

# The Death of Richard Nixon

a one act play by  
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**Cast:**  
***President Nixon***  
***Henry Kissinger***

*Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup> 1974.*

*Nixon is alone onstage with only 2 chairs and a small bar with a few bottles as a set. After a few minutes Kissinger appears out of the darkness...*

**KISSINGER:** Mr. President?

**NIXON:** Henry....come in...come in.

**KISSINGER:** It's time Mr. President.

**NIXON:** Already? Time flies when everybody else is having fun.

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir.

**NIXON:** Is the press downstairs?

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir. Your family is waiting for you. But before we go down there's one thing....

**NIXON:** (*interrupting him*) This is my favorite room in the White House....do you know that Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I....

**NIXON:** (*continuing*) The Lincoln room. It's haunted you know Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** I've spoken to Lincoln in here. If there's one person who understands what Nixon is up against, it's Abe. You agree?

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir...he sure would understand.

**NIXON:** Lincoln. Can you believe that Henry? He was here. Me and Abraham Lincoln had the same job. Me....the punk from Whittier. And *Abraham Lincoln*. (*long pause as this sinks in*) This country must be crazy Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I've considered that sir.

**NIXON:** He tried to keep the country from splitting Henry. There were enemies everywhere. He was so strong they couldn't stop him....even by killing him. They killed Kennedy and it stopped him in his tracks. They only cried 'cause he was pretty and looked good on TV. Lincoln beat the bastards Henry. He beat them.

**KISSINGER:** (*nervously*) Sir, what exactly have you and Mr. Lincoln talked about?

**NIXON:** Now that's classified Henry. If I tell you it'll be in the Post by morning.

**KISSINGER:** (*indignant*) Sir, I resent the implication that I leak.....

**NIXON:** Relax Henry. (*moving on*) You know....you gotta have an enormous ego to want this job. Look at the shoes you step into. Washington. Lincoln. FDR. Ike.

**KISSINGER:** (*getting a dig in*) Kennedy

**NIXON:** I never liked you Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I know that sir. But you needed me. That's much better than being liked.

**NIXON:** You're like another goddamn wife Henry

**KISSINGER:** Better looking though....right sir?.

**NIXON:** (*off again*) Kennedy. You step into his shoes you realize they're goddamn glass slippers. Camelot my ass. Press coulda burst that bubble with a goddamn fountain pen if they wanted to. What a story that woulda been. Watergate would look like a lark next to all that sewage.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, you gotta let go of all that.

**NIXON:** You brought him up Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Did I?

**NIXON:** Yes Henry. You're very thoughtful that way.

**KISSINGER:** He's gone sir. He can't hurt you anymore.

**NIXON:** Look at where we are Henry. I beg to differ. It's not the reality Henry. It's the perception. You remember that debate in 1960? TV. What the hell did I know about television? I cleaned Kennedy's clock that day Henry. Made him look like a goddamn little boy. But I pick up the paper the next day and everybody is talking about my 5 O'Clock shadow. You know....why didn't Nixon shave. *Shave!* And there's Jack Kennedy, blown dry, as brown as a Mexican. They fell in love with him.

**KISSINGER:** Sir....TV was in black and white then. They couldn't see his tan.

**NIXON:** But they *could* Henry. Don't you get it? Even in black and white the guy shone like a rock star. Knew as much about foreign policy as I knew about Elvis Presley.

**KISSINGER:** Now that was quite a day to remember sir.

**NIXON:** What?

**KISSINGER:** When Elvis came to visit.

**NIXON:** Oh Jesus....I forgot about that.

**KISSINGER:** He wanted to be made a federal agent in the war against drugs.

**NIXON:** Isn't that kinda like putting you in charge of the Peace Corps Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Well....I wouldn't have put it that way sir....but I get your meaning. *(pause)* Sir...if I recall you asked him to record an album with the theme "get high on life".

**NIXON:** They should have checked me for drugs that day Henry. If I should be resigning for anything it should be for agreeing to a meeting with that dope fiend. He kept saying everything was the Beatles' fault.. Jesus....remember that cape he was wearing? Looked like a goddamn astronaut. And that belt buckle. Christ. The thing was the size of a dinner plate.

**KISSINGER:** He brought you a Colt .45 with silver bullets as a present.

**NIXON:** We had some crack security here didn't we Henry? Guy walks into the oval office with a loaded gun.

**KISSINGER:** Well.....those were more innocent times sir.

**NIXON:** Sure Henry. US cities being burned to the ground. Assassinations every 10 minutes. War raging. It was like fucking Pooh Corner back then.

**KISSINGER:** My point exactly sir. Despite all that....a moral degenerate drug fiend could *still* walk into the oval office with a loaded gun.

**NIXON:** Getting nostalgic now Henry?.

**KISSINGER:** Seems a good time for it sir.

**NIXON:** Weren't we talking about the debate Henry? Today is not a good day to get Nixon sidetracked.

**KISSINGER:** Sorry sir. But you *did* mention Elvis.

**NIXON:** That's the problem with this country Henry. Too easily sidetracked. They pick up the Washington Post and.....

**KISSINGER:** (*cutting him off to keep him from starting a rant*) People who listened on the radio said you won that debate sir.

**NIXON:** Why can't they *just* listen Henry? Why do they have to *see* as well? The words. They're the truth Henry. The face always lies.

**KISSINGER:** Why didn't you shave that day sir?

**NIXON:** I did shave.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, you looked like you just came out of the woods.

**NIXON:** Real men have to shave twice a day Henry. How many times a day do you shave?

**KISSINGER:** Er.....twice a day sir.

**NIXON:** Liar. Nobody from Harvard shaves twice a day. You all have faces like a baby's ass. I was working that day Henry. Working. No time to pop into the mens room for another shave. I didn't have people on my staff to powder my nose like Jack Kennedy did.

**KISSINGER:** He had people on his staff who powdered more than his nose.

**NIXON:** (*furious now*) You think Nixon would have gotten away with that Henry? Do you? They would have crucified me. Goddamn Kennedy's get away with everything.

**KISSINGER:** (*trying to calm him a bit*) Sir, I notice you shaved today.

**NIXON:** (*chuckling*) Pat made me. I wanted to go out there wearing my robe and slippers. Give the bastards one last hurrah.

**KISSINGER:** They'll never know how much they'll miss you until your gone.

**NIXON:** Won't have me to kick around anymore....again.

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir. I think this one will hold.

**NIXON:** I notice you're not going anywhere Henry.

**KISSINGER:** No sir. Preside...*(stops himself...)*...Congressman Ford has asked me to stay on.

**NIXON:** Needs to know where the bodies are buried....does he Henry?

**KISSINGER:** I'm sure you already briefed him on that sir.

**NIXON:** I did. But he wanted you to stay anyway. The man played football without a helmet for too long Henry. Go easy on him.

**KISSINGER:** I'll try sir.

**NIXON:** He's a nice man...Ford. Doesn't deserve this.

**KISSINGER:** Neither do you sir

**NIXON:** About as interesting as a 10 pound bag of fertilizer though. He's liable to put Woodward and Bernstein to sleep.

**KISSINGER:** I wish we could've done that.

**NIXON:** Too late now Henry. Maybe next time.

**KISSINGER:** Sir....have you talked to him about.....er....

**NIXON:** Talk to who?

**KISSINGER:** Preside.....*(stops himself again)*..Congressman Ford sir.

**NIXON:** About what Henry?

**KISSINGER:** You know sir.....

**NIXON:** No I don't know Henry. About what?

**KISSINGER:** About a pardon sir.

**NIXON:** For who Henry? You? The man's dumb but he's not crazy.

**KISSINGER:** Actually sir, I was referring to you.

**NIXON:** *(laughs)* That'd get him out of the gate in style wouldn't it Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir, and I was just wondering if you've spoken to him about it.

**NIXON:** What are the boys downstairs saying?

**KISSINGER:** About 10 to 1 against. They're saying the country would crucify him.

**NIXON:** Well Henry....crazier things have happened. I mean....you won the fucking Nobel Peace Prize.

*(they both burst out laughing)*

**KISSINGER:** *(still cracking up)* You'll never let me live that down will you sir..

**NIXON:** What was that you said about getting out of Vietnam Henry?

**KISSINGER:** I said our goal was to have a decent interval between withdrawal and the rape of the first virgin.

*(they crack up again)*

**NIXON:** I love that line Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I think that may have been the one that clinched it for me actually.

**NIXON:** Even you didn't have the balls to go pick up the thing in person.

**KISSINGER:** Well sir, there *was* a war on.

*(they practically fall over themselves laughing now)*

**NIXON:** I remember reading some guy saying that political satire was dead the day Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

**KISSINGER:** *(mock outrage)* Who said that?! Let's tap his phone!

**NIXON:** *(playing along...calling to his "secretary")* Rose! Rose! Get Liddy in here! What do you mean he's in jail?

*(they laugh uproariously again)*

**KISSINGER:** Rose! Call the Attorney General. He can get Liddy out. What do you mean he's sharing a cell with him?!

*(they're like 2 drunken college buddies now.....laughing so hard tears are forming)*

**NIXON:** Henry, in a sick and twisted sort of way, I think I'm actually going to miss you.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I think that's the nicest thing you ever said to me.

**NIXON:** Now don't get all homo on me Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Sorry sir. You do bring out the man in me.

**NIXON:** So what do you think about a pardon Henry?

**KISSINGER:** For you sir?

**NIXON:** Yes Henry. For me.

**KISSINGER:** I'm not sure it's a good idea politically.

**NIXON:** You want to see your President in jail Henry?

**KISSINGER:** No sir....it's just....

**NIXON:** It's just what Henry?

**KISSINGER:** It won't look good sir.

**NIXON:** And me in an orange jumpsuit will Henry....is that what you're saying?

**KISSINGER:** No sir...I just.....(*nervous....wanting to get off the subject*) can I have a drink sir?

**NIXON:** Sure Henry. It's still free ...

*(Henry gets himself a drink..Nixon continues)*

....any regrets Henry?

**KISSINGER:** You mean besides letting Elvis in with a loaded gun?

**NIXON:** Yea....besides that.

**KISSINGER:** Well....it's kind of a late day for regrets sir.

**NIXON:** That's a faggoty Harvard thing to say Henry

**KISSINGER:** Sir a regret is just something we don't have any control over. So I avoid them if possible.

**NIXON:** Even President's have regrets Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Well.....I regret the price is always so damn high.

**NIXON:** You never gave paying it a second thought.

**KISSINGER:** No sir...but that doesn't mean I don't wish it was lower. 58,000 dead in a war....(*pauses...*)

**NIXON:** A war what Henry? That we didn't win?

**KISSINGER:** I didn't say that sir.

**NIXON:** Johnson never wanted to go down as the only American President to lose a war. So the bastard got out so they could pin it on me. They used to call it Johnson's war. Remember that Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Sir.....we did the right thing. We declared victory and came home.

**NIXON:** (*disgust*) Peace with honor....right Henry? People don't think Nixon feels. But I do. Those dead boys....each one is like a knife in the heart. It's not easy sitting in the Oval office ordering boys to fight and die. We can't hear the bombs from here Henry. We can't hear the screams...or smell the blood. I see these crazies with their long hair marching outside the window, driving Daddy's car and carrying money they've pilfered from Mommy's purse.....and then I think of our boys....squatting in the jungle....waiting for me to tell them what comes next. This place has gone mad Henry. And here I am....stuck in the middle. Besieged. We had to ring the damn place with buses and soldiers to keep 'em out Henry.

**KISSINGER:** The barbarians have made it past the buses sir.

**NIXON:** I wish I was as cold as you Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I'll take that as a compliment sir.

**NIXON:** You lost....what.....13 of your family in the Holocaust Henry? Goddamn Nazis chased you across an ocean. I figured you for a pacifist after what you've seen. But now what Henry? You getting back at Hitler by advising me to carpet bomb Cambodians?

**KISSINGER:** Sir, are you trying to tell me something?

**NIXON:** You're an odd Jew Henry. That's all.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, can I speak freely?

**NIXON:** Sure Henry. The tape recorders are off.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I've seen what even the *appearance* of weakness can do. Look at McGovern. He brings Eagleton in as his Vice President, and turns out the guy is some sort of nut. Getting electric-shock for depression....blubbing like a baby in front of the

press when they called him on it. So everybody turns on the guy. Like a pack of vipers. We *do* smell the blood sir. Weakness. We all have it. Hell...if you didn't, you wouldn't be running out of here like a rabbit...

**NIXON:** (*dryly*) Henry....I am still in charge of the army you know.

**KISSINGER:** (*he forgot himself momentarily*) Sorry sir. (*but now frankly all over again*) We all have weaknesses. But when you show them off....that's when a Panzer division drives right up your ass. So if the Viet Cong are gonna slip into Cambodia thinking it's gonna be some sort of safe haven.....

**NIXON:** (*mockingly*) That's right Henry....damn that international law.

**KISSINGER:** The illegal we do immediately sir. The unconstitutional takes a little longer.. And what are we supposed to do anyway? Like in Chile. I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves. The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously.

**NIXON:** Well Henry.....you may be wrong most of the time, but at least you're sure of yourself.

**KISSINGER:** That's what you pay me for sir. But still...I can hold myself up to the light..In my new book I talk about my first mistake on page 850.

**NIXON:** Don't flog yourself too hard Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I won't sir.

**NIXON:** (*moving on...wanting the spotlight to be on himself*) You know.....in 68 we had big plans. (*looks around the room*) I was thinking that maybe someday a President would be sitting in the Nixon room.

**KISSINGER:** Er....well....you never know sir.

**NIXON:** You're a supreme ass kisser.....do you know that Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Only when it's in my best interest sir. Sir, before we go downstairs, you....um..

**NIXON:** What Henry?

**KISSINGER:** (*embarrassed*) You have to write out a letter of resignation and sign it.

**NIXON:** Oh?.....who do I write it out to?

**KISSINGER:** Me Mr. President.

**NIXON:** You?

**KISSINGER:** Yes Sir....the constitution.....the...er....legality of the whole thing.

**NIXON:** Funny time to be thinking about legalities now isn't it Henry?

**KISSINGER:** I guess we have to pay attention to them sometime Mr. President.

**NIXON:** You've always had impeccable timing Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Thank you sir.

**NIXON:** So if I turn in my letter of resignation to you.....you could refuse it?

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** Henry, you must have come barging into the Oval Office 50 times over the years threatening to resign. You always sounded like one of Pat's hair dressers.

**KISSINGER:** (*uncomfortable*) Sir, I was simply standing up for what...

**NIXON:** (*cutting him off*) Henry, I never accepted your resignation. Maybe it's time you return the favor and not accept mine. There's so much more to do...and tell me who is gonna do it Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I think the situation we're in now is a bit different that what...

**NIXON:** (*cuts him off*) Yes...I know Henry I know. (*quiet for a time*) It's a good job you know? I hate to lose it. Pay's not very good but the benefits are tremendous. Good food. Good wine. Henry...did you ever notice at State dinners how the wine they poured for me always had a towel over the label? That's because I was drinking the good French stuff and giving all of you the cheap stuff.

**KISSINGER:** One of the perks of the job Sir. Of course I knew all along...

**NIXON:** Bug the kitchen did you Henry? I wouldn't put it past you. You're a devious bastard.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, we really should go....

**NIXON:** Henry....before we go, will you join me in a prayer?

**KISSINGER:** Sir....I....

**NIXON:** Don't be too proud Henry.

**KISSINGER:** No sir...it's just that I don't want to wrinkle the suit. Camera's are downstairs waiting....I assume you want to kneel down?

**NIXON:** That's generally how us Quakers pray. Do Jews pray standing up Henry?

**KISSINGER:** No sir.

*(the both kneel down)*

**NIXON:** Buy a new suit just for me Henry? I'm touched.

**KISSINGER:** Sir...the taping system....you did say it's shut off in here?

**NIXON:** Yes Henry. You may be somewhat familiar with the trouble it has caused me.

**KISSINGER:** Sir I was just checking.

**NIXON:** Wouldn't want this to get out...right Henry? I won't tell if you won't.

**KISSINGER:** It's a deal sir. Sir...what exactly are we praying *for*?

**NIXON:** Shut up Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir

*(after a few moments of silence.....Nixon stands....and Kissinger follows)*

**NIXON:** Henry, I had the world in my grasp. China. The Soviets. I ended the war. How did we end up here?

**KISSINGER:** Sir, it is not your fault. The liberal media latched on to this insignificant break in and....

**NIXON:** *(interrupting him)* I know it's not my fault. *(long pause)* I could blame you I suppose.

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** I remember that day in my office after the Pentagon Papers were leaked. *(imitating Kissinger's German accent)* "Mr. President they will call you a veakling...a veakling Mr. President". You got my manhood involved Henry. I'm the son of a failed grocer from Whittier California Henry. All my life people have been sticking it to me...reminding me that I'm not Jack Kennedy. I didn't go to the right schools....didn't have the right look.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, national security was at stake!

**NIXON:** Oh shut up Henry. National security my ass. Our problem is we're too much alike Henry. A President should surround himself with people who are strong in areas where he is weak. We both see the big picture Henry....but could never keep our eyes off the booby prize. We both think the other is crazy.

**KISSINGER:** We may both be right sir.

**NIXON:** What a team we made Henry. What a team we made. Half the time I'd forget you were Jewish.

**KISSINGER:** Well....er.....thank you sir.

**NIXON:** (*staring into his glass....swishing the scotch around*) You can see yourself in here Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** Look into your scotch. You can see yourself. Swish it around and your face changes. But it's still you Henry. It's still you.

**KISSINGER:** (*staring into his glass*) I think I've got the cheap stuff sir.

**NIXON:** Only the best for Nixon Henry. You never know how people are going to see you. Is the scotch gonna be still in the glass....or is it gonna be swishing around? It's the perception Henry. The rest.....(*finishes the drink*) just disappears down the hatch.

**KISSINGER:** Sir I have to admit I'm not one for reflection.

**NIXON:** (*derisive*) Really Henry? Is that what they taught you and the Kennedy's at Harvard? Eyes front. Hands out. Kick the ones you pass on the way up so they'll expect you to kick them again on your way down?

**KISSINGER:** (*with a touch of arrogance and pride*) Actually sir....that's exactly what they taught us.

**NIXON:** (*softens*) You were an A student weren't you Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir.

**NIXON:** Well....good boy. I can't blame you. You're a product of your environment just like I'm a product of mine. Harvard and Whittier. Bottom rail on top now though Henry. That must kill a ruthless bastard like yourself.

**KISSINGER:** It won't hurt for much longer sir.

**NIXON:** (*ignores this*) Screw it. Lets have one last drink Henry. Keep the bastards waiting. Loosen up. Sit down....you won't get wrinkled. I'll let you drink the expensive stuff just this one time.

*(he gets a drinks for them both)*

**KISSINGER:** Sir, you're telling me to relax? You know....in all our time together, I've never even seen you with your coat unbuttoned.

**NIXON:** Never let 'em see you relax Henry. Unbutton and the guard comes down.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, even in San Clemente when you were walking the beach for a photo-op you'd wear your wing tips. Somebody yelled for you to test the water and you put your shoe in.

**NIXON:** My Dad would wear his bloody apron from the store at the dinner table. Wouldn't take it off. Said he wasn't ashamed of the way he earned his money. Can you believe that his boy became President of the United States? I was never ashamed of where I came from Henry. The work is what's important. The rest is raindrops.....*(they are both silent for a time)* You warm Henry?.....cold?

**KISSINGER:** I'm fine Mr. President.

**NIXON:** You gotta control everything Henry...or else it can get away from you. That's why I always have the air conditioner on in here.....and the fireplace blazing at the same time. One cancels out the other....and I can control it.

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir...it's very comfortable in here.

*(pause.....Nixon stares into his drink)*

**NIXON:** You know Henry.....politics would be a helluva good business if it weren't for the goddamned people. I gave 'em a sword. And they stuck it in, and they twisted it with relish. And I guess if I had been in their position, I'd have done the same thing. To win is what's important. None of this how you play the game shit. An Olympic silver medal is a ticket to goddamn oblivion.

**KISSINGER:** (*twisting the knife a bit*) Sir, I can honestly say I don't think they're going to forget you.

*(ignores the sarcasm...or doesn't notice it. Long pause again...)*

**NIXON:** Henry....you've gotten laid pretty regularly since we've been in the White House haven't you?

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** Now Henry....don't be shy. We tapped your phones too you know.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I...

**NIXON:** What was that dame's name? Jill St. John wasn't it? What a looker she was.

**KISSINGER:** She had an IQ of 162

**NIXON:** Is that why you dated her Henry?

**KISSINGER:** No sir. When I found that out I got rid of her.

**NIXON:** You went out with that nut Shirley MacLaine too didn't you Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Yes sir....hoping I'd come back reincarnated as a democrat.

*(they laugh at this)*

**NIXON:** What's your secret Henry? I mean....look at you. You ain't no Jack Kennedy...that's for sure.

**KISSINGER:** I guess women love power as much as we do Mr. President....and if they can't have it they like to lay next to someone who does.

**NIXON:** Even an ugly Jew like you?

**KISSINGER:** The most powerful ugly Jew in the country sir.

**NIXON:** Well I'm more powerful than you Henry...

**KISSINGER:** Not after today sir.

**NIXON:** Don't rub it in Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Sorry sir.

**NIXON:** I haven't had a good lay in years Henry. Mrs. Nixon and I....well...

**KISSINGER:** Maybe if you'd take your wingtips off sir...

*(they both laugh)*

**NIXON:** I'll keep that in mind Henry. *(long pause....staring into his drink)*

**KISSINGER:** You're a fighter....not a lover.

**NIXON:** I was always more comfortable around men....in a non-gay way of course.

**KISSINGER:** That's how I took it sir.

**NIXON:** Men get things out in the open in a hurry. If I was a woman and went to see Mao we'd have spent about 2 hours talking about Beijing drapes. I've got no time for small talk Henry. Drove Mrs. Nixon crazy. For me foreplay telling was her all about Brezhnev.

**KISSINGER:** How could a woman resist that?

**NIXON:** Hard to know. That's what somebody said about me one time Henry. That I was hard to know. Do you think that's true?

**KISSINGER:** I think I know you pretty well sir.

**NIXON:** What's my favorite color Henry?

**KISSINGER:** Sir?

**NIXON:** You know me so well. What's my favorite color?

**KISSINGER:** I guess you're right sir. You are hard to know.

**NIXON:** It's the little things Henry. The Washington Post....The Jew York Times...

**KISSINGER:** Sir did you say "Jew" York Times?

**NIXON:** Yea why? Does that bother you?

**KISSINGER:** Sir I'm Jewish.

**NIXON:** And I'm the President.

**KISSINGER:** Doesn't bother me in the least sir.

**NIXON:** They don't know the real Nixon Henry. They don't know my favorite color. They don't know that I like meat loaf and cottage cheese. I part my hair on this side because when I was 3 I fell and have a big scar on my head that I still cover. They don't know that I have motion sickness.....that I have terrible hay fever. They only see me reacting to the exquisite agony of a crisis. They see the gloves come off, and I have to kick some ass. They don't like me.....but they sleep better knowing I'm here. Oh they loved Jack Kennedy....sure. But at night they'd be wondering....."I wonder if that fairy

son of a bitch is gonna cave in to Kruschev?’. They don’t admit it Henry.....they’re hypocrites. But they always doubted whether he was really up to the job.

**KISSINGER:** We’ll never know Sir.

**NIXON:** Dying gives you a halo Henry. Lincoln. Kennedy. They’re like Gods. A second term would’ve rubbed the sheen off their asses Henry.

**KISSINGER:** *(suddenly excited)* Sir, imagine if you’d been assassinated as you stepped off the plane after visiting China! They’d have carved your face in a mountain!

**NIXON:** So I’m just unlucky is what you’re saying Henry?

**KISSINGER:** *(fumbling)* Well sir...I guess it’s all in the timing.

**NIXON:** Henry....you’d shield me and take the bullet yourself if there were enough cameras around.

**KISSINGER:** I’m a patriot sir.

*(pause.....before a change of gears)*

**NIXON:** Tell me something. Who do you trust?

**KISSINGER:** I trust myself Mr. President.

**NIXON:** Anyone else?

**KISSINGER:** No sir. Not really.

**NIXON:** It’s hard to live like that Henry. It’s like being in a submarine that’s sinking in the sea. Going down....down....down....until the pressure just crushes it.

**KISSINGER:** But sir.....the good stuff is at the bottom of the sea. Any fool can ride around on the surface. Everybody’s got the same view from there. We saw things that nobody else could see. Maybe that’s enough.....maybe history will judge us on that someday.

**NIXON:** History is not going to remember China...or the Soviet Union. Someday they are gonna hear those tapes Henry. They’re gonna hear me...and they’re gonna hear you. And all we’ve done is gonna be wiped away like dirt off a table.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, there is nothing I have done that I am ashamed of! I have always...

**NIXON:** *(interrupting him)* No Henry? You think with me going downstairs it gets you off the hook? You think they’re gonna suddenly forget the 3,600 “secret” bombing

missions in Cambodia? You think they're gonna forget Chile and your pal Pinochet? Henry....we're joined at the hip on this thing, whether you like it or not. You're like a circus performer Henry. Straddling that high wire. Some people can watch...and others can't....they avert their eyes so they'll miss the fall. You've got that Harvard veneer Henry...so you'll last longer than most....but they'll come for you boy. It's only a matter of time.

**KISSINGER:** *(suddenly very nervous)* Sir....why didn't you burn the tapes?

**NIXON:** It's all like a dream Henry. I lost 2 brothers to tuberculosis....and when Harold died....and only then....did my Mother say I could go to law school. They could afford it then. It was like I was being handed the reins Henry. My old man never got one break in this world. It was like God was taunting him. He sold his Lemon ranch...and a few weeks later the guy who bought it found oil on it and got rich. The old man never complained. He just worked. And he worked himself to death...and when he died I know he felt like somebody owed him something. But he was too damn proud to say it. So he died the way he lived. Quietly. And he never told me I had to go out and make something of myself. He never told me I had to be a lawyer or a politician. He just told me I had to work hard....and well.....I figured that the reason he never made anything of himself was that he didn't work hard *enough*. So I decided I was gonna outwork 'em all. I might not be able to outsmart you Ivy League pansy's Henry....but I can work your ass into the ground.

**KISSINGER:** *(uncomfortable hearing Nixon unburden himself like this)* Yes sir.

**NIXON:** Without the tapes....how can I prove that any of this was real? Tell me Henry.

**KISSINGER:** Sir, I can assure you that all of this is quite real.

**NIXON:** Well Henry....I don't trust you. I don't trust anybody.

**KISSINGER:** Sir....we really need to get downstairs.

**NIXON:** Ok...let me write this letter for you Henry. You can put it in your scrapbook.

*(gets a pen and paper and writes a short few sentences...hands it to Henry)*

**KISSINGER:** *(reading it)*

Dear Mr Secretary,  
I hereby resign the office of President of the United States.  
So (stops here....not wanting to say the curse word, so instead he simply says...) F-Off.

Richard Nixon

It's fine sir. Eloquent to the last.

**NIXON:** (*enjoying his discomfort*) F-off Henry? That doesn't sound like something Nixon would write.

**KISSINGER:** No sir....I just didn't want to say...you know...that word.

**NIXON:** I'll bet the Cambodians would love to see this side of you Henry.

**KISSINGER:** I bet they would too Sir.

**NIXON:** I was just thinking Henry. My proudest moment in the Oval Office. It was a friend of the family who came to see me. He was old....had a nurse with him. Friend of my father's from Whittier. Probably 85 years old. Maybe 90. And I called the White House photographer in to get a picture....and this man wanted to stand up next to his President for the picture.....so his nurse started over towards us with his cane.....and I stopped her and said..."he doesn't need that damn thing"....and I picked him up and held him in place...standing.....and we had our picture taken. Presidents can do those kinds of things Henry. All I ever wanted was to win one more than I lost. That's a successful man isn't it Henry?

*(he drinks...and it silent for a minute before speaking again of his Father)*

I let him down Henry. I let him down. That's what I have to live with now.

**KISSINGER:** Sir....do you want me to appear behind you at the podium downstairs?

**NIXON:** No Henry. I don't need you anymore.

*(Nixon walks off...leaving Kissinger alone onstage.)*

**KISSINGER:** A weakling to the end.

*(Kissinger walks off....then stops and comes back...and very carefully kneels down (not wanting to mess his pants)...and blesses himself. After a few moments he rises and heads stage right into a single spotlight. Nixon appears stage left in his own spot. They are not aware of each other.....and they speak rapid fire.....one right after another)*

**KISSINGER:** I don't need him.

**NIXON:** I don't need him.

**KISSINGER:** This was my chance.

**NIXON:** They didn't put me here to build outhouses in Peoria.

**KISSINGER:** Waiting for history is the most boring thing in the world.

**NIXON:** All my life I had to push. Why should it be any different at the end? Let them dig in. They'll see that I had no other choice.

**KISSINGER:** I could hide in plain sight. It wasn't *my* country.

**NIXON:** Ghosts everywhere. Tapping me on the shoulder.....saying be grateful, be strong, be prettier.

**KISSINGER:** He may have been the loneliest man I've ever known.

**NIXON:** Paranoia. How could a guy as paranoid as me manage to surround myself with guys convinced the sky was falling only on *them*?

**KISSINGER:** He was taping me....and I was taping everyone else. For a crew obsessed with keeping secrets....ultimately we did a lousy job.

**NIXON:** Dying is strange. I always thought it would be....I don't know....different. Like in the movies maybe....with your whole life passing before your eyes. Doesn't work that way. Do yourself a favor. Don't have a stroke. You're too scared for any type of reflection. I'm laying there on my living room floor and you think all I've got on my mind is Watergate? No no. The world still needs Nixon.....what I bring to the table. You talk about th elephant in the room? I *am* the damn elephant.

**KISSINGER:** They want to try me for war crimes. *War Crimes*. Even today....there's places where I can't go. They'll arrest me. Diplomacy is not a cocktail party. My job is not to get to heaven....but to do what's best for the United States. And sometimes what's best for us is gonna make a mess somewhere else. If you want somebody to buy the world a puppy go somewhere else.

**NIXON:** When you're not President anymore you can walk down the street naked and nobody cares. One day everybody is kissing your ass and the next they're writing books telling the world what an asshole you were. Henry called me lonely. Well....you surround yourself with people like him and see how it makes you feel. I haven't seen the sonofabitch in 20 years.

**KISSINGER:** To be tethered to that man in history.....is not exactly what I had in mind. But it beats anonymity I suppose.

**NIXON:** Most only have to die once. My brothers....God literally took their breath away. But when it was over.....they could breath again. In a better place. Kennedy was flesh and blood. Oswald proved that. But now he's granite....on a pedestal so damn high you need a ladder to kiss his ass. Again.....a better place. Without my brothers...without Jack Kennedy.....I die only one time. But there's a trade-off. Nobody even remembers that I was alive.

**KISSINGER:** Time was good to the man. The longer he lived the shorter everyone's memory got. At the end he was some larger than life world statesman with a hard-on for peace. Even with my strong gag reflexes that was hard to take.

**NIXON:** 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.....

*(pause)*

I was flashing my famous double Churchill *(the waving V's with his hands)* with those words ringing in everybody's ears...

**KISSINGER:** The man was petty to a fault and hated everybody. And if anybody can spot such things, surely I can.

*(Kissinger arrogantly walks off....leaving Nixon alone)*

**NIXON:** A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,  
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;  
But were we burdened with like weight of pain,  
As much or more we should ourselves complain.

Shakespeare. From "A Comedy of Errors". Somehow fitting....you agree?

I'll bet Henry and the rest of the Harvards don't know that one.

But I do....

*(lights)*

The End