

*Text on screen:*

**ALABAMA, 1965**

**EXT            TOWN SQUARE            DAY**

*An Alabama small-town square. A road frames a central area of grass and trees. It's hot and quiet. On a corner of the grassy area stands a group of PEOPLE, about twenty men and women. Many of them are nervous. They seem uncertain what to do next.*

**EXT            STORE            DAY**

*We're still in the square, now looking from street-level, up some steps, at the front of a run-down general store.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The store is empty except for a middle-aged white MAN in jeans and check shirt behind the counter. On the counter is a pump-action shotgun. He squats briefly to reach something and comes up with a small cardboard box. He pulls it open and spills some cartridges onto the counter. He starts loading the shotgun. As he pushes home each cartridge he glances at the front door. Through the half-glazed door he can see the PEOPLE on the grass at the other side of the square.*

**EXT            SQUARE            DAY**

*There's some discussion going on amongst the uneasy group of PEOPLE.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN in the store is now sitting in a chair a little way back from the front door cradling the shotgun in his arms. He looks relaxed as he watches the PEOPLE on the other side of the square.*

**EXT            SQUARE            DAY**

*A young black man, CARL, leaves the group of PEOPLE and starts walking purposefully across the grass, heading in the general direction of the store.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN watches CARL's approach every step of the way. As CARL starts across the road in front of the store, the MAN gets to his feet and steps towards the door.*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*CARL sees the MAN with the shotgun on the other side of the glass-fronted door and for a moment their eyes meet.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN with the shotgun watches CARL turn along the front of the store and disappear from view.*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*CARL walks towards a public phone.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN returns to the chair and resumes watching the PEOPLE across the square.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE    DAY**

*CARL finishes dialling, raises the handset and waits for someone to answer.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN goes on watching the PEOPLE across the square.*

**EXT            SQUARE            DAY**

*Two white men and two black GIRLS leave the group and head towards the store.  
The men, both about thirty, are wearing ecclesiastical collars. They're PRIESTS.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE    DAY**

*CARL has the phone to his ear.*

**CARL**

*It's Carl. . . . Yeah . . . They just released us . . . 'bout ten minutes ago . . .  
just left us on the street, man . . . we need transport – urgently . . .*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*The PRIESTS and the GIRLS keep walking towards the store.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN with the shotgun stands up.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE            DAY**

*CARL is now waiting on the phone for confirmation of a ride. He sees something out of  
the corner of his eye and looks round. He sees:*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*the PRIESTS and the GIRLS approach the storefront steps.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN pumps the shotgun.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE            DAY**

*Just as CARL's eyes begin to widen in alarm someone comes back on the phone.*

**CARL**

*Twenty minutes . . . Okay . . .*

*He lets the phone drop from his hand and steps forward.*

CARL

Hey!!

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*The leading GIRL has half-opened the door into the store when she and the young PRIEST, two steps behind her, turn towards the urgent shout, the GIRL letting go of the door handle as she does so. The door slowly swings open.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE            DAY**

*CARL thrusts out his hand in a 'stop' gesture.*

CARL

Don't go in there!

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*The PRIEST turns away from Carl, back towards the GIRL standing in front of the door – as it completes its arc to reveal the MAN with the raised shotgun. The angle reverses to show:*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*from the back of the store, the MAN holding the gun is statue-still, calmly aiming at the GIRL framed in the doorway.*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*The PRIEST pulls the girl away from the door. She stumbles onto one knee. The PRIEST starts to raise his hand in appeal or reassurance – and is blown ten feet off the top step and into the road.*

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN pumps the shotgun and – still with the same somnambulant calm – walks towards the door, and the GIRL.*

**EXT            STORE FRONT            DAY**

*The GIRL breaks out of shock and runs, along the front of the buildings. The second PRIEST grabs the GIRL next to him and they start running. The MAN takes aim and fires. The second PRIEST is hit in the back and sprawls forward onto the ground. The GIRL stops running, paralysed with fear, and screams. The MAN lowers the shotgun, turns and strolls back into the store.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE            DAY**

*CARL stares in disbelief.*

**EXT            SQUARE            DAY**

*The PEOPLE across the square stare in disbelief.*

**EXT            PUBLIC PHONE            DAY**

*CARL turns and grabs the phone.*

**EXT            SQUARE            DAY**

*A few PEOPLE start to move across the grass towards the store.*

**EXT            STORE FRONT       DAY**

*A car has stopped in front of the store. The DRIVER stares at the body in the road.*

MAN (OOV)

This is Deputy Sheriff Tom Coleman.

**INT            STORE            DAY**

*The MAN is speaking into a phone on the counter.*

MAN

I want to speak to Jim Clark. *(waits)* Sheriff, those two white-nigger preachers. I just shot 'em.

**TITLES**

**INT            WAITING ROOM       DAY**

*A tall, imposing middle-aged black woman – ANNIE Lee Cooper - sits in silence in the spotlessly clean room. On the opposite side of the room is CARL. He watches ANNIE: she has a bag of books with her and she's studying a volume, memorising a section. CARL looks across the room at a partially-open door, labelled 'Registrars'.*

**EXT            WASHINGTON           DAY**

*A taxi approaches the White House.*

**INT            TAXI            DAY**

*In the taxi are Martin Luther KING - 36, and looking even younger - and Andrew YOUNG - King's Chief Assistant. YOUNG is of similar age to King, handsome, with a certain style to his dress.*

YOUNG

You going to tell him about Selma?

KING

Not unless he asks.

**INT            WAITING ROOM       DAY**

*A large, sauntering, early middle-aged white man opens a door. He's wearing sports-jacket and ties, and two badges: one stating 'Sheriff' and a cheap, circular lapel badge which simply states 'Never!'. The man is Sheriff Jim CLARK. He's accompanied by a DEPUTY in uniform.*

CLARK

*(mocking)* Two this month!

DEPUTY

*(nodding at the Registrars' Office)* Those boys must need the overtime, Sheriff.

*CLARK guffaws and turns to go – then stops, something registering. He turns and, yes, there's a chewing-gum wrapper on the floor near ANNIE's feet. CLARK walks over to ANNIE. She looks up at him.*

CLARK

You drop that there?

ANNIE

No.

CLARK

This my courthouse and I like it clean. Pick it up.

*ANNIE stares at CLARK.*

ANNIE

Sheriff Clark . . .

*A moment between them.*

ANNIE

. . . *I* didn't drop it there.

CLARK

That's not the point. Pick it up.

*A fierce stare from ANNIE. A moment between ANNIE and CLARK – broken when CARL gets up, walks over and picks up the wrapper. A moment between CARL and CLARK. Suddenly CLARK grins.*

CLARK

That's obligin' of you. Boy.

*CLARK turns and goes, followed by the DEPUTY. CARL returns to his place and silence returns to the room. ANNIE looks at CARL – who avoids her gaze - then goes back to her book.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAY**

*KING waits alone in the outer office of the President.*

**INT                      WAITING ROOM      DAY**

*A loud, aggressive voice from the Registrars' Office:*

**REGISTRAR (OOV)**

Annie Lee Cooper!

*As ANNIE gets to her feet, she looks at CARL as if he might wish her luck. He merely looks back, without expression.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE      DAY**

*KING gets to his feet as a presidential aide – Dick GOODWIN – 36, dark, strong face - eyes filled with admiration, approaches KING and offers his hand.*

**GOODWIN**

Doctor King. Congratulations!

**INT                      REGISTRAR'S OFFICE                      DAY**

*ANNIE Lee Cooper stands in front of three desks, the middle one displaying a plaque which states 'ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PANEL'. A white REGISTRAR sits behind each desk. They're formally dressed but their manner suggests a casual, even dismissive, approach to their task. They stare smugly at ANNIE as she recites from memory.*

**ANNIE**

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity -

**REGISTRAR 1**

*(interrupting loudly)* How many county judges in the state of Alabama?

**ANNIE**

Sixty-seven.

*Silence. It's the right answer.*

**REGISTRAR 2**

Name them.

*ANNIE stares at the smirking REGISTRARS. REGISTRAR 1 inks a rubber stamp. He looks down at a form, entitled 'VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION'. The applicant's name 'ANNIE LEE COOPER' is hand-written at the top. Bang! REGISTRAR 1 stamps Annie's form: 'DENIED'.*

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*President Lyndon JOHNSON strides across the Oval Office, beaming, hand held out to KING – now being shown into the room by Dick GOODWIN, who withdraws as JOHNSON pumps KING's hand, putting a long arm round his shoulder, drawing him into the room.*

JOHNSON

Martin, you just won the Nobel Prize and I just won the biggest landslide in American presidential history. *This . . .*

*JOHNSON taps a photograph on the wall.*

JOHNSON

. . . is only the beginning.

*JOHNSON gazes proudly at the photo. It shows JOHNSON and KING beaming at one another as they shake hands, surrounded by smiling senators. Its caption reads: 'Martin Luther King congratulates President Lyndon Baines Johnson at the signing of the Civil Rights Act 1964'.*

JOHNSON

Ending a hundred years of segregation was my proudest moment. If I had one photograph on the wall that would be it.

KING

I bet your secretary put it there five minutes ago.

JOHNSON

Three! I run a tight ship.

*Talking all the while, JOHNSON guides KING to a chair by a small table ready-laden with coffee and cups. JOHNSON sits opposite and pours. KING's youth is even more striking seen against Johnson's maturity.*

JOHNSON

Civil rights is an enormous priority in this country. We don't meet that challenge this nation's storing up a heap of trouble for itself. I feel damn fortunate having someone as statesmanlike as you leading that movement and I want you to go on leading that movement, no-one else. So I wanna help you all I can. Tell me how.

KING

I want Federal legislation to enable negroes to register for the vote. I want local registrars replaced with Federal registrars in every town. And if necessary, Federal marshals to escort negroes to those registrars.

*JOHNSON is unfazed – in fact was anticipating King's every word. While respectful and admiring, JOHNSON is confident of his sway over the younger, far less powerful man.*

JOHNSON

Don't go starting another battle before you won the first! Most the South still not desegregatin'. You should be concentratin' on (*pointing at the photograph on the wall*) getting the '64 act up and runnin'. And this voting thing is the tail wagging the dog! What use is the vote if you can't buy decent food for the kids, keep 'em warm at night, put shoes on their feet? Got no-one to teach you, to look after you when you're old or sick? And people aint gonna vote when they're living in squalor, ignorance and pain. Folks say money is the root of all evil. They're wrong. *Poverty* is the root of all evil. Poverty breeds ignorance breeds bigotry breeds racism. Poverty is public enemy number one! Now! - I'm putting together a programme of welfare reforms (*indicating a three-foot stack*) *this high!* (*very proudly*) I call it 'the War on Poverty'!

*JOHNSON grins excitedly at KING – who doesn't look as impressed as he might.*

JOHNSON

You see? See what I'm saying, Martin? It's a simple matter of priorities! The *votin'* . . . has to wait!

INT                      REGISTRAR'S OFFICE                      DAY

*CLOSE-UP of the REGISTRARS: smugly hostile. CARL - dignified, intelligent – stands before them. REGISTRAR 2 reads the name on a Voter Registration Application form: 'CARL JOSEPHSON'.*

REGISTRAR 2

'Josephson'? You a *Jewish* nigger, boy?

*CARL's intense, dignified stare fades the grin on REGISTRAR 1's face. REGISTRAR 2 thrusts a book at CARL.*

REGISTRAR 2

Open it anywhere and read.

*CARL takes the book and starts turning the pages, searching.*

REGISTRAR 1

You not familiar with the works of Shakespeare . . . Boy?

*CARL leafs through the pages; REGISTRAR 1 inks the 'Denied' stamp and raises it above Carl's application form. Then CARL starts reading.*

CARL

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?

*A brief CLOSE-UP of the REGISTRARS, stilled by the power of the language and of CARL's reading.*

CARL

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you -

REGISTRAR 1

Fine! Okay, you can read. Now. General knowledge.

*Brief pause for smirks all round.*

REGISTRAR 2

How many bubbles in a soap bar?

*CARL stares at the gloating REGISTRARS for a moment – and continues reading.*

CARL

If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?

REGISTRAR 3

Enough of that now!

*REGISTRAR 1 slams the 'Denied' stamp onto Carl's form.*

CARL

And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

*Silence. Then REGISTRAR snatches open a drawer and produces an automatic pistol. He levels it at CARL. A moment.*

REGISTRAR 1

You threatening us, boy?

*CARL contemplates the gun – for a frighteningly long time.*

REGISTRAR 1

Boy, I wanna hear you say, 'No, sir' - or I'll blow your black ass clean through that fuckin door!

*CARL stares at REGISTRAR 1.*

REGISTRAR 1

Say it! 'No, sir!'

*Another long moment.*

CARL

No. *(pause)* Sir.

*CARL tosses the book on the desk, turns and walks slowly to the door.*

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*JOHNSON is on his feet, returning from his desk with a bundle of briefing papers in his hands. He drops them on the table in front of KING.*

JOHNSON

That's a lot of legislation and there's gonna be lot of resistance. Now I want you to come work with me on this - in Washington - and help me get these reforms through Congress! *(pause)* I'll give you whatever you need.

*A moment between them. Is this a bribe?*

JOHNSON

Help me change this country for ever!

*KING stares regretfully at JOHNSON for several seconds.*

KING

Mr President, you ever heard of Deputy Sheriff Tom Coleman?

JOHNSON

No.

KING

He murdered two civil rights workers in public in broad daylight. He was charged with manslaughter. Yesterday a court in Montgomery acquitted him.

JOHNSON

Look I know we got a lot more work to do down there -

KING

Coleman was just the latest. There have been *thousands* of racially-motivated murders in the South! And not *one* of the killers has been convicted. Because they're protected by white legal officials elected by an

all-white electorate, and they're freed by all-white juries - all-white because you can't serve on a jury unless you're on the electoral register! Negroes getting the vote in the South isn't a matter of priorities - it's a matter of life and death!

*Brief silence. JOHNSON looks into KING's eyes – and suddenly knows he's underestimated King, and this day is lost. JOHNSON smiles resignedly. He sits down.*

JOHNSON

So what are your plans, Martin?

KING

A voting rights campaign. In Selma.

JOHNSON

Selma? (*mystification with an edge of alarm*) Selma, Alabama?

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAY**

*KING and YOUNG are leaving the White House.*

YOUNG

How'd it go.

KING

He offered me a job.

YOUNG

Yes? As what?

KING

House boy.

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*JOHNSON is alone, pondering. GOODWIN - the aide who showed King into the office earlier – enters.*

GOODWIN

Successful meeting, Mr President?

JOHNSON

No.

*JOHNSON picks up the phone and hits a button.*

JOHNSON

*(into the phone)* That King photograph needs changing. Now. Before Phillips and Peterson arrive! *(putting the phone down, to Goodwin)* Those Alabama boys see a nigger in the Oval Office they gonna shit a squealin' worm.

*JOHNSON looks at the photograph on the wall. We see it in CLOSE-UP as a hand lifts the photo off the wall and replaces it with a photo of Johnson with Governor George Wallace. We PULL BACK to see a SECRETARY disappear with the King photo. JOHNSON looks at GOODWIN and grins.*

JOHNSON

Little cocksucker doesn't trust me. Can you believe that?

**INT                    KING HOME                    DAY**

*KING is clowning around with his four young CHILDREN – two girls, two boys - in a small living room. They're trying to get a basketball away from him.*

*KING dribbles round the CHILDREN, and various items of furniture, with impressive speed and grace – the remnants of a strong athletic talent. The CHILDREN are nearly hysterical as they pursue him, scrambling over furniture to get to him. He has the same glee and energy – he's one of them at this moment, an older brother rather than the father.*

CORETTA (OFF-CAMERA)

Martin!

*CORETTA stands in the doorway. She's attractive, but has a certain dignity - while he at this moment is all charm and energy. KING drops the ball, grabs the KIDS and they cower together in mock-terror. CORETTA laughs – then a seriousness edged with sadness enters her expression.*

CORETTA

Look at you with those children.

*A CLOSE-UP of KING, smiling sheepishly.*

**EXT                    HIGHWAY                    DAY**

*We're looking down on a four-lane interstate. In thin traffic we pick out a dark blue Ford – King's modest car.*

**INT                    KING'S CAR                    DAY**

*A CLOSE-UP of KING: serious, thoughtful. He's in the front passenger seat. The driver is Andrew YOUNG. In the back seat is Ralph ABERNATHY, formally dressed like the others. ABERNATHY looks more than his 46 years. He's King's deputy as well as his oldest friend and colleague. But his mood is far from collegiate.*

**EXT                    INTER-STATE HIGHWAY                    DAY**

*A road-sign stating 'SELMA 28' zips by.*

ABERNATHY (VO)

You got twenty-eight miles to come to your senses!

**INT                    KING'S CAR                    DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of ABERNATHY: truculent. He's a childish man with the saving grace of directness. You know exactly what he's thinking.*

ABERNATHY

You got a big speech lined up? Save it. No-one's gonna hear it from Selma!

YOUNG

Then maybe Doc'll let you make the big speech, Ralph.

ABERNATHY

That'll be the day. I have a dream: *once* in ten years *I* make the big speech.

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAY**

*We pick out KING'S CAR in the light mid-day traffic, passing over a bridge, heading into town. Painted across an overhead girder in large white letters are the words 'Edmund Pettus Bridge - 15'-1" '.*

ABERNATHY (VO)

Well here we are: Shitsville, Alabama. Where the American nightmare is alive and kickin'.

**INT                    KING'S CAR                    DAY**

*KING and YOUNG exchange a patient smile.*

ABERNATHY

And shootin' and lynchin' . . .

KING

Ralphy, be ye not as the horse or as the mule: which have no understanding.

YOUNG

Trust in the Doc with all thine heart. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and *he* shall direct thy paths.

ABERNATHY

Go fuck yourselves, Reverends.

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE            DAY**

*King's CAR drives on over the bridge and into Selma.*

**EXT            SELMA            DAY**

*King's CAR passes beneath a sign bearing a large Coca-Cola logo, stating 'SELMA, ALABAMA - Progressive & Friendly'. The shot widens to show the sign hanging over the main street. Another sign says 'THE SELMA NATIONAL BANK WELCOMES YOU TO SELMA – The City With 100% Human Interest!'*

**EXT            SELMA            DAY**

*King's CAR approaches a man standing on a corner: James BEVEL – mid-thirties, small, vivacious, casually dressed, wearing a denim jacket – raises his hand and smiles as the car slows.*

**EXT            HOTEL ALBERT    DAY**

*A small racially-mixed CROWD, including a few JOURNALISTS, are waiting outside The Hotel Albert, Selma's top hotel, a pre-Civil War replica of the Doge's Palace in Venice.*

**INT            HOTEL ALBERT    DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of a sign which says 'Hotel Albert Serving Whites Only Since 1855'. We PULL BACK to reveal a large man in hat and dark raincoat, Wilson BAKER, the Chief of Police, amongst an all-white CROWD inside the hotel lobby, waiting to witness the passing of an era. BAKER spots the 'Serving Whites Only' sign. He removes it and thrusts it at the bitterly resentful MANAGER.*

**BAKER**

*Get rid of it! It's illegal. And in about thirty seconds from now it'll also be a lie.*

**EXT            HOTEL ALBERT    DAY**

*King's CAR pulls up outside. PHOTOGRAPHERS and JOURNALISTS move towards it.*

**INT            KING'S CAR            DAY**

*KING looks out at the people on the pavement. CLOSE-UP of KING: sudden fear.*

**EXT            HOTEL ALBERT    DAY**

*The doors of King's CAR open and KING gets out – relaxed and gracious.*

**INT            HOTEL ALBERT    DAY**

*KING, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and BEVEL enter. KING approaches the reception desk in his modest, affable manner. ABERNATHY looks self-important, YOUNG appears watchful and intelligent, BEVEL radiates intense satisfaction as KING signs the silently proffered register. An earnest YOUNG WHITE MAN approaches the KING group.*

YOUNG WHITE MAN  
Doctor King. May I introduce myself?

*KING looks at him and smiles. A ripple of tension goes through the King group.*

KING  
Yes. Of course.

*KING steps towards him, holding out his hand. The YOUNG WHITE MAN attacks KING, landing punches to the head - and a kick in the groin as KING goes down.*

**INT HOTEL ROOM DAY**  
*KING sits on the bed, sweating, cigarette in one hand, can of beer in the other. ABERNATHY, YOUNG, BEVEL and police chief Wilson BAKER are with him.*

BAKER  
You want to file charges?

*KING seems not to have heard Baker.*

BAKER  
Doctor King?

KING  
No.

BAKER  
Alright.

*BAKER goes. ABERNATHY looks at KING, who looks glassy-eyed.*

ABERNATHY  
*(to Young and Abernathy)* I want this understood. I'm number two in this organisation and I say Doc's concussed and in no fit condition and we get him to a hospital. And the hell out of this town!

KING  
*(wearily)* Ralphy . . . Ralphy . . .

*ABERNATHY looks at the others. He knows they're thinking, 'How does Doc put up with this childish, petulant man?' ABERNATHY is angry with them and with himself. KING gets to his feet and starts taking his shirt off.*

**INT SHOWER DAY**  
*KING stands - head back, arms outspread - in the soothing waters of a shower.*

**INT                    HOTEL ROOM           DAY**

*KING, smartly dressed now, studies himself in the mirror for a moment, feeling a slight swelling on one side of his face. There's a knock at the door. At the sound, a change begins to come over KING as he stares at himself in the mirror: he straightens up, seems to grow an inch or two; an ironic smile, tinged with relief, spreads across his face; suddenly the smile becomes a grin.*

**KING**

Showtime!

**INT                    BROWN'S CHAPEL           DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of KING, now in a surplice, speaking from the pulpit of a large church packed with a MEETING of 700 people. We catch him in mid-flow, mid-throttle.*

**KING**

Now how is it that more than half the population of this city is black – and less than two percent of voting-age negroes have the vote! How is it that not one negro has been given the vote in Selma in the last ten years! One reason is those Registrars down there at the courthouse open their doors just *two days a month!* Now, at their present rate of business – and assuming those registrars approve *every application!* – to get everyone registered who should be registered would take a *hundred and three years!* (*cries of 'That's right!'*) But we don't have that long to wait!!

*JIMMIE Lee Jackson, a young man of radiant good nature, laughs and puts his arm round a white-haired old man, 83 year-old CAGER Lee.*

**JIMMIE**

No! My grandpappy waited over sixty years already!

*Laughter. Cries of, 'Too long! That's too long!'* Behind CAGER, tall and imposing, is ANNIE, gazing at KING with fierce approval. Alongside CAGER are his middle-aged daughter VIOLA, Jimmie's mother. Sitting next to JIMMIE is his friend CARL. Voices from the MEETING: 'Tell the story!', 'Make it plain!', 'Speak on it!'

**KING**

Now we can change this! But we got to be prepared to march! And we got to be prepared to go to jail! For one night, two nights – we got good lawyers! – but no-one's telling you going to jail even for one night is fun. And we have to go to jail by the thousands! Again and again. But if we do that then the whole of America will hear our cry: *Give us the vote!*

**MEETING**

(*loud*) Give us the vote!

**KING**

*Give us the vote!*

MEETING

*(louder) Give us the vote!*

KING

*We're not asking, we're demanding! Give us the vote!*

MEETING

*(very loud) Give us the vote!*

KING

*Give us the vote!*

MEETING

*(taking the roof off) GIVE US THE VOTE!!*

*The MEETING bursts into 'Eyes On the Prize' - linking arms as they sing. JIMMIE links his arm with CARL. JIMMIE is inspired; CARL looks at him with concern. He looks up at KING. CLOSE-UP of KING: we catch him dispassionately assessing the mood of the Meeting.*

**INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL SIDE-ROOM                      EVENING**

*With the sound of the MEETING singing 'Eyes On The Prize' in the background, KING, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and BEVEL enter the room.*

KING

*(to Abernathy) How was I?*

ABERNATHY

*(judiciously) Average.*

BEVEL

*Yeah? Well listen to that! They're ready.*

KING

*Ready to march?*

BEVEL

*Oh yeah! And go to jail!*

**EXT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL                      EVENING**

*The MEETING walks out into the darkening streets, talking excitedly, many looking inspired. But there's a small group of young men and women, STUDENT ACTIVISTS, standing to one side, watching, with doubt and concern. Their leaders are James FORMAN and John LEWIS – two men in their late twenties, leaders of a student civil*

*rights organisation (Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee) which regards King's organisation as a conservative personality-cult.*

**INT                      BROWN CHAPEL BACK ROOM                      NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: tired and depressed. KING and his TEAM - twenty-odd people - are having a strategy meeting in a room at the back of the church. In addition to ABERNATHY, YOUNG and BEVEL there's an aggressive new face, Hoseah WILLIAMS – middle-aged, a senior figure in the movement. There are white LAWYERS and ADVISORS, and some STUDENT ACTIVISTS, including James FORMAN and John LEWIS. FORMAN is a firebrand; LEWIS is more measured.*

**FORMAN**

*Yes we wanna help – yes we'll bring our people in - from all over the South if necessary - but we're just asking for some kind of commitment.*

**LEWIS**

*Look all we're saying is our organisation has had people working on voter registration in Alabama for two years . . .*

**WILLIAMS**

*You aint got very far have you?*

**LEWIS**

*Maybe not. But least we're still here!*

**WILLIAMS**

*Meaning what?*

**FORMAN**

*This time next month you might *not* be!*

**WILLIAMS**

*That's outrageous!*

**FORMAN**

*'Meaning' like you left Albany. Those people *pathetic* down there now. Like their *Daddy* left home!*

**ABERNATHY**

*You know what? I think we should leave Selma now, leave it to these boys, come back in another two years see how much further they got!*

*ABERNATHY's double-edged attack is the last straw for KING.*

**KING**

(a sudden, powerful anger) That's *enough!* Enough of this now! I haven't the time for this - *none* of us got the time for this!

*The room is instantly silent. ABERNATHY is particularly shocked. KING stares at ABERNATHY for a moment then gets to his feet. He paces up and down as he talks - ostensibly to FORMAN and LEWIS. But he's also talking to himself, urgently shoring up his self-doubt, as well as putting Abernathy back in his box.*

KING

John. James. The way our organisation works is simple: we set up a confrontation - and wait for our adversary to make a mistake. We were in Albany for *nine months!* But Sheriff Laurie Pritchett *never made a mistake!* Kept his cool, kept arresting us in a humane way, carried people to the jail-wagons on stretchers. Day in day out. There was *no drama*.

FORMAN

(*disparagingly*) You mean there was no cameras.

KING

Exactly! Now I *know*, we all understand, you boys believe in working in the community, long-term, raising black consciousness. I can't tell you how much I admire that! But what *we* do primarily is raise *white* consciousness! In particular the consciousness of whichever white man happens to be sitting in the Oval Office. Kennedy ignored us in Albany - because he could - because the press and the TV ignored us. And right now Johnson has other fish to fry and he'll ignore us, too - if he can. The only way to stop him doing that is by being on the *front page* of national press every morning and on the TV news every night. And *that . . .* requires *drama!* (*pause*) Now, John, James, answer me one question. I've been told the Sheriff in this town aint like Laurie Pritchett in Albany - he's like Bull Connor in Birmingham. You tell me. You know Selma, you know Clark. Is he Laurie Pritchett? Or is he Bull Connor? (*pause*) Which is it?

*A moment between LEWIS and FORMAN - before LEWIS gives a nod of acceptance.*

LEWIS

He's Bull Connor.

*A brief, intense silence.*

KING

Good. Okay.

EXT

STREETS

DAY

*KING, ABERNATHY and BEVEL lead MARCHERS through the streets. FORMAN, LEWIS and other STUDENT ACTIVISTS are just behind them.*

KING (VO)

But there's also an important difference. Clark doesn't control the streets like Connor did. Clark's the County Sheriff and all Clark controls in Selma is the County Courthouse.

*There are POLICEMEN along the route, most of them hostile and resentful - but disciplined. A police car slows alongside KING. BAKER leans out of the window.*

KING (VO)

Baker controls the streets. And while I don't doubt Chief Baker is a card-carrying segregationist he's also a dedicated by-the-book lawman.

BAKER

Doctor King, I suggest you walk in pairs, clearly separated.

KING

Why is that, Chief?

BAKER

Otherwise I will enforce the injunction against street-gatherings of three people or more.

*BAKER's car moves off.*

**EXT            STREET            DAY**

*The MARCHERS are now walking in widely spaced pairs.*

KING (VO)

So we have, relatively speaking, safe avenues of approach to a clearly-defined battle-zone -

*From KING'S POV we pick out a building in the distance.*

KING (VO)

- the County Courthouse, containing the single heart of the matter: the voter registration office. Now *this* . . . is an exceptional circumstance. In Albany there was no clearly-defined battle-zone. The issue was segregation and segregation was everywhere. In Selma, we can concentrate all our action on one small building. A citadel -

**EXT            COURTHOUSE    DAY**

*We see in big CLOSE-UP the single word 'NEVER!' on a lapel badge.*

KING (VO)

- defended by fanatics.

*We PULL BACK to see the lapel badge is worn by someone impersonating General Patton. In fact the large man in the white combat helmet, tight-fitting military-style uniform, wearing a six-shooter and carrying a club, is Sheriff Jim CLARK - dressed for war. CLARK is standing at the top of the courthouse steps. Below him, at the foot of the steps, is a line of DEPUTIES, carrying guns and clubs.*

KING (VO)

Selma County Courthouse is the perfect stage-set.

*Across the street stands a group of POSSEMEN. These are licensed vigilantes. A motley crew, the POSSEMEN's dress ranges from blue-collar working clothes to cowboy outfits, bearing nothing more official to identify them than a crudely made pin-badge stating 'Sheriff's Posse'. But they are even more heavily-armed than the DEPUTIES and carry a strikingly varied assortment of side-arms, home-made clubs and electric cattle-prods. To jeers and abuse from RACIST ONLOOKERS, KING and the MARCHERS line up at the foot of the courthouse steps. KING looks up at CLARK.*

KING (VO)

And with luck, sooner or later, Jim Clark will give us the perfect drama.

*CLOSE-UP of CLARK: a mask of outrage and aggression. The POSSEMEN eye with fierce hostility a group of JOURNALISTS, slowly walking around in a circle in single file, watched and protected, reluctantly, by four of Baker's POLICEMEN.*

JOURNALIST 1

Mr Baker how do you justify this?

*BAKER turns, deadpan.*

BAKER

I'm enforcing the law against loitering, walking on the grass, blocking the sidewalk and illegal assembly. And you're observing it. Thank-you gentlemen.

*From a bunch of jeering, white RACIST ONLOOKERS across the street, two YOUNG REDNECKS walk across the road, stop in front of a tall elegant woman, AMELIA Boynton, spit on her, and march off. AMELIA takes out a handkerchief and wipes the saliva from her coat.*

KING

Sheriff! That was a disgraceful and illegal act!

CLARK

You're right!

*CLARK turns to the DEPUTIES.*

CLARK

I want you to keep an eye out for those boys! Next thing you know they'll be spitting on the sidewalk!

*The DEPUTIES guffaw. CLARK turns back and sees AMELIA Boynton staring at him with fearless contempt. There's a long eyeballing moment between them.*

CLARK

You all deliberately causing an obstruction! If you don't disperse you'll be arrested!

KING

Sheriff Clark, all we're trying to do is gain access to the registration office. Which is our legal right.

CLARK

There's too many of you and you know damn well there's too many of you! You're going to have to wait at the rear.

KING

No, Sheriff! We're going in the front way, and we're going to wait right here.

*CLARK comes down the steps and starts pushing and prodding a few of the leading MARCHERS – and, in particular, AMELIA Boynton - along the sidewalk.*

CLARK

You wanna wait, you wait in the yard!

*He's a big man and for a few moments he has the small group of MARCHERS stumbling towards a side-alley. AMELIA breaks out of the group and heads back the other way. CLARK holds out his club, checking her.*

CLARK

Where in hell you think you're going?

*AMELIA gives CLARK a look of utter disdain, steps around the club, and strides imperiously back towards the main group. Suddenly, it's like someone has lit the blue touchpaper.*

CLARK

Okay lady I'll show you where you're going!!

*CLARK seizes AMELIA her by the collar of her coat.*

CLARK

You're under arrest!

*CLARK starts marching AMELIA, stumbling and twisting helplessly in his powerful grip, up the courthouse steps. As the JOURNALISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS surge forward, the POSSEMEN move in quickly to hold them in check. CLARK thrusts AMELIA inside the courthouse, then turns and yells from the top of the steps.*

CLARK

Clear the sidewalk!!

*The DEPUTIES move in on the MARCHERS, clubs raised, hoping for resistance, but are confounded by an orderly process: the majority of MARCHERS move quickly away while two hundred VOLUNTEER-ARRESTEES, including BEVEL, sit on the ground with their hands over their heads.*

**EXT                    MONTGOMERY                    DAY**

*The centre of Montgomery. Sunny and pleasant. The buildings display civic pride. We look up at the imposing state capitol – and CLOSE on a figure in a third-floor window.*

**INT                    WALLACE'S OFFICE                    DAY**

*Governor George WALLACE – short, dark, intense, stocky - stands by the window in his office, smoking hard.*

WALLACE

They just jailed two hundred nigra agitators in Selma.

LINGO (OFF-CAMERA)

Two hundred and some.

*WALLACE turns away from the window, to face two men: Colonel Al LINGO, the commander of the Alabama State Troopers, and his deputy, Major John CLOUD. They're both in uniform, both in their forties. CLOUD looks rather bookish. LINGO is lean and cold.*

WALLACE

I have a fuckin nightmare. You know what it is?

LINGO

No, Governor. What is your nightmare?

WALLACE

My nightmare is: I'm standing at this window, watching thousands of nigras, right out there, demonstrating in the state capital - and listening to Martin Luther King demanding we give them nigras the vote. And then I go home and it's on national fuckin TV that night!

*WALLACE walks to the ashtray on his desk and obliterates his cigarette.*

WALLACE

Selma is too fuckin close to Montgomery and while that black agitatin' sonofabitch is just a few miles down the interstate my nightmare could come true any fuckin day they don't get this thing under control in Selma and fast!

*WALLACE ponders and frets for a moment.*

WALLACE

I want the Selma authorities to treat King with *kid gloves*! Like they did in Albany! And pretty soon the whole damn circus will just leave town!

*WALLACE fails to notice LINGO and CLOUD glance at each other, sharing an amused scepticism. There's something sinister and conspiratorial about these two.*

WALLACE

Meanwhile the State Troopers my Imperial Guard. King makes one fuckin move out of Selma, in this direction, you boys better be ready.

LINGO

Oh we'll be ready, Governor. We'll be ready.

**INT            COURTHOUSE    NIGHT**

*CLARK is holding a press conference.*

REPORTER

How many people you arrest today, Sheriff?

CLARK

Two hundred and three.

REPORTER

Sheriff what's the name of the woman you personally arrested?

CLARK

She's a well-known local agitator called Amelia Boynton.

REPORTER

Is she a Miss or a Mrs?

CLARK

Son she's a nigger woman.

*The REPORTER raises his eyebrows at a BLACK JOURNALIST, with amused incredulity.*

BLACK JOURNALIST

Sheriff. Why do you hate black people?

*Absolute silence. A long moment between CLARK and the BLACK JOURNALIST.*

CLARK

*(with some patience and sincerity)* Son what you gotta understand is that folks in these parts believe it stands to reason the white man and the black man aint never gonna be able to live together. That don't happen *nowhere!* But we got a lot more blacks to whites than you got up where you come from. Racial equality down here gonna lead to mongrelisation. Now we all don't want that down here. But that don't mean we hate black people. We don't. What we hate is agitators and trouble-makers causing fear and disturbance. White people from the North coming down here tellin' *us* what's right and what's wrong, tellin' *us* how we should live different to the way we wanna live and always have lived.

JOURNALIST

Is that why your deputy shot those two white priests?

CLARK

Tom Coleman shot those men because he believed they were gonna attack him and rob his Daddy's store.

JOURNALIST

*You* believe that, Sheriff?

CLARK

One of my boys tells me something I believe it. And sure as hell the court in Montgomery believed it. But now to your answer *your* question, son . . .

*Another moment between CLARK and the BLACK JOURNALIST.*

CLARK

. . . way I see it, the white man is the nigger's friend . . . long as the nigger knows his place.

INT                      CELL                      NIGHT

*BEVEL, standing alone and naked in a cell, shaking with cold.*

**INT            JAIL            NIGHT**

*AMELIA Boynton stands shivering, bunched together against the cold with a group of women MARCHERS in a large cell, next to a door deliberately left open to the cold night air. A MARCHER, deeply embarrassed, close to tears, suddenly hitches up her skirt and squats down.*

**MARCHER**

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

**INT            CELL            NIGHT**

*Two DEPUTIES haul a fire-hose through a door – and towards the cell containing BEVEL, naked, shivering. He shows no fear but he's grim. He knows what's coming.*

**BEVEL**

I got weak lungs and I got asthma. You do that I could die tonight.

**DEPUTY**

Well! That a fact?

*Water explodes from the hose. It takes both DEPUTIES to control it as BEVEL is battered into the corner of the cell. After a few seconds, the DEPUTIES shut the hose off and go, leaving BEVEL curled in a corner, racked with cold.*

**EXT            WASHINGTON            NIGHT**

*Rain and darkness. Coming towards us is an enormous black car.*

**INT            PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE    NIGHT**

*JOHNSON and a couple of AIDES – one of them Dick GOODWIN - are in the back of a presidential limousine being driven through Washington.*

**JOHNSON**

I'm beginning to lose sleep over some raggedy-ass little country in south-east Asia I don't know nothin' about and could care fuckin less. And now this King. Trying to raise a shit-storm on the home front.

**INT            PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE    NIGHT**

*JOHNSON looks out of the window.*

**JOHNSON**

I offered him money, influence and prestige. He didn't bat a fuckin eyelid.

**EXT            LINCOLN MONUMENT    NIGHT**

*The Lincoln Monument glows in the dark.*

**GOODWIN (VO)**

Isn't that called integrity, Mr President?

**INT                    PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE                    NIGHT**  
*JOHNSON grins at GOODWIN.*

**JOHNSON**  
Integrity my ass. He just don't want to be retired into statesmanship just yet. He's got his Nobel Prize but that aint what King's looking for. Success on the field of battle is what he's looking for. And King aint had a lot of success in the field lately. His glory days may be over. Which is *hard* when you're still a young man. That boy's gonna over-reach himself down there. He's gonna fail in Selma. I'm just hoping he don't killed down there. Start riots in every ghetto across America. Start a fuckin race war. *No-one's* gonna support my War on Poverty when the poor are lootin' and burnin' and shootin' at each other!

*JOHNSON looks out of the window, at:*

**EXT                    LINCOLN MONUMENT                    NIGHT**  
*Abe LINCOLN gazes down.*

**INT                    CELL                    DAY**  
*Early morning. A cell full of male MARCHERS in various postures of shivering stupor, utterly silent, each locked in his own suffering and endurance.*

**INT                    CELL                    DAY**  
*Early morning. AMELIA and the other women MARCHERS are huddled close together, arms around each other, comforting one another.*

**INT                    CELL                    DAY**  
*Morning. BEVEL is curled in the corner of the cell. A JAILER approaches, carrying Bevel's clothes. He pushes them through the bars.*

**JAILER**  
You must have a good white-nigger lawyer, boy. You're outa here. Hear me?

*He whacks the bars with his night stick.*

**JAILER**  
Get dressed, apeman!

*BEVEL doesn't stir.*

**INT                    HOSPITAL ROOM                    DAY**

*Two medical PORTERS carry BEVEL, unconscious on a stretcher, into the room. They are followed by a DOCTOR and two DEPUTIES. One of them is smoking, and carrying a set of leg-irons. BEVEL has been half-dressed in his own clothes. The PORTERS get BEVEL onto the bed and, as the DOCTOR starts to examine him, the DEPUTIES fit the leg-irons on BEVEL and shackle him to the bed.*

**INT                      HOSPITAL ROOM                      DAY**

*BEVEL is regaining consciousness, breathing with difficulty. The first thing he registers is KING, standing by the bed looking down at him. BEVEL smiles, tries to move - and becomes aware that he's shackled.*

BEVEL

What's up, Doc?

*KING smiles.*

BEVEL

We got a movement?

KING

Not yet.

*The DOCTOR comes in. He holds out his hand to KING. They shake.*

DOCTOR

It's an honour.

*The DOCTOR starts to examine BEVEL. He nods reassuringly.*

DOCTOR

Good. We're doing good. Heart of a lion.

KING

You registered to vote, doctor?

DOCTOR

No.

KING

You gonna march with us?

*The DOCTOR says nothing, just continues his examination.*

KING

We just announced another Freedom Day. Next week.

DOCTOR  
That 'freedom' day or 'lose your job' day'?

KING  
No. The second Freedom Day is 'make or break' day. And we need your support.

*The DOCTOR finishes his examination, then turns to King, smiling.*

DOCTOR  
Don't pick on me, brother. Black man in America got a good job he don't do civil rights. You know that.

*KING, struck by this remark, watches the DOCTOR as he walks to the door. CLOSE-UP of KING: thoughtful. CUT TO:*

INT SOUL-FOOD CAFÉ DAY  
*CLOSE-UP of KING: same thoughtful expression. KING is eating with YOUNG.*

KING  
If you could choose one group from the black middle-class to march which would it be?

YOUNG  
The teachers.

KING  
Why?

YOUNG  
They got numbers as well as status.

KING  
Yes! (*leaning forward*) And in a small town like this *everyone* will know the teachers personally. That's powerful. It turns our major weakness here – a small population of potential marchers – into a strength.

*Pause.*

KING  
Andy, we get the teachers out . . . *we got a movement.*

YOUNG  
What you gonna use? A bulldozer?

*Pause.*

KING

Something more forceful.

**EXT                    COURTHOUSE                    DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of a smiling SCHOOLKID, about 13. The SCHOOLKID is holding up a handwritten sign: 'JIM CLARK IS A PUSSY'. CUT TO a CLOSE-UP of CLARK, angered by the sign - but somehow smug. He's watching about a hundred feisty SCHOOLCHILDREN parade in front of the courthouse steps, singing 'Aint Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round'. Several of them are holding up signs: 'Jim Clark Is A Cracker', 'Wallace Must Go', 'Nobody's Gonna Turn Us Round', 'Give my Ma and Pa the Vote!' There's a line of POSSEMEN at the foot of the steps. A car pulls up across the road and KING gets out.*

JOURNALIST (OOV)

Doctor King! Doctor King! This your decision?!

*The JOURNALISTS have paused in their vaguely circular shambling, watched over by a couple of Baker's POLICEMEN. KING says nothing, just watches the SCHOOLCHILDREN. Then a Police Car pulls up and BAKER gets out.*

JOURNALIST 1

Hey, Chief! What do you think of this putting schoolchildren in the front line?

BAKER

*(thinly-veiled disgust)* No comment!

JOURNALIST 2

Doctor King, Governor Wallace says your approval of demonstrations by schoolchildren is cowardly and cynical. What do you say?

*He says nothing. But BAKER gives KING a look which tells us he agrees with Wallace. The view of the SCHOOLCHILDREN is abruptly obscured by the arrival of three school buses outside the courthouse. CLARK descends a few steps so he, too, is out of sight. CUT TO the other side of the buses, where the POSSEMEN split into two menacing groups, one at each end of the group of SCHOOLCHILDREN. The singing dies away as their sense of enclosure increases. CLARK is grining broadly now.*

SCHOOLKID

Sheriff, you gonna let us march or you gonna arrest us?

*CLARK and several of his DEPUTIES and POSSEMEN laugh.*

CLARK

We gonna let you march all you want - and then some. Okay! Move 'em out!

*The buses start up. The POSSEMEN, shielded from view by the buses, start shoving the SCHOOLCHILDREN along the pavement. BAKER and the JOURNALISTS can see little more than three buses, nose-to-tail, moving at walking pace. PHOTOGRAPHERS raise their cameras, wait for a shot to reveal itself, then lower them again, frustrated.*

JOURNALIST 1

What's happening? The kids on the buses?

*The reflection on the windows obscures the buses' interiors. BAKER and the JOURNALISTS stare in bemusement as the demonstration simply disappears along the street and around the corner. CLOSE-UP of KING: deep unease.*

**EXT                    SMALL BRIDGE                    DAY**

*The SCHOOLCHILDREN are herded across a wooden bridge on the edge of town.*

**EXT                    COUNTRY ROAD                    DAY**

*The SCHOOLCHILDREN run and stagger along a dirt road, being driven like cattle by the POSSEMEN: on horseback, cracking a whip; leaning out of cars and jolting kids with electric cattle prods; running alongside like military trainers, yelling: 'You wanted to march, so march! Close up! Close up!' The POSSEMEN are having the time of their lives.*

**EXT                    SMALL BRIDGE                    DAY**

*Sheriff's Department cars have blocked off the road at the narrow bridge. CLARK and some DEPUTIES lean against the cars, grinning as three car-loads of JOURNALISTS, BAKER and KING arrive almost simultaneously. They can see and hear the POSSEMEN and the SCHOOLCHILDREN in the distance.*

CLARK

*(to Baker)* I do believe your jurisdiction ends right here - Mister Baker.

*BAKER steps angrily up to CLARK, who gets to his feet. For a moment they look ready to fight.*

BAKER

*Sheriff. You are a disgrace to your office. (turning away from Clark and walking towards King) And you are worse! You know how irresponsible and dangerous these men are and you good as handed those children over to them!*

*When BAKER gets closer to KING he sees the pain and guilt in his eyes. A moment between them - before BAKER strides on towards his car. KING turns and sees ABERNATHY staring at him angrily and accusingly. KING looks wounded.*

**EXT                    COUNTRY ROAD                    DAY**

*The POSSEMEN stand around, passing beer to one another, weak with laughter. SCHOOLCHILDREN are lying in ditches, vomiting, weeping, staring into space, struggling for breath. Some, having broken away, lie in surrounding fields. Others are hiding, in a state of terror. CLARK arrives in a car, driven by the CHIEF DEPUTY. CLARK gets out and surveys the scene – with great satisfaction.*

**CLARK**

Yeah. So Jim Clark's a pussy is he?

**INT                    BROWN'S CHAPEL SIDE ROOM                    NIGHT**

*KING is alone with ABERNATHY. They're silent. KING is tense, grim. The door opens. It's BAKER. KING looks at him, fearing the worst.*

**BAKER**

Dr King, I thought I'd let you know . . . they're all back, all home. No serious injuries.

*KING sags back in his chair with relief. He looks at BAKER.*

**KING**

Thank-you.

*A moment between them.*

**BAKER**

But I meant what I said. That was one hell of a risk you took with those kids. You do that again and I will arrest you for endangering the lives of minors.

**KING**

I even think about doing it again I'll hand *myself* in. You have my word on it.

*A moment. BAKER nods, turns and goes.*

**ABERNATHY**

Well. Now you got us taking lessons in morality from southern white police chiefs.

*KING, sad and pained, stares at ABERNATHY for a moment. Then his look hardens.*

**KING**

Ralph, I think you should have shared the Nobel Prize, too.

*ABERNATHY winces, the breath literally taken out of him, by a blow that came out of nowhere.*

ABERNATHY

You do? Who else thinks that? Because *I* don't!

KING

Yes. You do, Ralph. And you're right! But there was nothing I could do about that. For you - or for me!

*CLOSE-UP of KING: angry, depressed, trapped. He shakes it off.*

KING

We *all* made a decision, Ralph. A majority decision. And now we're here, we cannot retreat. Not after St Augustine and Albany. It'll be three strikes and out. This movement will be finished! And even more important, more important than anything, the belief in *non-violent protest* will be finished! Then God help black people in America.

*Silence. A moment between them. Then KING smiles a sad, affectionate smile.*

KING

I need your support, Ralph. *(pause)* I always have done.

INT                      COURTHOUSE                      NIGHT

*CLARK is holding another press conference. He's grinning widely, enjoying the joke.*

CLARK

I arrested those kids for truancy and was in the process of escorting them to the Fraternal Order of Police lodge six miles out of town on River Road because all other confinement facilities in the area are full. And besides it aint right to confine children with adults. But those kids all broke loose and escaped. We tried to catch 'em but they was too fast for us.

*CLARK gets up and saunters towards the exit, where BAKER stands, watching Clark with contempt. As CLARK approaches BAKER, he sneers – and BAKER throws a punch which doesn't quite connect. The two men go for each other – and are quickly dragged apart. Before the amazed JOURNALISTS can react, BAKER shakes off his restrainers, turns and goes.*

INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL                      NIGHT

*A vociferous, angry MEETING is taking place. KING is in the pulpit. Several JOURNALISTS are present.*

KING

I am sending the following telegram to President Johnson:

**INT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAY**

*Early morning. JOHNSON is having breakfast alone, perusing the papers and reading correspondence. At this moment he's reading a telegram.*

**KING (VO)**

*'The children of Selma's black community are being terrorised by state-sponsored criminals. I demand you send federal law enforcement to protect them . . .'*

*JOHNSON glances down at a newspaper headline: 'Children Attacked By Alabama Lawmen - King Demands Federal Protection'.*

**INT                    CLASSROOM                    DAY**

*A TEACHER surveys his class. There are several empty places. A GIRL catches his eye. She gives him a reproachful, challenging look. The TEACHER looks troubled. As we move into a CLOSE-UP of the shame in his eyes, a sound emerges: a MILITARY TREAD.*

**INT                    STREET                    DAY**

*The sound of the MILITARY TREAD continues as we see in CLOSE-UP immaculately clad legs and feet marching with military precision.*

**EXT                    COURTHOUSE                    DAY**

*The sound of the MILITARY TREAD continues, louder. CLARK, his DEPUTIES and POSSEMEN stand outside the courthouse, looking into the distance. BAKER pulls up in his car and gets out near the JOURNALISTS, trudging round in a circle, surrounded by their reluctant bodyguards, Baker's POLICEMEN.*

**BAKER**

*(to the Policemen) They can stop that! Let 'em loiter!*

*CLARK looks into the distance. He seems strangely uneasy.*

*The JOURNALISTS, silent and still, crane their necks, like the POLICEMEN guarding them, to see what's approaching.*

*The MILITARY TREAD gets louder still - and the BLACK JOURNALIST suddenly breaks away from the other JOURNALISTS and sprints across the grass opposite the courthouse, towards a telephone booth. A couple of POSSEMEN start to go after him.*

**INT/EXT            TELEPHONE BOOTH            DAY**

*The sound of the MILITARY TREAD continues as the BLACK JOURNALIST gets inside the phone booth, fumbles for coins, dials and waits.*

**EXT                    STREET                    DAY**

*In CLOSE-UP: immaculately clad legs and feet march with military precision. We hear their rhythmic MILITARY TREAD - but louder now. CUT to the TEACHER - imposing, in Sunday best - marching at the front, leading about a hundred TEACHERS.*

**INT/EXT      TELEPHONE BOOTH      DAY**

*UNDER this scene, the sound of the MILITARY TREAD - as the JOURNALIST waits for the phone to be answered.*

**JOURNALIST**

Richard? Richard - ! Elmore! The *teachers!* The teachers are marching!  
First time in the history of the Civil Rights Movement – !

*He turns as the two POSSEMEN pull open the door of the booth.*

**POSSEMAN 1**

Who you phoning, nigger? Your big black momma?

*The BLACK JOURNALIST rams his foot against the door. He shouts gleefully at the POSSEMEN and into the phone at the same time.*

**BLACK JOURNALIST**

No you *imbecile* I'm phoning my editor and telling him to send me another nigger reporter and a nigger photographer so we can tell our eight hundred thousand nigger readers in Chicago and Detroit what's going down in your shitty little town!!

*The POSSEMEN force the door open enough for POSSEMAN 2 to punch the BLACK JOURNALIST in the mouth, knocking him to the floor. The POSSEMEN grab his legs and start pulling him out of the booth. The BLACK JOURNALIST, still exultant, turns his head and yells into the dangling handset.*

**BLACK JOURNALIST**

Send more niggers, brother! We got a *movement* going on in Selma!

**INT              MEN'S JAIL              DAY**

*A black CONVICT, immersed in Melville's 'Moby Dick', looks up, disturbed by a noise: two PRISON GUARDS push a group of immaculately turned out TEACHERS into a cell opposite. The CONVICT and his CELLMATE look bemused.*

**CONVICT**

Hey! Mr Stevenson! Mr Stevenson, that you?

**TEACHER**

Hello Wilson. How are you?

**CONVICT**

I'm okay, Mr Stevenson! 'Cept I'm in here. Miscarriage of justice.

TEACHER

That's what I assumed, Wilson.

CONVICT

*(the whole cell-block)* Hey this man was my teacher! And a damn good one, too!

CELLMATE

*(at one of the Guards)* Hey Leroy! Now's the chance for you and your white-trash buddies learn to read and write!

GUARD

*(riled)* Shut your mouth, nigger!

*Raucous, gleeful laughter from INMATES throughout the CELLBLOCK.*

**INT                      WOMEN'S JAIL                      DAY**

*Wild applause from MARCHERS in packed cells as POLICE lead in a group of women TEACHERS brandishing toothbrushes and radiant with pride.*

**INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL                      NIGHT**

*A packed MEETING sings with enormous power and joy. KING, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and BEVEL are on the platform, singing with gusto. The camera moves through the MEETING, picking out familiar faces like CAGER, VIOLA, JIMMIE, ANNIE and CARL, everyone euphoric with fellowship and achievement. In CLOSE-UP: ABERNATHY turns to KING. A moment between them. ABERNATHY smiles.*

ABERNATHY

Congratulations, Doc.

*KING gives one of his million magawatt smiles, gives ABERNATHY's arm a little squeeze of gratitude, then turns back towards the MEETING, ripping into 'Aint Gonna Let No-one Turn Me Round'.*

**INT                      SHERIFF'S OFFICE                      NIGHT**

*A CLEANING LADY pauses as she walks across a deserted office towards a half-opened door. She's intrigued by the sound coming from the other side of the door: the Meeting singing 'Aint Gonna Let No-One Turn Me Round'. She walks forward and opens the door, to reveal CLARK and a DEPUTY sitting in a little room, listening to a speaker which is relaying voices from Brown's Chapel.*

*CLARK turns, sees the CLEANING LADY and quickly switches off the speaker.*

DEPUTY

Not now! Not in here!

*The DEPUTY closes the door in the CLEANING LADY's face. CUT TO: the CLEANING LADY staring at the door that's just been shut in her face.*

**INT WALLACE'S KITCHEN NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of MRS WALLACE, attractive, well-groomed, bored, flicking through a magazine, irritated by her husband's preoccupation. CLOSE-UP of WALLACE: depression. WALLACE is standing in a large, expensive kitchen, holding a freshly-poured whisky on ice, staring at MRS WALLACE, his somewhat trophy-ish wife.*

MRS WALLACE

George what is the matter with you? I don't get it. A few teachers been arrested. So what?

*WALLACE closes his eyes and shakes his head.*

WALLACE

Honey, aint I never taught you nothin' about politics? When you get the middle-classes on the streets – don't matter they're black, yellow, pink or fuckin purple! - you got a revolution on your hands! That's so fuckin what!

**INT BROWN'S CHAPEL BACK ROOM/KING HOME NIGHT**

*KING is on the phone to CORETTA. We INTERCUT to follow the conversation.*

KING

You okay?

CORETTA

Yes. I'm okay.

KING

I'm missing you. You missing me?

CORETTA

Yes.

KING

The kids okay?

CORETTA

Yes.

KING

I'm missing them. They missing me?

CORETTA

No, honey.

KING

What you mean, 'No'?

CORETTA

I mean, 'Yes'. But they're fine. They're fine.

*Pause.*

KING

The teachers marched today.

CORETTA

The teachers . . . ! That's . . . wonderful, Martin.

KING

Yes. It's great. *(pause)* I think maybe there's enough momentum here now I could sneak home for a couple of days.

*Pause.*

CORETTA

No, Martin. Not yet. We're fine.

*CLOSE-UP of KING: he knows she's telling him what she knows he needs to hear – and he accepts it gratefully if guiltily. CLOSE-UP of CORETTA: she knows exactly what's going on in her husband's mind.*

CORETTA

Keep them marching, Martin. Make sure none of those glory-seekers like Hoseah Williams do anything stupid. And any day now the press and the TV will climb on the bandwagon – and Lyndon Johnson will have to take notice of what you're doing down there.

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of J Edgar HOOVER - an ageing reptile. HOOVER stands in front of JOHNSON, who lounges behind his desk, watched from the sidelines by GODWIN and an AIDE.*

JOHNSON

What's the FBI's current information regarding King?

HOOVER

*(pathological hatred)* My information on King can be summed up in a few words: King is a political and moral degenerate.

*Silence. They all know HOOVER is crazy.*

JOHNSON

J Edgar *you* say that, that's something I have to take very seriously. But whether King writes love-letters to Kruschew or whether he'd like to drop an atomic bomb on Moscow, I can't be sure. And whether he has a gargantuan appetite for pussy or whether he just sometimes needs the distraction of a woman's touch when he's away from home working and fearing for his life twenty-five days a month, again I don't really know. But assuming King's a degenerate, what I *do* know is: he's a *non-violent* degenerate. *(pause)* And I want *him* to go on leading the civil rights movement - *not* one of the militants. So what I need to know right now J Edgar, is this: is King about to be killed?

HOOVER

I have no information to indicate a current threat.

JOHNSON

Good. Good. I sleep a lot easier knowing the FBI is looking out for that man's life.

*The silence between JOHNSON, GOODWIN and the AIDE is heavy with irony.*

HOOVER

Is that all, Mr President?

JOHNSON

Yes. Thank-you, Mister Director.

*HOOVER goes.*

AIDE

He's senile.

GOODWIN

As well as crazy. It ever occur to anyone *he* might kill King?

JOHNSON

It has. God knows he's powerful enough - those Kennedy boys were terrified of him! - but Hoover's a career bureaucrat to the marrow. He'd never risk a thing like that.

GOODWIN

You could make sure – by retiring the old bastard.

JOHNSON

Dick, seventy-three percent of Americans think J Edgar Hoover and the FBI is all that stands between them and Satan. For now I need him inside the tent pissing out, not outside pissing in.

*JOHNSON looks at a newspaper on his desk. The headline reads: 'KING MOBILISES MIDDLE-CLASS BLACKS IN SELMA – MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH FOR CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT'. JOHNSON thinks a moment.*

JOHNSON

I'd better fix me another meeting with King. And this time I better have something to offer him.

**EXT                      WASHINGTON HOTEL                      NIGHT**

*The view tells us this upmarket hotel is in Washington.*

**INT                      HOTEL RECEPTION                      NIGHT**

*KING is alone, booking into the hotel. An attractive, well-dressed YOUNG WOMAN of mixed race, eyes KING from across the lobby.*

**INT                      HOTEL ELEVATOR                      NIGHT**

*KING steps into the elevator. The YOUNG WOMAN is right behind him. KING takes no notice of her. Just as the doors are about to close, two unpleasant-looking HEAVY-SET MEN enter. The YOUNG WOMAN watches the HEAVY-SET MEN as they stare at KING, and as one of them reaches inside his jacket – and takes out a gun. KING steps back in fear. The MAN stares menacingly at KING, then puts the gun away and turns to his companion, grinning.*

HEAVY-SET MAN

Wasn't sure I put the safety-catch on. Don't want no accidents now.

*The lift stops and the HEAVY-SET MEN get out, chortling. 'See that nigger's face?' The doors close and the lift goes on up. Now KING looks at the YOUNG WOMAN for the first time, embarrassed at showing so much fear. She smiles.*

YOUNG WOMAN

You look like you need some tender loving care, honey.

KING

*(a compliment)* You're way out of my price bracket.

*Her smile broadens. A moment.*

YOUNG WOMAN

I'll donate part of my fee to the cause.

**INT HOTEL ROOM 1 NIGHT**

*The two HEAVY-SET MEN are sitting at a table, wearing headphones, with a tape-recorder between them. They're listening to two people having sex.*

**INT HOTEL ROOM 2 NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: profound relief. KING is in bed with the YOUNG WOMAN. Her name is DELLA. KING lies on his back and stares at the ceiling – relief beginning to struggle against guilt.*

DELLA

What is that?

*KING focuses. DELLA is pointing at a scar on King's chest.*

KING

I was doing a book-signing in a Harlem bookstore.

DELLA

A book-signing . . . ?

KING

It's a promotional thing. To sell books. The author comes to a bookstore on a certain day and anybody buys a copy of his book he'll sign it.

DELLA

So you wrote a book.

KING

Yes.

DELLA

Okay . . .

KING

*(warming, slightly teasing)* I'm sitting there signing books, I look up to see who's next, wham! this woman sticks a seven-inch Japanese blade in my chest.

DELLA

You're kidding!

KING

Right alongside my main artery.

DELLA

You're *kidding*!

KING

No. I'm sitting there a half-hour waiting for the ambulance, looking at this knife sticking out of my chest like a handle on a saucepan and after a seven-hour operation they told me I'd just sneezed I'd been a dead man.

DELLA

*No!*

KING

Yes.

DELLA

But . . . But . . .

KING

What?

DELLA

I don't understand . . .

KING

Understand what?

DELLA

Well . . . why didn't she just ask for her money back?

*She seems serious. KING looks at her. Then she starts to giggle. It's not that funny – but somehow it quickly becomes hilarious. Soon they're both laughing delightedly.*

**INT                      HOTEL ROOM                      NIGHT**

*The HEAVY-SET MEN grin at each other.*

MAN 1

That's funny . . .

MAN 2

Yeah. J Edgar's gonna be all cracked up.

**INT                      HOTEL ROOM                      NIGHT**

*KING and DELLA stop laughing. He stares at the ceiling, his smile fading. She watches him.*

DELLA

Honey . . . you tired of all this.

KING

Oh yeah.

DELLA

Then why don't you just go home? Be with your wife and your kids. Write another book. They already gave you the prize for being the bravest, wisest man on the planet. What else you got to prove?

KING

That they were right.

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*PULL BACK from the Johnson/King photo, back on the wall of the Oval Office, to reveal KING, listening to JOHNSON. They're face-to-face across the coffee-table. KING looks grim, staring up into JOHNSON's face with unwavering intensity. JOHNSON is leaning into KING, imposing his great physical presence, half an embrace, half a threat – but smiling all the time, exuding overwhelming confidence. KING is about to get the 'Johnson treatment'.*

JOHNSON

Martin. In a few days time you'll be a guest of honour at my Inauguration. Don't seem possible. Just fifteen months ago I was being sworn-in on Airforce One, Jackie Kenedy standing next to me, her husband's blood still on her jacket. Just *four days* later - and you can imagine how terrible those four days were in this place – but four days later I sat old Richard Russell, my mentor, the best and wisest friend I ever had in politics, the most powerful man in the Senate, I sat him right there where you're sitting now and I told him, 'Dick, I'm gonna be the President who finishes Lincoln's work.' Dick looks at me like I've lost my mind. He says, 'Lyndon, my boy, where I come from folks think Lincoln's work gone far enough. And I know how badly you want to be an elected President. You gotta go to the country in less than a year! You do this and it'll cost you the South and cost you the election!' We both knew he was probably right. He says, 'Lyndon. Why you doing this? Why all of a sudden you coming out strong for the negroes?' And I said, 'Because I'm "Free at last! Thank God almighty! Free at last!" I may only be a caretaker President, and only for a year, but I have the freedom and I have the power and I'm gonna use 'em best way I know how. I'm gonna end segregation in the United States!' Just *six months* later I signed the '64 Civil Rights Act. Now I know you know that 'cos you was there at my side. But my point, Martin, is this: getting that bill through Congress without a single change or compromise was the crowning achievement of my political life.

KING

*(sincerely)* No-one else could have done it, Mister President.

JOHNSON

Damn right! Because I spent thirty years on the hill and no-one knows it like I do! But I rode people hard day and night, called in every favour I was ever owed and a shitload I never was. Way I drove that bill through, lot of people on the hill just getting up off the ground with tyre-tracks all over their seersucker suits! They already getting' real upset at the *idea* I might go back this soon and ask for more civil rights. You know what I'm saying, Martin? *It just is not in the realms of the politically possible.* Now! What really quivers my ass is this: every political instinct I got tells me you go around agitatin' for the vote when the ink's still wet on the '64 Act, Congress is gonna dig its heels in the dirt and say, 'Whoa now hold on! This is going too far too fast. To hell with Martin Luther King and his agitators. And to hell with Johnson and his Great Society programme. To hell with his War on Poverty!' And then - and *then* what they gonna say is this!: 'Let's just cut taxes - and we *all* gonna be richer!' *(pause)* I'm telling you Martin. Push too hard now and you could lose everything. We *both* could!

*KING doesn't move for a few moments – then offers a few concessionary nods.*

*JOHNSON thinks he has his man. Who could resist? After a few moments, JOHNSON reaches across and puts a hand on KING's arm, like a father to a son.*

JOHNSON

Now. What I'm proposing is this. I announce a special commission to investigate electoral abuses in the South, stating specifically it's being set up in response to the Selma campaign, and you respond by declaring the Selma campaign a major victory – which is exactly what it would be! – and announcing its conclusion. *(pause, smiles)* Then I still want you come to Washington. Use your prestige and influence to the full - in a place of power and decision-making! You done your time on the streets, Martin!

*A long moment. KING smiles gratefully. JOHNSON starts to grin hugely.*

JOHNSON

And remember, Martin, you say 'No' I'm gonna be dancing with Mrs King at the Inaugural Ball. You think she's gonna be happy when I tell her what her husband turned down?

*KING grins back.*

KING

That's a very persuasive argument and a very generous proposal, Mister President.

*JOHNSON smiles - in anticipation of KING's acceptance.*

KING

And I'm grateful.

*JOHNSON is about to get up and shake on it.*

KING

But . . . neither the argument nor the offer is one I could accept.

*JOHNSON is deeply disappointed – a little hurt, even. Then he's angry.*

JOHNSON

Why in hell's name not?

KING

Because I promised those people in Selma I'd help them get the vote. And I'm not going to leave there 'til they got it.

*One look into KING's eyes and JOHNSON knows it's final.*

**INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL, BACK ROOM                      NIGHT**

*KING, YOUNG, ABERNATHY and a white PRESS AGENT are trawling the newspapers.*

ABERNATHY

Three days after the teachers and we're almost invisible again.

PRESS AGENT

You should announce another Freedom Day immediately.

*KING's eyes rest on a front page – and the headline 'JOHNSON INAUGURATION BREAKS DOWN COLOR BAR'.*

KING

One week from now.

YOUNG

One week from now you're at the Inauguration.

KING

Joe, you think the papers would like the headline, 'King Snubs President - To Lead March In Selma'?

*The PRESS AGENT's face lights up.*

ABERNATHY

You can't do that. Johnson's only human, Martin.

YOUNG

He's right. You can't risk permanently alienating the President of the United States.

**INT**

**WHITE HOUSE**

**DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of an outraged JOHNSON. He slams a newspaper onto his desk.*

JOHNSON

Fuck that ungrateful black motherfucker!

*The front-page headline on the newspaper is 'King Snubs President'. JOHNSON glares at GOODWIN – who grins.*

GOODWIN

Mr President, you're talking about the grandest moral figure of our age.

JOHNSON

Oh yeah? I bust my balls to make my inauguration the most integrated event in Washington history! - and King's grand moral gesture? *This!*

*JOHNSON displays his middle finger.*

JOHNSON

I already knew one thing about King: he's smart. Now I know two more things! One, *you* should be *his* fuckin' speechwriter! Two: I have totally underestimated him – for the simple reason no-one told me!: under that saintly exterior is a shit-kickin' bare-knuckle *prize-fighter!*

**EXT**

**COURTHOUSE DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: the hard stare of a prize-fighter. CLOSE-UP of CLARK: his anger and frustration at a new pitch. He and KING stare at each other for a long moment. Then CLARK starts moving along a line of MARCHERS outside the courthouse, jabbing people with his stick, elbowing and shoving them against the wall. He comes to old CAGER, his daughter VIOLA, grandson JIMMIE and Jimmie's friend CARL.*

CLARK

Keep the sidewalk clear! Get over there! You! Over against the wall! Get flat against that wall! Closer!

JIMMIE

Sheriff you asking him to walk through walls! He can't do that!

CLARK

Then he better learn!

*CLARK shoves CAGER, hard, and he falls against ANNIE. She stumbles and her head hits the wall – CLOSE-UP of ANNIE, hurt and angry - but CLARK doesn't register this; he's now focused on JIMMIE who has stepped between CLARK and CAGER. CLARK pushes his stick into JIMMIE's chest.*

CLARK

Well what we got here? I don't believe it. A nigger with balls?

*JIMMIE stares at CLARK.*

CAGER

Son, no! He really aint worth it.

CARL

He's right, Jimmie.

*CLARK jabs JIMMIE.*

CLARK

So what you think, boy?

*CLARK jabs him again. JIMMIE suddenly starts to tremble. CLARK sneers and gives JIMMIE another sharp prod.*

CLARK

Come on, boy. I'm worth it.

*JIMMIE stops trembling, straightens up and looks at CLARK, who grins a genuine grin of encouragement.*

CLARK

That's it, boy. Now that's better aint it?

CAGER

No . . .

*CARL grabs hold of JIMMIE.*

CARL

No! What's the point? Unless you can kill this white pig!

*For a moment, CLARK is stunned by Carl's words. Jaw-dropped. Then comes blind rage. He raises his club to strike CARL, when – bang! – CLARK is knocked sideways. ANNIE has stepped off the wall and punched him. The punch connects with surprising force, catching CLARK under the eye and knocking him down, his helmet clattering loose onto the road. KING, the JOURNALISTS, BAKER, the DEPUTIES and MARCHERS alike, all watch in amazed silence as CLARK gets to his knees – and ANNIE steps forward and cracks him again. CLARK falls onto his side and ANNIE moves in for another blow, but two DEPUTIES are behind her now, dragging her off. ANNIE stamps on a foot, rams her elbow into a stomach and breaks loose. CLARK looks up in disbelief, too late to avoid ANNIE's fist as she hits him a third time. The two DEPUTIES, supported by a third, grab ANNIE and wrestle her to the ground. CLARK, still on his knees, strikes at her head with his club, but ANNIE parries the blow, seizing hold of the stick. The DEPUTIES struggle to hold ANNIE down while she and CLARK struggle over the club. CLARK straddles ANNIE, wrenches the club free and brings it down on ANNIE's head. The image FREEZES momentarily in a camera-flash. Then there's a fusillade of flash-bulbs as PHOTOGRAPHERS surge forward.*

*CLOSE-UP of KING: disgust rapidly becoming calculation as CLARK and the DEPUTIES handcuff ANNIE, drag her to her feet and haul her away, photographed every inch of the way. He turns to FORMAN and LEWIS.*

KING

I think our adversary just made a mistake.

**EXT/INT WASHINGTON/BOYNTON HOUSE DAY/NIGHT**  
*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON, smiling, in a FULL-SCREEN, BLACK-AND-WHITE TELEVISION PICTURE showing Lyndon JOHNSON's Inauguration. Operatic soprano LEONTYNE PRICE is singing 'America The Beautiful'.*

ABERNATHY (VO)

More niggers at this Inauguration than you can shake a stick at.

*We pull back to reveal KING, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and WILLIAMS sitting around in Amelia Boynton's living room, eating, drinking coffee, and watching the Inauguration on television. AMELIA watches from the door into the kitchen.*

YOUNG

Those good ol' boys must be starting to hate Johnson. They gotta be asking themselves: could there be a black President in their lifetimes?

AMELIA

Well you're eating chicken with him! This man gonna be President of the United States before he's got a grey hair in his head!

KING

Yeah. And I'm telling you now: there's only gonna be one goddam nigger at my Inauguration!

*Laughter – becoming silent admiration as the soaring voice of Leontyne Price rises over the scene, singing 'America the Beautiful' – which slowly gives way to another sound: the rhythmic thunder of a large printing press.*

**INT                      PRINT ROOM                      NIGHT**

*The image of Clark striking Annie is now a flickering PHOTO - on newspaper front pages hurtling through a printing press.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAWN**

*We see the CLARK/ANNIE PHOTO on the front page of a newspaper - one of several being carried in a bundle along a corridor.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAWN**

*JOHNSON is eating breakfast, alone. An AIDE enters, carrying several newspapers.*

AIDE

Good morning, Mr President!

JOHNSON

Morning.

AIDE

Great day on Saturday, sir. Spectacular.

JOHNSON

Thank-you.

*The AIDE places the newspapers on the table and goes. As he eats, JOHNSON starts into the newspapers. He picks up 'The New York Times'. On the front page is the sensational photograph: CLARK astride ANNIE, holding his club in both hands and driving it down onto her head. JOHNSON flicks through a few more front pages. They all show the same photo. JOHNSON gives a groan of helpless frustration – and picks up the phone.*

**INT                      WALLACE'S OFFICE                      DAY**

*The CLARK/ANNIE PHOTO in CLOSE-UP. WALLACE is brandishing a newspaper at LINGO and CLOUD.*

WALLACE

King's just been summoned to the White House *again!* Which means Johnson's gettin' jumpy. Real pressure gonna be building on him to do something. And whatever Johnson does, I guarantee I am not gonna fuckin like it! Now! I can't be seen to make a single move against Clark 'cos it'll

be seen as I'm helping King! But *someone* in Selma's got to get Clark under control! He's got to start givin' them nigras access to the courthouse, let 'em fill in a few applications. It's that fuckin simple!

LINGO

Jim Clark just don't like to see niggers in his courthouse. It's *that* fuckin simple, George.

WALLACE

Jesus H Christ! This . . . what's his name? . . . Baker! The Chief of Police, what about him?

CLOUD

Jim Clark and Wilson Baker hate each other's guts. They got a turf war going on over there for two years now.

WALLACE

Jesus H Christ . . . Will Clark listen to you?

LINGO

Not a chance.

WALLACE

Goddamit Al, you telling me I gotta go down there and sweet-talk that crazy bastard myself?

LINGO

No, Governor. I'm telling you if the Lord Jesus and Elvis Presley came visiting and they said, 'Jim, we want you to treat them niggers nice', Jim Clark would beat the shit out the pair of 'em then throw 'em in jail.

WALLACE

Jesus H *Christ* . . . !

CLOUD

Problem is it's all like a game to Jim Clark. You know he's bugged the pulpit in the niggers' church?

WALLACE

Bugged the pulpit!? What's he done that for? It a public meeting! And they publicise every move they make in advance! That's the whole fuckin point!

LINGO

George. You mind if I make an observation?

WALLACE

Go ahead.

LINGO

The problem with Clark is not so much he hates niggers 'cos he don't, not really. He just can't stand anyone coming up against his authority. Who don't jump when he says, 'Jump!' They don't jump Jim Clark puts 'em in jail. But King's lawyers get 'em out in a day or so. Then they go home feeling good. They can tell their grandchildren they saw action. What Jim don't understand, this aint about authority - it's about *dominance*. Now we maintained dominance over our niggers in all kinds of ways but it all comes down to one thing: fear. Over a couple hundred years we got 'em *conditioned* - to *scare*. Now Jim Clark's a good old boy and a friend of mine - but Jim Clark . . . just aint that scary. Now, if you want fear - and you want *dominance* - in Selma . . . find a reason to send (*nods towards Cloud*) John and his boys in there.

*WALLACE looks at the cerebral-looking CLOUD. Is he scary? He looks at LINGO. Can he be right? Could it be that simple? Maybe it could.*

CLOUD

They just announced a night march. Tomorrow night.

*A thought strikes WALLACE.*

WALLACE

*King is out of town . . . there'll be a lot fewer cameras on the street . . .*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAY**

*Lyndon JOHNSON and Martin Luther KING are face-to-face across a small coffee-table in the Oval Office.*

JOHNSON

I've instructed the Attorney General to draw up voting rights legislation. He's working on it as we speak. You have my word it'll include everything you asked for. I'll make a formal announcement: that I will send a voting rights bill to Congress - within a year.

*Silence.*

JOHNSON

You've waited a couple hundred years, Martin - a hundred since the Emancipation. Give me just *one more year!* Then I'll get you the vote.

*KING stares at him unflinchingly for several moments.*

KING

Mr President . . . the '64 Act gave us some dignity. But while we're excluded from the democracy in which we live we have dignity without influence. Dignity without power.

JOHNSON

(weary) Ohhh *Martin!* You're talking to an ex-Vice President! I *know*: there aint no such *thing* as dignity without power! (pause) But I'm *offerin'* you power! I'm *guaranteein'* you power! All I ask in return is a little patience. And a little trust!

*KING glances at the wall. The photo of Johnson with King isn't there.*

KING

The problem is most of an entire people have put their trust in *me*. They want the vote; they want it now. I can't make decisions that deny their deepest wishes.

JOHNSON

Sometimes that's exactly what a *leader* does!

*Brief silence. JOHNSON senses an advantage.*

JOHNSON

Martin, you know as well as I do: you try and push this through now on the streets of Selma, and people could die. For what? You ask those people: 'You wanna die so other people can have the vote now? Or do you wanna live and vote alongside those other people a year from now?' Come on! (pause) Look I know you're willing to take that risk. But that what you want to do, Martin? Get *other* people killed?

*JOHNSON looms over KING. There's a sense that JOHNSON - the master of the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation - has KING in a moral armlock. KING stares back defiantly. Then his expression softens - into a sad smile of compassion.*

KING

Isn't that what leaders *always* do?

**EXT**

**RURAL ALABAMA**

**EVENING**

*A big wide shot of the countryside with the sun low on the horizon.*

**EXT**

**STATE TROOPER HQ YARD**

**EVENING**

*Colonel LINGO and Major CLOUD get into a two-tone blue and grey Ford, marked 'Alabama State Troopers'. Behind it are 19 more State Trooper cars. Four heavily-armed TROOPERS are getting into each one.*

**EXT            SELMA            EVENING**  
*Selma is quiet.*

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE            EVENING**  
*The setting sun is reflected on the waters below the bridge, as the STATE TROOPER CONVOY crosses into Selma.*

**EXT            SELMA OUTSKIRTS            NIGHT**  
*The STATE TROOPER CONVOY is splitting up, the cars turning off down different streets.*

**EXT            SELMA STREETS            NIGHT**  
*STATE TROOPER CARS, engines throbbing at low revs, nose through various streets like gathering sharks; STATE TROOPER CAR engines shut down as the cars park up at strategic points - blocking off passageways, sealing off roads.*

**INT            LINGO'S CAR            NIGHT**  
*LINGO and CLOUD are parked up and waiting.*

**EXT            BROWN CHAPEL            NIGHT**  
*Hoseah WILLIAMS leads MARCHERS from the church. It's a quiet affair, watched over by a few POLICEMEN and attended by a few JOURNALISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS.*

**EXT            MAIN STREET            NIGHT**  
*The MARCHERS are confronted by State TROOPERS lined up in front of three CARS blocking the end of the street. The TROOPERS are like identical statues, perfectly spaced, clubs at the ready – far more formidable than Clark's Deputies and Possemen. We pick out CARL, JIMMIE, VIOLA AND CAGER.*

**CARL**  
*(quietly to Jimmie) Ohhh fuck. Wallace has let slip the dogs of war.*

*WILLIAMS hesitates but keeps walking towards them – with increasing unease. He realises the street is deserted – and must have been cleared. No witnesses. The MARCHERS look around and Trooper CARS are moving into position behind them to block any chance of retreat. CARS are also moving into position to block off the side-streets on one side – the opposite side.*

*Silence amongst the MARCHERS. No movement. Then TROOPERS begin to advance on the MARCHERS from front and back.*

**WILLIAMS**  
*You have no right – !*

*Two shots are fired. CUT TO: a TROOPER in a side-street, holding a pistol in the air. Mortal fear breaks out. The MARCHERS start rushing into the side-streets. The*

*TROOPER who fired the gun grins at another TROOPER – who takes out a knuckleduster and slips it onto his fist.*

*The TROOPERS follow the fleeing Marchers at a steady, disciplined jog: they're not pursuing, they're herding. The CARS blocking the side streets roll forward and follow the jogging TROOPERS. All this has left the JOURNALISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS behind, isolated. TROOPERS jump out of the CARS, beating the JOURNALISTS, seizing cameras from the PHOTOGRAPHERS and smashing them to bits.*

**EXT            STREET            NIGHT**

*The MARCHERS flee from the side streets into a wider street – to be faced by more cars and more TROOPERS. They MARCHERS stop and stand where they are. Shots are fired, shattering the street lights. Darkness. The packed MARCHERS fall silent. Suddenly the Trooper Car headlights come on, blinding the MARCHERS and making the TROOPERS invisible. Then a strange, rhythmic sound, getting louder and louder. CUT TO:*

*the other side of the wall of light: the TROOPERS have taken off their helmets and are using them as drums, beating them with their clubs. CUT TO:*

*the MARCHERS, in an agony of apprehension, the din becoming unbearable. Sudden, unbearable silence - and TROOPERS come charging out of the wall of light.*

**EXT            LINGO'S CAR            NIGHT**

*LINGO and CLOUD have got out of the car and stand watching the attack taking place in the floodlit arena. They're relaxed and impassive.*

**INT            STREET            NIGHT**

*The TROOPERS have gone into an orgy of violence. A knuckleduster-clad fist smashes into a WOMAN's face. Where she drops unconscious a MAN is on the ground being stomped by two TROOPERS. A club takes out several teeth; a boot goes into a groin. Annie's frail HUSBAND is bowled over and ANNIE throws herself across him as he falls to the ground. CARL and JIMMIE pull CAGER and VIOLA towards a gap in the chaos. CARL is clubbed and kicked and stumbles to the ground. JIMMIE turns to help him.*

**CARL**

**No!! Don't stop!! Get them away from here!!**

*CARL gets up, turning to face two TROOPERS about to attack him. He covers his head with his arms as they wade into him.*

**INT            CAFÉ            NIGHT**

*A quiet little soul-food café. A few black CUSTOMERS talk, eat and drink coffee in a subdued atmosphere. There's a jukebox playing.*

**EXT            STREET            NIGHT**

Several MARCHERS including JIMMIE, CAGER and VIOLA flee down a narrow street pursued by TROOPERS. Their blood is up and they're going berserk: it's a black area of town and anyone on the street is attacked. This slows the TROOPERS down, allowing JIMMIE, CAGER and VIOLA to stay ahead of the clubs.

**INT                    CAFÉ                    NIGHT**

The CUSTOMERS look up as JIMMIE and VIOLA drag CAGER, exhausted, into the café. For a moment the CUSTOMERS stare at the wild-eyed intruders - then THREE TROOPERS burst into the place with the indiscriminate destruction of a bomb. A TROOPER strikes CAGER, VIOLA tries to protect him, the TROOPER turns on her and JIMMIE lunges at him. Another TROOPER clubs him and the two together hurl JIMMIE at the wall. He strikes the jukebox – which keeps playing. The TROOPER who was battering VIOLA takes out his gun and shoots JIMMIE twice in the stomach. A brief moment of stillness - before VIOLA screams and the TROOPERS rampage out of the café and into the night. JIMMIE doubles and slumps to the floor, the CUSTOMERS staring in disbelief as VIOLA crouches over him.

VIOLA

Jimmie! Jimmie! Jimmie!

**INT                    OPERATING THEATRE   NIGHT**

JIMMIE is being operated on. The atmosphere suggests a losing battle.

**INT                    HOSPITAL                    NIGHT**

The DOCTOR – the one who treated James Bevel – approaches VIOLA and the head-banded CAGER. CARL is with them.

DOCTOR

They just finished. He has a chance. That's all we can say at the moment.

The DOCTOR turns and walks away.

**INT                    HOTEL                    NIGHT**

KING is alone in his Washington hotel room, tired, getting ready for bed. The phone rings.

KING

(answering the phone) Yes, it is.

He listens for a moment, then sags forward with a deep groan.

KING

I'll try and be there by morning.

**INT                    AIRPORT                    DAWN**

*KING and YOUNG sit in an empty airport lounge, sleepless, silent. KING is smoking a cigarette. He looks drained.*

**INT                    HOSPITAL                    DAY**

*Next morning, early. JIMMIE is lying on a bed, unconscious, plugged into several drains and feeds. CAGER, VIOLA and CARL are seated around the bed. CAGER and VIOLA are half-asleep. CARL is fully awake, staring at JIMMIE. The door opens and KING enters quietly. He's unshaven; a little unkempt; he hasn't slept all night.*

**INT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: exhausted to the point of stupefaction. He's about to address a silent, deeply demoralised MEETING, many of them bearing the wounds and dressings from the night before.*

**KING**

*At a time like this we look for something to hold on to. When the world seems so senseless . . . and so cruel . . . when injustice reigns supreme . . . for so long . . . and . . . and . . . sometimes . . . sometimes . . .*

*BEVEL and ABERNATHY, on the platform, are looking at KING with mounting concern. CLOSE-UP of KING: desperately miserable and disorientated, staring at something at the back of the church:*

***BRIEF VISION:** a BODY, rigid, horizontal, floating in the air above the heads of the MEETING, moves slowly towards KING. CUT TO:*

*KING, trying to focus on the faces in front of him. ABERNATHY suddenly gets up and goes to the pulpit. He takes hold of King's arm.*

**ABERNATHY**

*Let me do this one, Marty.*

*KING stares at ABERNATHY for a moment, nods and walks slowly to a chair as ABERNATHY enters the pulpit. ABERNATHY looks out into the Congregation with a shrewd, knowing expression. He looks down into the third row and meets the eyes of the CLEANING LADY - who stumbled on the bugging device in the Sheriff's Office. ABERNATHY winks at her.*

**ABERNATHY**

*Now. I just been told something by a lady I know. Something of a scandalous nature! Oh yeah.*

*The MEETING look up at him in weary surprise.*

**ABERNATHY**

*Well? You want to know what I just been told?*

*A few responses: 'Tell it, Reverend!', 'Yes! We want to know!' ABERNATHY smiles and pauses, drawing them in.*

ABERNATHY

Well now . . . I just been told . . . we got a *doohickey* in this church! (*a scandalised pause*) I'm serious! That's right! Jim Clark and the Sheriff's Department has had the downright audacity to bug the house of God! Now. We got to find that doohickey! (*stares and points at the four microphones in front of him*) Now which one do you think it is? Hmmm. Eeeny, meeny, miny, mo, catch a *doohickey* by his toe! . . . This one! Now! I bet you that cracker Jim Clark is so dumb he aint connected his doohickey to those loudspeakers up there - just to the Sheriff's Department. (*covers three microphones and speaks into the fourth*) Hello-o-o doohickey, that you baby?

*The sound comes loud and clear through the church loudspeakers.*

ABERNATHY

Hmmm. (*covers three microphones and speaks into a fourth*) Doohickey that you, sweetheart?

*The sound comes through loud and clear. CUT TO:*

**INT                      SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT                      NIGHT**

*Two DEPUTIES are looking at each other, frozen.*

ABERNATHY (ON SPEAKER)

Doohickey darlin' that you? (*pause*) Well. Now.

**INT                      BROWN CHAPEL                      NIGHT**

*ABERNATHY covers three microphones and speaks into a fourth.*

ABERNATHY

So is *this* you my sweet Doohickey?

*Loud and clear.*

ABERNATHY

Aaaha!

*He points at the last mike, bends and speaks into it.*

ABERNATHY

You my Doohickey! Aint you, baby?

*Hardly a sound is heard beyond the first row. ABERNATHY grins at the MEETING, many of whom are now smiling broadly, and takes his hands from the microphones.*

ABERNATHY

Well now I got something to say to you, Doohickey, so what I wanna know is *this*: Are you *listening*? Are you *listening*, Doohickey?

*ABERNATHY raps the microphone with his knuckles.*

**INT                    SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT                    NIGHT**

*The DEPUTY winces at the booming sound of Abernathy's knuckles. The door is open - the other DEPUTY has gone to fetch CLARK.*

**INT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    NIGHT**

*The MEETING is increasingly amazed and delighted by Abernathy's performance.*

ABERNATHY

'Cos I got something important to tell you! I got a message . . .

**INT                    SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT                    NIGHT**

*Sheriff CLARK is in the room now, listening with the CLERK and the DEPUTY.*

ABERNATHY (ON SPEAKER)

. . . for Sheriff Jim Clark! Now Sheriff you listening to me?

*Laughter comes over the speaker.*

**INT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    NIGHT**

*The MEETING is laughing loudly.*

ABERNATHY

'Cos I got two very important things to tell you. First is this: Sheriff . . . we love you! Yes! We love you! Yes we do, Sheriff . . .

**INT                    SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT                    NIGHT**

*CLARK looks as though someone has made him an indecent proposal.*

ABERNATHY (ON SPEAKER)

. . . we love you!

*Voices in the background: 'We love you! We love you, Sheriff!' CUT TO:*

**INT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING, smiling with affection and admiration.*

ABERNATHY

And the other thing . . . is *this!*:

*ABERNATHY pauses and looks at the MEETING. He has them in the palm of his hand now.*

ABERNATHY

*We are not afraid!*

*A few cries of 'No!' and 'We are not afraid!' from the MEETING.*

ABERNATHY

*We are not afraid!*

MEETING

*(not very loud) We are not afraid!*

ABERNATHY

*Tell him! Tell Jim Clark! We are not afraid!*

MEETING

*(loud) We are not afraid!!*

ABERNATHY

*You hear that Doohickey? We are not afraid!*

MEETING

*(louder) We are not afraid!!*

ABERNATHY

*Tell Al Lingo! Tell him! We are not afraid!*

MEETING

*(very loud) WE ARE NOT AFRAID!!*

ABERNATHY

*Tell George Wallace! We are not afraid!*

MEETING

*WE ARE NOT AFRAID!!!!*

*KING, moved, watches with an expression of intense admiration.*

**INT                      SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT                      NIGHT**

*Amidst the anger in CLARK's eyes is the shadow of a doubt.*

MEETING (ON SPEAKER)

WE ARE NOT AFRAID!!!!

*A sudden crunching sound and silence.*

**INT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    NIGHT**

*ABERNATHY holds the disconnected microphone aloft as the response becomes a sustained chant: 'We are not afraid! We are not afraid! We are not afraid!' To a roar of acclaim, ABERNATHY throws the microphone onto the floor, leaves the pulpit and sits down next to KING. BEVEL bounds into the pulpit.*

**BEVEL**

*I'm ready! I'm ready! To march again!*

*Shouts of 'Yeah!', 'Let's march!', 'I'm ready!' A brief silence – then someone starts singing the fourth verse of 'We Shall Overcome'. Soon the whole place is singing it – passionately.*

**MEETING**

*We are not afraid, we are not afraid  
We shall overcome someday  
Here in my heart, I do believe  
We shall overcome some day.*

*KING turns to ABERNATHY.*

**KING**

*Ralphy. I think you just gave the big speech.*

**INT                    BOYNTON HOUSE                    NIGHT**

*ABERNATHY is very quietly getting undressed in a small twin-bedroom. KING, in pyjamas, is already sleeping like the dead.*

**INT                    KING HOME                    NIGHT**

*CORETTA is in the study going through a pile of correspondence addressed to 'Doctor King'. She rips open a large packet. There's just a spool of tape in it.*

**INT                    KING HOME                    NIGHT**

*CORETTA sits, staring at a tape recorder. It's playing a recording of KING in the Washington hotel room with DELLA.*

**DELLA (ON TAPE)**

*Why didn't she just ask for her money back?*

*CORETTA listens to King's and Della's laughter. This seems particularly painful. Then a new voice, a man's, comes on the tape:*

**MAN (ON TAPE)**

You are a fraud and a degenerate. You have two weeks to do the only honourable thing you have left to do. Otherwise this tape and others like it will be widely distributed to the press, the Nobel Prize Committee, the White House and other places. There is only one way out for you. If you find the courage to take it you will be remembered as a man of honour and achievement – by your wife, your children, by the world . . .

*CORETTA abruptly switches off the tape.*

**EXT                  YARD                  NIGHT**

*CORETTA, leans against the side of the house, looks up into the dark sky, and weeps for a few moments. Then she takes a couple of deep breaths and wipes her eyes with one hand – we don't see her other hand until CORETTA lifts the lid off a dustbin and hurls the tape spool into it. CORETTA walks back into the house.*

**INT                  BOYNTON HOUSE                  MORNING**

*ABERNATHY is finishing dressing in a small twin room, smiling as he watches KING – still dead asleep. ABERNATHY hears something and moves quickly to open the door. AMELIA Boynton is standing there with two mugs of coffee. ABERNATHY gestures, 'Quiet!' They both look at KING in his pyjamas. He looks like a boy.*

**INT                  HOSPITAL ROOM                  DAY**

*JIMMIE is propped up in bed connected to several feeds and drains. He's barely conscious. VIOLA and CAGER sit either side of the bed. CAGER is holding JIMMIE's hand. CARL leans in a corner, deeply thoughtful.*

**EXT                  HOSPITAL                  DAY**

*A State Trooper Car pulls up outside the hospital. LINGO and CLOUD get out.*

**INT                  HOSPITAL RECEPTION                  NIGHT**

*LINGO and CLOUD are at the reception desk, manned by a pretty RECEPTIONIST.*

**CLOUD**

Excuse me, darlin'. You got a nigger name of Jackson in here. Where's he at?

**INT                  HOSPITAL ROOM                  NIGHT**

*CARL watches as CAGER leans over the bed, takes JIMMIE's face in his hands and kisses him softly, repeatedly. He and VIOLA are weeping unrestrainedly. They sense Jimmie is slipping away.*

**CAGER**

Oh my sweet, sweet boy. My sweet, sweet boy . . .

**INT                  HOSPITAL                  NIGHT**

*LINGO and CLOUD, grim and purposeful, march along a corridor. CLOUD adjusts his holster.*

**INT                    HOSPITAL ROOM                    NIGHT**

*The door to Jimmie's room is thrown open. LINGO and CLOUD step into the room, CLOUD quickly closing the door behind them. The threat of violence is so intense, that even CARL is terrified for a moment. VIOLA leans over JIMMIE in an attempt to shield him. CLOUD thrusts VIOLA aside so fiercely that she falls in a heap. CARL steps towards CLOUD.*

CARL

You . . .

*CLOUD takes out his gun.*

CLOUD

Nigger, you wanna end up like your buddy there, be my guest.

*CARL checks. LINGO takes a piece of paper from his tunic pocket.*

LINGO

Are you Jimmie Lee Jackson?

*Surreally, LINGO is addressing JIMMIE in formal tones. JIMMIE even seems to register the man's presence.*

LINGO

Are you Jimmie Lee Jackson?

CAGER

Yes! He is.

LINGO

Jimmie Lee Jackson, I'm serving you with a warrant for your arrest. The charge is assault and battery - with intent to murder one of my officers.

*LINGO tosses the warrant onto the bed. A momentary pause, then LINGO turns and hits CARL with a ferocious punch, knocking him into a semi-conscious heap on the floor.*

LINGO

Threaten one of my officers again and you'll be killed.

*CAGER holds VIOLA in his arms as she wails, nearly hysterical with the unbearable intensity of her misery. LINGO turns and goes out the door. CLOUD follows but pauses in the doorway as he holsters his gun.*

CLOUD

Governor George Wallace sends his regards.

*CLOSE-UP of CARL: Cloud's words striking deep into his consciousness.*

CLOUD

Y'all get well soon now.

*CLOUD follows LINGO. CLOSE-UP of CARL staring after them with a look of hatred.*

**INT                    MORTICIAN'S – HALL                    DAY**

*KING steps into the hall. He looks around. Another door opens and CARL emerges into the hall. He sees KING as he's about to shut the door. He pauses and instead pushes the door open and waits – as KING approaches him. They come face to face. CARL's face is wet with tears.*

KING

Son I'm so sorry about your friend.

*CARL stares at KING for a moment.*

CARL

Yes I'm sorry, too. He was a really good, warm-hearted man. Very kind. Very loving. Totally without malice. *(pause)* But *that*, Doctor King . . . *(pointing at the door from which he emerged)* . . . is passive resistance.

*As CARL turns away from KING, we CUT TO:*

**INT                    MORTICIAN'S – EMBALMING ROOM                    DAY**

*Jimmie's BODY, lying on a steel table in the process of being cleaned before being dressed and placed in the nearby coffin. The BODY is semi-emaciated, naked except for a cloth placed across his midriff. There's a large wound in his side. KING stands a few feet from the BODY, in front of a window, staring in silence at the countryside in the distance. CLOSE-UP of KING as:*

**FLASHBACK BEGINS**

**INT                    STUDY                    DAY**

*Ten years earlier. CLOSE-UP of KING, thinking, writing in a small study. It's striking how much younger, leaner and fitter he looks. Chuck Berry's 'Maybellene' is playing quietly on a radio. CORETTA, looking like a girl and carrying a BABY, opens the door. KING smiles, turns up the radio, stands and takes the BABY from CORETTA, and starts dancing with her and the BABY – gracefully and inventively. The doorbell rings.*

**INT                    STUDY                    DAY**

CORETTA and KING, still holding the baby, stand in the hall with Ralph ABERNATHY in hat and coat – a good-naturedly forceful man in his mid-thirties.

ABERNATHY

They're gonna charge Rosa Parkes. There's a call for a bus boycott.

CORETTA

(protectively) He knows.

ABERNATHY looks at CORETTA and hesitates. She won't like what he's going to say next.

ABERNATHY

The committee wants him to lead it.

KING groans and switches off the radio.

KING

Why me? Why not you?

ABERNATHY

(grinning) 'Cause you got more class. (pause) There's a mass-meeting. Tonight.

KING

Mass-meeting. Ralph . . . There won't be fifty people there.

**INT CHURCH (MONTGOMERY) NIGHT**

A BODY, floating horizontally, moves head-first towards us. This is the vision King experienced in Scene xx. The camera rises to look down at the BODY – it's KING's, eyes closed, hands folded on the chest. Then the eyes open - and the angle WIDENS to reveal KING is being passed hand-over-hand, above the heads of a multitude, a MEETING packed solid into a large church. He eventually arrives at the stage, where ABERNATHY helps him to his feet. ABERNATHY grins at him. KING looks out over the huge, expectant crowd. For a few moments he's awed, even frightened. Then fear becomes realisation of something profoundly important. He steps towards the pulpit.

**END OF FLASHBACK**

KING stares out of the window for a moment longer then turns into the room. KING stands by the table looking down at JIMMIE.

KING

Jimmie . . . I might not make forty.

*KING puts his hand on JIMMIE's hand.*

KING

But it's a lot more than you had . . .

*He gives JIMMIE's hand a little squeeze. A farewell - to Jimmie - and to the hope of a long life. He turns away and walks towards the door. From the POV of the door, we watch KING walking towards us, moving into CLOSE-UP to reveal grief and guilt becoming burning anger.*

KING (VO)

*(intensely challenging)* Who murdered Jimmie Lee Jackson?

**INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL                      DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of KING, speaking with an intensity of anger no-one has seen before. There are no responses from the MEETING – they're too awed by King's rage.*

KING

*Who murdered Jimmie Lee Jackson?!*

*JIMMIE lies in an open casket before a church full of MOURNERS. In the front pew CAGER and VIOLA weep inconsolably.*

KING

*We know a state trooper pointed the gun and pulled the trigger! We know that state trooper was acting under the orders George Wallace and Al Lingo. We know their fingers were on that trigger just as surely as that state trooper's. But how many other people had a finger on that trigger?! I'll tell you! Every white priest who stays silent before his white congregation! Every white politician who feeds on hatred and prejudice! Every white lawman who abuses the law to terrorise innocent people! (pause) And every black man and woman who stands by without protest as their neighbours, their brothers, their sisters are humiliated, brutalised and murdered!!*

*A CLOSE-UP of the DOCTOR, staring at KING. KING pauses, as if to restrain himself – then his anger breaks loose again.*

KING

*I'm going to Washington! I'm going to demand see the President! And I'm going to tell him: Jimmie was murdered by an administration that is ready to spend millions of dollars every day, to sacrifice life in the name of liberty, in Vietnam! . . . but lacks the moral will and the moral courage to defend the lives of its own defenceless people!*

*A deep, powerful sound rises from the MEETING in response - a low roar of passionate support. A group of JOURNALISTS scribble furiously. One or two of them hurry to get out to a phone. CLOSE-UP of CARL, sitting at the back, staring at KING with scepticism and contempt.*

**INT                      BROWN'S CHAPEL SIDE ROOM                      DAY**

*KING enters fresh from the memorial service, still angry but very preoccupied, followed by BEVEL. He's even more than usually intense, inspired by the fire of King's speech.*

**BEVEL**

*Doc! They're ready to do something extraordinary. Something far out!  
Heroic!*

*KING, still preoccupied, doesn't even look at BEVEL - who takes hold of KING's arm.*

**BEVEL**

*A march . . . from Selma to Montgomery! In memory of Jimmie Lee Jackson! Let's carry his murder all the way to the state capital and lay it on George Wallace's fuckin doorstep!*

*ABERNATHY and WILLIAMS shake their heads patiently, patronisingly. But KING turns to BEVEL now, staring silently at him. CUT TO:*

**INT                      KING'S CAR                      EVENING**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: staring out of the car window at rural Alabama with the same expression he turned on Bevel. He's staring at rural Alabama as YOUNG drives. A sign - 'Montgomery 45' - comes and goes.*

**EXT                      RURAL ALABAMA                      EVENING**

*We rise above King's CAR into a WIDE SHOT of the road passing through a section of wild, uncultivated country - the 'Swamplands'.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      MORNING**

*Next morning. CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: staring at a newspaper, furious. GOODWIN is with him.*

**JOHNSON**

*(reading aloud) 'murdered by an administration ready to spend millions of dollars every day in Vietnam . . .!'*

*JOHNSON slams the newspaper down onto the desk with real force. He's enraged.*

**JOHNSON**

Motherfucker . . . ! And *no-one* invites themselves to the fuckin White House! *(pause)* Well let him come! But I aint seeing him!! I done talking to King!

*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: hunted.*

**INT            WHITE HOUSE            MORNING**

*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: hunted. He's in a Vietnam meeting with top ADVISERS and MILITARY FIGURES.*

**INT            WHITE HOUSE            DAY**

*KING and YOUNG wait in a small room. They're silent. They've been waiting for some time. GOODWIN, deeply uncomfortable, enters the room.*

GOODWIN

Doctor King, I'm sorry. The President has asked me to tell you he regrets he will not be able to see you today. *(apologetic, hopeful)* If you can stay over another day . . .

**INT            WHITE HOUSE            DAY**

*JOHNSON leaves the crisis meeting, an AIDE scurrying alongside carrying papers.*

JOHNSON

*(as much to himself as to the Aide)* I didn't get us in there but I sure as hell can't get us out. The American people never forgive a quitter. I can't run where Kennedy stood. That little brother of his will see me crucified. But I can't finish it with what I got. So what the hell can I do?

*JOHNSON marches round a corner and there's KING - coat on, hat in hand - on the way out, accompanied by GOODWIN. JOHNSON considers an escape route, but KING turns and sees him. A powerful moment between them.*

JOHNSON

Holy fuck what a day . . . !

**INT            WHITE HOUSE            DAY**

*JOHNSON and KING are alone in a small room. KING still has his coat on. JOHNSON is in a state of barely-controlled anger. They're both standing.*

JOHNSON

So what's your next move?

*KING hesitates for a brief, intense moment.*

KING

A march to commemorate Jimmie Lee Jackson.

JOHNSON

Yeah?

*Another moment of hesitation from KING. Then . . .*

KING

From Selma to Montgomery.

*JOHNSON's jaw drops.*

JOHNSON

*Selma to Montgomery?!*

KING

Those people have been beaten, terrorised and murdered. Only something that big and that symbolic will encompass their anger and their grief.

*JOHNSON steps closer to KING – into an intense eyeballing moment.*

JOHNSON

Selma to Montgomery must fifty miles. You march those people out into rural Alabama unprotected and it'll be open season. It's too fuckin far and *too fuckin dangerous!*

KING

*Not if you send in federal law enforcement!*

JOHNSON

I won't do that! I already got one war! I'm damned if I'll start another over States' rights! You *want* George Wallace to be the next President of the United States?!

KING

Jimmie Lee Jackson was murdered by George Wallace's State Troopers. *You* have to stop him killing someone else.

JOHNSON

Grabbing headlines by getting people killed in Selma is *your* decision! 'That's what leaders do' - remember?

*Silence.*

KING

We need your help. We deserve your help. If you won't offer it I'm going to have to demand it. Publicly. In every way I know.

*JOHNSON moves closer to KING, intimidatingly so, staring down at him, his anger turning hard and cold.*

JOHNSON

You're an agitator, I'm a politician. You got one big issue I got a hundred and one. Now, you demanding more support from me, you putting me on the spot by announcing you gonna come visiting, that's okay, that's your job, that's what you do. But I read what you said at that boy's funeral, Martin. Attacking my Vietnam policy is *not* your job! Is *not* what you do! I'm in a damn tight spot with this Vietnam thing and I need your support! You think I *want* to spend my War on Poverty budget propping up some pissant little jungle dictatorship? We been in Vietnam five fuckin years, Martin! Eisenhower first, then John Kennedy. The US made a fuckin commitment out there! Now it's getting' serious I can't just cut and run! *(almost snarling)* Now! You want any more support from me on this voting for *nigros* thing I need some quid pro quos from you! I want you to *promise* me; you'll take your foot off the gas in Selma - and you'll *keep* off Vietnam!

*KING stares at JOHNSON, with 'nigros' - used claculatedly and aggressively - ringing in his ears. Now it's KING who's angry. Their eyes lock for a few moments.*

JOHNSON

Don't make an enemy of me, Martin!

*JOHNSON leans forward, threatening, his face almost touching KING's. Neither of them blinks for a long moment.*

KING

Mr President. Don't you see? You don't scare those yellow people - and you don't scare this 'nigro'.

*KING turns to go. JOHNSON groans with exasperation - and regret.*

INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAY

*CLOSE-UP of KING: deeply uncertain, deeply concerned. He approaches a throng of press and television REPORTERS waiting in a lobby area. KING slows, closes his eyes and puts a hand to his face for a moment. Whe he removes it, he's smiling broadly. He strides into the midst of the REPORTERS, beaming.*

REPORTER

Did you see the President, Doctor King?

REPORTER

You feel your visit's been a success?

REPORTER

You got a statement, Doctor King?

REPORTER

What exactly was the purpose of your visit?

*KING holds up his hands to quieten them. He smiles, looking at the last questioner.*

KING

From time to time I feel the necessity of exchanging views with the President on vital issues facing the nation. We talked about several today.

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT                    JOHNSON'S BEDROOM   NIGHT**

*That night: JOHNSON is standing at the foot of his bed, in pyjamas and dressing-gown, brushing his teeth, looking at three televisions showing different channels. One shows King about to face the reporters earlier that day. JOHNSON lunges to turn down the sound on the other two televisions.*

**INT                    WALLACE'S BEDROOM   NIGHT**

*WALLACE is in bed, smoking, watching KING on television. MRS WALLACE is next to him, absorbed in a magazine.*

**INT                    JOHNSON'S BEDROOM   NIGHT**

*JOHNSON stares at KING on the television.*

KING (ON TV)

We talked about several today.

*JOHNSON's jaw drops.*

JOHNSON

You black sonofabitch!

LADY BIRD (OFF-SCREEN)

*(shocked)* Lyndon!

*LADY BIRD appears in the bathroom doorway.*

JOHNSON

I'm sorry darlin' but this King feller's on TV every five minutes talking like he's in charge of this country! There's probably already people out there in TV-land think he's the first black President of the United States!

**INT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAY**

*KING continues his statement to the press.*

**KING**

The President was gracious as always and very generous with his time. We had a full and frank discussion.

**REPORTER**

Did it include your recent comments on Vietnam?

*CLOSE-UP of KING, looking into camera.*

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT                    JOHNSON'S BEDROOM   NIGHT**

*That night. JOHNSON in CLOSE-UP, staring at KING on the television, waiting for his answer to the Vietnam question.*

**INT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAY**

*A CLOSE-UP of KING as he turns from the REPORTER to looks directly into the camera – and we know he's looking and talking directly at Johnson.*

**KING**

No.

**REPORTER**

You have anything to add to those comments?

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT                    JOHNSON'S BEDROOM   NIGHT**

*JOHNSON's eyes narrow, staring eyeball-to-eyeball at KING, as he waits the answer.*

**KING (ON TV)**

The President is faced with a complex problem in Vietnam. He needs time and the support of the American people while he tries to find a solution.

*JOHNSON gives a little sigh of relief.*

**KING (ON TV)**

Most importantly, the President reaffirmed his commitment to establish voting rights for black Americans.

JOHNSON  
*(mildly, still relieved)* Like hell I did.

**INT WALLACE'S BEDROOM NIGHT**  
*WALLACE eyes KING (on TV) shrewdly, suspiciously.*

WALLACE  
Like hell he did!

**INT WHITE HOUSE DAY**  
*KING turns to a REPORTER.*

REPORTER  
Did the President give any commitment to how and when he'll address the voting rights issue?

KING  
I wouldn't presume to speak for the President on such a matter. That is a question you must ask him.

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT JOHNSON'S BEDROOM NIGHT**  
*JOHNSON relaxes and sits back onto the bed.*

KING (ON TV)  
But . . . there was another matter of great importance we discussed . . .

*JOHNSON tenses.*

KING (ON TV)  
. . . and it is this . . .

**INT WHITE HOUSE NIGHT**  
*Once again, KING turns and looks into the television camera.*

KING  
. . . a young man called Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed by Alabama State Troopers in Selma four nights ago. To mark that young man's sacrifice in the cause of democracy . . .

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT JOHNSON'S BEDROOM NIGHT**  
*JOHNSON gets to his feet.*

JOHNSON

Don't!

**INT                WHITE HOUSE                DAY**

*KING in CLOSE-UP, as he pauses, staring into camera, at:*

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT                JOHNSON'S BEDROOM                NIGHT**

*JOHNSON in CLOSE-UP, staring back at KING.*

JOHNSON

Don't, Martin. Don't! . . .

**INT                WHITE HOUSE                DAY**

*KING stares into camera with defiance.*

KING

. . . we propose to organise a mass-march from Selma to the state capital,  
Montgomery!

**FLASH FORWARD:**

**INT                JOHNSON'S BEDROOM                NIGHT**

*JOHNSON is staring at the television, open-mouthed.*

JOHNSON

Fuck . . . !

**INT                WALLACE'S BEDROOM                NIGHT**

*WALLACE has jumped out of bed.*

WALLACE

Fuck! Fuck!! Fuck!!!

*MRS WALLACE watches him in some amazement.*

**INT                JOHNSON'S BEDROOM                NIGHT**

*LADY BIRD is watching her husband, shaking her head.*

LADY BIRD

That's another night ruined. You got to stop watching  
television before you go to bed, Lyndon!

**INT                WALLACE PRESS CONFERENCE                DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of WALLACE – grim, cornered, but ready to fight to the death. He is reading  
a statement to national press and television JOURNALISTS.*

WALLACE

There will be no march from Selma to Montgomery.

*CUT TO:*

**INT           CAFÉ           DAY**

*CARL is watching WALLACE on the cafe's black-and-white television.*

WALLACE (ON TV)

It is not conducive to traffic flow on Route 80 and to public safety. Such a march *cannot* and *will not* be tolerated.

**EXT           SELMA STREET           DAY**

*CARL walks along a street. At the far end, he sees MARCHERS passing. CARL reaches the corner and is amazed. MARCHERS stretch before him, forward and back, as far as he can see. This is a far bigger gathering than anything so far, moving with a sense of quiet purpose and occasion, many of the MARCHERS carrying food and extra clothing. CARL is deeply impressed - but he buries his sense of loss and self-imposed exclusion behind an expression of bitter scepticism. CUT TO:*

**EXT           PETTUS BRIDGE – SELMA SIDE           DAY**

*BAKER, helpless, resigned, as he watches a silent regiment of MARCHERS – not in spaced pairs this time but close-ranked – moving rapidly – as if anxious for commencement of battle, or simply building momentum – towards the crest of the bridge. The loudest noise is the cold wind in the ironwork of the empty bridge. The road surface of the bridge rises in a gentle arch, obscuring the far side. CUT TO:*

**EXT           PETTUS BRIDGE – MONTGOMERY SIDE           DAY**

*The reverse view. We're looking at the backs of a small squad of silent TROOPERS in the foreground. Beyond them, we can see the empty bridge. Given the as-yet-unseen numbers approaching the TROOPERS, they seem insignificant and inadequate.*

**EXT           PETUS BRIDGE           DAY**

*The MARCHERS approach the crest of the bridge. They are led by WILLIAMS and LEWIS. A CLOSE-UP of WILLIAMS and other front MARCHERS shows dawning alarm. We REVERSE ANGLE into the POV of the FRONT MARCHERS. They see:*

**EXT           PETTUS BRIDGE – MONTGOMERY SIDE           DAY**

*an army: behind the small front-line force of TROOPERS are nearly 200 mingled TROOPERS, DEPUTIES and POSSEMEN, many of them on horseback. On either side in business parking lots and burger joints are scores of white SPECTATORS, parked up in cars, standing around in groups, some standing on car roofs or the backs of pick-ups waving big Confederate flags, brandishing clubs, holding banners saying 'Who Needs Niggers?' and 'Doctor Martin Luther Koon – Welcome to Selma'.*

*A low growl of aggression and excitement rises from the white SPECTATORS as they see the heads of the first rank of MARCHERS. A small group of BLACK SPECTATORS, curiosity overcoming fear, stands quietly behind an old school bus. A small crowd of JOURNALISTS are penned some way from the road by TROOPERS. Near them, a handful of American Nazis, including James ROBINSON (who assaulted King in the hotel) eyes the Journalists with intense hostility. Beyond all this can be seen dozens of TROOPER CARS blocking off all four lanes of Route 80. LINGO leans on the bonnet of one them, arms folded. Next to him, on horseback, is Sheriff CLARK. CLARK raises a pair of binoculars to his eyes.*

CLARK

Where's King? He aint there.

LINGO

You sure?

CLARK

Yeah.

*LINGO nods to himself, understanding the strategy.*

CLARK

That nigger sick, scared, or what?

LINGO

They're holding him in reserve for the second attempt.

*LINGO draws himself erect, looking around.*

LINGO

But there aint gonna be no second attempt.

*CLARK grins.*

CLARK

See you later, Al.

*CLARK urges his horse forward to join the mounted POSSEMEN. He gives a cheery 'Well isn't this great!' grin to the POSSEMEN around him. One of them is REGISTRAR 1 (called Eugene). Alongside him is Deputy Tom COLEMAN, the double-murderer seen in the opening scenes. CLARK slaps COLEMAN on the back.*

CLARK

Well! Tom! Good to see you back in harness, boy!

COLEMAN

Thank-you, Sheriff.

CLARK

Hey, Eugene! How *you* doin'? I hear your mamma's feelin' better.

REGISTRAR 1

Yes, thank-you, Sheriff. She's doing pretty good now.

CLARK

Excellent! That's good. That's good.

*REGISTRAR 1 tightens the barbed wire wound around his club. CUT TO:*

*WILLIAMS, FORMAN and the front rank of MARCHERS take in the extent of the forces confronting them. WILLIAMS looks nervously down into the muddy waters of the Alabama River, choppy in the wind. Struck by a thought, he turns to LEWIS.*

WILLIAMS

Can you swim?

LEWIS

No swimming pools for black people where I come from . . .

*The MARCHERS descend the slope towards the small army.*

*TROOPERS, DEPUTIES and POSSEMEN form into ranks. A TROOPER comes through from the rear and hands the officer-in-charge, Major CLOUD, a bullhorn. We see the TROOPERS have gas-masks and tear-gas grenades hanging from their belts.*

*WILLIAMS and the MARCHERS halt a few yards from CLOUD. Everything goes quiet. CLOUD raises his bullhorn.*

CLOUD

This is an unlawful assembly. You have one minute to disperse.

*Brief silence. WILLIAMS is surprised by the ultimatum.*

WILLIAMS

*(mutters to himself)* One minute . . . ?

*The TROOPERS put on their gas-masks, becoming strikingly alien and sinister. WILLIAMS takes a step forward towards CLOUD.*

WILLIAMS

May we have a word with the Major?

CLOUD

There is no word to be had.

*The camera picks out AMELIA, ANNIE, her HUSBAND, CAGER, VIOLA, and other familiar faces – including the DOCTOR this time - all waiting for the next move with mounting apprehension.*

WILLIAMS

Major Cloud . . .

CLOUD

Troopers! Advance!

*The TROOPERS advance at a disciplined run, smashing into the front rank of MARCHERS, immediately creating a grotesque rag-doll domino-effect deep into the crowd. The TROOPERS begin to throw tear-gas grenades.*

*Two gun-shots: cut to CLARK on horseback, pistol raised in the air. CLARK and his POSSEMEN urge their horses forward with rebel yells. They ride into a low-lying fog of tear gas in which the gas-masked TROOPERS rear and strike like monsters from the deep.*

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE            DAY**

*MARCHERS at the rear see the tear-gas clouds and hear the cries. They start to break and flee back towards Selma.*

**EXT            SELMA            DAY**

*MARCHERS flee from the bridge back into Selma, pursued by TROOPERS, DEPUTIES and POSSEMEN. The air is full of rebel yells, clattering hooves, screams of pain and fear.*

**EXT            CAFÉ            DAY**

*CARL is sitting on his own morosely nursing a coffee. He looks for a moment at the place where Jimmie was shot. He looks up as he hears in the distance the sound of horses, rebel yells, cries of fear and outrage.*

**EXT            STREET            DAY**

*CARL runs along the street. At the end, MARCHERS are flooding past. CARL reaches the end and comes face-to-face with a horseman: Tom COLEMAN. CARL is stopped in his tracks, appalled. COLEMAN's face lights up in a malevolent grin and he calls to another mounted DEPUTY.*

COLEMAN

Hey Leverage! Here's that nigger testified against me!

COLEMAN spurs his horse forward, knocking CARL to the ground. CARL looks up at him as COLEMAN takes out his gun. CARL rolls under a parked car. COLEMAN starts to get off his horse, but is restrained by LEVERNE.

LEVERNE

Tom, you go shootin' someone else this soon gonna look bad.

COLEMAN hesitates briefly then wheels his horse round and heads back towards the fleeing MARCHERS. CARL lies under the car, gasping with relief.

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE – MONTGOMERY SIDE       DAY**

The far side of the bridge looks like a battlefield. The DOCTOR moves amongst the wounded, while others limp back towards Selma. A few cars are arriving driven by friends and relatives, to help carry away the injured. The SPECTATORS have mostly gone in pursuit. Those that remain are in holiday mood, and merely watch and jeer – except for a few NAZIS and REDNECKS who menace the young ABC TELEVISION CREW as they take the film from the camera. Suddenly, two of the CREW make a run to a car. While the remaining CREW and their equipment are attacked, the car drives off at speed.

**INT            ABC CREW CAR            DAY**

A CLOSE-UP of the film canister – gripped by the CREW MEMBER in the passenger seat as if his life depended on it.

**INT            SIDE ROOM            NIGHT**

We PULL OUT of a brief CLOSE-UP of a blank TELEVISION SCREEN into the room - where KING, YOUNG, ABERNATHY and a few others sit or stand around, no-one making a move to pick up the phone ringing in the background. Finally, YOUNG snaps out of it and picks up the phone.

YOUNG

Yes. (listens) Now? Yes.

YOUNG, still on the phone, turns to the others.

YOUNG

Put the television on! ABC! Now!

BEVEL turns on the television – which remains blank as it warms up. YOUNG listens to the person on the phone.

YOUNG

(incredulous) How many? Seventy?! (pause) Thanks.

ABERNATHY

What is it?

*YOUNG is so excited he doesn't reply, just stares at the screen. Gradually a picture and sound emerges. It's Spenser Tracy talking to a middle-aged couple in a scene from 'Judgement at Nuremburg'.*

BEVEL

What is it?

ABERNATHY

Dunno. But I seen it.

*The picture changes abruptly to an ANNOUNCER.*

ANNOUNCER ON TV

We are interrupting our Saturday Night Theatre feature 'Judgement at Nuremburg' to bring you sensational pictures of astonishing events earlier today - in Selma, Alabama.

*Original television footage of the Pettus Bridge attack.*

*KING stares at the television screen, staggered and appalled – he's been told what happened, but now he's seeing it.*

YOUNG

Marty. Seventy million people are watching this . . .

*KING looks up, taking this amazing fact on board.*

**INT                    JOHNSON BEDROOM                    NIGHT**

*JOHNSON and LADY-BIRD stare at the television, stunned.*

**INT                    WALLACE HOME                    NIGHT**

*WALLACE and his WIFE stare at the television, stunned.*

WALLACE

Jesus H. Christ . . . How many people are watching this?!

**INT                    JOHNSON BEDROOM                    NIGHT**

*Continuation of xx.*

JOHNSON

It's incredible . . . Incredible . . . No-one's ever done this before . . .

LADY BIRD

Well that's not exactly true, dear –

JOHNSON

No, I mean *King*! I mean *this*: half the people in America are watching this – together, *right now* . . . By this time tomorrow, *everyone* in America will have seen this.

**INT                    BROWN'S CHAPEL BACK ROOM                    NIGHT**  
*Continuation of xx. KING suddenly looks energised.*

KING

We got our hands round their throats. And we mustn't let go for a *moment*.

**INT                    BROWN'S CHAPEL                    DAY**  
*Next day. KING addresses a packed but still demoralised MEETING. There a whole row of JOURNALISTS and three TELEVISION CAMERAS.*

KING

We have to go back to the bridge. In two days! We cannot turn back now. We've come too far, sacrificed too much.

*KING gives a long pause, looking around the rapt MEETING.*

KING

You see . . . if a man is thirty-six years old - as I happen to be - and some great truth stands before the door of his life . . . and he refuses to stand up because he wants to live a little longer . . . even if he lives to be *ninety-six*, that man has already been dead for sixty years! (*pause*) We must go back! We must cross that bridge and march! To dignity and to freedom! To Montgomery!

**EXT                    SELMA BUS STATION                    DAY**  
*A Greyhound Bus disgorges mainly white SUPPORTERS from the North.*

**EXT                    BROWN CHAPEL                    DAY**  
*A hired bus unloads mainly white CLERGY and NUNS.*

**INT                    OVAL OFFICE                    DAY**  
*JOHNSON is holding up a newspaper to GOODWIN.*

JOHNSON

You seen this?

GOODWIN

He's really got something going down there, hasn't he?

JOHNSON

Yeah. A fuckin volcano!

*CLOSE-UP of the newspaper front page. The headline is 'THOUSANDS HEAD SOUTH IN MORAL CRUSADE'. In the background rises the sound of a semi-rhythmic tread. This is not like the sound of the teachers marching. This sound is bigger, deeper, the SOUND OF A MULTITUDE ON THE MARCH.*

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAY**

*Seen from the Montgomery side - the heads of a multitude begin to appear over the brow of the bridge. The REVERSE ANGLE reveals CLOUD and a large force of State Troopers, waiting. But this time they're virtually alone - no spectators, no Deputies or Possemen - except for a much greater number of JOURNALISTS and TV CREWS. It's very quiet. CLOSE-UP of CLARK.*

CLARK

Good god . . . !

*We slowly ZOOM IN to reveal that this time the MARCHERS' ranks are swollen by scores of white men and women: NUNS, PRIESTS, STUDENTS, WORKERS, PROFESSIONALS. We pick out an attractive, casually-dressed woman, VIOLA LIUZZO, and an earnest, formal-looking, bespectacled man, JAMES REEB. This time the march is led by KING.*

**INT                    CAR DEALERSHIP                    DAY**

*CLARK stands in the car showroom window with a pair of binoculars. LINGO sits, feet up on a desk with a phone held to his ear.*

LINGO

They just coming over the bridge now.

**INT                    WALLACE'S OFFICE                    DAY**

*WALLACE is pacing and smoking. An AIDE is on the phone.*

WALLACE'S AIDE

They're just coming over the bridge.

*WALLACE's pacing- and smoking-rate increases.*

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAY**

*KING and the MARCHERS are a few yards from CLOUD and his TROOPERS. CLOUD raises his bullhorn.*

CLOUD

You are ordered to stop and stand where you are.

*KING halts the march. The MARCHERS fall silent. Many are very uneasy, looking nervously at the blue-helmeted TROOPERS who surround them on three sides, expecting*

them to charge at any moment. *KING* slowly goes down on his knees in an attitude of prayer and humility. Slowly, behind *King*, rank after rank, the *MARCHERS* go down on their knees. They pray in silence. Then *KING* looks up and meets *CLOUD*'s watchful, assessing gaze. Suddenly *CLOUD* raises the bullhorn.

**CLOUD**

Troopers!!

*There's a pause as he briefly turns back and resumes the mutual stare with KING.*

**CLOUD**

Withdraw!!

*The TROOPERS behind CLOUD divide and move aside – leaving the road to Montgomery wide open. KING and the MARCHERS get slowly to their feet. KING stares at the road ahead, leading into rural Alabama. A deep silence takes hold of everyone – MARCHERS, TROOPERS, JOURNALISTS, onlookers in general. KING goes on staring at the road to Montgomery. The man next to him - it's CAGER - stares at KING, mystified, like everyone else, by his silence and stillness.*

*CUT INTO KING'S IMAGININGS:*

**EXT SWAMPLANDS DAY**

*KING leads the marchers along the highway to Montgomery - through the remote swamplands. A shot rings out. A MARCHER is knocked to the ground. But KING marches on, oblivious. Another shot. A MARCHER, a woman, screams in pain as she hits the ground. Another shot from someone unseen in the trees – and another cry of pain. Panic and terror now as more shots come in from more unseen gunmen. FORMAN is hit. KING marches on through the bullets. He's invulnerable – aware of it, revelling in it. Then CAGER is hit and VIOLA screams – a sound which pierces KING's consciousness. He turns – and sees a massacre taking place before his eyes.*

*CUT OUT OF KING'S IMAGININGS, TO:*

**EXT PETTUS BRIDGE DAY**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: fear – as he stares at the open road to Montgomery. He turns to the man next to him. It's CAGER, staring at KING, mystified.*

**KING**

It's a trap.

**INT CAR DEALERSHIP DAY**

*Inside the car dealership, CLARK and LINGO watch KING with mounting suspense.*

**LINGO**

C'mon . . . C'mon . . . Come to Poppa . . . Come to Poppa . . .

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE            DAY**

*KING stares into the distance. Then he turns his back to CLOUD and faces the MARCHERS.*

KING

We're going back.

**INT            CAR DEALERSHIP            DAY**

*CLARK, beside himself with frustration, whacks a table with his club.*

CLARK

Damn that nigger!!

*LINGO picks up the phone.*

LINGO

Gimme the Governor.

**INT            WALLACE'S OFFICE            DAY**

*WALLACE has taken the phone from the AIDE.*

WALLACE

Al, King must be some kinda evil fuckin genius. How the fuck did he figure that one out?

**EXT            PETTUS BRIDGE            DAY**

*KING is leading the MARCHERS back towards Selma, the column peeling back on itself on both sides. KING puts his arms round CAGER and VIOLA.*

KING

They would've sealed off the road behind us. No food, water, any kind of support allowed through. We wouldn't have made twenty miles let alone fifty - and god knows what would've happened out there. I was walking everybody right into a trap.

**INT            SIDE ROOM BROWN'S CHAPEL            DAY**

*KING and all his TEAM are there with LEWIS and FORMAN - who is enraged.*

FORMAN

That was no trap! You *know* why they opened the road to us! Because all them nice respectable white folks was with us! *That's* why! And we should've capitalised on that!

*CUT TO:*

**INT            BROWN CHAPEL            NIGHT**

*The church is packed with MARCHERS, occupying on every available square inch, listening in absolute silence to the furious voices coming from behind the stage.*

FORMAN (OOV)

Because those white folks won't be around long, they never are, because  
*this aint their movement!!*

*We pick out an early middle-aged white man in jacket and tie – James REEB. He exchanges self-conscious glances with two white male COMPANIONS. ANNIE reaches out to the nearest white person – VIOLA LIUZZO.*

ANNIE

We're glad you're here . . .

VIOLA

Thank-you . . .

**INT                      SOUL-FOOD CAFÉ                      NIGHT**

*REEB and two white male COMPANIONS are eating and talking with the BLACK JOURNALIST, taking the occasional note.*

**EXT/INT      HIGHWAY/CARS                      NIGHT**

*There are two cars travelling in the same direction on this dark country section of the highway. One comes up behind the other.*

*VIOLA LIUZZO is driving the car that's being overtaken. There's a PASSENGER, a young black man, in the front seat.*

**EXT                      SELMA                      NIGHT**

*REEB and his two white COMPANIONS come out of the restaurant onto the street. Watching them, parked up in their car, are four men - KLANSMEN. As REEB and his COMPANIONS walk past, the KLANSMEN get out their car.*

KLANSMAN

Hey, you! White niggers!

*The KLANSMEN launch into the three men with clubs and knuckle-dusters. REEB takes a terrific blow to the head. All three are barely conscious when the attack suddenly ceases.*

KLANSMAN

Now you know what it feels like to be a *real* nigger!

**EXT/INT      HIGHWAY/CARS                      NIGHT**

*VIOLA LIUZZO turns to look as a car draws alongside. She's looking into the barrel of a sawn-off shotgun.*

*The other car contains another group of KLANSMEN. The KLANSMAN in the back is holding the shotgun. He fires. VIOLA LIUZZO's face disintegrates. Her car starts running off the road as the KLANSMEN's car accelerates away.*

**INT                      BROWN CHAPEL                      NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: concern. He's about to address a late-night MEETING. Everyone is shell-shocked by the killings earlier that night.*

*SUDDEN VISION: below the pulpit, KING lies in an open casket.*

*The VISION remains there as he speaks. KING talks with a quiet intensity, with a compassionate intimacy.*

**KING**

I know . . . I know . . . You went to that bridge ready to march. And I brought you back. And now . . . two more people are dead. Two more martyrs have laid down their lives for the cause of freedom. *(long, heavy pause)* But you must believe me when I say nothing can stop us now. Not now. Not now we have come so far and so many people have sacrificed so much. Nothing can stop us now. Nothing . . . because we have no fear now . . . Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo have taken us beyond fear . . .

*KING gazes down at the VISION of himself in the open casket.*

**GIRL (OFF CAMERA)**

We shall overcome, we shall overcome

*KING looks up and his eyes find the GIRL – about 17 years old – shy, amazed to find herself doing this. Truly inspired.*

**GIRL**

We shall overcome some day  
Here in my heart

*Slowly, the whole MEETING joins in.*

**MEETING**

I do believe  
We shall overcome some day.

*CLOSE-UP of KING: eyes full of admiration for his people.*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      DAWN**

*JOHNSON is standing by a window. Behind him on the table is a half-eaten breakfast and the usual selection of newspapers. There's singing in the background.*

PROTESTORS (VO)

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand

**EXT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAWN**

*A group of young, black and white PROTESTORS – holding an all-night vigil - stand in a group around some candles, holding hands and singing.*

PROTESTORS

We'll walk hand in hand someday

**INT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAWN**

*JOHNSON turns from the window and looks down at a newspaper – at a picture of REEB and a smiling VIOLA LIUZZO. Every front page is about Selma and the killings. A New York Times headline below the main story is 'Thousands More Head For Selma'. JOHNSON stares at the pictures and the headline.*

PROTESTORS (VO)

Here in my heart, I do believe  
We'll walk hand in hand someday.

*JOHNSON sits down. He's very still for some moments, deep in thought. Then he gives a long, deep sigh. He picks up the phone.*

JOHNSON

Bring the car round to the back.

**INT                    PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE                    DAWN**

*JOHNSON, wearing an overcoat, sits in the back of the parked car. Sitting in the other corner of the back seat is GOODWIN. The DRIVER is motionless. JOHNSON's breath fogs with cold as he winds down the window and gazes at something above him in the distance.*

**EXT                    LINCOLN MONUMENT                    DAWN**

*The Lincoln Monument glows in the strengthening light. CLOSE-UP of LINCOLN – gazing down at Johnson.*

**INT                    PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE                    DAWN**

*JOHNSON turns to GOODWIN.*

JOHNSON

You know Lincoln was always a gradualist on the slavery issue. Just thought it was so obviously so wrong it would die of natural causes. Then one day right out the blue he freed the slaves. Just turned up in cabinet one morning with the Emancipation Proclamation in his hand.

GOODWIN

Yes.

JOHNSON

Because suddenly he knew; felt some tremor, some shift, in the grass roots; he knew: the country was ready.

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      MORNING**

*JOHNSON is addressing a whole gaggle of JUNIOR STAFF, watched by a smiling GOODWIN.*

JOHNSON

Boys and girls, I just called the first joint session of Congress in twenty years! Tomorrow night! And I want you to make sure every senator and every representative, I don't care if they're in Honolulu or Tibet or on top of Mount fuckin Everest, every one that can walk I want 'em there - and those that can't I want 'em carried in!

**INT                      HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                      NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: gazing up at us. We slowly PULL BACK as the noise of a large formal, expectant gathering increases. We continue to PULL BACK – until we can see JOHNSON is standing at a lectern composing himself while staring into a television camera a little distance away. The expectant buzz dies away. We PULL BACK further to reveal a majestic spectacle and a momentous event: a joint session of Congress - rank upon rank of SENATORS and CONGRESSMEN. CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: tense.*

**INT                      BOYNTON HOUSE                      NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING: relaxed. He's lounging in an armchair in Amelia Boynton's living room with AMELIA, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and WILLIAMS. YOUNG switches on the television.*

**INT                      HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                      NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON.*

JOHNSON

Mr Speaker, Mr President, Members of the Congress: I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy. . . .

**INT                      HOUSE                      NIGHT**

*KING is not paying close attention, as he watches JOHNSON on the black-and-white television in the corner of the room.*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

In our time we have come to live with moments of great crisis . . .

ABERNATHY

Most of 'em caused by politicians.

*KING and the others chuckle. AMELIA comes in from the kitchen.*

AMELIA

There's more coffee just made.

*ABERNATHY, BEVEL and WILLIAMS wander into the kitchen with AMELIA.*

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**

*JOHNSON is gathering a little momentum now and more conviction.*

JOHNSON

But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue.

*A CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON – eyes reaching out to KING.*

**INT                    BOYNTON HOUSE                    NIGHT**

*A CLOSE-UP of KING - suddenly intrigued- staring into JOHNSON's eyes. It seems deeply personal, between just the two of them.*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

And should we defeat every enemy, should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation.

KING

Hey! Get in here! Listen to this!

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**

*JOHNSON is finding his stride now.*

JOHNSON

For with a country as with a person, 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

**INT                    HOUSE                    NIGHT**

*KING is now sitting forward in his chair, eyes fixed on JOHNSON, as ABERNATHY, BEVEL WILLIAMS and AMELIA come back into the room.*

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**

*A CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON:*

JOHNSON

There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.

**INT                    HOUSE                    NIGHT**

*KING and the others glance at each other with looks which say 'You hearing what I'm hearing?'*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

And we are met here tonight as Americans – not as Democrats or Republicans – we are met here tonight as Americans to solve that problem.

*AMELIA settles slowly onto the arm of a chair to watch. From a CLOSE-UP of KING, we CUT TO:*

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**

*A CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON, eyes more certain now, steadier, warmer – as if he senses KING and the nation are listening with complete attention.*

JOHNSON

Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right. Yet the harsh fact is that in many places in this country men and women are kept from voting simply because they are Negroes.

**EXT/INT                    CHURCH HALL                    NIGHT**

*A ramshackle wooden building in woodland. We go inside, where a group of poor blacks – including CAGER and VIOLA - are gathered to watch Johnson's speech. Next to Cager is an even older OLD MAN.*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

Every device of which human ingenuity is capable has been used to deny this right. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late, or the official in charge is absent.

OLD MAN

*(to Cager)* He called us citizens . . .

**INT                    REGISTRAR'S HOME                    NIGHT**

*A middle-class living-room with lots of books. REGISTRAR 1 is sitting in a comfortable armchair, alongside his severe, bookish-looking WIFE who, even at this moment, is more interested in the book she's reading. He, however, is watching and listening.*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

And if he manages to fill out an application he is given a test. The registrar is the sole judge of whether he passes this test.

REGISTRAR

That's right you cocksucker!

WIFE

Eugene!

*She wacks him hard with her book. She's fierce; he cowers a little. We realise the Registrar is hen-pecked.*

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution, or explain –

**INT    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES            NIGHT**

JOHNSON

- the most complex provisions of the state law. And even a college degree cannot be used to prove that he can read and write. For the fact is the only way to pass these barriers is to show a white skin.

**INT                    BAR                    NIGHT**

*DEPUTIES and various POSSEMEN stare in shock and dismay at the television.*

JOHNSON (ON TV)

Wednesday I will send to Congress a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote. . . . This bill will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections – Federal, State and local – which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote.

DEPUTY

Next time you come down here we gonna give you what Kennedy got!

**INT                    CLARK'S HOME                    NIGHT**

*CLARK and his WIFE are watching the speech - he with rage, she with bitter tears. They've both been drinking.*

WIFE

How could they do this to us? We're Americans, too!

*Suddenly, she turns on CLARK.*

WIFE

And it's your fault! All this!

*CLARK stares at her, hurt, like a young boy unjustly accused.*

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**  
*JOHNSON continues his speech.*

**JOHNSON**  
But even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and State of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life.

**INT                    LINGO HOME                    NIGHT**  
*LINGO'S WIFE - young, pretty and drunk – looking as if struck by tragedy - stands in a doorway looking into a room where LINGO and six FRIENDS have been playing cards but are now staring at the television. LINGO suddenly gets up and leaves the room.*

**JOHNSON ON TV**  
Their cause must be our cause, too.

*LINGO strides back into the room with a shotgun. LINGO'S WIFE screams and runs into the other room.*

**LINGO**  
You lying double-crossing sonofabitch!!

**JOHNSON ON TV**  
... it is all of us -

*BOOM! The television implodes.*

**INT                    BAKER HOME                    NIGHT**  
*Wilson BAKER and FAMILY watch JOHNSON on TV. They're absolutely silent.*

**JOHNSON ON TV**  
... it is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

*Barely perceptibly, BAKER nods in agreement.*

**INT                    WALLACE HOME                    NIGHT**  
*WALLACE stares at his television – he's silent, still, expressionless, eviscerated. MRS WALLACE looks at him with deep concern.*

**INT                    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES                    NIGHT**  
*JOHNSON is staring into camera in the midst of a long, weighty pause.*

JOHNSON

And – we – shall – *overcome*.

*CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON as he continues to stare into camera.*

**INT            HOUSE            NIGHT**

*CLOSE-KING of KING: staring into JOHNSON's eyes on the television – as KING and his companions sit in amazed silence for several moments.*

YOUNG

Can you believe that? Can you *believe* what he just said?!

**INT    HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES            NIGHT**

*SENATORS and CONGRESSMEN display a spectrum of emotion. Most are on their feet applauding passionately, others are slumped in their seats in dismay, even despair, some are bitterly angry, a few are too moved even to applaud and sit there smiling, with tears running down their faces. A CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON, smiling at camera.*

**INT            BOYNTON HOUSE            NIGHT**

*CLOSE-UP of KING, tears in his eyes, smiling at JOHNSON on the television.*

**INT            KING HOME            NIGHT**

*CORETTA is on the sofa, holding her four KIDS to her, watching the television. She too is weeping.*

CORETTA

*(to Kids)* It's okay. I'm just happy. I'm just very happy. And very proud of your Daddy.

**EXT            WHITE HOUSE            NIGHT**

*An AIDE meets JOHNSON's car as it pulls up outside the White House. He opens the door.*

AIDE

Congratulations, Mr President! We're swamped with calls already.

*JOHNSON gets out.*

JOHNSON

There's only one call *I* want to get tonight.

**INT            WHITE HOUSE            NIGHT**

*JOHNSON is in the Oval Office, fielding congratulatory phone calls. GOODWIN, LADY BIRD and several AIDES talk quietly but excitedly in the background. JOHNSON puts a hand over the phone.*

JOHNSON

*(mouthes gleefully at the others) Dick Russell! (removing his hand from the phone) Well, Dick, that's mighty generous of you, but I don't deserve it 'cos you're the man who taught me everything I know! (pause) Well, Dick, I wouldn't say (loud, with a showman's grin, at the whole room) 'it was the finest political speech of the twentieth century!' – but it damn sure's the best one I ever gave!*

**INT                      WHITE HOUSE                      NIGHT**

*Later. JOHNSON is alone in the Oval Office except for LADY BIRD, who's just leaving. JOHNSON now looks depressed.*

LADY BIRD

*(sympathetically) Don't be long, honey.*

JOHNSON

I won't.

*LADY BIRD goes. JOHNSON stares at the phone. He turns away, resigned. A long, lonely silence is suddenly broken when a SECRETARY opens the door.*

SECRETARY

Doctor King. Line two.

*JOHNSON waits a moment, then picks up the phone.*

JOHNSON

Martin.

**INT                      BOYNTON HOUSE/WHITE HOUSE                      NIGHT**

*KING is alone.*

KING

Sorry to call so late, Mr President.

*We INTERCUT to follow the conversation:*

JOHNSON

That's okay. So. You watch me on TV tonight?

KING

Yes, Mr President. I did.

*KING falls silent, smiling to himself a little – he knows he's in control of this conversation.*

JOHNSON

How'd I do? What you think?

KING

I thought you were magnificent. Tonight, you stood alongside Lincoln.

*JOHNSON is suddenly and powerfully moved. It takes him by surprise – and takes him a few moments to recover.*

JOHNSON

Well I don't know about that, but . . . for a moment or two back there, I was on the mountain-top. *(pause)* I have a feeling I aint never gonna be there again. But least I been there. And fact is . . . I never would have, without you *drove* me up there. *(pause)* I'm grateful for that.

KING

*You* called that joint session, Mr President. *You* gave that speech. No-one else.

JOHNSON

Thank-you, Martin. Thank-you.

**INT                      OVAL OFFICE                      DAY**

*JOHNSON is talking to HOOVER, watched by GOODWIN and an AIDE.*

JOHNSON

I want you to put a fifteen-foot steel wall round Martin Luther King.

HOOVER

We'll do everything we can, Mr President. But . . .

JOHNSON

. . . you can't guarantee his safety.

HOOVER

No.

*Brief silence.*

JOHNSON

Any news on the killings?

HOOVER

I'm still waiting news on James Reeb but we know who killed the woman.

JOHNSON

'The woman'. You mean Viola Liuzzo.

HOOVER

Yes. Viola Liuzzo. (*involuntary repugnance*) The woman alone in a car with a young negro in the front seat.

*An incredulous, angry silence.*

GOODWIN

He was a civil rights worker needing transport to Montgomery.

*HOOVER ignores this, keeping his focus on JOHNSON.*

HOOVER

(*trying to retrieve ground*) We have very good information in the Liuzzo case.

JOHNSON

Really?

HOOVER

Yes, Mr President. We had an agent in the killer's car.

*HOOVER has produced this like some kind of trump card. After momentary surprise, JOHNSON fixes HOOVER in a cold stare of power.*

JOHNSON

(*slowly*) You're telling me the FBI cannot protect the life of one of the most important men in America but is able take part in racist murders. Seems to me you're presiding over an organisation designed to know everything and *do . . .* nothing.

*HOOVER is rocked to the core. He takes a few moments to recover.*

HOOVER

That is not how I would characterise our operations, Mr President.

*Silence.*

JOHNSON

Mister Director. If something were to happen to Martin Luther King on the road to Montgomery I would be very, very . . . disappointed. (*pause*) That's all.

*No-one has threatened J Edgar Hoover's position for decades. He's speechless. Utterly humiliated. He turns and walks towards the door. CLOSE-UP of HOOVER: anger and hatred.*

**INT            HOUSE            DAY**

*Gloved hands place a gun-barrel into its slot in a GUN-CASE containing the disassembled parts of a rifle with telescopic sights. The gloved hands close the GUN-CASE.*

**INT/INT        SIDE ROOM/KING HOME            DAY**

*WE begin with a CLOSE-UP of KING, talking quietly on the phone, then INTERCUT to follow the conversation.*

KING  
How are the kids?

CORETTA  
They're fine.

KING  
They missing me?

CORETTA  
Yes.

KING  
You missing me?

CORETTA  
Yes.

KING  
I'm missing you. Very much.

*Silence.*

KING  
Sunday we're going back to the bridge. And whatever happens, this time we won't turn back.

*CORETTA is at the other end. She's silent for a moment.*

CORETTA  
I want to be there.

KING

Too dangerous.

CORETTA

Martin. I want to be there.

**INT                    BEDROOM                    DAWN**

*Just before dawn. KING is in pyjamas in bed. He's awake, staring at the ceiling. ABERNATHY is in the other bed, snoring lightly. KING has obviously been awake a long time – maybe all night. Then, from outside, comes the sound of a vehicle, building to a steady rumble. KING looks puzzled. He gets up and goes to the window. He sees:*

**EXT                    SELMA                    DAWN**

*a convoy of US Army jeeps containing SOLDIERS rolling past in the street below.*

**INT                    BEDROOM                    DAWN**

*A CLOSE-UP of KING: amazement and joy. He turns - and ABERNATHY, also in pyjamas, is standing next to him. They look at each other in disbelief.*

KING

We did it, Ralphie. We did it.

*A moment. Suddenly ABERNATHY looks outraged.*

ABERNATHY

'We'? 'We'?! There you go again! It was *my* big speech that done it!

*KING stares, uncertain for a moment. ABERNATHY cracks a huge grin and roars with laughter. They grab each others' arms and start dancing round the room, yelling triumphantly.*

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAWN**

*SOLDIERS are dropped off from jeeps and start to line the empty bridge in the early morning, standing at ease at regular intervals, holding rifles with fixed bayonets.*

**EXT                    UNDERNEATH PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAWN**

*Above the turbid waters of the Alabama River, a US Army BOMB DISPOSAL TEAM comb the underside of the bridge.*

**EXT                    HIGHWAY                    DAWN**

*US Army SOLDIERS inspect a culvert in a section of highway passing through swampland.*

**EXT                    HIGHWAY                    DAWN**

*A BOMB DISPOSAL TEAM investigate a car left near the highway. A tow-truck stands by to remove it.*

**INT                    WHITE HOUSE                    DAWN**

*JOHNSON is alone at breakfast. He looks at a newspaper front page leading with 'King Marches On Montgomery' – but JOHNSON's eyes are on a smaller headline: 'Johnson Sends Marines Into Danang'. He picks up the phone and dials.*

**JOHNSON**

*You seen the New York Times? (pause) We gotta stop the press getting hold of every fuckin move I make on Vietnam . . .*

**EXT                    LOCATION UNCERTAIN                    DAY**

*A strange, powerful noise fills the air: two US Army helicopters rise into view. The sound and the imagery are iconically Vietnam war – but then we realise the choppers are rising above the Pettus Bridge, watched by a subdued CROWD of mainly hostile onlookers gathered on the Montgomery side. The CROWD is marshalled by SOLDIERS, US MARSHALLS, resentful Federalised STATE TROOPERS and a few detached, observant men we can assume are FBI AGENTS. A large number of JOURNALISTS is gathered in a well-protected group. They include CAMERA-CREWS from all over the world.*

*Everyone is watching the empty bridge.*

*The CROWD starts to become noisy and defiant. The heads of the front rank of MARCHERS have appeared above the bridge's horizon.*

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAY**

*Seen from above: two army helicopters hover above three thousand MARCHERS.*

**INT                    WALLACE'S OFFICE                    DAY**

*In CLOSE-UP: newspaper with headline 'KING MARCHES ON MONTGOMERY'. The newspaper is on Wallace' desk. WALLACE is staring out the window.*

**EXT                    CROWD                    DAY**

*Briefly, another close shot of the GUN-CASE being carried through a crowd.*

**EXT                    PETTUS BRIDGE                    DAY**

*As the MARCHERS descend towards the end of the bridge, the CROWD becomes increasingly angry, until they are screaming racist abuse in a desperate rage verging on hysteria.*

*As the MARCHERS approach the camera, we see that KING has CORETTA with him. Next to King and Coretta are CAGER and VIOLA.*

**EXT                    HIGHWAY                    DAY**

*MARCHERS march in sunshine. SOLDIERS stand guard along the route, backs to the Marchers, facing groups of RACISTS.*

**EXT                    CROWD                    DAY**

*The GUN-CASE is being carried through an office parking lot.*

**EXT                    PLANTATION                    DAY**

*WORKERS spontaneously leave their work in the fields, walking past bemused white OVERSEERS on horseback, to cheer the passing MARCHERS.*

**EXT                    HIGHWAY                    DAY**

*MARCHERS sing 'Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!' in pouring rain. SOLDIERS stand guard in ponchos, their backs to the Marchers, but facing no-one in the downpour, except a few dispirited-looking faces behind parked car windows.*

**INT                    SCHOOLHOUSE                    DAY**

*The singing of 'Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!' continues over: a classroom, very overcrowded with black SCHOOLCHILDREN. The TEACHER, hearing the sound of singing, looks out of the window.*

**EXT                    SCHOOLHOUSE                    DAY**

*The TEACHER and the SCHOOLCHILDREN emerge from the schoolhouse, silent and awed, looking down at the MARCHERS on the highway as the sound of 'Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!' rises from the valley. (And now we can see how dilapidated the school is, little better than a broken-down shack, holes patched with cardboard.)*

**EXT                    CAMPSITE                    NIGHT**

*MARCHERS mingle round campfires amidst a small canvas city.*

**EXT                    SWAMPLAND                    MORNING**

*MARCHERS are silent as they pass through a sinister-looking landscape.*

**EXT                    SMALLHOLDING                    DAY**

*A dirt-poor smallholding by the highway. Outside the tiny wooden house a POOR WHITE FAMILY stare in uncomprehending silence as the MARCHERS pass.*

**EXT                    FIRE-ESCAPE                    DAY**

*The GUN-CASE is being carried up some metal steps, past a sign which says 'ACCESS FORBIDDEN - CONSTRUCTION WORK IN PROGRESS', and on a temporary barrier.*

**EXT                    MONTGOMERY                    DAY**

*KING is standing in the midst of a vast crowd, beneath the Alabama State Capitol. In a few moments he will address the crowd. Near him is CAGER and VIOLA. KING looks at them for a long moment. CAGER moves close to KING.*

**CAGER**

*It was worth it. The boy dying. I want you to know: it was worth it.*

*KING is too grateful and too moved to speak. He merely nods a thank-you. He looks at CORETTA, overcome. A moment between them.*

CORETTA

Go on now, Martin. Tell them what they need to hear.

*KING turns and approaches some microphones – linked to a powerful system of loudspeakers, so his voice echoes powerfully around the buildings.*

KING

My people! My people! We are here today to tell America and the world:  
a people united in a just cause is a force that mighty armies cannot  
overcome!

*Suddenly we are looking at KING through a telescopic sight. The image is a little blurred at first then the sight is focused and we see KING in brilliant close-up. KING looks up - directly into the telescopic sight. CUT TO:*

INT BUILDING DAY

*a rifle with telescopic sight, held by gloved hands. CUT TO:*

EXT MONTGOMERY DAY

*KING, seen through a TELESCOPIC SIGHT.*

KING

We know there are hard times and bad days ahead of us but now we know  
the battle is ours to win, all over the South. The victory is ours to take, all  
over America!

*CUT TO:*

INT BUILDING DAY

*the rifle for a moment – and the gloved hands.*

EXT MONTGOMERY DAY

*KING, continuing his speech.*

KING

The battle is for equality in all its forms and all its meanings and the  
victory will require years more of struggle and sacrifice. And yes, perhaps  
there will be others like Jimmie Lee Jackson who will have to make the  
ultimate sacrifice. *(pause, passionately)* But I submit to you that if a man  
has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live!

*CUT to KING in the TELESCOPIC SIGHT. The SIGHT holds steady for some moments as KING pauses – and we wait for the gunshot.*

*Abruptly, the SIGHT leaves KING. We CUT TO a conventional view as the camera moves slowly over the Capitol. The windows of the Capitol have people standing in them, sometimes several people, watching and listening to the amazing scene below them. Every window except one. CUT to TELESCOPIC SIGHT VIEW as it settles on a window which has its curtains drawn.*

**INT                    WALLACE'S OFFICE                    DAY**

*WALLACE is alone in the curtained room, smoking, staring down at his desk, and trying not to listen to the voice that seems to fill his room.*

**KING (OFF-CAMERA)**

*But victory will be ours!*

*To a gathering roar outside, WALLACE looks up. He slowly gets out of his chair. CUT TO:*

**EXT                    CAPITOL                    DAY**

*TELESCOPIC SIGHT VIEW of the closed curtains on Wallace's window. There's a slight movement at one side of the curtains. WALLACE appears in the sights. CUT TO:*

**INT                    BUILDING                    DAY**

*The gun and the gloved hands gripping it. One of the shirt-sleeves slides up a little - to reveal black skin. CUT TO:*

**EXT                    MONTGOMERY                    DAY**

*The noise dies down and KING continues his speech.*

**KING**

*And so this afternoon I plead with you: keep your faith in non-violence. Keep your faith in its dignity! And . . .*

*CUT TO:*

**EXT                    CAPITOL                    DAY**

*WALLACE in the TELESCOPIC SIGHT.*

**KING (OFF-CAMERA)**

*. . . in its power! But always remember when we talk of victory, and when we talk of the power of non-violence, we are not talking of the defeat or the humiliation of the white man . . .*

*CUT TO:*

**EXT                    BUILDING                    DAY**

*A wider angle reveals the gunman. It's CARL. He's in a window of an empty building which is undergoing heavy refurbishment. CARL holds his aim. CUT TO:*

**EXT            MONTGOMERY    DAY**

*KING continues his speech.*

**KING**

. . . we are talking of a society that has grown beyond prejudice and racism, a society that has been reconciled by the only kind of victory that leaves no fear and hatred in its wake: . . .

**EXT            CAPITOL            DAY**

*The image of WALLACE in the TELESCOPIC SIGHT becomes unsteady.*

**KING (OFF-CAMERA)**

. . . that is the victory - and that is the power - of non-violent protest.

*CUT TO:*

**INT            BUILDING            DAY**

*The rifle wavers as CARL loses concentration. His eyes leave the sight – to watch and listen to King. CUT TO:*

**EXT            MONTGOMERY    DAY**

*A CLOSE-UP of KING.*

**KING**

We are talking of a society whose citizens are truly at peace with themselves and with each other!

*CUT TO:*

**INT            BUILDING            DAY**

*CARL gets to his feet, leaving the rifle lying on the ground. CARL stands to one side of the window, looking down at King. CUT TO:*

**INT            WALLACE'S OFFICE    DAY**

*From one side of his window, WALLACE stares down at King. CUT TO:*

**EXT            MONTGOMERY            DAY**

*WALLACE's POV: we're looking down on a sea of people. As we hear KING continue his speech we gradually descend towards the figure at the heart of this multitude.*

**KING**

'When?' I hear you ask. 'When will this day come?' Soon. Soon. Because justice and truth cannot be denied. Because when truth and justice are our

weapons, no force on God's earth can overpower us! 'When will this day come?' Soon. Soon. Because:

**INT                      BUILDING                      DAY**  
*CARL turns and heads out of the building, leaving the rifle where it lies.*

**KING (OOV)**  
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword;  
His truth is marching on.

*The camera moves to the window and we look down at KING, slowly ZOOMING DOWN towards him.*

**KING**  
He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgement seat.  
O, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant my feet!  
Our God is marching on.

Glory, hallelujah! Glory, hallelujah!  
Glory, hallelujah! Glory, hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

*KING looks up into camera. We continue to CLOSE on KING as a great long roar of passionate belief rises around him.*

*Text on screen: (each line appearing and disappearing in turn)*

*Five months later Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.*

*Within a year, more than half of voting-age black Americans in the South were registered to vote.*

*Three years later, on April 4 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated. He was 39 years old.*

*FREEZE on CLOSE-UP of KING.*

**END**