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"LBJ"

by

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EXT. DALLAS LOVE FIELD - 11:35 A.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE stand behind a chest-high chain link fence. Their anticipation grows.

Secret Service Agent JERRY KIVETT, 28, walks along the inside of the fence where several DALLAS POLICE OFFICERS stand post.

Over this we hear NEWS FOOTAGE of WFAA-TV, commentated by BOB WALKER, 31, standing somewhere near the crowd.

BOB WALKER
Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,
this is Bob Walker speaking from
Dallas Love Field...

Kivett breaks away from the fence and moves toward THE WELCOMERS. He approaches Assistant Special Agent in Charge RUFUS YOUNGBLOOD, 39, a focused strength.

AGENT KIVETT
Everything's set. The Lincoln
convertible is yours.

Youngblood nods and returns his attention to the man he protects, 55 year old, Johnson.

YOUNGBLOOD
Mr. Vice President, we'll be in the
third car - the gray Lincoln.

A stoic Johnson nods. He holds a folded copy of the *Dallas News*. The headline reads: "Yarborough Snubs LBJ."

At Johnson's side is his wife LADY BIRD, 50. She notices her husband's fixation on the newspaper.

LADY BIRD
Lyndon, put that away.
(re: the crowd)
Have you ever seen such enthusiasm?

Johnson scans their faces. Not a single eye looks back at him. Everyone stares past him at the glistening blue and white Boeing 707 that is AIR FORCE ONE. As a set of stairs is wheeled into place, Johnson and Lady Bird head toward the plane. They are followed by a greeting committee.

JOHNSON
(to Youngblood)
What's the word on Yarborough?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNGBLOOD

The President told the Senator
either he rides with you or he can
walk through downtown Dallas.

Youngblood expected Johnson to be more amused by this
anecdote. Johnson just nods and hands the paper off.

Now at the bottom of the staircase, Johnson and Lady Bird
look up as the rear hatch opens and a radiant JACKIE KENNEDY,
34, in her pink suit and pillbox hat emerges. Just behind her
is the captivating President of the United States, JOHN
FITZGERALD KENNEDY, 46.

BOB WALKER

Here's Mrs. Kennedy. And the crowd
yells. And the President of the
United States. And I can see his
suntan all the way from here!

On the ground, White House Photographer CECIL STOUGHTON, 41
snaps a photo of the First Couple.

GOVERNOR JOHN CONNALLY, 46, and his wife NELLIE CONNALLY, 44
follow the President and his wife down the steps.

As JFK and Jackie reach the bottom, someone hands Jackie a
bouquet of red roses. Johnson is the first to shake hands
with the President.

JOHNSON

Mr. President.

JFK

Hello, Lyndon.

At first JFK follows the Secret Service agents, but seeing
the fervor of the crowd, he breaks away and moves to shake
hands. People fight for position, causing the fence to
buckle. Johnson follows.

As JFK releases a hand, Johnson tries to grab it. But before
he can, the hand is recoiled, its owner still fixated on JFK.
Johnson looks at his own empty outstretched hand.

Johnson steps back and moves to his rented LINCOLN
CONVERTIBLE. Youngblood and Lady Bird follow.

Youngblood opens the car's rear door and Johnson and Lady
Bird climb in.

LADY BIRD

Don't ya just love Texas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Johnson nods, not looking at the crowd. He sets his WHITE STETSON on his knee.

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

Is there any place you'd rather be?

Johnson contemplates this question.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING (ESTABLISHING) - 1959 - DAY

SUPER: FOUR YEARS EARLIER

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - "TAJ MAHAL" - 1959 - DAY

The huge two-room suite in the U.S. Capitol Building that has been converted into an ornate office.

JUANITA ROBERTS, Johnson's secretary, escorts an intimidated Senator RALPH YARBOROUGH, 55, in from the outer office.

The walls and the 20-foot high ceilings are golden and covered with murals. A full-size portrait of Johnson hangs over a marble fireplace.

AIDES and SECRETARIES hurry about. Among them are WALTER JENKINS, 41, faithful servant of Johnson's, and GEORGE REEDY, 42, Special Assistant and go-to whipping boy.

The office is a whirlwind of organized chaos and at the center of it all, behind his desk, stands the Senate Majority Leader - Lyndon Johnson, four years younger. He overflows with power.

Juanita shows Yarborough to his seat where he watches Johnson wrap up a phone call in that strong Texas drawl.

JOHNSON

(into the phone)

Because I'm not General Custer and this ain't The Little fuckin' Bighorn. If you have an objection, make it now, before I head to the floor of the United States Senate. Well good, Senator. That's what I like to hear.

Johnson hangs up and looks to Jenkins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

We got Cannon.

Jenkins makes a note of it.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Senator Yarborough-

Yarborough stands, ready to shake Johnson's hand.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Be right with you.

Johnson looks past Yarborough to Juanita entering with the affable Majority Whip, Senator MIKE MANSFIELD, 56.

JUANITA

Senator Mansfield, sir.

JOHNSON

Mike, come on in. Give me the number.

SENATOR MANSFIELD

About 48.

JOHNSON

"About 48" is not a number.

SENATOR MANSFIELD

That's the closest approximation I could get.

JOHNSON

Mike, I want you to imagine putting your little 2-inch pecker on the edge of this desk.

Mansfield is amused, yet terrified.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Now if I grabbed a hatchet and told you I was gonna swing it down "about" 2 inches from the edge, would you be nervous?

Mansfield nods.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Damn right you would. Well that's how I get when I hear that our count is "about 48." Go back and get me an actual number.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SENATOR MANSFIELD

Yes.

He departs. Johnson goes to a wet bar and fixes two scotches.

JOHNSON

What the hell good is a whip who can't count? Juanita, dear, call Dirksen's office and tell them I'd like to speak to the senator at his earliest convenience. George, get my tailor on the phone.

REEDY

Who's Mike Taylor?

JOHNSON

What? No, not Mike Taylor - my tailor: the guy who makes my fucking clothes. Get him on the phone. Now, Senator Yarborough.

YARBOROUGH

Mr. Leader.

Johnson brings the drinks to Yarborough and offers him one.

YARBOROUGH (CONT'D)

I don't drink.

Johnson clearly thinks this concept is absurd. Oh well. He pours Yarborough's drink into his own and then sits next to Yarborough in front of the desk.

YARBOROUGH (CONT'D)

If you called me here to ask about my vote on the Farm Bill, I should tell you I haven't made up my mind yet.

JOHNSON

No problem. No problem at all. Listen, while I have you here, there is one thing I've been meaning to ask you... Have you got shit for brains?

Jenkins and Reedy look to see what kind of storm is brewing.

YARBOROUGH

Excuse me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHNSON

What the hell is your problem with
this Farm Bill?

YARBOROUGH

It's toothless.

JOHNSON

The only thing more irritating than
a liberal is a liberal from Texas.

YARBOROUGH

My constituents want-

JOHNSON

Your constituents are my
constituents, and they have been
for a lot longer so don't tell me
what they want. Just because after
three failed attempts at the
governor's mansion you finally
managed to win an election doesn't
make you an expert on Texas voters.

An AIDE enters and whispers into Johnson's ear.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(to the aide)

Bring him in.

The aide leads a SENATOR, 50s, into the office. Johnson moves
to him and gives him a two-handed greeting, never letting go.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Hello, Senator. Here's the deal -
we're bringing the Farm Bill to a
vote A.S.A.P. and I need to know
that I have your support.

SENATOR

With all due respect-

Johnson pulls the Senator into a private area.

JOHNSON

Here's what I'm gonna do. My office
sent some flowers to your wife to
show our appreciation for her
letting us keep you here tonight to
burn the midnight oil. Also we've
rented you a room at the Hay-Adams.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Now, you can either stay here and fight me all night until I beat you, as you know I will, or you can commit right now, take that beautiful secretary of yours to the hotel and get a nice meal and maybe a little shuteye.

Johnson winks. The senator thinks it over.

SENATOR

The Hay-Adams?

JOHNSON

Room looks right out to the White House.

The Senator nods and only now does Johnson let go of the Senator's hand. The Senator leaves. Johnson walks back over to Yarborough

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Some of 'em you have to pet, some you have to prod. A good rancher knows the difference.

Juanita enters.

JUANITA

Senator Dirksen is on the phone.

REEDY

I've got your tailor as well.

JOHNSON

You realize Juanita managed to get the Minority Leader of the Senate quicker than you could locate a man who sews for a living?

Johnson shakes his head at Reedy and then grabs the phone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Everett, this is Lyndon... We want to take this to the floor tonight but I want to make sure we do that without our two parties nippin' at each other like a pack of rabid dogs... Uh huh, well I thank you as always, Senator.

Johnson hangs up and looks to Jenkins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Get ready to move on it.

(to Yarborough)

This could be your lucky day. You might be able to vote your conscience on the Farm Bill. By the way, how come you haven't endorsed me for President?

YARBOROUGH

You haven't announced.

JOHNSON

Beside the point.

YARBOROUGH

I'm not endorsing anyone... But-

JOHNSON

You like Kennedy?

YARBOROUGH

Senator Kennedy and I share many of the same principles.

JOHNSON

You got your show horses and you got your workhorses. Kennedy's a show horse - easy on the eyes but when you need your field plowed he won't leave the barn.

YARBOROUGH

What's most important to me-

JOHNSON

Hold that thought.

Johnson picks up his phone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Lyndon Johnson... Hello there. Listen, last year you made me a blue suit that was near perfect. Now I want three more just like it but you gave me the standard trousers last time and they don't fit me right. What I need is for you to let out the crotch about four inches.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
See, I'm what they call "well-endowed" so you give me the average man's pants and I get all bunched up. I need some added room in there from my nuts to my bunghole so that my valuables can hang free... All right, I sure appreciate it.

Johnson hangs up.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
(to Yarborough)
You were saying?

YARBOROUGH
What's most important to me is that the Democratic nominee for president represent the best principles of our Party.

Jenkins hangs up the phone and gives Johnson a thumbs up.

JOHNSON
(to Jenkins)
Call for unanimous consent.
(to Yarborough)
Show horses. Workhorses. You only get one. Go vote your conscience.

Johnson, with his aides, strides out of his office.

EXT. DALLAS LOVE FIELD - 11:53 A.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

Johnson sits in the CONVERTIBLE, staring at the STETSON on his knee. He looks out toward JFK who's still shaking hands.

Near the President is a smiling Senator Yarborough. Yarborough's eyes meet Johnson's and the smile fades away.

JFK leads Jackie from the crowd and into the MIDNIGHT BLUE PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE. Its bubble top has been removed.

AT JOHNSON'S LIMO

Yarborough opens the left rear door and sits. Lady Bird is sandwiched between her husband and Yarborough.

Youngblood sits in the passenger seat next to the driver - Texas Highway Patrolman HURCHEL JACKS who awaits instruction.

YOUNGBLOOD
Let's go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnson puts the Stetson on his head.

The long motorcade begins its departure from Love Field as Bob Walker describes the procession.

BOB WALKER

The presidential car moving up. The President and First Lady. Big, beautiful Lincoln. Secret Service men in the car behind. Then comes the Vice President and Mrs. Johnson, Senator Yarborough... And of course as we say, thousands will be on hand for that motorcade now which will be downtown Dallas, Cedar Springs to Harwood. And on Harwood he'll turn on Main, from which point he'll go all the way down to the courthouse area which is the end of Main. It'll turn on, Houston Street to Elm, under the triple underpass...

BANG! A BULLET FIRED FROM A SHOTGUN INTO THE SKY.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNSON RANCH - TEXAS - 1959 - DAY

Johnson, in hunting gear, holds a SHOTGUN and looks over to BOBBY KENNEDY, 34, who has been tossed to the ground by the recoil of the SHOTGUN he just fired.

Johnson grins as Bobby stands and brushes himself off.

JOHNSON

I guess you Kennedys don't do much deer huntin'.

BOBBY

When Kennedys fire weapons it's usually at Nazis.

JOHNSON

Lotta Nazis in Massachusetts?

Bobby ignores the last remark.

BOBBY

We need to know if you're running.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON
I'm quite comfortable in my post as
Majority Leader.

BOBBY
Then perhaps you'd consider
endorsing my brother.

JOHNSON
I'll endorse whoever wins our
Party's nomination.

BOBBY
And there's no chance that will be
you?

JOHNSON
How many different ways do you want
me to answer that question?

BOBBY
One would suffice.

Johnson stops and moves face to face with Bobby.

JOHNSON
I have zero intention of running
for president.

EXT. D.C. HOUSE (ESTABLISHING) - NIGHT

INT. D.C. HOUSE - APRIL 5, 1960 - NIGHT

We're in the living room of Johnson's Washington home on 52nd Street. Jenkins, Reedy, and John Connally (3 years before he'll become Governor of Texas) watch primary election coverage on a TV while Johnson has a telephone conversation in the back.

ON TELEVISION:

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

(NOTE: ALL ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE AND FOOTAGE THAT SHOULD LOOK
ARCHIVAL WILL APPEAR IN BLACK AND WHITE)

A NEWSCASTER reports from his desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSCASTER

Senator John Kennedy of
Massachusetts has defeated Senator
Hubert Humphrey in Wisconsin at the
first contested primary battle for
the Democratic nomination...

BACK TO SCENE

MRS. ZEPHYR WRIGHT, 40s, Johnson's black cook, clears plates
near Johnson who is getting heated on the phone.

JOHNSON

(into the phone)

I want to know why the hell you
were putting up "Johnson for
President" signs all over town...
Well for starters, Johnson hasn't
said he's running for president.
The reason I know that is 'cause
I'm fuckin' him!

Johnson slams the phone down. He looks at his staff.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What?

JENKINS

Sir, I think it's time you
announce.

JOHNSON

I haven't made up my mind.

CONNALLY

Then tell me why I came all the way
here from Texas to run a campaign
that doesn't have a candidate?

JOHNSON

To bask in the pleasure of my
company.

JENKINS

Sir, I've been on the phone with
delegates all evening. Every one of
whom is for Kennedy today. And
every one of whom would be yours
tomorrow if you'd just announce
that you're running.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

A Catholic won a Catholic state.
Big fuckin' deal. You think he can
do that in West Virginia? This
country is not going to elect a
Catholic president.

CONNALLY

He's starting to pull away from the
pack.

JOHNSON

Let Kennedy hopscotch the United
States kissing babies. Nominations
aren't won on the campaign trail -
they're won at the convention.

INT. D.C. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jenkins and Connally walk to Jenkins' car. They light up
cigarettes. Rather than getting inside, Connally stops at the
passenger side and speaks to Jenkins over the car.

CONNALLY

That was a waste.

JENKINS

He'll run.

CONNALLY

It'll be too late.

JENKINS

He's the best Senate Majority
Leader this country's ever had. He
works harder than the other 99
senators combined and he doesn't
understand why he's not already the
Party's favorite. He doesn't
understand why they don't just give
it to him.

CONNALLY

Nobody gets handed the presidency.
(a beat)
This is his best chance. If he
wants it, he better decide.

JENKINS

He's never wanted anything more in
his whole life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNALLY

Then why won't he commit?

JENKINS

He's afraid.

CONNALLY

Of what? Losing. Hell, everybody is afraid losing.

JENKINS

Yeah, but he's also afraid of winning.

EXT. D.C. - ESTABLISHING - DAY (EARLY MORNING)

Our NEWSCASTER covers the latest events.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

In a surprising upset, Senator John Kennedy has won the West Virginia primary.

EXT. D.C. - DUSK

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Many experts believed the issue of his religion was insurmountable in a state like this, but here is what Senator Kennedy had to say about this.

INT. D.C. HOUSE - BEDROOM - MAY 10, 1960 - NIGHT

Johnson and Lady Bird lie in bed watching the television.

ON TELEVISION: (Re-Create, should look archival, BLACK AND WHITE).

JFK stands on stage, surrounded by CITIZENS of West Virginia.

JFK

When any man stands on the steps of the Capitol and takes the oath of office of president, he puts one hand on the Bible and raises the other hand to God as he takes the oath.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JFK (CONT'D)

And if he breaks his oath, he is
not only committing a crime against
the Constitution, but he is
committing a sin against God.

BACK TO SCENE

JOHNSON

I've never seen a politician look
that good on T.V.

LADY BIRD

He's not that handsome.

JOHNSON

Are you kiddin'? I've never seen a
movie star look that good on T.V.

ON TELEVISION

JFK places his hand on an imaginary Bible.

JFK

I do solemnly swear that I will
faithfully execute the Office of
President of the United States...

Lady Bird notices Johnson mouthing the words along with JFK.

JFK (CONT'D)

...and will to the best of my
ability, preserve, protect and
defend the Constitution of the
United States, so help me God.

JOHNSON

Jesus, he just swore himself in.

After a beat, Lady Bird takes Johnson's hand.

LADY BIRD

Do you know why I married you?

Johnson doesn't respond.

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

I had options. But I chose you. Do
you know why? You knew what you
wanted. But I couldn't have said
yes if you hadn't asked.

She sweetly kisses him.

INT. DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION - JULY 11, 1960 - DAY

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

A jam-packed Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena. Thousands of delegates cheer and hold signs for their states and favorite candidates: "ALL THE WAY FOR LBJ." "WIN WITH KENNEDY."

The CHAIRMAN takes the podium.

CHAIRMAN

The Convention of the Democratic
Party of the United States is
called in session.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - LOBBY HALLWAY - JULY 13, 1960 - DAY

Johnson, Connally, Jenkins, Reedy, and Advisor JIM ROWE, 51, march to the elevator.

ROWE

You need to go see the Wyoming
delegation.

JOHNSON

How the hell are we still fightin'
over western states?

CONNALLY

Their delegates are meeting with
Kennedy right now.

JOHNSON

Jack or Bobby?

CONNALLY

Teddy.

JOHNSON

Christ, this place is infested!

Ding. The elevator doors open and just as Johnson's group is about to enter, coming from the opposite direction, they are joined by Bobby, Yarborough, and two members of Kennedy's so-called "Irish Mafia" - Aide LARRY O'BRIEN, 43, and Special Assistant KENNY O'DONNELL, 36.

Once they are all packed into the elevator, all eyes are on Johnson and Bobby who stand next to one another. The doors close.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - ELEVATOR - DAY

A tense silence. All eyes face forward.

BOBBY

"I have zero intention of running
for president."

JOHNSON

Had a change of heart.

BOBBY

How can you look another man in the
eye and lie like that?

Bobby looks around at Connally and Johnson's men.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

And the next one of you who says a
disparaging thing about Jack's
health, I'll personally knock his
teeth out.

JOHNSON

You said he's never felt better.
That wouldn't be a lie, would it?

Johnson looks at his watch.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Balloting starts in two hours. If
you don't take me down in the first
two rounds, I'm gonna beat you.

BOBBY

There won't be a second round.

JOHNSON

You're awful confident.

BOBBY

I can count.

Bobby flashes a folded list in his hand. Ding. The elevator
door opens and Bobby leads his team away.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - JOHNSON'S SUITE - NIGHT

Room 7333 of the Biltmore Hotel. Johnson, Lady Bird, Reedy,
Connally, and Rowe are glued to the TV. Johnson holds his own
count sheet. They watch the convention while delegate tallies
grow with every state's vote. The mood is grim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

An on-screen tally reads:

"1st Ballot. 761 to nominate...

Johnson: 405. Kennedy: 750. Stevenson: 79.5. Symington: 86."

MCCRACKEN of Wyoming's delegation goes next.

MCCRACKEN

Mr. Chairman, Wyoming's vote will
make a majority for Senator
Kennedy... There are 15 votes from
Wyoming for Kennedy.

Kennedy's tally changes from 750 to 765. The place goes
crazy.

BACK TO SCENE

Lady Bird fights back tears. Johnson drops his count sheet
and disappears into the bedroom with his scotch and soda.

CUT TO:

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - BOBBY'S SUITE - JULY 14, 1960 - NIGHT

Room 8315 of the Biltmore Hotel. Bobby soaks in a bathtub,
cigar in his mouth and newspaper in his hand.

BOBBY

First round knockout, boys! Rocky
Marciano!

Bobby speaks through the open bathroom door to O'Donnell,
O'Brien and other members of the staff including Speechwriter
TED SORENSEN, 32, a friendly Nebraskan, and PIERRE SALINGER,
35, the heavyset Press Secretary.

SALINGER

The Times wants a comment.

BOBBY

Tell them there's a new heavyweight
champion, and his name is Kennedy.

O'DONNELL

How's the acceptance speech coming?

SORENSEN

Easiest speech I ever had to write.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

O'BRIEN
(calling to the bathroom)
Bobby, we're getting 20 calls a
minute. Who's your V.P.? Everyone
wants a name.

BOBBY
First we need to pick a name.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - JOHNSON'S SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

Drawn shades block the morning sun. The PHONE RINGS. Johnson doesn't stir. Lady Bird reaches over her husband, past a near-empty bottle of scotch, and grabs the phone.

LADY BIRD
Hello?... Lyndon. Lyndon! Wake up!

JOHNSON
What's wrong?

LADY BIRD
It's John Kennedy.

She has his attention now. They lock eyes, knowing that they're sharing the same thought.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - JOHNSON'S SUITE - DAY

Johnson and Lady Bird hurry around trying to get dressed. Jenkins, Reedy, and Connally try their best to straighten up the place. They clear drinks and snacks from the night before. They hide LBJ campaign posters in a closet.

A KNOCK on the door. Johnson moves to it. He opens the door, revealing JFK. And he's come alone.

JFK
Good morning, Lyndon.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - BOBBY'S SUITE - DAY

Bobby is out of the tub and fully clothed. He pours himself some coffee while giving orders to Sorensen and Salinger.

BOBBY
Make sure Symington, Humphrey, and
Stevenson are all near their
phones. We'll make our choice
today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

O'Donnell bursts in.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

O'DONNELL
You're not going to believe where
your brother is right now.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - JOHNSON'S SUITE - DAY

Johnson and JFK sit on a couch. Just the two of them. It's almost as if he's watching JFK make a decision in the moment.

JFK
Lyndon, how would you feel about
being my vice president?

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - BOBBY'S SUITE - DAY

Room 9333 of the Biltmore Hotel. JFK stands in the middle of the room while O'Donnell and Bobby can't sit still.

BOBBY
You're out of your damn mind, Jack!
You couldn't have made a worse
choice if you tried.

JFK
I spoke with Dad. We agreed. If we
want to win, we need Johnson.

BOBBY
Why didn't you consult me?

JFK
We also agreed we'd never convince
you it was a good idea.

BOBBY
Because it isn't. Johnson and his
men have spent the last 72 hours
trying to convince the entire
delegation that you have Addison's
disease!

JFK
I do have Addison's disease.

BOBBY
That's not the fucking point!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

O'DONNELL

Labor hates him. Civil rights
leaders hate him. All the liberals
hate him.

JFK

We're going to get the liberal vote
anyway. We need Southerners. We
need Texas.

BOBBY

The only person he'll ever be loyal
to is himself.

JFK

If I'm president, would you rather
Lyndon Johnson serve under me as
vice president or fight me for
control of the government as the
Majority Leader of the Senate?

BOBBY

Jack, you can't have Lyndon Johnson
be part of your administration.

JFK

Maybe you'll get your wish; he
hasn't accepted yet.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - JOHNSON'S SUITE - DAY

Johnson, Jenkins, Connally, and Rowe sit at the table. Lady
Bird moves around in the background.

ROWE

If you run with Kennedy and lose,
what happens to your senate seat?

CONNALLY

He can run for both offices.

ROWE

How?

CONNALLY

We changed the law last year

ROWE

Why?

JOHNSON

Because I asked them to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Reedy enters.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What did you find out?

REEDY

Ten of 36.

Johnson takes in this information. He stands and walks to the window. Jenkins follows and gets in closer to his boss.

JOHNSON

What do you think?

JENKINS

It's a thankless job.

JOHNSON

So is being a school teacher in Blanco County, Texas.

ROWE

(to Reedy)

Ten of 36?

REEDY

Of the 36 men who have been vice president, 10 have gone on to become president.

JENKINS

If Kennedy loses, the Majority Leader will be the most powerful Democrat in the country. If Kennedy wins, the Majority Leader will still be the most powerful Democrat in Congress. There is no power in the vice presidency.

JOHNSON

Walter, how long have you been with me?

JENKINS

Twenty-one years, sir.

JOHNSON

In 21 years, can you think of one time that I've taken over a new office and not made it 100 times more powerful than it was before I got there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jenkins just looks at Johnson who picks up the phone and starts dialing.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Power is where power goes.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - MAIN STREET - 12:21 P.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

The motorcade turns right onto Main Street. HUNDREDS OF SPECTATORS have gathered to cheer for the President.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - MAIN STREET - VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - DAY

Lady Bird sits between Johnson and Yarborough.

Youngblood receives information from AGENT LEM JOHNS through the RADIO ON HIS SHOULDER.

AGENT JOHNS (V.O.)
We're five minutes behind schedule.

YOUNGBLOOD
(relaying to Johnson)
Should be at the Trade Mart in 15.

POP-POP!

Youngblood spins around to find TWO TEENAGERS banging the hood of the Vice President's car. They run away.

The crowd is thick and the car slows to a crawl because people are coming right up to it. Youngblood opens his door about 45 degrees so as to push people away.

Johnson and Yarborough notice a group of BLACK CITIZENS waving small American flags and cheering for the President.

JOHNSON
They love him.

YARBOROUGH
They believe in him. They know that the President's civil rights law is going to change everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

The President doesn't have a civil rights law - The President has a civil rights bill.

YARBOROUGH

I believe in my heart that Congress will get it passed.

JOHNSON

(sort of to himself)
Shit for brains.

An awkward silence.

CUT TO:

**EXT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - JANUARY 20, 1961 -
AFTERNOON -ESTABLISHING**

**INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -
AFTERNOON**

Impressive to be sure, but it's not the Taj Mahal.

Jenkins, Reedy, and Juanita unpack boxes. Everyone is dressed particularly well today. A TV near the desk is turned on.

ON THE TELEVISION:

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

A NEWSCASTER reports...

NEWSCASTER

And from earlier today, here is
President John F. Kennedy
delivering his inaugural address.

The screen switches to:

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING - EASTERN PORTICO - DAY

IN BLACK AND WHITE, JFK delivers his Inaugural Address.
Johnson sits to Kennedy's right.

BACK TO SCENE

Jenkins looks to Reedy as they finish setting up their desks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REEDY
You unpacked?

JENKINS
Yep.

REEDY
So now what do we do?

JENKINS
Don't have the foggiest idea.

Johnson stares across to White House.

JFK
(from the TV)
All this will not be finished in
the first one hundred days. Nor
will it be finished in the first
one thousand days, nor in the life
of this administration, nor even
perhaps in our lifetime on this
planet. But let us begin.

Johnson gets a flash of inspiration.

JOHNSON
Juanita, sit down here, dear. I
want to write a letter.

Juanita sits in Johnson's HIGH-BACK CHAIR at his GREEN-TOPPED
DESK. She grabs a pen, ready to transcribe his thoughts.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Dear Mr. President...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

JFK's Oval Office. A LIGHT BLUE CARPET and the famed RESOLUTE
DESK. JFK's ROCKING CHAIR sits off to the side.

JFK and O'Donnell watch in amusement as Bobby reads a letter.

BOBBY
He didn't write this.

JFK
That's his signature.

BOBBY
Even Lyndon Johnson is not this
stupid.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(reading)

"I hereby request that the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency cooperate fully with the Vice President." He also requested oversight of the space program.

O'DONNELL

Looks like he wants to control everything from here to the moon.

BOBBY

I say we send the letter to *The Washington Post*. Have them publish it and humiliate the bastard.

JFK

Last month Lyndon Johnson was the most powerful Democrat in Washington. Now he answers to my kid brother and his Harvard roommate. No one will do anything to embarrass my Vice President.

BOBBY

He embarrasses himself.

O'DONNELL

You know he started calling himself "LBJ" after "FDR" was elected because he thought it made him sound more presidential.

BOBBY

Well he's no FDR, and he's no JFK. He's Lyndon I'll-Never-Be-President-In-A-Million-Years Johnson.

JFK

I'm quite aware of your feelings, Bobby. That's why I'm putting Kenny in charge of him.

O'DONNELL

What?

JFK

Congratulations, Kenny, you're my new liaison to the Vice President.

O'DONNELL

Sir, please-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JFK

He's a sensitive man with an enormous ego. Your job is to placate him, and I don't care if you have to kiss his ass all over town in order to do it. I can't have him causing problems for me.

BOBBY

I'm sure we can find something to keep him occupied.

**INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
/BATHROOM - JANUARY 1961 - DAY**

Johnson's face is hidden behind a one-page memo. He lowers it in frustration.

JOHNSON

What the fuck is the P.C.E.E.O.?

Johnson looks up from a seated position at Jenkins and Reedy who stand in the doorway looking very uncomfortable.

REEDY

It's the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.

And now it's clear that Reedy and Jenkins are in the doorway of the office that connects to the private bathroom. And Johnson is sitting on the toilet.

JENKINS

The President wants to ensure that all government agencies and contractors exercise fair hiring practices with regards to race. It's his first major initiative on civil rights.

REEDY

The Southern Democrats are going to hate this.

JOHNSON

No shit. And when this trumped up committee inevitably fails to solve the country's civil rights problems, the rest of the Democrats are gonna hate that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Johnson goes to wipe, Jenkins and Reedy avert their eyes, wishing this meeting was happening anywhere else.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

When 68 rolls around, I'd like to run for president. That means we need to spend the next eight years building up new support, maintaining old friendships, and generally making sure that people fuckin' like me!

Johnson slams the door in the faces of Reedy and Jenkins, leaving them on the other side of the door. The toilet flushes.

REEDY

How could anybody not like him?

We hear the water running, and from inside the bathroom.

JOHNSON

You know, I was thinking...

Johnson exits from the bathroom and continues.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

One time when I was about thirteen, I was driving home with my daddy and I made some smartass comment that pissed him off. He slammed on the brakes, tossed me out of the truck, and told me I was walking home. I had about six or seven miles to go and it was real hot. So I'm feeling bad for myself when I look up and see this old Chevy kicking up dust. I stick my thumb out and it pulls over. A woman with curly red hair offers me a ride. This woman had the biggest set of titties you ever saw. I stared at 'em the whole way home. And I never would have seen them if my daddy hadn't punished me in the first place.

Reedy looks at Jenkins like "What the fuck is he talking about?"

REEDY

So what are you saying? When life gives you lemons you make lemonade?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

No, George, I'm saying when the Good Lord puts big, beautiful breasts right in front of ya, you don't waste time crying over the little things.

JENKINS

So there's an upside to you being appointed chairman of this committee?

JOHNSON

This damn civil rights issue is gonna tear the Democrats in two. We got rival camps who are never going to see eye to eye. But as long as they're both sitting at the table, they're gonna need an interpreter. The Kennedy's don't speak "Southern." And the Southerners don't speak "Kennedy." I'm the only man who's fluent in both languages.

REEDY

And which side are you on?

JOHNSON

You're missing the point. As long as neither side declares all out war, both sides need me. The best thing that can happen for me is that the civil rights debate goes on forever.

JENKINS

And how do we make that happen?

JOHNSON

Compromise, boys. Endless compromise.

INT. SENATE DINING ROOM - MARCH 1961 - DAY

At a large table in the austere room, Johnson and SENATOR RICHARD RUSSELL, 63, dine together, alone.

RUSSELL

Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunities Committee. Those Kennedys must really hate you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

Yeah, I drew the short straw on this one.

RUSSELL

I wouldn't worry about it. This committee won't be around long.

JOHNSON

I wouldn't be so sure.

RUSSELL

Never underestimate the southern delegation. My army may be small, but our cause is mighty.

JOHNSON

Am I talking to Senator Richard Russell or Stonewall Jackson?

RUSSELL

You're talking to the man who's defeated three presidents on this and I can defeat a fourth.

A BLACK WAITER approaches and clears the plates.

JOHNSON

Thank you, Eddie.

After Eddie leaves.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

The government has a one-billion dollar contract to build a new airplane.

RUSSELL

And I know just where that contract should go.

JOHNSON

I bet you do. And I want nothing more than to see that Lockheed plant in Georgia get this contract.

RUSSELL

Glad to hear it. Convince that committee of yours to sign off on it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

I will... after you convince Lockheed to make some changes at the plant.

RUSSELL

We're not making any changes.

JOHNSON

Come on, Dick, I can't have signs all over the plant that say "colored this" and "white that."

RUSSELL

You don't like separate drinking fountains? Fine. We'll bring in paper cups.

JOHNSON

You need to do more on this one. You need to hire negros.

RUSSELL

Well, I guess someone has to mop the floors.

JOHNSON

This has to be about more than janitors. I'm talking about engineers, skilled labor.

RUSSELL

The government has no right telling employers who to hire.

JOHNSON

It's the government's billion dollars. I'm guessing we have some right.

RUSSELL

Next you'll want to tell employees what jobs they have to do. And last I heard we were against forced labor in this country.

JOHNSON

You don't have to convince me. I'm the one going fifteen rounds with the Kennedys on this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUSSELL

Those Harvard boys from
Massachusetts aren't going to tell
us how to run things in the state
of Georgia.

JOHNSON

Of course not. But they did win the
election by appealing to the
colored man. And they need to give
him something in return.

RUSSELL

You asking me to surrender?

JOHNSON

I'm asking you to give them these
little victories here and there so
they forget about the war.
Otherwise my fear is they'll pursue
something a lot more drastic.

RUSSELL

Let them try. I will use all the
means at my disposal to defend this
cause until the last breath of air
escapes my lungs.

JOHNSON

Dick, I'm the only ally in the
White House you've got - I suggest
you make it easier for me to help
you.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM - APRIL 1961 - DAY

Johnson enters and TWELVE MEN rise to their feet, including
NICK KATZENBACH, 39, and the UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR, 50.

Johnson moves to the head of the table.

JOHNSON

Please take your seats.

They sit. Johnson remains standing as he surveys the room.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

By presidential order, this
committee on equal employment
opportunity is to be comprised
of...

(consulting his notes)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Three of the joint chiefs, four members of the cabinet, and five heads of commissions. Out of curiosity, who the hell are all of you?

Everyone looks around. No one answers.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

We got the Undersecretary of State. The Undersecretary of Defense. I see Nick Katzenbach is here. What's the matter Nick? Bobby Kennedy too busy to join us today?

KATZENBACH

Sir, the Attorney General had a previous...

JOHNSON

(cutting him off)

Despite the fact that none of your bosses are here, the Vice President did in fact show up so let's get this thing started.

Johnson sits.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Our first order of business is the one-billion-dollar contract to build a new transport airplane.

KATZENBACH

Senator Russell seems to think the contract is going to Georgia.

JOHNSON

That's because it is.

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR

That Lockheed plant's record on civil rights is disgraceful.

JOHNSON

Richard Russell is the leader of the Southern Democratic Caucus and Chairman of The Armed Services Committee. We are going to work with Senator Russell on this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR
Sir, I know I speak for my boss
when I say that this is a fight in
which we should not give an inch.
The Secretary of Labor has drafted
a list of demands that he wants
addressed before we award any
contract to that plant.

He slides a MEMO to Johnson.

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR (CONT'D)
We need to use this opportunity to
demonstrate the full power of this
committee.

JOHNSON
If your boss wants to make demands,
you tell him to deliver them to me
in person.
(pointing at the memo)
And, son, if this committee had any
real power, the men you work for
would be sitting at this table,
instead of you. This meeting is
adjourned.

Johnson remains seated as everyone else stands to leave.

The Undersecretary of Defense takes a step toward the door
and then pauses. He removes a MEMO from his briefcase and
sets it in front of Johnson.

As the room files out, more than half of the men drop MEMOS
on the pile. Each memo is more kindling for the fire burning
inside Johnson.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - 12:28 P.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

At the intersection of Main Street and Houston Street, police
motorcycles lead the motorcade, turning right onto Houston
and then quickly left onto Elm Street in Dealey Plaza.

The unmarked police car is first. The President's limo is
just behind it, with JFK, Jackie, Governor Connally, and his
wife NELLIE CONNALLY, 44. They wave at the CHEERING CROWD.

Closely following the President's car is the Queen Mary, with
O'Donnell, Special Assistant DAVE POWERS, 51, and six Secret
Service Agents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Several car lengths behind, is the Vice President's limo.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - SAME

Johnson, Lady Bird, and Yarborough are quiet. Lady Bird and Yarborough wave at the crowd.

In the front seat, Youngblood looks out at the buildings and the crowd.

Youngblood hears Agent Johns through his radio.

AGENT JOHNS (V.O.)

Five minutes to the Trade Mart.

Youngblood looks at the speedometer as Jacks slows to make the turn onto Elm Street. They drop below 10 miles per hour.

They complete the turn and the car straightens out...

Johnson is lost in thought...

BANG!

An explosion echoes throughout the plaza. Johnson is startled. Everybody hears it. Nobody knows what it was.

Johnson looks outside the car and up ahead, trying to see the source of the noise but all he sees is commotion, confusion.

Youngblood looks ahead, seeing commotion on the Queen Mary, blocking his view of JFK's car.

YOUNGBLOOD

Get down! Get down!

Youngblood reaches into the backseat and pushes Johnson to the floor. Lady Bird and Yarborough both freeze.

Youngblood jumps over the seat and forces as much of Johnson to the floor as possible, with a knee into his back and an elbow into his shoulder.

Johnson's face is smashed against the floor. All he can see are Lady Bird's shoes.

BANG!... BANG!

Two more loud explosions cry out.

Youngblood looks forward, past the Queen Mary. A gray blur of debris explodes into the air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agent CLINT HILL runs forward for the President's limo while the cars in front of Johnson's speed up, creating distance between the Vice President and the front of the motorcade.

In the Queen Mary, Agent GEORGE HICKEY stands. He holds an AR-15 ASSAULT RIFLE and he is ready to use it, looking back toward the buildings.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)
(to Jacks)
Stay with them!

Youngblood looks outside where people are scattering.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)
(into his radio)
I'm switching to Charlie frequency!

As he does, Youngblood hears Agent EMORY ROBERTS' voice.

AGENT ROBERTS (V.O.)
Halfback to Lawson! The President's
been hit! Get us to the hospital!

Johnson's head is close enough to Youngblood's to hear fractured words from Youngblood's earpiece.

AGENT ROBERTS (V.O.)
He's hit! He's hit!... Hospital!

Lady Bird reaches for Johnson and he reaches back for her.

YOUNGBLOOD
Stay down!

Youngblood forces Johnson to the floor. Lady Bird jumps back.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)
(to Jacks)
Go, go, go!

Jacks steps on the gas, knocking everybody around.

Jacks accelerates as they enter the shadow of the underpass.

Jacks continues to speed up as he gets the car onto:

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - STEMMONS FREEWAY ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Sirens blare as they follow the lead cars onto the freeway.

EXT. STEMMONS FREEWAY EXIT - DAY

BACK TO THE FREEWAY

The Vice President's Car follows the others down an off ramp. Tires screech as they turn, almost out of control.

The car speeds past a sign: "PARKLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL."

EXT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - DAY

Jacks throws the car into the driveway of the Parkland Emergency entrance.

The lead car, the President's car, and the Queen Mary come to a quick stop in front of them.

EXT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - DAY

Youngblood grabs the door handle as they approach.

YOUNGBLOOD
We aren't stopping for anything or
anyone. Do you understand?

JOHNSON
Okay, partner. You ready, Bird?

LADY BIRD
I'm ready.

The car screeches to a halt.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - SPRING 1961 - MORNING

JFK sits in his rocker, holding a baby JOHN F. KENNEDY, JR. and playing with CAROLINE KENNEDY, 3.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - MORNING

Just outside the Oval Office, we hear faint sounds of children laughing.

The President's Personal Secretary, EVELYN LINCOLN, 51, works at her desk, paying no mind to Johnson who sits on a small chair, like a kid waiting to be called into the principal's office. He's hunched over a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bobby enters and walks past Johnson without so much as a glance, moving quickly.

BOBBY

Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln.

MRS. LINCOLN

Good morning, Mr. Kennedy.

As Bobby walks into the Oval Office, Caroline runs out. A NANNY follows with JFK and the baby behind her. JFK hands John Jr. to the Nanny.

JFK

Lyndon, sorry to keep you waiting.
Come on in.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

JFK sits in his rocker. Johnson and Bobby sit on the two couches, facing each other.

JFK

How are you doing with the
Committee?

JOHNSON

Fine, Mr. President.

No one seems to buy this.

JFK

We need to make sure that this
Lockheed contract conforms to the
Committee's purpose.

JOHNSON

Senator Russell has assured me that
we can expect to see some
significant changes at the plant.

BOBBY

That's not what I hear.

JOHNSON

If you're concerned you should come
to one of our meetings. It would be
a whole lot better than getting
second-hand information.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY

I'd be more than happy to express my dissatisfaction in front of the entire Committee.

JFK

Lyndon, we're not awarding the contract to a plant that systematically continues to violate civil rights.

BOBBY

And you might remind Senator Russell that we don't need his help on this. There's a Lockheed plant in California that would be more than happy to build those planes.

JOHNSON

(to JFK)

With all due respect, if we take the contract away from Russell, all that'll show is that we can't get him to do a single thing he doesn't want to do. Besides, you don't want to make an enemy of Richard Russell. He'll put the brakes on every piece of legislation we want to move through Congress.

BOBBY

We're not going to let one senator hold us hostage.

JOHNSON

(to Bobby)

I don't think you want to find out how powerful that one senator can be.

JFK

I need this Committee to show a strong record right from the start. Something that demonstrates concrete changes on civil rights. And we can't do that by giving a huge contract to a discriminatory plant.

JOHNSON

On the contrary, I think we can, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JFK

How?

JOHNSON

If we keep the contract in Georgia, I think I can get Russell to get the plant to give some of those jobs to negros. We'd have white men and black men on assembly lines in the Deep South working side by side building America's newest airplane. That would be one hell of a victory for this administration.

After a beat.

JFK

All right, Lyndon, but only if you can move Russell.

JOHNSON

Thank you, Mr. President. And if I may, there's one other item I'd like to discuss.

Bobby looks at JFK. This was not part of the scheduled meeting.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What's happening with Sarah Hughes?

JFK, needing information, half turns his head toward Bobby.

BOBBY

The judge from Dallas.

JOHNSON

You haven't responded to my recommendation to nominate her.

BOBBY

It's not your place to make that recommendation.

JOHNSON

(to JFK)

She'd make a damn fine judge.

BOBBY

She's too old.

JOHNSON

To you, everybody's too old.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JFK

We have to let senators from their respective states make those recommendations.

JOHNSON

How's it going to look to the people of my state if I can't even get a federal judge appointed?

JFK

Ralph Yarborough is the senior senator from Texas now. I can't just ignore his request.

JOHNSON

I promised Sarah Hughes that appointment. I'll look like a liar.

Bobby scoffs at that notion. Johnson tries to ignore him.

JFK

I understand your frustration, Lyndon, but this is how it's got to be done. We'll give Sarah Hughes a look next time. Thank you for stopping by.

JFK stands, letting Johnson know the discussion is over.

INT. LOCKHEED FACTORY - MARIETTA, GEORGIA - SPRING 1963 - DAY

Russell and Johnson observe a C-141 AIRCRAFT being constructed.

An assembly line of workers some black, some white, are working side-by-side.

RUSSELL

She'll be ready to take flight this summer. Record time.

JOHNSON

You sure that big bitch'll fly?

RUSSELL

She'll fly. Built by Georgia's finest.

Russell eyes some of the black workers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Half of 'em anyway.

Russell holds a rolled up copy of *Life Magazine*. He unrolls it. Bobby's photo is on the cover.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Did you see this?

JOHNSON
Yeah. They're calling him the
number 2 man in Washington.

RUSSELL
(reassuring)
No one has ever gone from Attorney
General to President.

JOHNSON
There's a lot of things these
Kennedys are doing that no one has
ever done.

Russell puts the magazine away.

RUSSELL
I'm hearing disturbing talk about
some civil rights bill.

JOHNSON
Yeah.

RUSSELL
What are you gonna do about it?

JOHNSON
What would you like me to do?

RUSSELL
You can impress upon the President
the severity of the moment.

JOHNSON
He's not some snot-nosed junior
senator and I'm not his boss. He
doesn't answer to me. Or you.

RUSSELL
Kennedy won the presidency by a
fraction of a percent. You know
what my margin of victory was that
same year?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

You were unopposed.

RUSSELL

Damn right I was. And six years before that, and six years before that, and six-

JOHNSON

What's your point?

RUSSELL

I may not be president, but neither am I at risk of ever losing my job. If the President sends a civil rights bill to Congress, I will personally see to it that it dies a painful death. And I'll kill every other bill along the way. I don't care if it costs my party the White House.

JOHNSON

I'm sure we can all sit down and come to an agreement that everybody can live with.

RUSSELL

Seems like every time that happens I'm the one giving something up. I'm running out of things I'm willing to live without.

JOHNSON

I'm doing everything in my power.

RUSSELL

I sincerely hope that's not true. Because if it is, why the hell am I talking to you?

CUT TO:

**INT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - 12:36 P.M. -
NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY**

Several AGENTS and OFFICERS are clearing the room. DOCTORS and NURSES move about frantically.

Youngblood leads the Vice President and his party. Yarborough trails behind as Youngblood spots Agent Roberts who's barking orders at a nurse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGENT ROBERTS

Clear that area!

Seeing Youngblood, Roberts points him toward a room.
Youngblood nods and leads his party to the door and into:

INT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TWO SHEETS separate the room into thirds.

A YOUNG NURSE was in the middle of taking a MALE PATIENT's blood pressure.

Youngblood pushes Johnson into the room, followed by other agents and Lady Bird.

Youngblood immediately puts his body between Johnson and the nurse and patient.

YOUNGBLOOD

(to agents, re:
nurse/patient)

Get them out of here!

The frightened nurse and patient are quickly herded out.

Youngblood pushes Johnson against the side wall while he scans the room. The other agents do a sweep.

Youngblood gets the attention of a nearby AGENT.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)

Nobody comes in here unless you
know who he is and he's got a damn
good reason to be here!

The agent nods and moves to the outside of the door.

Youngblood moves Johnson to the wall farthest from the door.

Agent Kivett listens to his earpiece and relays a message.

AGENT KIVETT

They want you to call Washington
for an update.

YOUNGBLOOD

I'm not leaving this man's side.

Johnson nods, taking comfort in this notion. He looks at Lady Bird in the corner to make sure she's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agent Roberts enters and moves to Youngblood and Johnson.

JOHNSON

Emory?

AGENT ROBERTS

Both the President and Governor Connally have suffered gunshot wounds. I don't know the Governor's condition. But the President... it's bad.

YOUNGBLOOD

(to Johnson)

Sir, we need to get you back to Washington as soon as possible.

AGENT ROBERTS

I agree.

JOHNSON

I'm not leaving here.

YOUNGBLOOD

Mr. Vice President, the safest place in the world for you right now is in the White House.

JOHNSON

I'm not leaving President Kennedy while he fights for his life.

Youngblood sees that Johnson means it.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - SUMMER 1963 - NIGHT

Mrs. Lincoln and TWO FEMALE SECRETARIES watch the nightly news on a SMALL TELEVISION.

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

Scenes of civil unrest and police brutality. Fire hoses and dogs being turned on black citizens.

NEWSCASTER

More violence tonight in the Deep South as police officers attempted to disperse demonstrators...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

A tense meeting is underway. Johnson, JFK, Bobby, O'Donnell, Sorensen, Jenkins, Reedy, Salinger, and Special Assistant to the President ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, 46, are spread around.

On the table between the couches, is a map of the U.S. that has red circles around many Southern cities.

BOBBY

How many more demonstrations do we have to look at with fire hoses and attack dogs?

SALINGER

Mr. President, I'm running out of ways to explain to the press corps why the Civil Rights Bill isn't being sent to Congress.

JOHNSON

You take legislative action now and all you'll do is fan the flames.

O'DONNELL

We made promises during the campaign. If we sit on this bill, our supporters will never forgive us.

SCHLESINGER

It's also the right thing to do.

JOHNSON

It's the wrong time to do it.

Bobby holds up *The New York Times*.

BOBBY

The wrong time? We've got King writing letters from a jail cell and kids on the street getting their heads busted. Time is a luxury we don't have.

JOHNSON

I've had many conversations with Senator Russell. You're going to have enough trouble getting your budget passed without sending them the civil rights bill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JFK
They'd hold the budget bill hostage
to...?

JOHNSON
To block civil rights, they'll hold
everything hostage.

BOBBY
To hell with Russell. We'll go
around him.

JOHNSON
You can't go around Richard
Russell.

BOBBY
Then we'll go through him!
(after a beat)
Mr. President, we're talking about
bombings and lynchings.

JOHNSON
I am not unsympathetic to the
plight of the nigras-

Off that word Bobby shoots Johnson a glare. The other Kennedy
men exchange shakes of their heads and smirks.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
I know I'm not as smart as some of
the men in this room. Maybe I'm not
as smart as any man in this room.
But when it comes to the Congress
of the United States, I think I
have a fair idea of how things go.
Mr. President, if you send the
civil rights bill to Congress right
now it will never become law.

JFK thinks for a moment.

JFK
Thank you, Gentlemen.

Everyone files out except for JFK, Bobby, and O'Donnell.

Johnson is the last to leave. He looks back at three men in
the Oval Office as he closes the door.

JFK (CONT'D)
What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOBBY

The time for negotiation is over.

JFK

What about the Southern Democrats?

O'DONNELL

We're never going to get their support.

BOBBY

This is one of those times to draw a line in the sand.

JFK

Maybe we can send a message to them through Lyndon. They might listen to a Southerner who's on our side.

BOBBY

What makes you think he's on our side?

JFK nods and walks to his desk.

JFK

Kenny, can we get this bill passed?

O'DONNELL

I don't know, sir. It won't be easy.

JFK

Well, we don't do these things because they are easy. Right?

Bobby and O'Donnell wait for a concrete order.

JFK (CONT'D)

This country needs a civil rights bill. We have to try.

O'DONNELL

What should I tell Lyndon?

BOBBY

The Vice President is no longer part of this discussion.

JFK nods in agreement.

INT. THE ELMS - DINING ROOM - SUMMER 1963 - NIGHT

Johnson and Russell eat steaks. Johnson has a scotch and soda. Russell drinks whiskey.

RUSSELL

The Kennedys spent their entire lives in private schools and now they want to talk about equality? Voluntary integration is one thing. But don't you think that I, as an American citizen, have the right to eat a hamburger in a restaurant without being forced to sit next to someone I don't want to bump elbows with?

JOHNSON

I think as an American citizen you should never be forced to eat a hamburger.

RUSSELL

Don't be a wise ass, Lyndon. I don't find this topic amusing.

JOHNSON

Here's where I get confused. A baby calf is born, it grows into a cow, lives on a farm, is slaughtered, butchered, packaged, shipped, cooked, and finally served to you on your plate. Most, if not all of those steps required the hands of black men. Why is it that when it comes time to eat it, you suddenly can't stomach the thought of sitting next to a black man while you chew?

Mrs. Wright, Johnson's black cook, enters and begins to clear the table.

MRS. WRIGHT

May I clear your plates, sir?

JOHNSON

Yes. Thank you, dear.

RUSSELL

"If the law can compel me to employ a negro, it can compel a negro to work for me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Such a law would do nothing more than enslave a minority." That's what one senator had to say about civil rights legislation.

JOHNSON

Well that senator's a moron. Probably Strom Thurmond.

RUSSELL

It was you. 1949. Your first speech on the Senate floor.

Johnson looks to Mrs. Wright who sort of pretends not to be listening. Johnson looks away before they make eye contact.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You spoke for over an hour that day, in opposition to a civil rights bill just like the one they're talking about today. I remember watching you deliver that speech and thinking, "This young man is the future of the South."

JOHNSON

We're both from states where the best leaders of the time voted for secession. Those great men almost destroyed America. I don't ever want a history book to say that about me.

Mrs. Wright clears their plates while tension hovers in the room. She leaves.

Aware that Mrs. Wright is just in the next room, Russell LOWERS HIS VOICE so she won't hear. Johnson does the same.

RUSSELL

(re: Mrs. Wright)

When was the last time you had a meal with her, Lyndon?

JOHNSON

She's an employee but if you think I'd have an objection to breaking bread with her, then you're a fool.

RUSSELL

You telling me that woman is your equal?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

That woman spends more time in this house than anyone except Lady Bird. She's not just an equal - she's family.

RUSSELL

I don't know how I missed the resemblance.

(a beat)

Look, what we're talking about here is freedom. We're talking about the preservation of a certain way of life - a way of life that you and I grew up with. And there is nothing wrong with that.

JOHNSON

Then why are we whispering?

INT. THE ELMS - DEN - JUNE 11, 1963 - NIGHT

Johnson sits alone on his couch, finishing a drink. He's slouched low and definitely a few drinks deep.

He gulps down the last sip and rises to make another. He passes a television that is turned on, but with no volume. It switches from the news to JFK addressing the nation.

Johnson puts ice in his glass and fixes his drink. As he moves to return to the couch the TV catches his eye. He turns up the volume.

ON THE TELEVISION

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

JFK delivers a speech from behind the Resolute desk.

JFK

One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts will not be fully free until all its citizens are free...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnson can't believe what he's seeing.

JFK (CONT'D)

Next week I shall ask the Congress
of the United States to act, to
make a commitment it has not fully
made in this century to the
proposition that race has no place
in American life or law...

Johnson throws his glass at the wall, shattering it.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - FALL 1963 - NIGHT

JFK stands behind his desk, reading an opened newspaper.

From the side door, Mrs. Lincoln shows Johnson inside. She
leaves them.

JOHNSON

Good evening, Mr. President. I-

As the man behind the desk looks up, Johnson realizes that
it's not John Kennedy, but rather it's Bobby.

BOBBY

The President's at a dinner.

JOHNSON

I'll reschedule.

BOBBY

What do you need?

JOHNSON

It can wait.

BOBBY

Tell me what's on your mind and
I'll relay it to the President.

Johnson hesitates but decides to proceed.

JOHNSON

I would like to know what the
President's intentions are for '64.

Bobby is not sure what Johnson's getting at.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Does he still want me on the
ticket?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY

Dropping you from the ticket would be more trouble than it's worth. Now if that's all, I don't have much time.

Bobby grabs his jacket. Johnson has to follow Bobby as he moves.

JOHNSON

Your brother likes me. Your father likes me. What is it that makes you hate me so much?

BOBBY

We see the world in very different ways.

JOHNSON

Then why keep me around?

Bobby offers no help.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I was in Congress for 24 years, but you never want my help on legislative issues. I'm from the South but when you need help down there, you have other Southerners you'd rather work with. Why don't you just let me go home to Texas where I can live in peace. You've worked overtime making sure that I'm through with politics. I'll never be able to run for office again. Hell, I'm not even sure I can help the President win reelection in '64.

Johnson starts to think this through.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But this isn't about '64, is it? We're talking about '68, aren't we?

Bobby looks up - Johnson is getting warmer.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And you're not worried about me in '68.

(thinking to himself)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But if the President was to have a new vice president in '64, someone fresh, someone popular, then that man would likely be the Democratic nominee four years from now. So you keep me here because that way the vice president isn't the presumptive nominee in '68... you are.

BOBBY

You think I'd be that conniving?

JOHNSON

I would be.

Bobby exits the side door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Reedy and Jenkins walk behind Johnson who is lost in a contemplative daze. They are concerned but dare not speak.

Johnson stops at a doorway. His head is lowered, shoulders slumped forward. Three years of this has taken its toll and he is tired, weakened, a defeated man.

JOHNSON

If either of you get an offer for a better job, I suggest you take it.

Reedy and Jenkins remain where they're standing as Johnson, hands in his pockets and head down, slowly walks away.

INT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - HOSPITAL ROOM - 1:13 P.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

Johnson leans against the wall, staring at the ground.

The door to the room opens and Johnson is the first to notice O'Donnell enter, almost in a daze. He's so quiet that it takes a few seconds for everyone to notice him.

Lady Bird sits with THREE TEXAS CONGRESSMEN: HOMER THORNBERRY, 52, JACK BROOKS, 40, and ALBERT THOMAS, 65. Agents are spread out. A few more members of the staff are here now as well.

O'Donnell walks toward the center of the room, never making eye contact with anyone. He stops. His eyes are swollen. He's overcome with grief. He struggles to speak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

O'DONNELL

He's gone.

Johnson's eyes swell, almost tearing for a moment. Then he blinks and looks up.

A long pause and then it begins to sink in for everyone.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT enters, visibly upset. O'Donnell passes the secret service agent on his way out. The room is silent and still.

AMIDST IT ALL, LYNDON JOHNSON RISES FROM LEANING AGAINST THE WALL. HE STRAIGHTENS UP TO THE ENTIRETY OF HIS 6'4" FRAME, SHEDDING THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SLUMP THAT HAS COME TO TYPIFY HIS POLITICAL IMPOTENCE. UNNOTICED BY THE OTHERS FOR THE MOMENT, HE ABSORBS THE INEVITABLE POWER THAT FLOWS TO HIM.

All eyes turn to Johnson.

JOHNSON

Rufus, get some cars set up and let the drivers know we're ready to move. Emory, have your people locate Lucy and Lynda Bird - I want my daughters to meet us when we arrive in Washington. Also, have McNamara, Rusk, and the rest of the cabinet on the ground at Andrews.

CARTER

Rusk and five other cabinet members are on a plane to Japan.

JOHNSON

Turn it around.

(to Agent Roberts)

I need you to tell Mrs. Kennedy that it's time to go.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT

Mrs. Kennedy won't leave here without the body.

JOHNSON

Well we're not leaving here without Mrs. Kennedy.

YOUNGBLOOD

Sir, we need to get you in the air.

JOHNSON

Not without Jackie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YOUNGBLOOD

Then let's wait for her at the plane.

JOHNSON

Fine. Cliff, I need people I know close by. Congressmen, I want you flying back to Washington with me.

Assistant Press Secretary MALCOLM KILDUFF, 36, chimes in.

KILDUFF

Mr. President?

Everyone in the room realizes the shift in power that has occurred.

KILDUFF (CONT'D)

I need to announce the death of President Kennedy.

JOHNSON

I want you to hold off on that, Malcolm.

KILDUFF

But, sir...

JOHNSON

On April 14th, 1865 two would-be assassins attempted to kill Secretary of State William Seward, stabbing him in his home. At the same time, another assassin was dispatched in a plot to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson. These events happened on the same night that John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln. We do not know the extent of this conspiracy or if it has run its full course. We do not know who is behind it or what other destruction they mean to inflict. Malcolm, you're to announce President Kennedy's death only after the rest of us are safely on board, otherwise you're gonna make these boys' jobs a whole lot harder.

AN AGENT enters and whispers a quick message to Youngblood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

YOUNGBLOOD

We've got two cars standing by.

JOHNSON

Let's move.

EXT. DALLAS LOVE FIELD - 1:32 P.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - DAY

Two unmarked cars come to a stop in front of the plane, heavily guarded now by AGENTS and OFFICERS.

Youngblood exits the front car from the rear door on the passenger side. Johnson follows him out and looks up at the glistening Boeing 707, tail number "26000" and the words "United States of America" painted across the fuselage.

Congressman Thornberry gets out of the rear as Congressman Thomas gets out of the front passenger side.

The second car's occupants exit - two secret service agents, Lady Bird, and Congressman Brooks.

The parties from both cars make their way up the steps and as Johnson enters the plane it officially becomes Air Force One.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - AFT CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The pilot, COLONEL JIM SWINDAL, 46, stands inside the rear hatch. Swindal salutes Johnson as he enters.

Johnson walks through the small aft compartment and along the narrow hallway on the left side of the plane.

Youngblood peers out a window, scanning the rooftops.

YOUNGBLOOD

Pull these shades down!

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - STATEROOM - MOMENTS LATER

This compartment spans the entire width of the plane. The office contains a sofa, a table, the president's desk, and a TV. A second door at the front leads to the press seats.

Johnson enters quietly. Youngblood follows. Lady Bird and the three congressmen have joined Johnson aide BILL MOYERS, 29, a few SECRETARIES, STAFFERS, and CREW MEMBERS who surround the TV, watching the news.

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALTER CRONKITE sits at his news desk, reporting.

CRONKITE

...It was only on October 24th that our ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson was assaulted in Dallas, leaving a dinner meeting there.

(reading a note)

From Dallas, Texas, the flash, apparently official: President Kennedy died at 1 P.M. central standard time, 2 o'clock eastern standard time, some 38 minutes ago.

(fighting back tears)

Vice President Lyndon Johnson has left the hospital in Dallas but we do not know to where he has proceeded. Presumably he will be taking the oath of office shortly and become the 36th President of the United States.

This statement ignites a thought for Johnson.

While many in the stateroom share in Cronkite's tears, Johnson moves to the corner where the three congressmen stand, away from the others.

JOHNSON

I need to decide when and where to take the oath.

CONGRESSMAN BROOKS

I think you should take it immediately, sir. Establish continuity.

CONGRESSMAN THORNBERRY

It might be better to wait 'til we get back to Washington. Have Warren swear you in.

CONGRESSMAN THOMAS

We need to reassure everyone that America has a president. It's a delicate line to walk. You need to protect the legitimacy of the moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

Well then let's make sure that no one can object. Rufus, where can I get the most privacy in here?

YOUNGBLOOD

I suppose the bedroom.

JOHNSON

Then the bedroom it is.

Johnson and Youngblood move toward the back of the plane. They pass Cliff Carter along with LIZ CARPENTER, 43, MARIE FEHMER, 29, JACK VALENTI, 42, and photographer Cecil Stoughton.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I want to Thank everyone for getting here so quickly. I'd like you all to accompany me to Washington. Marie, would you join me in the other room please?

Johnson moves without waiting for a reply. Fehmer follows him into:

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fehmer stops in her tracks upon realizing what room she's in.

JOHNSON

It's all right, Marie.

Johnson removes his jacket and hangs it in the closet. President Kennedy's BROWN AIR FORCE ONE BOMBER JACKET catches his eye. He runs his fingers along the leather sleeve.

Johnson moves to the farthest of the two perfectly made twin beds. He sits, propping some pillows behind his back.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Lyndon Johnson... Yeah.

(to Fehmer)

I need you to take notes.

Fehmer quickly moves toward the corner table.

EXT. HICKORY HILL - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

INT. HICKORY HILL - BOBBY'S OFFICE - SAME

ED GUTHMAN, 44, covers the mouthpiece of a phone. Bobby stares out a window.

GUTHMAN

Sir.

BOBBY

I thought if they got one of us, it would be me.

Bobby turns and looks at the telephone. He takes it.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Robert Kennedy.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

JOHNSON

This is Lyndon Johnson.

Silence. Who should start?

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Bobby, I'm very sorry for your loss. Words can't express. The whole country mourns with you.

BOBBY

Thank you.

Silence. Bobby's still not sure why this call is necessary.

JOHNSON

Listen, Bobby, I need your opinion on something. People down here are saying I should take the oath of office as soon as possible... Before we depart... What do you think about that?

BOBBY

I think it would be nice for President Kennedy to return to Washington as the president.

JOHNSON

I understand that, I do, but we've got confusion down here and it's liable to turn into panic.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I think it would put a lot of people at ease if I took the oath right now.

BOBBY

What's the matter, Lyndon, you afraid you'll arrive in Washington and the White House won't be there?

JOHNSON

It's important that the world knows America's government is functioning and that someone's in charge.

BOBBY

I don't know what the hurry is but if you're so insistent on taking the oath then take the damn oath.

JOHNSON

(for Fehmer's benefit)

Okay, Bobby, then I'll take the oath.

BOBBY

Fine, Lyndon.

JOHNSON

We have to be absolutely certain we do this the right way. I need you to get me the precise wording.

Bobby would jump through the phone if he could.

BOBBY

Is that all?

JOHNSON

One last thing. Who do we need to administer it?

BOBBY

Any judge can do it.

JOHNSON

Thank you.

Johnson hangs up and looks to Marie.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Get me Sarah Hughes.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - AFT CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson exits the bedroom and literally runs into Jackie, startling her.

JOHNSON

Oh, Jackie, excuse us.

JACKIE

Oh no, I just didn't expect - it's quite all right.

From the door to the stateroom, Lady Bird hurries to them.

Johnson quickly puts his jacket on.

Jackie moves to a seat near the coffin. Lady Bird sits next to her and looks at her pink suit, now stained with blood.

LADY BIRD

Dear God.

JACKIE

I'm just so glad I was there.

LADY BIRD

We're so sorry.

JACKIE

We've always liked the two of you so much.

Johnson puts a consoling hand on Jackie's shoulder. No helpful words come to him.

LADY BIRD

Perhaps we should find you something else to wear.

JACKIE

No. I want them to see what they have done to Jack.

JOHNSON

Jackie, before we take off, if you're feeling up to it, there is one thing I'd like to ask of you.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - STATEROOM - 2:34 P.M.

The tiny room is filled with 27 people, overflowing outside, all focused on the same thing - Johnson, with Lady Bird on his right and Jackie on his left. He faces the tiny JUDGE SARAH HUGHES, 67, who holds a little Catholic missal in her hand.

Crammed around them are Valenti, Congressman Thomas, Mrs. Lincoln, Congressman Thornberry, Congressman Brooks, and Bill Moyers.

Elsewhere along the wall are O'Donnell, O'Brien, Liz Carpenter, Marie Fehmer, Cliff Carter, and TEN OTHER PEOPLE.

Other agents and aides who don't fit, stand just outside.

Kilduff kneels down next to Judge Hughes. He holds a Dictaphone.

Stoughton is perched on the couch with his camera ready.

Johnson places his left hand on the small missal and raises his right hand in the air. Kilduff turns the Dictaphone on.

The room of grief-stricken faces, aides, and friends of JFK as well as Johnson, bear witness to the moment.

Judge Hughes administers the oath of office, piece by piece with a somber and steady Johnson repeating.

JUDGE HUGHES/JOHNSON
I do solemnly swear / that I will
faithfully execute / the office of
President of the United States /
and will to the best of my ability
/ preserve / protect / and defend /
the Constitution of the United
States...

Stoughton snaps the historic photograph.

JUDGE HUGHES
...So help me God.

JOHNSON
...So help me God.

EXT. DALLAS LOVE FIELD - 2:47 P.M.

Air Force One speeds down the runway and takes flight.

**EXT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - NIGHT
(ESTABLISHING)**

**INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -
NIGHT**

Jenkins and Reedy work. Juanita hands Jenkins a note.

JENKINS

Tell him to expect a call tonight.

Jenkins looks to her to see if the message is received but she has now stopped, something else has her attention.

At the doorway, Johnson stands, looking at his office. Carter, Moyers, and Valenti are behind him.

Youngblood and THREE AGENTS do a quick sweep.

REEDY

Welcome back, sir.

Juanita carries several sheets of paper to Johnson but emotion takes over as she nears him.

JUANITA

The initial reports said you'd been shot or that you had a heart attack. It took over an hour before we knew that you were-

JOHNSON

Don't you worry. Agent Youngblood took excellent care of me.

(re: sheets of paper)

What do you have there?

JUANITA

Calls to return, sir. They're in the hundreds.

JOHNSON

Marie Fehmer will be here shortly to help you with that. I think you all remember Jack Valenti. I've asked him to join us as well. We'll start with the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Richard Russell. I also want to talk to every former living president. Hell, if you can get a hold of the dead ones, I'll talk to them too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUANITA

How many of these calls would you like to make tonight?

JOHNSON

Every one of them.

National Security Advisor MCGEORGE BUNDY, 44, enters.

BUNDY

Mr. President, we'll have a security briefing ready for you in 20 minutes. Will you be... where will you be staying tonight?

JOHNSON

Lady Bird and I will remain at the Vice President's mansion for the foreseeable future.

BUNDY

That's fine, sir. But you and your staff should move into the Oval Office tomorrow morning.

Jenkins and Reedy exchange a look, it's starting to hit them.

JOHNSON

Good. We'll see you in 20.

Bundy leaves.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Every person in this room needs to be thinking one word: "priorities." Budget bill, Congress, the D.N.C. These things need to fall in line and in a hurry. We need to come up with an agenda and then we need to make it a reality.

REEDY

The D.N.C.? You want to start talking about the election already?

JOHNSON

The Republicans will be. We need to turn chaos into order. If we can keep the wheels from falling off the wagon, we'll have done our immediate job. All right, everybody here knows his role. Let's get to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Everyone moves. Johnson finds two sheets of paper.

REEDY
Something we can help you with,
sir?

JOHNSON
No. I want to write a letter to
Caroline and John Jr.

Reedy nods and goes to work.

Jenkins stands, mesmerized by Johnson. Their eyes meet.

JENKINS
Sir, I just wanted to say...
welcome back.

Jenkins means it in more ways than one and Johnson knows that. He nods in appreciation. Jenkins gets to work.

Johnson looks out his window at the illuminated White House.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Alone, Bobby looks at the empty Resolute desk. His grief consumes him.

BOBBY
Why, God?

The grief now turns to resolve.

EXT. THE ELMS - NOVEMBER 23, 1963 - MORNING

The sun begins to show itself on a new day.

Johnson's house has become a fortress overnight. SECRET SERVICE AGENTS guard the new castle.

INT. THE ELMS - KITCHEN - MORNING

Moyers and Valenti wear fresh clothes. They grab a quick breakfast and coffee.

Johnson enters, throwing on his jacket.

JOHNSON
My grandma always said sleep beyond
five hours is just laziness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grabs a coffee mug off the table that was clearly Moyers' and heads out as the rest scramble to follow.

We hear the sound of a phone ringing.

INT. SORENSEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sorensen, in casual clothes, having coffee, gets up from his seat and answers the phone.

SORENSEN

Ted Sorensen.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMO - DAY

Moyers and Valenti sit in the car watching Johnson talk on the car's phone.

JOHNSON

Ted, this is Lyndon Johnson.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

SORENSEN

Hello... Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Glad I tracked you down. Ted, I want to tell you I know how much you loved President Kennedy.

SORENSEN

Yes.

JOHNSON

And he loved you. You were a trusted servant, loyal to the end... I need you now, Ted. I need you even more than he did... Ted?

Johnson waits for a response but it doesn't come.

INT. SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnson walks with Moyers and Valenti from the limo. Jenkins and Reedy see them and hurry to catch up.

JOHNSON

Do either of you know what this meeting is about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENKINS

Russell just said he wanted five minutes of your time.

JOHNSON

There aren't many senators who would summon a president.

INT. SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - RUSSELL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson opens the door and enters, expecting to see Russell. Instead, the small office is filled with TWENTY SENATORS.

Everyone rises to their feet. Johnson, Jenkins, Reedy, Moyers, and Valenti look around, surprised. Russell moves to greet him.

RUSSELL

Mr. President.

Everyone applauds wholeheartedly. The clapping dies down.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

In this dark hour of our nation's history, we must remember to give thanks for the blessings upon us. From the despicable ashes of a presidential assassination a new leader has emerged. We are here to offer you our support. After a century of persecution, a century of being treated as inferior, after one hundred long years, we finally have one of our own leading this nation. America has a Southern president. And we could ask for no finer representative of our people.

(bowing his head)

Lord, continue to bless our President, watch over him, and fill him with strength and wisdom as he works to do the same for all your children. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

Johnson smiles but the implicit threat has been heard.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnson and Jenkins, Reedy, Moyers, and Valenti march through the hall. Youngblood walks in front of them.

Walking toward them are O'Donnell and O'Brien.

The groups reach each other.

JOHNSON

Good morning, gentlemen.

O'DONNELL

(has trouble getting this
out)

Mr. President.

JOHNSON

I'm pleased to see you back at work already. I know how much the President meant to you both. He had an impressive group of men working for him. I need you now, even more than President Kennedy needed you.

Neither man can respond to this request.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Not that I loved Caesar less, but
that I loved Rome more.

Johnson nods and he and his group continue on their way.

O'BRIEN

I can't believe he just quoted
Shakespeare.

O'DONNELL

I can't believe he just quoted
Brutus.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Lincoln and Kennedy's other two female secretaries pack up some items from around the office.

Johnson and his staff enter.

JOHNSON

Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln. I have a 9:30 meeting. Can I have my girls in your office by then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. LINCOLN
(flustered)
I'll do the best I can.

JOHNSON
I know you will.

Johnson continues through the door into:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson takes a few steps and then stops. Something is off. He looks down. The light blue carpet has been replaced with a DEEP RED CARPET, changing the complexion of the room.

JENKINS
Mrs. Kennedy had the new carpet
installed when everyone left for
Texas.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Bobby bumps into Mrs. Lincoln. She is clearly upset.

BOBBY
What's wrong?

MRS. LINCOLN
Mr. Johnson just told me to clear
everything out immediately.

Bobby is pissed.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Bobby throws open the door. Johnson stands on one side of the presidential seal in the carpet. Bobby moves to the other side of it.

BOBBY
You don't waste any time, do you,
Lyndon?

JOHNSON
Excuse me?

BOBBY
It's going to take some doing to
get all of President Kennedy's
belongings packed and relocated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

I was told to use this office.

BOBBY

Just like you were told to take the
oath in Dallas?

Johnson would like to respond but he thinks better of it.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

My brother's coffin is down the
hall. This is not where our
attention should be.

JOHNSON

While we all mourn for your
brother, someone needs to tend to
the business of the country.

BOBBY

Mourning for my brother is the
business of the country.

Bobby glares at him.

JOHNSON

(understanding)

We can come back later, after my
cabinet meeting this afternoon.

BOBBY

Your cabinet?

JOHNSON

(treading carefully)

I know you've got a lot on your
mind, but I'm counting on you to
stand with me as Attorney General.

BOBBY

You've already got one photograph
with a grieving Kennedy at your
side. Do you really need another?

JOHNSON

I'd appreciate it if you kept me
apprised of any change in plans you
might have.

BOBBY

I know where to find you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Johnson holds steady for a beat and then heads for the exit.
His staff follows.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnson speeds through the hallway with his entire staff.

JOHNSON
I'm done worrying about that son of
bitch!

**INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -
DAY**

Jenkins, Reedy and Johnson are watching Walter Cronkite on
T.V.

ON SCREEN:

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

CRONKITE
People gathered outside the grounds
of the White House today. Our
reporter David Schumacher was
outside the White House and talked
to some of those people.

The coverage switches from Cronkite in the studio to DAVID
SCHUMACHER and his interviews of CITIZENS.

BLACK MAN
I just can't describe how I feel at
this time.
(looking at the White
House)
It just seems empty...

JENKINS
Sir, we need to discuss your
address to Congress.

JOHNSON
I'm not ready for that yet.

JENKINS
With all due respect, you're going
to have to get ready. President
Kennedy's burial has been set for
Monday.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENKINS (CONT'D)

With Thursday being Thanksgiving,
we don't have much of a window.

WHITE WOMAN

Well, I was thinking that possibly
the only thing we could do is to
pray that Lyndon Johnson can carry
on.

Johnson is impacted by these sentiments.

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

On the second floor of the old D.C. restaurant many of
Kennedy's men have assembled, including WALTER HELLER, 48,
KEN GALBRAITH, 55, SAM BEER, 52, PAUL SAMUELSON, 48, WILLIAM
WALTON, 53, and RICHARD GOODWIN, 31.

O'Donnell, Sorensen, O'Brien, and Salinger sit near the front
of the large table that fills the room.

O'DONNELL

Johnson gave Pierre the-
(in a Texas drawl)
"I need you even more than he
needed you" speech.

GALBRAITH

What did you tell him?

SALINGER

I told him I'd stay on as Press
Secretary as long as he wanted...
until Tuesday.

They laugh.

O'BRIEN

Johnson's not going to be satisfied
until every one of us promises to
serve him.

SORENSEN

So what are we doing here?

Schlesinger starts to address the room. Everyone quiets down.

SCHLESINGER

In his inaugural address, President
Kennedy declared that the torch had
been passed to a new generation of
Americans.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH PORTICO - NOVEMBER 24, 1963 - DAY

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

(ALL FOOTAGE WILL BE IN BLACK AND WHITE)

EIGHT MILITARY PALLBEARERS carry JFK's coffin from the White House, past a line of UNIFORMED MEN, and set it on a CAISSON that is pulled by six gray horses.

A SINGLE DRUM begins to play...

SCHLESINGER (V.O.)
The question before us now is who
should be the custodian of that
torch?

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to the dinner that Schlesinger leads.

SCHLESINGER
The Constitution may say that the
Vice President is next in the line
of succession...

**EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH PORTICO - NOVEMBER 24, 1963 -
MOMENTS LATER**

(Should look archival):

Jackie, dressed in black, holds the hands of JOHN JR. (1 day shy of 3 years old) and CAROLINE (3 days shy of 6 years old). Behind them is Bobby. Johnson and Lady Bird follow the family.

SCHLESINGER (V.O.)
But does anyone here believe that
Lyndon Johnson is the man to carry
that torch?

Jackie leads Caroline and John Jr. by UNIFORMED MILITARY MEN, into the car. She follows them in. Bobby pauses at the car's open door, glances at Johnson behind him, and then climbs in. Johnson enters, followed by Lady Bird.

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Schlesinger has finished and now the floor is open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

O'BRIEN

So what are you suggesting? I didn't come to Washington just to work for John Kennedy; I came here to work for what John Kennedy believed in.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

The coffin is carried up the steps of the nation's Capitol.

O'BRIEN (V.O.)

There is unfinished business and right now our only hope of completing it is by serving his successor.

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

So many objections to O'Brien's statement that they drown each other out. Salinger takes the floor.

O'BRIEN

We've come too far to put everything on hold!

BEER

You think Johnson will continue the work of President Kennedy? This is a man who voted against virtually every piece of civil rights legislation in the last 20 years. How can you honor Kennedy by working for Johnson?

SALINGER

You're looking at this the wrong way. Even if Johnson believed in what we believe in, and that is seriously up for debate, how much do you think he could really accomplish in one year?

GALBRAITH

Can we mount a challenge by then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALINGER

Bobby is already more powerful and more popular than any other Democrat including Lyndon Johnson.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - ROTUNDA - DAY

(Should look archival)

Kennedy's coffin has been placed in the center of the Rotunda for MOURNERS to see.

An ARMY SERGEANT walks backwards, carrying a large WREATH. He sets it down in front of the casket. Johnson follows and stops at the wreath, lowers his head in prayer, then nods to Jackie. Caroline and John Jr. stand beside her.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NOVEMBER 25, 1963 - DAY

FOOTAGE: (ARCHIVAL)

Hundreds of thousands of MOURNERS line the nation's capital city as a 3-mile long FUNERAL PROCESSION moves through.

SCHLESINGER (V.O.)

The men in this room all want to see a president - a President Kennedy - lead us to a better world. And the people of this country want the same thing.

FOOTAGE: ARCHIVAL

John Jr. salutes his father's casket as it passes by.

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sorensen looks to Schlesinger.

SORENSEN

Just what are you asking us to do? Quit? Betray Lyndon Johnson?

O'Donnell stands up and everyone gets quiet.

O'DONNELL

No one is being asked to sabotage anything. No one is calling for a mass exodus. And this is certainly not a coupe d'état.

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

FOOTAGE: (Should look archival)

MOURNERS flood the grass as the slain president's coffin is carried to its final resting place.

WE TRANSITION FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO COLOR, FOOTAGE TO FILM.

Jackie walks, flanked on either side by Bobby and TEDDY KENNEDY, 31, wearing MATCHING SUITS.

SEVEN MILITARY MEN from the 3rd Infantry Regiment prepare to fire a 3-volley salute.

INT. OCCIDENTAL GRILL & SEAFOOD - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As O'Donnell continues, INTERCUT THE RIFLE SHOTS.

O'DONNELL

But Johnson still has to make his case to the American people. He still has to prove that he is worthy of this job. And if he stumbles...

FIRE ONE.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

...if he should fall...

FIRE TWO.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

...then we need to be prepared to challenge him...

FIRE THREE.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

...and then it will be Bobby's time.

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

Kennedy's casket is lowered into the ground.

Everyone from the previous meeting is here. All of Johnson's men, and all of Kennedy's men have gathered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jackie moves toward the grave and is handed a TORCH. Once ignited, this will be the eternal flame.

Jackie stops, turns, and hands the torch to Bobby. Bobby ignites the flame. He watches it burn and then looks up through the flame at Johnson, who looks back at Bobby.

INT. THE ELMS - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Reedy, Moyers and Valenti are joined by SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY, 52 at the dining room table.

REEDY

We can't just sweep the rest of the agenda under the rug.

FORTAS

He has to make some progress on civil rights.

REEDY

Some, yes. But we have got to be realistic.

INT. THE ELMS - KITCHEN - SAME

Johnson walks in, tired from a long day. He pours himself a drink while listening to the discussion in the next room.

Mrs. Wright chops vegetables.

Jenkins exits the meeting and approaches Johnson.

JOHNSON

How's it going in there?

Jenkins shrugs. Johnson nods.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Have we heard back from any of the Kennedy men?

JENKINS

Two nights ago they all had a meeting. We should hear from them soon.

Johnson nods, almost sad. He knows what this means.

AS THE ARGUMENT IN THE NEXT ROOM GROWS LOUD ENOUGH TO HEAR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR HUMPHREY (O.S.)
Some progress is not enough. The
civil rights bill was the
cornerstone of Kennedy's
presidency!

REEDY (O.S.)
The civil rights bill stalled in
the Senate months ago. Even Kennedy
was going to have to compromise
eventually.

MOYERS (O.S.)
Exactly! And nobody expects Johnson
to be John F. Kennedy.

That sentiment strikes Johnson to his core.

INT. THE ELMS - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lady Bird is in bed reading. Johnson enters.

JOHNSON
History's gonna say I was the
illegitimate heir to the throne. No
man should rise to the top this
way.

LADY BIRD
Truman did.

JOHNSON
FDR was never going to live through
his last term. Everyone knew it was
Truman's to inherit.

She doesn't argue. With his clothes on, he climbs into bed.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
I had that dream again, Bird.

LADY BIRD
The one where you can't move?

JOHNSON
I'm sittin' in that same chair, in
the middle of that same field, and
the man with the shotgun's coming
towards me. I just sit there,
paralyzed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY BIRD

Honey, it's just a dream.

JOHNSON

Yeah, but this time when I called out my mother, she showed up and just looked at me with this helpless face. She wouldn't save me.

(a long beat)

If the people want Bobby Kennedy so bad, they can have him.

Lady Bird thinks about this. Then after a long beat:

LADY BIRD

Well, maybe that would be best. The country has been through a terrible ordeal. It might make sense for Bobby to carry on for his brother. There's something almost biblical about it. Perhaps the right thing is to replace one Kennedy with another.

All this pierces Johnson to his core.

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

On the other hand, maybe we need something different.

(a beat)

President Kennedy was a man of great ideas. Perhaps now we need a man who can deliver.

JOHNSON

It won't matter if the people don't want me.

Johnson turns to his wife.

LADY BIRD

There used to be a fire inside of you. And I know it feels like it has extinguished these past three years. But those embers still burn. President Kennedy did wonderful things for America. Not the least of which was choosing you to be his successor. Maybe your mother didn't come to save you; maybe she needed you to save her. It's up to you to save this country.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Johnson lets this sink in.

INT. THE ELMS - DINING ROOM - SAME

The discussion continues.

VALENTI

If we don't do anything on civil rights, we'll face a challenge at the convention.

MOYERS

From Bobby?

VALENTI

From someone.

REEDY

The question is: What's the minimum we need to accomplish in order to win reelection?

Johnson opens the door. He is unnoticed as the debate continues.

VALENTI

Which provisions in Kennedy's bill can we live without?

FORTAS

Are you saying weaken the bill right out of the gate?

REEDY

We can't risk everything chasing ambitious goals.

JOHNSON

Then what the hell's the presidency for?!

Everyone turns to Johnson.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

It can't just be about a shiny airplane and a room with no corners. Surely we can aspire to something greater.

VALENTI

Are you saying you want to back Kennedy's civil rights bill?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

The entire god damned thing.

REEDY

Are you even in favor of it?

Johnson contemplates before answering.

JOHNSON

About a year ago, my private cook, Mrs. Wright, was driving from here down to the ranch in Texas. I asked her if she wouldn't mind taking my dog with her so that he'd be there when I got home. Mrs. Wright respectfully declined. She said it was hard enough driving through the South as a black woman without having a dog to worry about. Finding a place to eat, to sleep, to use a restroom. The personal cook for the Vice President of the United States had to drive through towns without stopping, and then squat to pee on the sides of roads. A hundred years ago she'd have been a slave. A hundred years from now, hell maybe she could be president. But today is a time of too much uncertainty. Where can she eat? Where can she sleep? Can she vote? If she does, will she be harassed for casting that vote? Can she attend school? And if so, which school? Can she travel the cities and towns of this land without fearing for her safety? What rights that belong to the men in this room should not be afforded to her?

VALENTI

You're going to lose the support of the people who have always had your back. And if you aren't successful, you're never going to earn the support of anyone else.

REEDY

Four other presidents have fought congress on this, and failed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON

There will be no compromise. There will be no negotiation. And there will be no failure. This time Congress won't be fighting a president - it'll be fighting two. Never underestimate the intensity of a martyr's cause, or the size of a Texan's balls.

Johnson marches out.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

Does he really support this bill?

JENKINS

With his whole heart.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

Since when?

JENKINS

Since about three minutes ago.

Humphrey assumes that Jenkins is joking but upon examining Jenkins' face, he realizes he's dead serious, and damn proud.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NOVEMBER 25, 1963 - DAY

Agent Youngblood escorts the President and his staff toward the Oval Office.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Youngblood moves to the side of the office as Johnson, Jenkins, Reedy, Moyers, Valenti, and Carter enter.

Juanita is at the desk where Mrs. Lincoln used to sit.

JUANITA

Good morning, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Good morning, Juanita.

Johnson arrives at the door and notices a new rack standing next to it. His WHITE STETSON hangs on the top hook.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Johnson takes two steps into the Oval Office - his Oval Office.

Kennedy's Resolute desk has been replaced with Johnson's GREEN-TOPPED DESK. Behind it sits his HIGH-BACK GREEN CHAIR.

A new PORTRAIT OF FDR hangs above the mantle.

Kennedy's rocker has been removed.

The carpet is still red and the walls still need decorating, but this is a different office now.

Johnson moves to his desk. He runs his hand along the many buttons on his phone. He picks up the receiver.

JOHNSON

Juanita?

JUANITA (V.O.)

Yes, Mr. President?

JOHNSON

Can you get Ted Sorensen for me?

JUANITA (V.O.)

Right away, Mr. President.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - LATER

We are looking at a very uncomfortable Ted Sorensen. Johnson sits next to him and leans in.

JOHNSON

Ted, we've scheduled a speech before a joint session of Congress on Wednesday.

SORENSEN

I've heard.

JOHNSON

I'd like you to write it.

SORENSEN

Mr. President, I don't know if I'll be coming back to work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

Ted, the voice of John Kennedy
rings throughout our land. You gave
words to that voice. I need those
words now.

SORENSEN

Mr. President-

JOHNSON

We're moving ahead full tilt with
his civil rights bill, his entire
agenda. This is about making
President Kennedy's vision a
reality.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - TINY OFFICE - DAY

Sorensen stands at an empty desk in a small office. Reedy
enters and drops piles of notes in front of him.

REEDY

That should bring you up to speed.

Sorensen looks at the mountain of work before him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson is seated at his desk. Secretary of Defense ROBERT
MCNAMARA, 47, enters.

MCNAMARA

Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Mr. Secretary.

MCNAMARA

I need to know your thinking on
Vietnam.

JOHNSON

My thinking on Vietnam is I don't
want to think about Vietnam. I got
a damn country in mourning, a
congress that needs to get off its
ass, and an entire presidential
term to squeeze into 11 months.

McNamara isn't satisfied with this answer. Johnson gets up
and puts his arm around McNamara.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Bob, we're not gonna let Vietnam fall to the communists. But I don't want it interfering with our agenda. So for now let's just stay the course and see if you folks at the Defense Department can't solve this thing before it becomes a bigger problem than it already is.

MCNAMARA

Right, Mr. President.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - TINY OFFICE - DAY

Sorensen sits at his desk. He scribbles on a piece of paper, then tears it off and trashes it.

Jenkins pokes his head in.

JENKINS

Just wanted to see if you needed anything.

SORENSEN

I'm not sure what you want this to be. Is it a speech? Is it a eulogy?

JENKINS

Both. It's the country's final goodbye to President Kennedy, and it's first real introduction to President Johnson. It's a eulogy, it's an opening statement, it's a state of the union, it's an inaugural address. And you have less than 21 hours to write it.

SORENSEN

Do you really believe he can accomplish all of this?

JENKINS

I do.

SORENSEN

How?

JENKINS

The same way he always has.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson sits at his desk, talking on the phone. Humphrey stands nearby.

From different directions, Valenti and Reedy approach, needing his attention.

JOHNSON
(into the phone)
You know you're as worthless as
porkless pig.
(to his staff)
Yeah?

VALENTI
Senator Dirksen's office said he
can stop by in an hour.

JOHNSON
No. I'll go to him.

REEDY
Rusk needs 10 minutes.

JOHNSON
He can have them in 20.

Senator Mansfield enters.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Mike, give me good news.

SENATOR MANSFIELD
There's definitely going to be a
Southern filibuster, Mr. President.

JOHNSON
No shit. What's the count on
cloture?

SENATOR MANSFIELD
About 56.

JOHNSON
(trying to remain calm)
About 56? Thank you, Senator. You
can leave about now.

Mansfield exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Thank God he can't be Majority Leader and Whip at the same fuckin' time. Hubert, you're gonna have to manage this one. When I ask for a number, I want a goddamn number.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

Yes, sir. You've got me day and night, but we're going to need more good devoted men working on this. And it wouldn't hurt to have a Southerner.

Johnson nods in agreement.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - LATER

Juanita escorts Senator Yarborough past her desk and into:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Yarborough looks around at the newly redecorated office.

Humphrey and TWO OTHER SENATORS sit on the couches, having their own discussion.

Johnson walks to Yarborough, damn near accosting him. Johnson sticks out his hand.

JOHNSON

Senator Yarborough, it's good to see you.

Yarborough shakes Johnson's hand. He looks confused.

YARBOROUGH

Good to see you, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

We're gonna push the civil rights bill through Congress, intact. It's gonna be an all out war and I need men, men with principle who are prepared to take some heavy artillery. You up for that?

YARBOROUGH

I serve at your pleasure, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

Good. Hubert will get you set up.

YARBOROUGH

Sir, just out of curiosity, what's your reasoning?

JOHNSON

I don't give a damn what color a man's skin is; every man deserves a fair shot. And if he can't get it on his own then we ought to help him out.

YARBOROUGH

I hate to tell you Mr. President, but I think you might be a liberal.

JOHNSON

Don't call me names in my own office.

YARBOROUGH

No, sir.

JOHNSON

Get to work.

INT. SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - DIRKSEN'S OFFICE - DUSK

Johnson sits across from Illinois Senator EVERETT DIRKSEN, 67. They each have a drink in hand.

JOHNSON

Everett, do you know why I've come here?

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Because there's a civil war in the Democratic party.

JOHNSON

I'd think that would be welcomed news for you Republicans.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Can't say it's bad news. But I'm not sure it's something I want to get in the middle of either.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON

Just stand back and watch us kill each other?

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Why not?

JOHNSON

Because there's more at stake here than politics. The civil rights bill is going to have its day.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

It's going to have more than a day, sir.

JOHNSON

That's why you and I are having this conversation. The Southerners in my party, at least most of 'em, are gonna rise up against us. If we're to win this battle, it's going to be the Republicans, you, Senator Dirksen, are going to fire the final shot.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Respectfully, sir, I won't put myself on the line until I believe you're willing to do the same.

JOHNSON

Fair enough. And when I do, it is my sincere hope that the Republicans, the party of Lincoln, will cast the deciding votes.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

Johnson's MOTORCADE departs the Capitol. The American Flag above still flies at half-mast.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMO - NIGHT

Johnson sits quietly as the car moves.

Outside the window, Johnson looks as the LINCOLN MEMORIAL appears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON
(to Lincoln)
This is your fuckin' mess I'm
cleaning up.

IN THE DISTANCE

The stone face of Lincoln offers no reply.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Johnson enters the dimly lit office. Russell is standing in the center of it, waiting for him. An unexpected visit.

JOHNSON
Good to see you, Dick.

Johnson extends his hand but Russell doesn't take it.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Why don't we have a drink?

RUSSELL
I am done drinking with you. You
are turning your back on the people
who made you who you are. And for
what?

JOHNSON
Civil rights is an idea whose time
has come.

RUSSELL
This will define your presidency.

JOHNSON
I can only hope.

Johnson's face indicates just that.

RUSSELL
You're willing to hitch your wagon
to the outcome of this bill?

JOHNSON
We've been having this conversation
for ever and we never say a thing.

RUSSELL
What is it you want to say? That
you intend to turn your back on me?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

That you don't care about everything I've done for you? That you're willing to betray me!

JOHNSON

That you're a racist!

RUSSELL

I beg your pardon.

JOHNSON

All your talk about "the Southern way of life," about loving the negro as your brother and all the while you plot against him like he's a sworn enemy.

RUSSELL

I don't care where we're standing - no man is gonna call me a racist.

JOHNSON

You're a good man, Dick. World class. I admire you more than you'll ever know. But you're wrong on this one. You're just plain wrong!

RUSSELL

I will fight you with everything I have.

JOHNSON

Fine. Fight me. But not in here, not in back rooms in hushed conversations. Fight me on the floor of the United States Senate in front of the entire world. And on that battlefield, let each man write his own legacy.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NOVEMBER 27, 1963 - DAY

The sun rises over the nation's capital. Its monuments glimmer in all of their glory.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Jenkins, Moyers, Reedy, Valenti, and Carter wait outside the Oval Office with O'Donnell, O'Brien, and Salinger. Juanita sits at her desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Many seem nervous, particularly Reedy. O'Brien approaches.

O'BRIEN

You need to settle down.

REEDY

He's never delivered a speech of this magnitude.

O'BRIEN

I'm sure the speech is excellent.

REEDY

I'm not worried about the speech -
I'm worried about the speaker. You
ever seen him address an audience?

O'BRIEN

He's passionate.

REEDY

Passionate? No, he's...
(searching for an
explanation)
Did your father ever get drunk and
yell at you?

O'BRIEN

I'm Irish.

REEDY

Okay, so imagine that, only instead
of yelling at a little boy, he's
yelling at 435 congressmen, 100
senators, nine Supreme Court
justices, and one entire nation
that desperately needs to feel the
warm paternal embrace of its
president.

O'BRIEN

He scares you, doesn't he?

REEDY

Every day.

Juanita's phone lights up. She answers.

JUANITA

Yes, Mr. President. I'll send them
right in.
(to the assembled group)
The President will see you now.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Sorensen stands at the President's desk while Johnson looks over the speech. He has a pen in hand and scratches notes in the margin, crosses a few things out. Both staffs - Johnson's and Kennedy's - file in. Johnson looks up from the speech.

JOHNSON
(to Sorensen)
This is one of the finest things
I've ever read.

SORENSEN
It was the hardest speech I've ever
had to write.

JOHNSON
I've made a few adjustments to make
it my own, but Ted, this is a job
well done. I want you to know that
I'm very grateful. And you did
right by him as well.

Johnson walks to the front of his desk and addresses the group.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Each of you came to Washington
because you wanted to change the
world. Together that's exactly what
we're going to do.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The President's motorcade leaves the White House.

INT. PRESIDENT'S LIMO - DAY

Agent Youngblood sits in the front seat, ever vigilant.

In the back seat, Johnson looks out his window, tense with his own thoughts.

Sorensen, O'Brien, and Salinger sit silently.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Any flags visible will still be at half-mast.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - LARGE HALL - DAY

Johnson marches toward the end of the hall, followed by Jenkins, Reedy, O'Donnell, O'Brien, Sorensen, Salinger, Moyers, and Valenti.

REEDY

Sir, just remember not to spend too much time looking at the Southern caucus when you're talking about civil rights.

JOHNSON

Where will they be sitting?

REEDY

I don't know. But they'll be the ones not clapping.

JOHNSON

You're annoying me.

Reedy backs off.

They come to the door that leads to the floor of the House of Representatives. At the door, DOORKEEPER WILLIAM "FISHBAIT" MILLER, 54, stands waiting. Everyone stops.

MILLER

You ready, sir?

Johnson looks down.

CUT TO:

EXT. HICKORY HILL - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)**INT. HICKORY HILL - DINING HALL - WINTER 1962 - NIGHT**

Bobby Kennedy's house. A big dinner hall. Ten tables are spread throughout the room, each with a ten GUESTS.

AT JOHNSON'S TABLE

Vice President Johnson starts in on a new scotch and soda, keeping to himself. Lady Bird sits next to him. He hears laughter from nearby and he looks over to the:

HEAD TABLE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bobby, Schlesinger, Sorensen, Salinger, and THEIR WIVES are all being entertained by O'Donnell who is telling a story rather loudly.

O'DONNELL

...So I get the reporter back on the phone and I tell him that if he ever runs a story like that again, he's going to be sorry. The S.O.B. has the nerve to ask if he can get a quote from the President. I say, "No, President Kennedy is a very important man and doesn't give quotes to pesky little reporters from podunk papers." Then he asks if Bobby can give him a quote. I say, "No, Bobby's even more important than the President."

They all laugh.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

So I say, "Listen, if you really want a quote, why don't you call Lyndon Johnson?" And he goes, "Say, what ever happened to Lyndon Johnson?"

The entire table bursts out laughing. Apparently no one realizes that Johnson is here. Or no one cares.

Johnson slumps in his chair and lowers his head.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - LARGE HALL - NOVEMBER 27, 1963 - DAY

Johnson looks up at Miller and gives an affirmative nod.

Miller turns and pulls open the doors as he walks into:

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

As Miller enters he makes a loud declaration in a booming Mississippi accent:

MILLER

Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The entire chamber rises to its feet as Johnson walks down the center aisle towards the podium in front of the SPEAKER.

On the floor sit 435 CONGRESSMEN and all 100 SENATORS.

Toward the front are the JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT and the entire CABINET.

UP IN THE GALLERY

A mixture of FRIENDS, FAMILY, and CITIZENS.

In the front row stands Lady Bird. To one side are their two daughters, LYNDA BIRD, 19, and LUCY, 16. On her other side is the family's personal cook, Mrs. Wright.

CAMERAS are set up to broadcast live across the world.

IN THE BACK

Along the walls, STAFFERS are bunched together.

Schlesinger joins O'Donnell, O'Brien, Sorensen, and Salinger.

Reedy, Jenkins, Moyers, and Carter huddle together.

AT THE FRONT

Johnson walks past his Cabinet, including the McNamara and the Attorney General. Bobby's face is like stone. Neither man gives anything away.

Two and three rows behind the Cabinet sit Russell and the Southern senators, the most senior ones.

Johnson walks up to the podium. Over his right shoulder is SPEAKER JOHN MCCORMACK, 71, and over his left shoulder is SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMP CARL HAYDEN, 84.

Johnson puts his glasses on and opens his speech.

Everyone sits. Silence.

JOHNSON

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the House, Members of the Senate, my fellow Americans: All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today. The greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the foulest deed of our time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Today, John Fitzgerald Kennedy lives on in the immortal words and works that he left behind. He lives on in the mind and memories of mankind. He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen. No words are sad enough to express our sense of loss. No words are strong enough to express our determination to continue the forward thrust of America that he began.

Reedy and Jenkins are nervous but none of their concerns have materialized. He's strong, steady, confident, almost warm.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

An assassin's bullet has thrust upon me the awesome burden of the Presidency. And in this critical moment, it is our duty, yours and mine, as the government of the United States, to do away with uncertainty and doubt and delay, and to show that we are capable of decisive action; that from the brutal loss of our leader, we will derive not weakness, but strength; that we can and will act and act now.

A strong, supportive applause from everyone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

On the 20th day of January, in nineteen and sixty-one, John F. Kennedy told his countrymen that our national work would not be finished "in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But," he said, "let us begin." Today, in this moment of new resolve, I would say to all my fellow Americans, let us continue.

The chamber rises to its feet to applaud. The Kennedy men are particularly moved by this. O'Donnell pats Sorensen on the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought so long. We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law.

Much of the audience applauds loudly. Dirksen has been convinced.

The Southern contingent remains seated. Russell and his fellow Southern Democrats are silent.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I profoundly hope that the tragedy and the torment of these terrible days will bind us together in new fellowship, making us one people in our hour of sorrow. So let us here highly resolve that John Fitzgerald Kennedy did not live, or die, in vain. And on this Thanksgiving eve, as we gather together to ask the Lord's blessing, and give Him our thanks, let us unite in those familiar and cherished words: America, America, God shed His grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

The entire room leaps to its feet and erupts in thunderous applause, an applause that does not stop, does not waver as the President begins his walk out of the chamber.

Lady Bird and Johnson's friends and family are overcome with pride as they cheer him.

Every person in this room applauds in support and appreciation. Every person, with his applause, conveys a newfound dedication to Lyndon Johnson.

Those who support Johnson are invigorated. Those who oppose him are petrified. Those who might benefit from him stumbling are left with no hope. Those who want him to succeed are ready to go into battle with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

And then there's Bobby...

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - SPRING 1964 - DAY

The eternal flame on JFK's grave burns, blowing in the wind.

Bobby Kennedy stands at the grave, wearing President Kennedy's AIR FORCE ONE BOMBER JACKET.

Behind him stand O'Donnell, Sorensen, O'Brien, Schlesinger, and Salinger.

O'DONNELL

He already got the budget through Congress. And civil rights - it's going to be a battle but I think he's going to get it passed.

SCHLESINGER

He's got the support of both houses and the country.

BOBBY

President Kennedy's Civil Rights Act is going to be signed into law by Lyndon Johnson.

Bobby shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Juanita sits where Mrs. Lincoln used to sit. TWO NEW SECRETARIES work here too, one white, one black - GERALDINE WASHINGTON, 32.

Johnson marches through, toward his office, followed by Jenkins, Reedy, Valenti, Moyers, and Carter.

VALENTI

The Republicans are going to nominate Goldwater. And no Democrat is going to challenge you, not even Bobby.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson, Jenkins, Reedy, Valenti, Moyers, and Carter enter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REEDY

Rumor has it he's so grief-stricken
that he may retire from politics
altogether.

Johnson moves behind HIS DESK. The rest circle around.

JOHNSON

Let me tell you something about men
like Bobby Kennedy. Men, who've
held the reins of power, they don't
just let it slip away. They wait
for their moment to strike. Men
like Bobby Kennedy may lose power
but they always come back for it.

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

Bobby and his men continue their conversation.

SALINGER

You could run for Governor of
Massachusetts.

O'DONNELL

Or the senate seat in New York.

SCHLESINGER

The polls say you're the odds-on
favorite to be Johnson's Vice
President.

BOBBY

Not in a thousand years.

Bobby looks down at his brother's grave and then turns to
face his men.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I would have dedicated my entire
life to my brother. But I can't be
John Kennedy.

SORENSEN

Then be Bobby Kennedy.

A soft wind blows in Bobby's face.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson continues his meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENKINS

We're going to have to move beyond civil rights. We need to think about what else we aim to do.

JOHNSON

If we've learned anything from President Kennedy it's that life is frail and time is precious. I don't intend to waste either. Mistakes will be made but inaction won't be one of them. We're going to move forward, always forward and at full speed. John Kennedy gave people hope. Now we're going to give them results. Let's get to work.

JENKINS

Thank you, Mr. President.

Everybody follows this order. The office becomes a whirlwind of organized chaos and at the center of it all, behind his desk, stands Lyndon Johnson, President of the United States.

ENDING CARDS:

And these words appear on the screen:

"President Lyndon Johnson's first 11 months in office launched the most progressive social agenda of the century.

"On July 2, 1964, 378 days after President Kennedy sent the civil rights bill to Congress, President Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"On November 3, 1964, Lyndon Baines Johnson defeated Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona for the presidency, winning 44 of 50 states and the District of Columbia. President Johnson received 61.1% of the popular vote, the largest victory since 1820. No president since has surpassed this accomplishment.

"During the next term of his presidency, Johnson continued to pursue an aggressive domestic agenda in hopes of achieving his dream of The Great Society by establishing programs including Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start.

"Johnson would also continue to escalate the war in Vietnam. By 1968, American deaths reached an all-time high.

"On March 16, 1968, the junior senator from New York, Robert Francis Kennedy, declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fifteen days later, Lyndon Johnson withdrew from the race, becoming the last sitting president to choose not to seek reelection."

"On June 5, 1968, moments after winning the California presidential primary, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated.

"Three days later he was buried next to his brother at Arlington National Cemetery. Lyndon Johnson looked on as Bobby was laid to rest."

FADE OUT.