Kennedys get away with everything. Do you see me screwing everything that moves?

(then)

For Christ's sake! I did what the New

York Times editorial page said we should do! I ended the war, I got SALT I 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 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.

(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 matter now, Henry. The
point is, you might lose some of your
media-darling halo if the press 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 it 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)

Mr. Nixon, 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 perfectly, 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)
Mr. 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 going to 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 to Dean, sotto
voce)
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 ...

INT. CIA - HELMS'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

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, leans forward excitedly, 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's violent reaction, but remains very cool.

HALDEMAN

This is what the President told me to relay to you, Mr. Helms.

HELMS

(settling back)

All right ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1973)

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 the 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. Ehrenberg's paid three times that much ...

HALDEMAN

Helms wants Iran or there might be problems. All of 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 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?

(then)

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 a 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 (CONT'D)

(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 Earvin'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 just 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 have to 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 ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

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 (CONT'D)
(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 known 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 (CONT'D)

This is about Richard Nixon. You got people dying because he didn't make the varsity football team. 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

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 ...

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. BRIDGE - NIGHT

JOHN DEAN stands at the center of the bridge, looks down 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 (CONT'D)

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

(lights his pipe)

John, sooner or later -- sooner, I think -- you are going to learn the lesson that has been learned by everyone who has ever gotten close to Richard Nixon. That he's the darkness reaching out for the darkness. And eventually, it's either you or him. Look at the landscape of his life and you'll see a boneyard.

Hunt throws a match into the river.

HUNT (CONT'D)
... And he's already digging your
grave, John.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

JOHN DEAN, looking glum, walks down the 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 ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SUBTITLE READS: "MARCH 1973"

DEAN is explaining his new outlook to a quiet NIXON.

DEAN
... this is just 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 across his desk. And moves towards a MIKE drilled in the edge of the desk.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. FILE ROOM - BASEMENT - DAY

A bank of TAPE RECORDERS labelled "Oval Office," "Lincoln Room," "Phones 1-6," "EOB," is 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 Christ's sake, 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 Christ's sake, 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 of all this. Mitchell's going to get it in the neck anyway. It's time he assumed some responsibility.

Dean has a nervous look in his eye.

DEAN

He won't. He told Ehrlichman 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 suckered 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 to 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, sees the point of this.

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 weekend. And I want you to write up a report. I want you to put everything you know about Watergate in there. Say: Mr. President, here it all is.

Another lightning-like IMAGE is Nixon's worst fear -- JOHN DEAN is at the table, plea-bargaining with TWO PROSECUTORS, their backs to us.

DEAN (V.O.)

You want me to put it all in writing?
Over my signature?

NIXON (V.O.)
Nobody knows more about this thing
than you do, John.

A pause.

DEAN
I'm not going to be the scapegoat for
this. Haldeman and Ehrlichman are in
just as deep as me.

NIXON
John, you don't want to start down
that road. I remember what Whittaker
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:

TELEVISION SCREEN - NIXON - NIGHT (1973)

NIXON on the TV screen, shaken, ashen-faced.

NIXON (ON TV)
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 ...

INT. CIA - HELMS'S OFFICE - NIGHT (1973)

RICHARD HELMS, absently watching NIXON on TV, carries a handful of documents to a CIA incinerator. 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.

LIMBO - HALDEMAN watches TV, his WIFE and CHILDREN next to him. He thinks back to:

INT. EXEC OFFICE BLDG - NIXON OFFICE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Haldeman's mind -- the last one-to-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.

BACK TO SCENE:

NIXON (ON TV) (CONT'D)
... 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)
Sir ... six bodies.

His wife puts her hand on his knee in support. He squeezes her hand.

LIMBO -

EHRlichman also watches, with FAMILY.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

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 devastated.

ALEXANDER HAIG, Nixon's new chief-of-staff, seen earlier, watches Nixon for a moment, turns to a VIDEO CREW.

HAIG
(softly)
Out.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (1973)

NIXON at one end of the lengthy table, 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
(at last)
I'm giving a tea for the wives of the
POWs.

Nixon doesn't respond.

PAT (CONT'D)
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 left, Dick. If you don't 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 beaten 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - HAIG'S OFFICE - DAY

NIXON STAFFERS are gathered around Haig's TV set at as we:

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. COMMITTEE CHAMBER - (SEEN ONLY ON TV) - DAY (1973)

JOHN DEAN reads his statement to the COMMITTEE.
Conservatively groomed, horn-rimmed glasses, shorter hair,
Dean speaks in a monotone. A pretty blond 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

HAIG walks past STAFF into the Oval Office.

DEAN (ON TV)
(droning on)
... 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 was a higher duty to protect the President ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY (1973)

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 a long time in my country.

(then)

This is the man 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 II treaty between our great countries. Peace in our era is possible ...

Nixon looks to Haig, who whispers something in his ear.

NIXON

Excuse me, Mr. 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIXON BEDROOM - NIGHT (1973)

Nixon's daughter, JULIE, earnest, bright-eyed, looks at her
father.

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 (CONT'D)

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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - PAT'S BEDROOM - DAY (1973)

PAT is 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)

... and 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, 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 top of her glasses.

SMITH

And on Sunday you're saying hello to the VFW Poppy Girl ...

She realizes Pat is not listening.

SMITH (CONT'D)
Mrs. Nixon ... ?

Close: on Pat as she slowly raises a hand to her lips.

NEWSCASTER 1 (V.O.)
White House sources say that over 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.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIXON'S BEDROOM - DAY

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:

INT. BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - DAY (1973)

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 through. Clear a path. I'm in
charge here.

PAT gets the DOCTOR's attention on the move.

PAT
(privately)
Is it TB?

DOCTOR
No.
He's sure he has tuberculosis.

DOCTOR
No, it's an acute viral pneumonia.
(lowers his voice)
But that's not what we're worried
about. We found an inflammation in
his left leg. It's phlebitis ...

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's Nixon's business
dealings and house payments. Nixon
apparently paid no income tax in the
years 1970, '71 and '72 ... and may
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.

INT. BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT - DAY

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 the respirator into Nixon's mouth. Images of the Beast pervade the room.

Nixon begins breathing ... His eyes going past PAT to ...

IMAGES OF THE PAST - OF HIS PARENTS, FRANK, HANNAH, LITTLE ARTHUR, HAROLD ... THE GROCERY STORE.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STREET - DAY

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 ...

EXT. STREET - DAY

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 up your keester, fella. Our marriage is finished, thank you very much ...

He pushes on.

BACK TO:

INT. BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT

NIXON in the hospital, breathing.

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!

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING CORRIDOR - DAY (1973)

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?

A beat. Then:

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
with 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 VIOLIN playing
inside.

NIXON (CONT'D)
(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 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.

(pointing to the East Room)

Do you think those POWs in there did?

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 greets the President, as he disappears inside.

TELEVISION SCREEN - NBC LOGO - LIMBO

ANNOUNCER

We interrupt this program for a special report from NBC News.

A REPORTER appears, stunned.

REPORTER (ON TV)

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'D)

Attorney General Elliot Richards has resigned rather than comply with the President's order, and Deputy Attorney General 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 into a car, refusing to comment. ELLIOT RICHARDSON moving down the gauntlet of REPORTERS. We CUT BACK to the REPORTER on camera, grim.

REPORTER (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Tonight, the country, without a Vice President, stands poised at a crossroads -- has a government of laws become a government of one man?

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT (1973)

As before, the black iron bars. The facade of the mansion. The light in the second floor. We move in slowly.

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

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 out the voices -- 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 (CONT'D)
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,
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."

NIXON (CONT'D)
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 that 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 them.

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 thou were a boy ...

NIXON
(blurts out)
No! Please! Don't talk to me!
Anything ... but don't talk to me.

A SHARP CUT snaps us from the 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 (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)

... these guys went after Castro.
Seven times, ten times ... What do you
think -- people like that, they just
give up? They just walk away?

(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
shows Nixon getting drunker, playing all 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 eighteen-and-a-half minute
gap in a critical Watergate tape ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING - DAY (1974)

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
forty-six taped conversations ...

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

... In a simple ceremony, Gerald Ford
was sworn in as Vice President. A
longtime, 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 (CONT'D)

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 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 pile 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!

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT (1974)

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 ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - HAIG'S OFFICE - NIGHT (1974)

KISSINGER and HAIG watch NIXON on television. They share a drink.

NIXON (ON TV)

... an action that will at last, once and for all, show that what I knew and what I did with regard 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)

I had no knowledge of the cover-up until John Dean told me about it on March twenty-first. 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)

... 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:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - PAT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DOCUMENTARY IMAGE - NIGHT (1974)

REPORTERS (V.O.)

The Supreme Court ruled today eight-to-zero 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 ...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDORS & STAIRS - NIGHT (1974)

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 film's opening shots of the White House. The silhouettes now become apparent as GENERAL HAIG and HENRY KISSINGER.

REPORTERS (V.O.)

... The House Judiciary Committee has voted twenty-seven-to-eleven 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 thirty six occasions, that he encouraged his aides to commit perjury, and that he abused the powers of his office ... In a separate report, the Senate Select Committee details the misuses of the IRS, the FBI, the CIA and the Justice Department. It denounces the Plumbers, and it raises questions 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.

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

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 the 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, Mr. President.

He hands him a paper. Nixon glances at it.

HAIG (CONT'D)

June twenty-third, '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 (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
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 twentieth 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 (CONT'D)

We both know it's possible.

(then)

I know for a fact it's possible.

Nixon stares up at him.

HAIG (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

This is something you will have to do,
Mr. 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 to 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 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 (CONT'D)

... 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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

... 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 (CONT'D)

(woozily at his hands)

It's unbelievable, it's insane ...

On that note, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CORRIDORS & ENTRY - NIGHT (1974)

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 bluffness, a sense of bravado in the face of

defeat.

NIXON (O.S.)
... they smelled the blood on me this
time, Al. I got soft. You know ...
that rusty, metallic smell ...

HAIG (O.S.)
I know it well, sir.

NIXON (O.S.)
It came over from Vietnam, you know.

HAIG (O.S.)
Sir?

NIXON (O.S.)
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 (CONT'D)
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 bid him a last
"Mr. President."

NIXON (CONT'D)
(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 (CONT'D)

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 weary, 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 toward him to support him.

PAT

It'll be over soon.

NIXON

No ... it's just 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, as a boy ... 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 (CONT'D)
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 (CONT'D)
I could always see where I was going.
But it's dark out there.
God, I've always been afraid of the
dark ... Buddy ...

Nixon breaks down. She slowly leads him up the grand
staircase -- into the shadows of history.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - DAY

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,
a 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 would never really 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 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 (CONT'D)

... 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.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A MARINE CORPS HELICOPTER waits at the end of a red carpet.
NIXON and PAT make their way towards it, followed by
FAMILY.

NIXON (V.O.)

... Remember: always give your best,
never get discouraged, never be petty.
Always remember: 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'D)

... 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 statesman. He was buried and honored by five 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 twentieth 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