

ART HOPPE



Can of Tapeworms

SCENE: a cluttered, dimly lit room in the basement of The White House. The time: a late November night in the year 1976.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino is listening to a tape recording while ranking Republican member, Edward Hutchinson, sifts through a box of papers. Both are wearing long white beards and thick corrective lenses.

★ ★ ★

Rodino (eyes glazed): Another piano rendition of The Star-Spangled Banner with all that thumping! Does he have to jog in place as he plays it every morning?

Hutchinson: Wait, here's something. It says, "No Starch!"

Rodino: Another attack on John Dean?

Hutchinson (squinting): No, I guess it's only another laundry list. I wonder why he didn't include it in the papers he donated for that tax write-off?

Rodino: If I have to listen to the sound track of "Patton" one more time or hear one more Billy Graham Prayer Breakfast sermon. . . . I wish I'd never changed my mind and accepted his invitation to listen to those first 42 tapes. It was your idea.

Hutchinson: Well, they only ran for 33 hours. Of course, we had to compare them with the 1308-page transcript of excerpts he gave us. But we could've handled it, if he hadn't turned over those 362 tapes we hadn't asked for two weeks later.

Rodino: I should've smelled a rat when he said on television he wanted us to know he had "nothing to hide — no matter how long it takes." Then the following June when he handed us all five years of his tapes plus every paper in his files. . . .

Hutchinson: We're almost to the end. Hey, listen to this: "First, take all the dough available. . . ." No, it's a recipe for his mother's apple pie.

Rodino (fiddling with the tape recorder): Wait, this may be important. He's saying to someone, "I know I can count on your continuing loyalty and faithful support, as your President. . . ." Oh, forget it. It's just another nightly prayer.

Hutchinson: Here's a note. It says, "Thanks to your vast skimming operation, we've got all the cream we can use."

Rodino (hopefully): Is it to Bebe Robozo?

Hutchinson: No, to the milkman.

Rodino: Shhh! Now he's talking to Haldeman about Dean. My, my. If we ever do impeach him, he'll make a great mule-skinner.

Hutchinson: I'm getting down to the bottom. All I've left to read are The Collected Columns of David Eisenhower, the first, second and sixth drafts of The Checkers Speech, ten dance programs, Trish's report cards, King Timahoe's pedigree and fourteen copies of "Six Crises."

Rodino: By golly! I've only got 78 more tapes left to listen to. And three of them are from the tap in their bedroom so they ought to be blank.

Hutchinson: Just think, after two-and-a-half years we could be out of here in a week and finally vote on the impeachment resolution.

Rodino: It hasn't been easy. But at least he can't accuse us of refusing to listen to all the evidence. What's that?

Ron Ziegler (opening the basement window and peering in): Great news, gentlemen! We've just found some of those missing tapes and documents under Rose Mary's desk. Okay, men, back up the U-Haul trailer and dump 'em in. At last, we'll be able to put Watergate behind us.

Rodino (aghast): But when?

Ziegler (smiling): Hopefully, on or about Inauguration Day next January.

SFC

515174