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8 Crazy Scenes From The Kennedys

by *Jace Jacob*

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READ THIS SKIP THAT

The Daily Beast obtained an exclusive, early copy of the script of the botched History Channel miniseries *The Kennedys*. Jace Jacob picks eight salacious bits from the first episode.

Ask just about anyone in Hollywood what they had thought of *The Kennedys*, the History Channel miniseries about the Kennedy clan, and they'll tell you it was so far off their radars that they didn't give it a thought. That changed last week when the History Channel, a division of A&E Television Networks, announced that it had opted to shelve the project—from 24 co-creator Joel Surnow, director Jon Cassar, and writer Steve Kronish—stating that the “dramatic interpretation [was] not a fit for the History brand.”

The news was particularly shocking as *The Kennedys* features actors Greg Kinnear and Katie Holmes as John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy, and Tom Wilkinson as Joe Kennedy Sr. (A Canadian broadcast of the eight-part miniseries is still set for this spring, while the project is expected to air internationally.) The show's creators immediately began to shop the project to other cable networks, receiving passes from FX, Starz, and, most recently, Showtime.

The Daily Beast has obtained an undated draft of the first episode of writer Kronish's script for *The Kennedys*, potentially the same draft the late former Kennedy adviser Theodore C. Sorensen and documentary filmmaker Robert Greenwald, founder of website StopKennedySmears.com, told The New York Times last winter was “political character assassination.”

The episode largely revolves around the Svengali-like grip that Joe Kennedy (Wilkinson) held over his sons, Joe Jr. (slain during WWII), war hero Jack, and lawyer Bobby (Barry Pepper), telling his story in non-linear fashion. The action flashes between his undergraduate days at Harvard—where he was denied admission the exclusive Porcellian Club (itself recently featured in *The Social Network*)—and two political campaigns being waged by John Kennedy (Kinnear), one for Congress and one the fateful presidential campaign that made him the 35th president of the United States.

But while the scene is set for JFK's victory over Richard Nixon in 1960, Kronish seems to relish in painting the Kennedys as a group of rowdy schoolboys, equally hungry for power and sex, particularly in the case of Wilkinson's Joe Sr., whose quest for vengeance provides the throughline for the first episode.

What follows are eight of the most shocking moments in the script for *The Kennedys'* first installment. (Kennedy obsessives, is there any truth to these dramatized events?)

One

Pages 16-17: Wilkinson's Joe Sr. fondles his secretary in his office at the ambassador's residence in London in 1938. As he dictates a note to the president, Joe “fondles her breasts” and “nuzzles her neck.” When sons Joe Jr. and Jack enter his office, Joe Sr. continues his fondling as his sons look on, “amused.” The note he's dictating? It suggests that in order to keep the peace in Europe, certain concessions be made to Hitler. (It's a viewpoint later parroted by son Joe Jr. even after the annexation of Czechoslovakia.) A comment made about Jack's shabby clothes results in him telling his father, “Girls figure I need help dressing. Once I get 'em in the closet...”



Katie Holmes and Greg Kinnear star in "The Kennedys." Credit: Newscom

Two

Years later, Joe Sr. and his secretary Janet pass by his wife Rose in the hallway of their Hyannisport home on Election Night 1960. After chatting with Rose, he and his secretary Janet enter his bedroom as Rose locks her own bedroom door. **[Page 57]**

Three

Pages 21-23: Joe Sr. learns that Jack is romantically involved with married Danish national Inga Arvard (whom Jack refers to as "Inga Binga"), a woman that J. Edgar Hoover reports has "been linked to counterintelligence activities in Washington on behalf of the German government." When Jack refuses to break off relations with Arvard, Joe Sr. has Jack shipped overseas after placing a call to the secretary of the Navy.

Four

Page 24: When beloved eldest son Joe Jr. dies during the war, Joe Sr. receives the tragic news by retreating to his bedroom alone, leaving his deeply religious wife Rose holding her rosary by herself. Upon entering the bedroom, he spies a two-foot wooden crucifix on the wall and breaks it across his knee.

Five

Page 41: Brothers Jack and Bobby engage in banter about horniness after their father has begun to apply pressure on Jack to marry in 1951. "What do you do when you're horny?" asks Jack. "I mean, how can you stand the boredom?" When Bobby replies that he loves Ethel (who has just jumped into the pool during a party in McLean, at which she released live frogs), Jack says, "I love lobster, but not every night. If I don't have some strange ass every couple of days, I get migraines."

Six

On Election Day 1960, Jack implies to his brother Bobby that he had sex with a redheaded aide in his campaign offices. "She volunteered to work overtime last night," says Jack. "We discussed the ins and outs of politics." **[Page 8]**

Seven

Pages 44-46: In September 1953, while at Hyannisport, Joe Sr. tells Jackie he knows her grandfather was a Jew, changing his name from Levy to Lee so that he “could get a job on Wall Street.” In the same conversation, Jackie tells Joe Sr. she wants a divorce from Jack. In order to keep the two together, Joe Sr. offers Jackie a \$1 million trust, with the promise that if Jack doesn’t win presidency, she can leave him and keep the money.

Eight

Page 55: Joe Sr. buys off Chicago Italian mobster Sam Giancana in an effort to help win Jack’s presidential election, telling Giancana to “get names off of tombstones for all I give a damn.” In exchange, Joe Sr. promises Giancana protection from the Justice Department and the IRS once Jack is elected. “If you get on board—my hand to God—all you boys’ll see the best times you’ve had since Prohibition,” he says. Giancana, of course, was said to be involved with a CIA operation in which he and other mobsters were recruited to assassinate Cuba’s Fidel Castro; Giancana was also reputed to have shared two mistresses—Judith Exner and Phyllis McGuire—with JFK.



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