

# Nixon, Hillary and the Beast

**T**he far-flung "On Society" staff scored an exclusive interview with filmmaker Oliver Stone. The full text:

**Q.** Mr. Stone, congratulations on Nixon. Anthony Hopkins was tremendous, and all of us on the far-flung "On Society" staff think you more or less got Richard Nixon's character right. But what is all this business about "the Beast"?

**Stone.** The Beast is the secret force that rules America. The key scene in my film is the one at the Lincoln Memorial. A student protester points out that the system won't let Nixon stop the Vietnam War, and naturally Nixon is struck dumb. Later he says to Haldeman: "The Beast. A 19-year-old kid. She understands the nature of the Beast." Twenty-five years in politics and he doesn't know what every teenager at the Lincoln Memorial knows—that presidents are controlled by the Beast.

**Q.** We can all learn from the young. So those clouds rushing around at 200 miles an hour in your movie are signs the Beast is around?

**Stone.** Exactly.

**Q.** We gather that the Beast was awfully busy knocking people off so Nixon could ascend. In the movie Nixon says four people had to die—Jack and Bobby Kennedy, and his own two brothers—for him to become president. One of your writers, Christopher Wilkinson, includes the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. and the political destruction of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey on the list of suspicious things that benefited Nixon. He writes: "It almost seemed that Nixon was being helped, helped by something dark, something sinister, something frightening."

**Stone.** Yes, that would be the Beast.

**Q.** But why would the Beast go to all that trouble to give us Richard Nixon? If presidents are powerless in the grip of the Beast, why couldn't the Beast make do with Jack, Lyndon, Bobby or even Hubert?

**Stone.** Jack Kennedy was a threat to the Beast; that's why it killed him. I did a movie on that.

**Q.** We know. Let's talk about some of the obvious parallels between you and William Shakespeare. JFK was your Hamlet, because, as you once said, "You know, the real king was killed and a fake king put on the throne." Nixon is your version of Richard III, complete with a Shakespearean actor and a brooding leader accused of foul deeds. And your next movie?

**Stone.** I'm remaking *Macbeth*. It's the story of an ambitious but feckless leader controlled by a strong but malevolent wife who in turn is controlled by the Beast.

**Q.** And it's called . . . ?

**Stone.** *Clinton*. There's a scene in there where Hillary, sitting at the end of a long dinner table, gives her famous "One more bimbo and I'm out of here" speech, and Bill Clinton dramatically reaches across his plate of hamburgers, rings the bell for the servant and says, "Mrs. Clinton is finished." I made it up.

**Q.** Sounds great. But where is the parallel with *Macbeth*?

**Stone.** I decided not to be as subtle as I was in *JFK* and *Nixon*. The Beast creates the savings and loan crisis, then establishes itself in Arkansas to ensnare the Clintons. Something odd happens to all of Clinton's rivals for the presidency, the same as with Nixon's. George Bush self-destructs. Both Mario Cuomo and Bob Kerrey die in mysterious accidents.

**Q.** But Cuomo and Kerrey aren't dead.

**Stone.** Whatever. In my movie they are.

**Q.** What about Hillary?

**Stone.** She has this great scene where she can't wash the blood of Vince Foster off her hands. She is forced to get rid of the people in the White House travel office because they know what really happened to Foster. Then the Beast bucks up her courage by granting her a \$100,000 windfall in the commodities market. Did you know, by the way, that Vince Foster was left-handed, yet the gun was found in his right hand?

**Q.** Actually that's not true. He was right-handed and—

**Stone.** Never mind. We artists aren't shackled to literal truth like you small-time "On Society" staffers.

**Q.** Tell us more.

**Stone.** The Banquo's ghost figure who haunts Hillary is Vince Foster—but now and then, Foster turns into Jack Kennedy.

**Q.** The Clintons were involved in JFK's murder, too?

**Stone.** There's no way of knowing whether the teenage Hillary was on that grassy knoll that day in Dallas. I would have put her there in *JFK* if I had thought of it in time.

**Q.** Are you sure this is the way to put history on screen?

**Stone.** Kids love it. Wait. There's another scene. The Clintons are throwing a White House party. The camera zooms in on a guest tossing a small metal pellet around. It's Gerald Ford. He's playing with the missing bullet from Jack's assassination! He was on the Warren Commission and—

**Q.** Thanks. We're leaving. Don't call us. We'll call you. ■

