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# **SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES: What if Kennedy Survived Dallas? *A novel by Bryce Zabel***

(EXCERPT from Chapter 6: Life After)



In 1969, former President Kennedy began a national book tour to promote what his publishers had hoped would be an autobiography but instead had become a call to action for Americans to retake control of their government. *Just Courage* — as the book was titled — led to a national reevaluation of his time in office, with sides being taken once again. The growing conservative movement focused on Kennedy's transgressions, and the liberal community said JFK's behavior simply could not be compared to the venal treason of the conspirators. His support, particularly among women, had dropped

precipitously, but not enough to prevent his book from becoming the year's best seller.

Although it took as much brokering as the Kennedy-Khrushchev Summit of 1965, eventually President Richard Nixon invited John Kennedy to the White House in November of 1969 to greet the astronauts who had returned from the moon the past July. At the time, Nixon had gone to see the astronauts in their isolation quarters, where they had been placed to

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avoid lunar contamination. He had invited them to the White House after they completed a global goodwill tour on behalf of the United States.

The shadow that haunted Richard Nixon that summer and fall looked like his old rival John Kennedy, the man who had first challenged the United States to send a man to the Moon before the 1960s were over. Nixon's own advisers fretted that their boss might look like he was trying to take credit for something that wasn't his, particularly given that he had been in office less than a year. It only took some impertinent questions from some Democratic-leaning reporters to push them into the photo op of the decade.

The photo of an awkwardly smiling Neil Armstrong flanked by former President John Kennedy and current President Richard Nixon became almost as famous as the one with Kennedy and the Beatles. The odd men out, of course, were astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins, both cropped from the photo by circumstance and artistic design. As JFK left the White House that day, he winked to Kenneth O'Donnell, who had accompanied him to their "old stomping grounds," and said, "I still got it." John Kennedy had begun the decade with his New Frontier and had left the decade with his flag firmly planted on the lunar surface.

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