

SELMA

Written by

Paul Webb

Text on screen:

ALABAMA, 1965

1 EXT TOWN SQUARE - DAY

1

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.

2 EXT STORE - DAY

2

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

3 INT STORE - DAY

3

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.

4 EXT SQUARE - DAY

4

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

5 INT STORE - DAY

5

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.

6 EXT SQUARE - DAY

6

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.

7 INT STORE - DAY 7
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.

8 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 8
CARL sees the MAN with the shotgun on the other side of the glass-fronted door and for a moment their eyes meet.

9 INT STORE - DAY 9
The MAN with the shotgun watches CARL turn along the front of the store and disappear from view.

10 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 10
CARL walks towards a public phone.

11 INT STORE - DAY 11
The MAN returns to the chair and resumes watching the PEOPLE across the square.

12 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 12
CARL finishes dialling, raises the handset and waits for someone to answer.

13 INT STORE - DAY 13
The MAN goes on watching the PEOPLE across the square.

14 EXT SQUARE - DAY 14
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.

15 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 15

CARL has the phone to his ear.

CARL

It's Carl. Yeah... They just released us bout ten minutes ago. No.... they left. Just left us on the street. Ya'll need to send us some help... Like yesterday.

16 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 16

The PRIESTS and the GIRLS keep walking towards the store.

17 INT STORE - DAY 17

The MAN with the shotgun stands up.

18 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 18

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:

19 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 19

the PRIESTS and the GIRLS approach the storefront steps.

20 INT STORE - DAY 20

The MAN pumps the shotgun.

21 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 21

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

CARL

Twenty minutes? No now..NOW!

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

CARL (CONT'D)

Hey!!

22 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 22
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.

23 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 23
CARL thrusts out his hand in a 'stop' gesture.
CARL
Don't go in there!

24 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 24
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:

25 INT STORE - DAY 25
From the back of the store, the MAN holding the gun is statue-still, calmly aiming at the GIRL framed in the doorway.

26 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 26
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.

27 INT STORE - DAY 27
The MAN pumps the shotgun and with the same calm - walks towards the door, and the GIRL.

28 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 28
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 stares like a deer in the headlight. She wets herself. The MAN lowers the shotgun, turns and strolls back into the store.

29 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 29

CARL stares in disbelief.

30 EXT SQUARE - DAY 30

The PEOPLE across the square stare in disbelief.

31 EXT PUBLIC PHONE - DAY 31

CARL turns and grabs the phone.

32 EXT SQUARE - DAY 32

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

33 EXT STORE FRONT - DAY 33

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.

34 INT STORE - DAY 34

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

35 INT WAITING ROOM - DAY 35

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, memorizing a section. CARL looks across the room at a partially-open door, labelled 'Registrars'.

ENTER LILA-MAE MAYHEW, a sweet middle aged white woman. From the looks of it, the women are friends. Lila-Mae approaches Annie with concern.

LILA MAE

Annie? ...Annie Lee, what are you doing here?

(whispers)

You know you shouldn't be in here. This ain't no place for a decent colored lady. Why are you looking for trouble?

ANNIE

I got to do what I gotta do Miss Lila Mae.

Lila Mae GLARES at Carl accusatory.

LILA MAE

You put her up to this?!

Carl STARES straight ahead. Lila Mae snarls.

LILA MAE (CONT'D)

A dis-damn-grace. You both should be shamed.

36

EXT WHITE HOUSE/STREET - DAY

36

A taxi approaches the White House.

37

INT TAXI - DAY

37

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 tells me what he did to your momma?

YOUNG
 (a beat... smiles...)
 Sick. You're very ill, Reverend.

King laughs.

38 INT COURTHOUSE/WAITING ROOM - DAY

38

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. Please pick it up.

ANNIE stares at CLARK.

ANNIE
 Sheriff Clark . . .

A moment between them.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 . . . I didn't drop it there.

CLARK
 Did I ask who dropped it? 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 (CONT'D)
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.

39 INT WHITE HOUSE/OUTER OFFICE – DAY 39

KING waits alone in the outer office of the President.

40 INT COURTHOUSE/WAITING ROOM – DAY 40

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.

41 INT WHITE HOUSE/OUTER OFFICE – DAY 41

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!

42 INT COURTHOUSE/REGISTRAR'S OFFICE – DAY 42

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.

43

INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

43

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON strides across the WHITE HOUSE/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 (CONT'D)

...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 (CONT'D)

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

KING

Your secretary put it there five minutes ago, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Three!

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 (CONT'D)

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

KING

NEGROS, Mister President. We are called NEGROS, Sir. I want Federal legislation to help us to register to vote. I want local registrars replaced with Federal registrars in every town. And if necessary, Federal marshals to escort NEGROS to those registrars.

JOHNSON is unfased - 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 'fore you done won the first! Most the South still not desegregatin'. You should be concentratin' on (points at photo on wall) - getting the '64 act up and runnin'. And this voting shit is the tail wagging the dog! What use is the vote if you can't buy decent food for your kids, keep 'em warm at night, put shoes on their feet? People ain't gonna vote when they're living like dogs. Folks say money is the root of all evil.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

They're wrong. Poverty is the root
of all evil. Poverty is public
enemy number one! Now! - I'm
putting together a programme of
welfare reforms -

(proudly indicating a
three foot stack)

- this high! I call it 'the War on
Poverty'!

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

44

INT COURTHOUSE/REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - DAY

44

CLOSE-UP of the REGISTRARS: smugly hostile. Annie still stands before them. REGISTRAR 2 thrusts a book at her.

REGISTRAR 2
Now open this and read.

Annie takes the book and starts turning the pages, searching.

REGISTRAR 1
You not familiar with the works of
Shakespeare...

She leafs through the pages; REGISTRAR 1 inks the 'Denied' stamp and raises it above the application form. Annie starts reading.

ANNIE
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 Annie's reading.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 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?

Annie stares at the gloating REGISTRARS for a moment - and continues reading.

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

REGISTRAR 3
 Enough of that!

REGISTRAR 1 slams the 'Denied' stamp onto her form.

ANNIE
 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 Annie. A moment.

REGISTRAR 1
 You threatening us, you black
 bitch?

Annie contemplates the gun - for a frighteningly long time.

REGISTRAR 1 (CONT'D)
 I wanna hear you say, 'No, sir' -
 or I'll blow your black ass clean
 through that fuckin door!

Annie stares at REGISTRAR 1.

REGISTRAR 1 (CONT'D)
 Say it!

Another long moment.

ANNIE
 No. (pause) Sir.

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

45

INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

45

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 - get these reforms through Congress! ...I'll give you whatever you need.

A moment between them. Is this a bribe? 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 one. They're killing us like flies. And no one is ever convicted cause they're protected by white legal officials, elected by an all-white electorate, and freed by all-white juries - all-white cause you can't serve on a jury unless you're on the electoral register! We need the vote in the South. It isn't a matter of priorities - it's a matter of life and death!

Brief cold silence. JOHNSON looks into KING's eyes. He's underestimated him and this day is lost. JOHNSON smiles resignedly. He sits down.

JOHNSON
What is your plan, Martin?

KING
A voting rights campaign. In Selma.

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

46 INT WHITE HOUSE/OUTER OFFICE - DAY

46

KING and YOUNG are leaving the White House. King is somber. No more joking.

YOUNG
How'd it go?

KING
He offered me a job.

YOUNG
As what?

KING
House boy.

47 INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

47

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 (CONT'D)
(into phone, off the King photograph)
Take that down. Now. Before Phillips and Peterson arrive!
(to Goodwin)
(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 Those Alabama boys see him in this
 office they'll shit a brick.

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 (CONT'D)
 Little cocksucker don't trust me.
 Can you believe that?

INT. DIRT FLOOR SHACK - NIGHT

CALVIN, a bifocaled 13 year old black kid watches his new TV. Behind is his mother MAYBELLE, a heavyset black woman, folding up the cardboard box it came in. She smiles gratefully at VIOLA LIUZZO, a friendly, working-class white woman, talking on the phone to her kids.

MAYBELLE
 Its a wonderful TV Miss Viola! You
 really shouldn't have.

Viola grins and waves away the thanks.

VIOLA LIUZZO
 The least I could do, you putting
 me up in your home, time and time
 again.

Calvin turns from the TV, and rolls his eyes at his mother.

CALVIN
 Billy Ware called me a baboon again
 today, momma. I'm sick a' him.
 Doctor King come to Selma and say
 march then dammit I'ma march!

MAYBELLE
 Oh no you ain't! You gone get
 yourself in a heap of trouble! I
 see Sheriff Clark every day! He
 ain't playing with dis marchin mess
 and neither is dem police!

CALVIN
 Will you stop being such a kiss ass
 to that man!

Maybelle slaps Calvin HARD.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 (points to Viola, through
 tears)

Miss Viola comin all the way from
 Detroit every month to help with
 the movement. What you been doin,
 momma?

Maybelle turns, putting the TV box in the trash.

VIOLA LIUZZO
 (hand over phone)
 Maybelle, I'm sorry, I didn't mean
 to cause anything.
 (into phone)
 Hold on a minute guys.

CALVIN
 (to Viola)
 What you causing is me to realize
 my mama ain't want me to do nuthin
 but pick cotton all my life!

Calvin runs out the door. Maybelle runs after him.

MAYBELLE
 Get yo black ass in here, boy!
 CALVIN!
 (to Viola)
 He gone mess around and get hurt.

VIOLA LIUZZO
 Boys his age get all fired up.
 He'll be back.
 (into phone)
 Okay I gotta go. I'm driving back
 home tomorrow. Evangeline, please
 listen to your aunt. I love you
 guys!

KING is in the BATHROOM sitting on the toilet.

INT KING HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

CORETTA KING is instructing classical piano to her DAUGHTER
 Yolanda in the LIVING ROOM.

INT KING HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

The other children - MARTIN LUTHER III, DEXTER and BERNICE - are in the BEDROOM listening to James Brown on the radio.

INT KING HOME/BATHROOM - DAY

King is hearing Brown's funk and Coretta's classical as he smokes a cigarette. He starts to tap his feet to James Brown.

INT KING HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Coretta turns to the bedroom with an annoyed stare banging harder on the keys. The Children in the bedroom are dancing their asses off.

INT KING HOME/HALLWAY - DAY

TOILET FLUSH, King dashes into the hallway, runs...

INT KING HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

...into the bedroom with the kids, turns the music up and starts dancing with them. James Brown has taken over the house and the kids are having the time of their lives.

INT KING HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frustrated, Coretta gets up from the piano, walks...

INT KING HOME/HALLWAY - DAY

...past the bathroom, and waves her hand in disgust at the smell.

INT KING HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

Coretta enters the bedroom doorway. She's attractive and has a certain dignity - while he is in his element. King and the kids are bustin-a-move!

CORETTA

Martin, turn it down. I'm practicing with Yolanda. And did you wash your hands?

King stops, looks at the floor. The kids start giggling. Young Martin turns the music down.

CORETTA (CONT'D)
And don't touch my kids without
washing your hands. Leaving the
bathroom...

INT KING HOME/BATHROOM - DAY

King goes back in the bathroom and washes his hands.

INT KING HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Coretta goes back to teaching her lesson.

INT KING HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

King goes back to the kids, turns the music up and they all start dancing again. The doorbell rings. CORETTA returns to the bedroom. The kids cower behind their dad.

CORETTA
Martin!

She laughs - then a serious edge with sadness enters her expression.

A CLOSE-UP of KING, smiling sheepishly. CORETTA glances towards the living room.

CORETTA (CONT'D)
The car's here.

A moment between KING and CORETTA.

49 EXT INTER-STATE HIGHWAY - DAY

49

We're looking down on a four-lane interstate. In thin traffic we pick out an ordinary dark blue Ford.

50 INT KING'S CAR/MOVING - DAY

50

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.

51 EXT INTER-STATE HIGHWAY - DAY

51

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

ABERNATHY (VO)
You got twenty-eight miles to come
to your senses!

52 INT KING'S CAR/MOVING - DAY

52

CLOSE-UP of ABERNATHY: irritated. A man that's very direct. You know exactly what he's thinking.

ABERNATHY
World president of black people and
he wants to go to Selma, Alabama.
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.
Somebody gives me a Nobel Peace
Prize - and once in ten years I
make the big speech.

Martin LAUGHS.

YOUNG
Shut up.

53 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

53

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)
Good God. Lynch Central. The only
way we're gonna make white folks
round here like us...

54 INT KING'S CAR/MOVING - DAY

54

KING and YOUNG exchange a patient smile.

ABERNATHY
is to die'...

KING
Ralph, 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
Reverends, kiss my ass.

55 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

55

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

56 EXT ROAD INTO TOWN/SELMA - DAY

56

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!'

ABERNATHY
*With nigger scalps thrown in for
free.*

KING
(smiles)
NEGRO scalps Ralphie. NEGRO scalps.

57 EXT CAR - DAY

57

King's CAR approaches a man standing on a corner: James BEVEL, light-skinned black, mid-thirties, small, vivacious, casually dressed, wearing a denim jacket and a beanie-cap on his balding head - raises his hand and smiles as the car slows.

Bevel gets into the car. He is also a member of Dr. King's SCLC.

BEVEL
Welcome to Selma, Dr. King.

Dr King affectionately takes off Bevel's beanie-cap and points to his balding head

KING
See Ralpie they already got one!

Abernathy rolls his eyes in disgust.

INT CLARK'S HOME DAY

Clark reads the paper as his WIFE gossips. We see MAYBELLE is their maid. She serves them breakfast.

WIFE
... then Laney said they got flying turtles in Arkansas. Now you know she's lyin.

Clark grunts at his wife but looks up when Maybelle says:

MAYBELLE
Mr. Clark, ya'll been out lookin
for Calvin?

CLARK
Maybelle, leave me alone.

MAYBELLE
(urgent)
I done told you to find my son!
Calvin's been gone missing for two
days now. He only 13. You gotta get
out there and find him!

WIFE
(exasperated)
Oh, Jim would you please just find
that dang boy?

CLARK
(to wife)
I'm about sick of your yakkin!

Clark looks at Maybelle.

MAYBELLE
Mr. Clark, go on now.

Clark throws down his paper and leaves.

INT. WALLACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Governor George WALLACE - short, dark, intense, stocky - stands in his office, smoking hard.

WALLACE
That motherfuckin' Hoover! He think
he's Elliot Ness and Fu Man-fuckin'-
chu rolled into one!

WALLACE turns 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 stubby looking. They betray a flicker of amusement as WALLACE goes into a rant.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
He phones personally to tell me
Martin Luther King's coming to
Alabama! Like I needed telling
that! King's spent most his fuckin'
life causing trouble in Alabama! So
thank you J Edgar-the-faggot-who-
lives-at-home-with-his-mother-
Hoover and the F-B- 'bout-as-much-
use-as-tits-on-a-fuckin-bull-I!!

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

WALLACE (CONT'D)
But what I don't get... and what
that weirdo creep couldn't tell me
is this: always the big stage
before... why Selma? What the
fuck's in Selma?

He screams off to his maid.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
Hattie, bring me ma' newspaper!

58 EXT HOTEL ALBERT - DAY 58

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

59 INT HOTEL ALBERT - DAY 59

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.

60 EXT HOTEL ALBERT - DAY 60

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

61 INT KING'S CAR - DAY 61

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

62 EXT HOTEL ALBERT - DAY 62

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

63 INT HOTEL ALBERT - DAY 63

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

JAMES ROBINSON
Doctor King, May I introduce
myself?

KING
(smiles)
Yes, oh 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.

64 INT HOTEL ROOM - DAY

64

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 (CONT'D)
Doctor King?

KING
No.

BAKER
Alright.

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

ABERNATHY
(to Young and Bevel)
I want this understood. I'm number two in this organization and I say Doc's got a concussion and he's in no fit condition. We get him to a hospital and the hell out of this town!

KING
Ralph... stop sounding like a lady and get yourself a beer.

ABERNATHY looks at the others. He is angry with them and himself. KING gets to his feet and starts taking his shirt off.

65 INT HOTEL ROOM/SHOWER - DAY

65

KING stands - head back, arms outspread - in the soothing waters of a shower, BLOOD trickling down his face. He looks at SCAR on his chest, shaped like a cross.

66 INT HOTEL ROOM - DAY

66

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

Lord said, "Martin Luther, stand up for Justice. Stand up for Truth. And I will be with you, even until the end of the world."

(a beat, smile)

Showtime!

67 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - DAY

67

CLOSE-UP of KING 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!

The crowd yells "That's right!" And "Naw sir we surely don't!" Etc.

KING (CONT'D)
 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 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. He looks up at KING. CLOSE-UP of KING: we catch him dispassionately assessing the mood of the Meeting.

68

INT BROWN'S CHAPEL/BACK ROOM - DAY

68

With the sound of the MEETING singing 'Eyes On The Prize' ("Well, the one thing we did *RIGHT* was the day we started to *FIGHT!* Keep your *EYES* on the *PRIZE*, hold on..." in the background, KING, ABERNATHY, YOUNG and BEVEL enter the room.

KING

(to Abernathy) How was I?

ABERNATHY

Insecure.

KING

What?

ABERNATHY

(smiles)

You did all right.

BEVEL

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

KING

Ready to march?

BEVEL

Oh yeah!

ABERNATHY

Let's get it on.

69

EXT BROWN'S CHAPEL - DUSK

69

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 organization (Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee) which regards King's organization as a conservative personality-cult. CARL is with them.

70

INT BROWN'S CHAPEL/BACK ROOM - NIGHT

70

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, John LEWIS and CARL. FORMAN is hot-headed; LEWIS is more measured. CARL stays in the background, keenly observant, his own man. Though he remains silent, CARL is a strong presence throughout this scene.

FORMAN

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

LEWIS

All we're saying is our organization has had people working on voter registration in Alabama for two years . . .

WILLIAMS

You ain't got very far have you?

LEWIS

We're still here, ain't we?!

WILLIAMS

Meaning what?

FORMAN

Meaning this time next month you might not be! 'Meaning' like you did up there in Albany, right? You left em! You know what? You need to take that little Nobel Peace prize and step.

WILLIAMS

This is fuckin nuts!

ABERNATHY

You know what? I think we should step.

(MORE)

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)
I think we should leave these
mothefuckahs right here. Now...
come back in two years and see what
they got going on.

ABERNATHY's double-edged attack is the last straw for KING.
He erupts with sudden powerful anger.

KING
Shut up! That's enough!

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, talking his self-doubt away, as well as putting Abernathy back in check.

KING (CONT'D)
John. James. The way our
organization 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! He
kept his cool, kept arresting us in
a humane way; carried people in the
jail-wagons on stretchers. Day in -
day out. There was no drama.

FORMAN
(disparagingly)
You mean there was no cameras.

KING
Exactly! What we gotta do is raise
white consciousness. Especially the
consciousness in the Oval Office.
Kennedy ignored us in Albany -
because the newspapers and TV
ignored us. And right now Johnson
fryin other fish and he'll ignore
us too - if he can. We'll get his
attention all right... if we're on
the front page of every newspaper
in every state and if we're on the
TV on every news channel every
morning and every night. And
that... requires drama!

A brief, intense silence. Now, finally, CARL looks at KING with respect and some measure of approval.

71

EXT SELMA/STREET - DAY

71

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

KING (VO)

Clark doesn't control the streets.
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) (CONT'D)

Baker controls the streets. I don't
doubt he 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.

72

EXT SELMA/STREET - DAY

72

The MARCHERS are now walking in widely spaced pairs.

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

KING (VO)

So that's the difference. In Albany
we were fighting all over the place
and it was a mess. Here, the County
Courthouse is where we focus our
war cause that's where the voter
registration is...

73

EXT COURTHOUSE - DAY

73

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

KING (VO)
 ...But remember, there's some crazies in there.

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) (CONT'D)
 Selma County Courthouse is the perfect stage-set.

Across the street stands a group of POSSEMEN, licensed vigilantes - a frighteningly crazy bunch. The possemen's dress ranges from blue-collar working clothes to cowboy outfits, bearing crudely made pin-badges stating 'Sheriff's Posse'. 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) (CONT'D)
 And trust me, 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, spits on her face, and march off.

AMELIA takes out a handkerchief and wipes the saliva from her throat.

KING

Sheriff! That was a disgraceful and
illegal act!

CLARK

You're right!

CLARK turns to the DEPUTIES.

CLARK (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

Where in hell you think you're going? Ain't you heard me?

AMELIA gives CLARK a look of utter disdain, steps around the club, and walks back towards the main group.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Okay lady, I'ma show you where you're goin!

CLARK seizes AMELIA her by the collar of her coat.

CLARK (CONT'D)

You're under arrest!

(whispers in her ear)

Ape-bitch!

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 (CONT'D)

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.

75

INT WALLACE'S OFFICE - DAY

75

Governor WALLACE sits at his desk, hands buried in his face.

WALLACE

They just jailed two hundred nigra
agitators in Selma.

LINGO (OFF-CAMERA)

Two hundred and some.

AL LINGO and JOHN CLOUD sit opposite him. HATTIE PEARL - Wallace's black maid, is cleaning the blinds.

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 very window, watching
thousands of nigras, right out
there, demonstrating in the state
capital - and listening to King
demandin that we give dem damn
nigras the vote. And then I go home
and it's on national goddamn TV
that night!

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

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Selma's too close to Montgomery.
That King and his filthy Commie
agitators are just a few miles down
Route 80. My nightmare could come
true. Goddamn, niggas.

Hattie Pearl slaps Wallace's shoulder with her duster and gives him a look. Wallace rolls his eyes.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Hattie Pearl! Go fetch me a
lemonade.

Hattie leaves. WALLACE calms, shrewdness entering his expression.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I want the Selma authorities to treat King like they're a bunch of purty Homecoming Queens.

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 (CONT'D)

That black faggot makes one move in this direction and we'll give him some dick.

76

INT COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

76

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

A well-known local agitator. Amelia Boynton.

REPORTER

Is she a Miss or a Mrs?

CLARK

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 sincerity)

Son, I really, really don't.

(MORE)

CLARK (CONT'D)

What I hate is... 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. Son...

Another moment between CLARK and the BLACK JOURNALIST.

CLARK (CONT'D)

(sincerely)

...the white man down here is the nigger's best friend... long as the nigger knows his place.

77

INT CELL - NIGHT

77

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

78

INT JAIL - NIGHT

78

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.

79

INT CELL - NIGHT

79

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.

80

EXT WASHINGTON/STREET - NIGHT

80

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

81

INT PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE/MOVING - NIGHT

81

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 about. Now King... Trying to raise a shit-storm on the home front.

JOHNSON looks out of the window.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

GOODWIN

Isn't that called integrity, Mr..
President?

84

84

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 Peace Prize but that ain't what King's looking for. His glory days are almost over. That's hard for a young man. He's gonna fail in Selma. This whole thing could backfire and fuck up my War on Poverty!

86 INT CELL - DAY 86

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

87 INT CELL - DAY 87

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

88 INT CELL - DAY 88

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 outta here.

He whacks the bars with his night stick.

JAILER (CONT'D)

Get up!

BEVEL doesn't stir.

90 INT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 90

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

Doc, you've been praying over me?

KING smiles.

BEVEL (CONT'D)

We got a movement?

KING

Not yet.

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

DOCTOR TYSON

It's an honour. I'm Doctor Tyson.

The DOCTOR starts to examine BEVEL. He nods reassuringly.

DOCTOR TYSON (CONT'D)

Good. We're doing good.

KING

You registered to vote, doctor?

DOCTOR TYSON

No, Dr. King.

KING

You gonna march with us?

The DOCTOR says nothing, just continues his examination.

KING (CONT'D)

We just announced another Freedom Day. Next week.

DOCTOR TYSON

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

KING

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

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

DOCTOR TYSON

C'mon Doctor King. Negro in the South got a good job he don't do civil rights.

(MORE)

DOCTOR TYSON (CONT'D)
 Besides when Sheriff Clark starts
 cracking Negro heads you'll need me
 to put in all those civil rights
 stitches.

KING laughs and they shake hands. CLOSE-UP of KING:
 thoughtful. CUT TO:

INT WALKER'S CAFÉ DAY

CLOSE-UP on KING: same thoughtful expression. KING is eating with YOUNG - CLOSE-UP on plate: pile of collard greens, fried chicken, mac and cheese. King pours hot sauce vigorously over everything and starts devouring.

YOUNG
 You want some collard greens on
 that hot sauce, Negro?

KING
 (while eating)
 Amelia Boynton. That arrested
 woman. She got any friends?

YOUNG
 Oh yeah. Plenty. Ministers.
 Beauticians. Teachers.

KING
 (nods)
 Good. And if you could choose one
 group from the black middle-class
 to march which would it be?

YOUNG
 Teachers.

KING
 Mm-hm. That's cause teachers have
 status. And everybody knows em.
 Personally.

Pause.

KING (CONT'D)
 Andy, we get the teachers out... we
 got a movement. Get that Reese guy
 from the Dallas County Voters
 League. See who he can pull off.

EXT. GADSON'S HOUSE: PORCH - DAY

Modest porch of Ms. JONETTA GADSON, a schoolteacher.

GADSON

Off. Fred, get off my porch. You're talkin about losing my job. My mother is sick. My husband's outta work. The school board will wait till King leaves then I'm out.

REESE

We're doing it for Amelia.

GADSON

I love Amelia but she ain't paying my bills.

(looks up at Young)

You want some more sugar in your tea, baby?

REESE

Jonetta, I don't think you really understand how important this is.

GADSON

You must be out of your mind, man. I got 14 year old kids that can't read. I ain't got time for this marching mess.

YOUNG

(interrupts, charming,
almost seductive)

Baby get this. We got folks dying.
They killing us left and right,
Save that teaching line for
somebody else. You wanna help your
kids? March.

Gadson looks torn. As we move into a close-up of her eyes. A sound emerges: FEET WALKING.

EXT. SELMA STREETS - DAY

CLOSE - IMMACULATED CLAD LEGS AND FEET

They MARCH with military precision. We hear their rhythmic feet, shoes on pavement but louder now.

ANGLE - STREET

Jonetta Gadson, imposing in her Sunday best. She's marching at the front, leading over a hundred teachers.

INT/EXT TELEPHONE BOOTH DAY

The sounds of feet louder now marching as the Negro reporter waits for the phone to be answered.

BLACK JOURNALIST
Richard? Richard - Elmore! The
teachers!!! Man, the teachers are
marchin!!!

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

POSSEMAN 1
Who you phoning, nigger? Your fat
black mammy?

The BLACK JOURNALIST rams his foot against the door and 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 across the country 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 - and some teeth out. The POSSEMEN grab his legs and start pulling him out of the booth. The bloodied BLACK JOURNALIST, still triumphant, turns his head and yells into the dangling handset.

BLACK JOURNALIST (CONT'D)
Send us some more niggers!

INT MEN'S JAIL DAY

A black CONVICT and his CELLMATE sit staring at the wall. They look up, disturbed by a noise... two PRISON GUARDS push a group of immaculately dressed TEACHERS into their cell. They all stare at each other. One teacher, MR. STEVENSON, stares directly at a Convict.

CONVICT

What's up Mr. Stevenson.

MR. STEVENSON

What are you doing in here? How are you, Wilson?

CONVICT/WILSON

I'm okay, Mr. Stevenson. 'Cept I fucked up. You know how it go.

MR. STEVENSON

(nods)

You all right?

CONVICT/WILSON

(nods)

Hangin.

(to cellmate)

Hey, this man was my teacher.

CELLMATE

(at one of the guards)

Hey Leroy! Now's the chance you and your white-trash buddies can learn to read and write!

GUARD

(riled) Shut your mouth, nigger!

Raucous laughter from INMATES throughout the CELLBLOCK and the teachers laugh too.

INT WALLACE'S KITCHEN NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of LURLEEN 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.

LURLEEN 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, ain't I never taught you nothin' about politics?

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

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 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 megawatt 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

Distantly, the sound of singing. 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
Git!!! Git, I said!

The DEPUTY closes the door in the CLEANING LADY's face.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SMALL ROOM - NIGHT

In the small room, the speaker has been switched on again.

CLOSE - CLARK

He listens to the triumphant singing in the church. His anger is etched with anxiety.

INT AMELIA BOYNTON HOUSE NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of KING, late that night, in a silent house. KING is on the phone to CORETTA, talking quietly. We INTERCUT to follow the conversation.

KING
You okay?

INT KING HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

CORETTA
Yes.

KING
I'm missing you.

CORETTA smiles to herself and says nothing.

KING (CONT'D)
You're supposed to say you're
missing me.

CORETTA
(teasing) Oh that what I'm supposed
to say?

KING
Yes it is.

CORETTA
(half teasing, half serious) Okay.
I miss you my darling. Like crazy.
Every moment, waking and sleeping.

KING
Okay. That's good enough.

Silence, each smiling down the phone line.

KING (CONT'D)
The kids okay?

CORETTA
Yes.

KING
They missing me?

CORETTA
No, honey.

KING starts laughing.

KING
What you mean, 'No'?

CORETTA
(laughing) I mean, 'Yes'. But
they're fine is what I mean.
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.

Silence. KING waits.

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 - and she plays to it, taking control, a
steely dedication to the cause emerging as she does so.

CORETTA (CONT'D)
Keep them marching, Martin. And you
have to be there - to make sure
things stay on the rails now, and
make sure someone like Jimmy Bevel
or Hoseah Williams, or Ralphy even,
they don't get carried away and do
something stupid.
(MORE)

CORETTA (CONT'D)

And then 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

The secretary JANET sits outside on the phone - J. Edgar Hoover sits on the couch staring at nothing in particular. Glances at Janet.

HOOVER

That's a lovely blouse, Janet dear.

JANET

Thank you, Mister Director.

She buzzes Johnson.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson is at his desk staring out the window. Dick Goodwin sits on the couch going through the daily de-brief. The intercom rings.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Mr. President, Mr. Hoover is here.

JOHNSON

Send him in.

Johnson and Dick look up with deliberately neutral expressions as the door opens and in walks J EDGAR HOOVER, an aging reptile.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Hello J. Edgar.

HOOVER

Hello Mister President. Mister Goodwin.

Before Johnson can speak again Hoover rants.

HOOVER (CONT'D)

Mister President over a year ago, you directed my FBI to increase our crusade against spies, saboteurs and subversives.

Johnson and Goodwin share a glance. Hoover continues:

HOOVER (CONT'D)

This responsibility was gladly accepted as the American people continue to take their liberty for granted and have ceased to think seriously about it. But the foes of America are thinking about it and have penetrated every realm of decency.

Suddenly, it seems Hoover is done. He stands silent waiting for approval. Goodwin and Johnson exchange a private glance. Goodwin hides a smirk. Johnson smiles at Hoover, stands up to shake his hand, Hoover abruptly continues.

HOOVER (CONT'D)

These subversive forces are in our schools, our churches, and civic organizations. This is because the majority of the American people are pinheads. Stupid like truck drivers and unable to think straight or speak the truth. Truth. We must force America to realize these legions of subversives are making tremendous sacrifices for an ideal. An ideal which aims to destroy everything which we hold dear.

JOHNSON

Good. Good. I sleep a lot easier knowing the FBI is looking out for the country.

Hoover nods.

HOOVER

Is that all, Mr. President...?

JOHNSON

Yes. Thank-you, Mister Director.

HOOVER goes.

GOODWIN

He's senile.

JOHNSON

And crazy as hell.

GOODWIN

Why not retire 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. Plus... he's an old friend.

EXT COURTHOUSE DAY

CLOSE-UP of a smiling SCHOOLKID, about 13. The SCHOOLKID holds 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 over 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 a circle 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 grinning 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 your little
hearts 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 amusement 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! Go 'head! March!' 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 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!

BAKER gets closer to KING and 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. He's angry. 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, huh?

Clark notices a 13 YEAR OLD SCHOOLKID, he does a double-take, goes over to him and realizes its CALVIN, Maybelle's son. Calvin has an eye missing from his socket. He is convulsing. Clark puts the eye back in its socket.

CLARK (CONT'D)
 (pain and disgusted)
 Calvin, why do you make me do this?
 Your momma's been lookin for you.
 Why do you do this to her, Calvin?

Clark slumps.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Somebody get him outta here. Get
him to a doctor then get him to his
momma.

Clark stares out at the sunset.

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
The children are all back. All
home. Wasn't no deaths.

KING sags back in his chair. He looks at BAKER.

KING
Thank-you.

A moment between them.

BAKER
Do that again and I will arrest you
for endangering the lives of
minors.

King lights a cigarette, swigs his beer.

KING
You gonna arrest that mob that beat
those defenseless children, Officer
Baker?

Confused and sad, BAKER shakes his head and goes. Abernathy stares at King and rolls his eyes in disgust. KING stares at ABERNATHY for a moment.

KING (CONT'D)
I can't do this on my own.

KING's look hardens.

KING (CONT'D)
You think we should have shared
that Nobel Prize. Don't you?

ABERNATHY stares at him.

KING (CONT'D)
You wanted that Nobel Prize, didn't you? Ralph, what did you want me to do?

Abernathy looks away.

KING (CONT'D)
Look at me, man. You been with me every step of the way. I couldn't do nothin about that.

CLOSE-UP - KING:

KING (CONT'D)
I need you, man.

After a pause that seems like an eternity. Abernathy smiles ironically, and laughs

ABERNATHY
Nigga, you're mad...

KING
And stop using that damn word.

INT COURTHOUSE NIGHT

CLARK is holding another press conference.

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 ain't right to confine children with adults. But all those kids broke loose and escaped. Shit, little nigglets run faster than Jackie Robinson.

REPORTER
Was anybody hurt?

CLARK
(trying hard not to remember Calvin)
No.

CLARK moves to the exit, where Baker stands, watching Clark with contempt. Clark and Baker know what's up.

BAKER
You piece a shit.

There's a moment. Baker throws a punch which doesn't quite connect. Through guilt and frustration, Clark goes at Baker and they are quickly dragged apart.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ethel Merman blasts THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal J. Edgar Hoover in full drag, lipstick, bracelets, high-heel pumps. His fat body squeezed into a woman's one-piece red bathing suit. Its far from flattering. He SINGS with Merman.

HOOVER
*...There's no business like show
business, like no business I
know...*

The phone rings. A hairy, manicured hand turns down the stereo and picks up the receiver.

FEMALE VOICE
President Johnson for you, sir.

HOOVER
Yes, okay Janet.

INT. WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

We see Johnson speak into the phone.

JOHNSON
What's your current information
regarding Martin Luther King?

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hoover turns down the music.

HOOVER
My information can be summed up in
a few words: King is a political
and moral degenerate.

FLASH TO:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King enters the room, smoking a cigarette.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hoover continues:

HOOVER
He's a pot smoking thug, riddled
with encephalitis.

FLASH TO:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King sitting on the couch, smoking a joint, stares at the TV.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hoover continues:

HOOVER
I personally believe he's a
pedophile.

Hoover stubs his cigarette out.

FLASH TO:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King dancing solo in his boxers holding a bottle of scotch to
his lips.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hoover continues:

HOOVER
He's an emissary from the very
bowels of communism.

FLASH TO:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A very drunk King looking down on a blond woman as she's giving him head.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Johnson takes in this information.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hoover pulls off his wig to brush it as Johnson replies.

JOHNSON

(v/o, on phone)

J Edgar, whether King writes love-letters to Kruschev or wants to drop an atomic bomb on Moscow, or has a gargantuan appetite for pussy, I don't really know. But I do know he's a non-violent emissary.

(pause)

And I want *him* to go on leading the civil rights movement and not Malcolm X.

Hoover rolls his eyes in disgust and puts his wig back on.

INT. WHITE HOUSE 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 leans into King, imposing his great physical presence but smiling all the time, King is about to get the 'Johnson Treatment.'

JOHNSON

Y'know, just fifteen months ago I was sworn in on Air Force One. Worst day of my life when Jack was assassinated. Four days later, I called my friend, Dick Russell, Leader of the Senate.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I said, 'Dick, now that I'm head hog, I'm gonna be the President who finishes Lincoln's work.' Dick said, 'Lyndon, your career'll be deader than a prostitute in Church on Christmas Sunday morning. It'll cost you the election. Why the sudden interest in the Negro?

Johnson laughs.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

People hear what they want to hear. I already told him why. I was only a caretaker President back then but in six months I ended Segregation in the United States of America forever!!! You were there when I signed the '64 Civil Rights Act.

King is touched by the words of the President.

KING

No one else could have done it, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Getting that Bill through Congress without a single compromise was the crowning achievement of my political life. That was a cattle drive, Martin and lots of folks 'round here are just gettin' up and dustin' my hoof tracks off their asses. Now if I show up at the Rodeo again hollerin' for more Civil Rights when the ink ain't even dry of the '64 Act yet, Congress'll dig in its heels. They'll say "to hell with Martin Luther King. To hell with Johnson and his Great Society Program. To hell with his War on Poverty!!! Let's just cut taxes and we all gonna be richer!!! You and I, could lose everything.

King doesn't move for a few moments then offers a few concessionary nods. Johnson think he has his Man. Who could resist? Johnson reaches across and puts a hand on King's arm, like a father to a son.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Now, what I'm proposin' is this. I announce a Special Commission to investigate electoral abuses in the South. I'll state it's specifically set up in response to your Selma campaign. You respond by declarin' the Selma campaign a major victory which is what it would be, and announce its conclusion. Then I want you to come to Washington, use your prestige and influence to the fullest in a place of power and decision making. You've done your time on the streets, Martin.

King smiles gratefully. Johnson grins hugely. King grins back.

KING

Mr. President, I'm grateful.

Johnson gets up to shake on it.

KING (CONT'D)

But I can't.

Johnson is deeply disappointed, a little hurt, then angry.

JOHNSON

Why not?

KING

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

Johnson knows its final.

INT KING HOUSE: BEDROOM - NIGHT

Martin lies on bed with the newspapers. We hear Coretta in the next room.

CORETTA

(o/s)

Yolanda, stop opening and closing that icebox. Stop it.

KING

Why don't you stop and come rub my feet, woman.

King grins. Coretta enters bedroom with a stack of laundry. She sits on King and starts rubbing his feet, her back to him.

CORETTA

Three days after the teachers march and ya'll might as well be invisible again.

(pause)

You should announce another freedom day.

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

KING

One week from now.

CORETTA

No. One week from now we're at the Inauguration.

KING

You think the papers would like the headline, 'King Snubs President – To Lead March In Selma'?

Coretta stops rubbing.

CORETTA

You can't do that. Johnson's only human, Martin. You can't risk permanently alienating the President of the United States.

INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE – DAY

CLOSE-UP an outraged JOHNSON 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 is this?! You should be his fuckin' speechwriter! I have underestimated him. Under that saintly exterior is a 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.

Clark 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 and Annie.

CLARK

Keep the sidewalk clear! Get over there! You! Over against the wall! No... 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 (CONT'D)

I don't believe it. A nigger with balls?

JIMMIE stares at CLARK.

CAGER
 (whispers)
 He ain't worth it, Jimmie.

CARL
 He's right.

CLARK jabs JIMMIE.

CLARK
 So what do you think, boy? Come on,
 bitch. I'm worth it.

JIMMIE stops. He's trembling. He looks at CLARK, who grins encouragingly.

JIMMIE
 So Dr. King says I'm supposed to
 pray for him?

CAGER
 That's what God said. Go git' back
 in line.

Jimmie wavers, walks back in line.

CARL
 Sometimes I wonder if God can love
 a man as evil as your ass.

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. ANNIE takes the blow but grabs 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.

INT WHITE HOUSE/BREAKFAST NOOK - DAWN

JOHNSON is eating breakfast, alone. GOODWIN enters, carrying several newspapers.

GOODWIN

Good morning, Mr. President!

JOHNSON

Morning.

GOODWIN

Great day on Saturday. Spectacular.

JOHNSON

Thanks, Dick.

Goodwin places the newspapers on the table. JOHNSON 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 gives a groan of 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. Hattie Pearl's VACUUMING can be heard in the next room.

WALLACE

King's just been summoned to the White House again!

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)
 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! 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 Goddamn simple!

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

WALLACE
 Honest to God! 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 for two years.

WALLACE
 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 Jesus Christ 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.

HATTIE PEARL bursts in room with her vacuum cleaner.

HATTIE PEARL
 We ain't niggers! We's NIGRAS now!

Hattie leaves as abruptly as she arrived, slamming the door behind her. Wallace, Cloud and Lingo all exchange glances.

CLOUD
(whispers)
You know Clark bugs their churches?

We hear the faint HUM of Hattie Pearl's VACUUM outside again.

WALLACE
You mean at the pulpit? Jesus fuckin... What's he done that for? Its a public meeting! And they publicize every move they make in advance!

LINGO
Clark don't hate the coloreds that much. He just don't like nobody buckin' his authority. What he don't understand, this ain't about authority, its about dominance over the nigger. We got 'em conditioned to "fear" the White Man.

The vacuum cleaner BANGS at the door on "fear."

LINGO (CONT'D)
Jim Clark's a good old boy and a friend but he ain't 100 percent proof in the fear department because he got Wilson Baker knockin' up against him. If you want fear and dominance in Selma... send us.

WALLACE looks at CLOUD and LINGO. Could it be that simple?

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/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Lyndon JOHNSON and Martin Luther KING are face-to-face across a small coffee-table in the WHITE HOUSE/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 (CONT'D)

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.

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 ain't no such thing as dignity without power! (pause) But I'm offerin' you power! I'm guaranteeein' 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 (CONT'D)
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's 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 arm-lock. KING stares back at him.

KING
Isn't that what leaders always do?

EXT RURAL ALABAMA - DUSK

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

EXT STATE TROOPER HQ/YARD - DUSK

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 - DUSK

Selma is quiet.

EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DUSK

The moon is reflected on the waters below the bridge, as the STATE TROOPER CONVOY crosses into Selma.

EXT SELMA/OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

The STATE TROOPER CONVOY splits up, the cars turning off down different streets.

EXT SELMA/STREET - 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 MAIN STREET - NIGHT

140 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.

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.

VIOLA

Oh Lord.

JIMMIE

Poppa, stay close.

WILLIAMS hesitates but keeps walking to them with increasing unease. He realizes 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. They're surrounded. Fear grips the marchers. Silence. Then the troopers advance slowly.

VIOLA

Ya'all just stay calm!

The Marchers walk quickly to the side streets. A Trooper grins at another Trooper who takes out a brass knuckles and slips it onto his fist.

The TROOPERS follow the fast walking Marchers at a steady, disciplined jog: they're herding. Another group of CARS roll forward and follow the jogging TROOPERS, closing the distance on the Marchers. The Reporters and Photographers have been cut off by another set of cars. TROOPERS jump out of the CARS, silently beating the JOURNALISTS, seizing cameras and smashing them to bits.

141 EXT MARION STREET - NIGHT

141

The MARCHERS, moving faster now, enter a wide street and find themselves blocked by more Cars and TROOPERS. They stall. Shots are fired, shattering the street lights. Darkness. Suddenly the Trooper Car headlights come on, blinding the MARCHERS and making the TROOPERS invisible. Then a strange, rhythmic sound, getting louder and louder.

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.

The MARCHERS, in an agony of apprehension, the terrible noise of the helmets becoming unbearable. Suddenly the TROOPERS come charging out of the wall of light. Marchers flee. Pandemonium.

142 EXT LINGO'S CAR - NIGHT

142

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.

143 EXT MARION STREET - NIGHT

143

The TROOPERS have traveled into an orgy of violence. A brass knuckle fist smashes into a WOMAN's face. She drops unconscious where a MAN is on the ground is 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. JIMMIE LEE pulls CAGER and VIOLA towards a gap in the chaos. CAGER is struck in the back of his head and wounded. JIMMIE turns to help him.

JIMMIE
Poppa... This way!

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

144 INT MACK'S CAFÉ - NIGHT

144

146 A quiet little soul-food café. A few black CUSTOMERS talk,¹⁴⁶ eat and drink coffee in a subdued atmosphere. There's a jukebox playing.

The CUSTOMERS look up as JIMMIE and VIOLA burst in dragging a wounded CAGER. For a moment the CUSTOMERS stare at the wild-eyed intruders. THREE TROOPERS kick the door in, guns drawn, clubs swinging.

Patrons scatter. Viola and Jimmie flee to one corner, Cager to the kitchen. Two Troopers pursue the elderly Cager into the kitchen.

The Troopers begin beating the wounded Old man in sight of Jimmie Lee - who moves towards the kitchen. TROOPER JAMES BONARD FOWLER intercepts Jimmie Lee.

TROOPER FOWLER
Where you goin?

JIMMIE
Please! I gotta get him to a doctor!

Fowler and others fling Jimmy to the floor, subdue him and beat him. Viola crashes a bottle over a Trooper's head. A Trooper knocks her unconscious. They pick Jimmie Lee up and prop him against a Cigarette Machine. Fowler fires two bullets into Jimmie's stomach.

Jimmie Lee, wounded, bounds for the front door, chased and assaulted by Fowler and the other two Troopers. Jimmie Lee falls out the front door.

EXT. MACK'S CAFE - NIGHT

Jimmie Lee flees out the cafe as more Troopers form a Soul Train line and beat him as he stumbles. He falls to the ground as Fowler and others kick at his bleeding, wounded body. Black people watch horrified, not moving.

The Troopers hop into their cars and roar off. The Black people stare transfixed, frightened. Cager drops to his knees at the crushing sight that greets him.

CAGER
(screams)
Somebody help my boy! Please God!
Somebody help him!

149 INT KING HOME: ATLANTA GEORGIA - NIGHT 149

It's late night. King is dead asleep. Fetal position. He's at peace. He looks like a boy. Phone rings. Coretta gentle nudges him.

KING
Baby, let it ring.

CORETTA
It'll wake up the kids.

She picks up the phone

CORETTA (CONT'D)
Yes, it is.

Coretta hands him the phone. He listens for a moment then sags forward with a deep groan.

KING
I'll be there by morning.

150 INT AIRPORT - DAWN 150

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

151 INT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 151

Next morning, early. JIMMIE is lying on a bed, unconscious, plugged into several I.U.V.'s. CAGER and VIOLA are half-asleep around the bed, bruises still visible on their faces. The door opens and KING enters quietly. He's unshaven; a little unkempt; he hasn't slept all night. He looks at Jimmie Lee and doesn't have to ask Cager or Viola how he's doing.

KING
Let us pray.

152 INT BROWN CHAPEL - NIGHT 152

CLOSE - KING

KING: exhausted to the point of stupefaction. He's about to address a silent, deeply demoralized 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 looking at KING with mounting concern.

CLOSE - KING

He's desperately exhausted and disoriented, staring at something at the back of the church and tries to focus on the faces in front of him.

ANGLE - PULPIT

ABERNATHY suddenly gets up and goes to the pulpit. He takes hold of King's arm.

ABERNATHY

I got this, Doctor.

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 (CONT'D)

I just been told something.
Something of a scandalous nature!
Oh yeah.

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

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Well now... I just been told... we got a doohickey in this church!
(a scandalized pause)
I'm serious! That's right! Jim Clark and the Sheriff's Department has had the downright audacity to bug the house of the Lawd! Now, we got to find that doohickey!

Abernathy stares and points at the four microphones in front of him.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Now which one do you think it is?
 Hmmm. Eeny, meeny, miny, mo, catch
 a doohickey by his toe! ...This
 one! Naw! I bet you that Jim Clark
 is so dumb he ain't connected his
 doohickey to those loudspeakers up
 there - just to the Sheriff's
 Department.

He covers three microphones and speaks into the fourth.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Hello-o-o doohickey, that you baby?

The sound comes loud and clear through the church
 loudspeakers.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Hmmmm. Doohickey that you,
 sweetheart?

The sound comes through loud and clear.

153 INT SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

153

Two DEPUTIES are looking at each other, frozen.

ABERNATHY (ON SPEAKER)

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

154 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - NIGHT

154

ABERNATHY covers three microphones and speaks into a fourth.

ABERNATHY

So is this you my sweet Doohickey?

Loud and clear.

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

Aahaha!

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

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)
 Well now I got something to say to you, Doohickey. Are you listening? Are you listening, Doohickey?

ABERNATHY raps the microphone with his knuckles.

155 INT SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 155

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

156 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - NIGHT 156

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

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

157 INT SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 157

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.

158 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - NIGHT 158

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...

159 INT SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 159

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:

160 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - NIGHT 160

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 (CONT'D)
We are not afraid!

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

ABERNATHY (CONT'D)
We are not afraid!

The Meeting answers not very loud

MEETING
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
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.

161 INT SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

161

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

ABERNATHY
Tell LBJ, the President of the
United States -

MEETING
WE ARE NOT AFRAID!!!

A sudden crunching sound and silence.

162 INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - NIGHT

162

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.

KING
(weak whisper)
I'm ready to march.
(mustering strength, a
little louder)
Ya'll ready to march?

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 shall overcome someday... Here
in my heart, I do believe, we shall
overcome some day...

KING turns to ABERNATHY and smiles.

168 INT SELMA HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

168

171 JIMMIE is propped up in bed connected to I.U.V.'s. He's 171
barely conscious. VIOLA and CAGER sit on either side of the
bed. CAGER is holding JIMMIE's hand. CAGER and VIOLA weep.
They sense Jimmie is slipping away. Cager reads aloud from
the Bible.

CAGER

...And many people shall go and
say, Come ye, and let us go up to
the mountain of the Lord...

Cager closes the Bible. He can't go on. He leans over the
bed, takes JIMMIE's face in his hands and kisses him softly,
repeatedly.

CAGER (CONT'D)

173 Its okay baby, its okay.

173

The door bursts open. LINGO and CLOUD step into the room,
CLOUD quickly closing the door behind them. The threat of
violence is intense. VIOLA leans over JIMMIE in an attempt to
shield him. CLOUD thrusts VIOLA aside and she falls in a
heap. CLOUD takes out his gun.

CLOUD

Coons, you wanna end up like this
boy in the bed here, be my guest.

LINGO takes a piece of paper from his 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 (CONT'D)

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 jabs the gun barrel in Jimmie Lee's chest.

LINGO (CONT'D)

Threaten one of my officers again, heah?

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

Y'all get well soon.

CLOUD follows LINGO out the door.

180

INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - DAY

180

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 sit shell-shocked.

KING (CONT'D)

We know a state trooper pointed the gun and pulled the trigger! We know that state trooper was acting under the orders of 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 terrorize innocent people!

(MORE)

KING (CONT'D)

(pause)

And every black man and woman who stands by without protest as their neighbors, their brothers, their sisters are humiliated, brutalized and murdered!!

A CLOSE-UP of DOCTOR TYSON, staring at KING.

KING pauses, as if to restrain himself – then his anger breaks loose again.

KING (CONT'D)

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 hurry to get out to a phone.

181

INT BROWN'S CHAPEL/BACK ROOM - DAY

181

KING enters fresh from the memorial service, still angry but very preoccupied, followed by BEVEL, Forman, Abernathy, SCLC and SNCC leaders. Bevel'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 (CONT'D)

A march, from Selma to Montgomery!
In memory of Jimmie Lee Jackson!

FORMAN

We'll carry Jimmie Lee's body and lay the casket on the steps of the State Capital.

KING

Have you checked with this young Man's mother about your plan to drive a Hearse bearing her son's body to Montgomery? The SCLC will have no part in making a mockery out of this young man's life. This is a non-violent Movement, not a Circus. Jimmie Lee will be laid to rest here.

FORMAN

You're not going far enough!

KING

James, like I said, did you speak to the boy's Mama?

Forman silently fumes.

ABERNATHY

I take that as a NO!

FORMAN

Who appointed you head Nigger in Charge?

Forman leaves.

KING

I'm being squeezed here between the SNCC Turks and the Feds.

184

INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

184

Next morning. CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON washing his hands in the sink of a small bathroom adjacent to the Oval Office, as he listens to GOODWIN reading the newspaper.

GOODWIN

King also says here that Mr. Jackson was murdered by an administration ready to spend millions of dollars every day in Vietnam...!'

JOHNSON comes out of the bathroom and throws his hand towel on the floor. He's enraged.

JOHNSON

No-one invites themselves to the fuckin White House!

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(pause)

Well, let him come! I ain't seeing
him! I'm done talking with King!

CLOSE-UP of JOHNSON: hunted.

186 INT WHITE HOUSE/WAITING ROOM - DAY

186

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

Dr King, I'm sorry. The President
regrets he won't be able to see you
today.

(apologetic, hopeful)

If you can stay over another day...

187 INT WHITE HOUSE/CORRIDOR - DAY

187

JOHNSON leaves a crisis meeting, with several AIDES scurrying alongside carrying papers.

JOHNSON

(as much to himself as to
the Aide next to him)

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 with YOUNG, accompanied by GOODWIN. JOHNSON considers an escape route, but KING turns and sees him. A powerful moment between them.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Holy fuck what a day...!

188 INT WHITE HOUSE/WAITING ROOM - DAY

188

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,
terrorized and murdered. Only
something that big and that
symbolic will encompass their anger
and their grief.

JOHNSON steps closer to KING — an intense eyeballing moment.

JOHNSON
Selma to Montgomery must be 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.
(MORE)

KING (CONT'D)
You have to stop him from killing
us.

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.

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

JOHNSON
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 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 has made a
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 calculatedly and
aggressively - ringing in his ears. Now it's KING who's
angry. Their eyes lock for a few moments.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Don't make an enemy of me.

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.

189 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY

189

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. When he removes it, he's smiling broadly. He strides into the midst of the REPORTERS, beaming.

REPORTER

Did you see the President, Dr. King?

REPORTER (CONT'D)

You feel your visit's been a success?

REPORTER (CONT'D)

You got a statement, Doctor King?

REPORTER (CONT'D)

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:

190 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

190

That night: JOHNSON is standing at the foot of his bed, in pyjamas and bathrobe, brushing his teeth, looking at three televisions showing ABC, NBC and CBS News. They all show King facing reporters earlier that day. Johnson watches intently.

WALLACE is in bed, smoking, watching KING on television.
LURLEEN WALLACE is next to him, absorbed in Life magazine.

192 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 192

JOHNSON stares at KING on the television.

KING (ON TV)
We talked about several topics today.

JOHNSON's jaw drops.

JOHNSON
You black sonofabitch!

LADY BIRD is shocked.

LADY BIRD (OFF-SCREEN)
Lyndon!

LADY BIRD appears in the bathroom doorway.

JOHNSON
I'm sorry baby, but this King fuck
is on every five minutes talkin
like he's the first Nigra President
of the United States!

193 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY 193

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

CLOSE-UP of KING, looking into camera.

FLASH FORWARD:

194 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 194

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

195 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY 195

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:

196 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 196

JOHNSON's eyes narrow 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) (CONT'D)

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

JOHNSON

(mild, still relieved)

Like hell I did.

197 INT WALLACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 197

WALLACE eyes KING (on TV) shrewdly, suspiciously.

WALLACE

Like hell he did!

198 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY

198

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:

199 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

199

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) (CONT'D)
...and it is this...

200 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY

200

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:

201 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

201

JOHNSON gets to his feet.

JOHNSON

Don't!

202 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY 202

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

FLASH FORWARD:

203 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 203

JOHNSON in CLOSE-UP, staring back at KING.

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

204 INT WHITE HOUSE/LOBBY - DAY 204

KING stares into camera with defiance.

KING

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

FLASH FORWARD:

205 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 205

JOHNSON is staring at the television, open-mouthed.

JOHNSON
Fuck!

206 INT WALLACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 206

WALLACE has jumped out of bed and SCREAMS.

WALLACE
FUCK! FUCK!!! FUCK!!!

LURLEEN WALLACE watches him in some amazement.

209 INT CAFÉ – DAY 209

CARL and ANNIE watch WALLACE on the black-and-white TV.

WALLACE (ON TV)
There will be no march from Selma
to Montgomery.
(MORE.)

WALLACE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 It is not conducive to traffic flow
 on Route 80 and to public safety.
 Such a march cannot and will not be
 tolerated.

Carl and Annie exchange a look, get up and walk out.

210 EXT SELMA/STREET - DAY

210

CARL and ANNIE walk along a street. At the far end, they see MARCHERS passing. They reach the corner and look at each other amazed. MARCHERS stretch before them, forward and back, as far as they can see. This is a far bigger gathering than anything so far, moving with a sense of quiet purpose. Many are carrying food and extra clothing. Annie is impressed - but feels skeptical.

ANNIE
 I hope we know what we doin.

211 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE/SELMA SIDE - DAY

211

TITLE - MARCH 7, 1965

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.

212 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE/MONTGOMERY SIDE - DAY

212

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.

213 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

213

The MARCHERS approach the crest of the bridge. They are led by WILLIAMS and LEWIS. They see, with dawning alarm:

214 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE/MONTGOMERY SIDE - DAY

214

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 ain't there.

LINGO
You sure?

CLARK
Yeah.

LINGO nods to himself, understanding the strategy.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Where is he?

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

LINGO draws himself erect, looking around.

LINGO (CONT'D)
But there ain't 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 (CONT'D)
Good to see you back in harness,
Tom!

COLEMAN
Thank-you, Sheriff.

CLARK
Hey, Eugene! How you doin'? I hear your momma'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.

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 nigga, can you?

The MARCHERS descend the slope towards the small army.

TROOPERS, DEPUTIES and POSSESMEN 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 not surprised by the ultimatum.

WILLIAMS
(muttering to self)
One minute...?

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

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
May we have a word with the Major?

CLOUD
There is no word to be had.

The camera picks out AMELIA, ANNIE, CAGER, VIOLA and other familiar faces – including the DOCTOR TYSON 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.

215 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

215

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

216 EXT SELMA/STREET - DAY

216

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 PETTUS BRIDGE/MONTGOMERY SIDE - DAY

The far side of the bridge looks like a battlefield. Dr. Tyson moves amongst the wounded to help the injured and bloody, while others limp back towards Selma. A few cars 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 watch and jeer except for a few Nazis and Rednecks who menace the young ABC TV 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 breakneck speed.

INT. ABC CREW CAR - DAY

CLOSE - FILM CASE

It's gripped by the White Crew Member in the passenger seat as if his life depended on it.

221 INT KING HOME - ATLANTA GEORGIA - NIGHT

221

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... Now? Ok.

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

YOUNG (CONT'D)

Put the TV on! ABC! Now!

KING turns on the TV - which remains blank as it warms up. YOUNG listens to the person on the phone.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

How many? Seventy?! ...Thanks.

ABERNATHY

What is it?

YOUNG is so excited he doesn't reply, just stares at the screen. Gradually a picture comes on. It's Spenser Tracy talking to a middle-aged couple in 'Judgement at Nuremberg'.

CORETTA

(to King)

Honey, didn't you take me to that movie? What was it called...?

Before King can answer the picture changes abruptly to an ANNOUNCER.

ANNOUNCER ON TV

We are interrupting our Saturday Night Theater feature 'Judgement at Nuremberg' 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.

KING

We got our hands around their throats. We can't let go for one moment.

222 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

222

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

223 INT WALLACE HOME - NIGHT

223

WALLACE and LURLEEN stare at the television, stunned.

WALLACE

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

224 INT WHITE HOUSE/JOHNSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

224

JOHNSON

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

LADY BIRD

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.

LADY BIRD

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

JOHNSON

Yeah, a fucking volcano.

Johnson picks up the phone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Dick? Federal Judge, what's his name? Yes, him. Tell him to slap an injunction on King from Marchin' and slow them fools down. Now, I ain't telling him that. I'm telling you that. You understand?

226

INT BROWN'S CHAPEL - DAY

226

Next day. KING addresses a packed but still demoralized MEETING. There a whole row of JOURNALISTS and three TELEVISION CAMERAS.

KING

We have to go back to the Edmund Pettus bridge. We cannot turn back now. We've come too far, sacrificed too much. We've asked a federal judge in Montgomery to forbid Wallace and his officials from repeating Sunday's incident. And I assure you, the Federal Government will hear us. Because America is hearing us. We been getting calls. A lot of Northern friends are coming. Don't be afraid.

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

KING (CONT'D)

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! We must go back! We must cross that bridge and march! To dignity and to freedom! To Montgomery!

Crowd moves out and Young and Abernathy corral King.

ABERNATHY
You getting 'em stoked up to do
nuthin.

KING
Court didn't go well?

YOUNG
That ain't the half of it. Instead
of siding with us, he went the
other way. He's prohibiting any
march from Selma until further
notice.

KING
Johnson crossed us. He's trying to
slow us.

ABERNATHY
What now?

KING
We keep it hot. See who can stand
it. Andy, gather our lawyers up and
go at it again. If Johnson can go
cahoots with the Federal Judge to
hold us up... We'll hold the
contest before 70 million viewers.

227 EXT SELMA/BUS STATION - DAY

227

Mostly white SUPPORTERS exit a Greyhound Bus from the North.

228 EXT BROWN'S CHAPEL - DAY

228

A hired bus unloads mainly white CLERGY and NUNS. We see
VIOLA LIUZZO, among them, helping and laughing with the nuns.

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.

230 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

230

TITLE - MARCH 9, 1965

Seen from the Montgomery side, the heads of a multitude begin to appear over the brow of the bridge.

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.

Amongst the marchers is VIOLA LIUZZO. This time the march is led by KING.

231 INT CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

231

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.

232 INT WALLACE'S OFFICE - DAY

232

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

WALLACE'S AIDE
They just coming over the bridge.

WALLACE's pacing and smoking-rate increases.

233 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

233

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 are uneasy. Many 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 as Abernathy leads them in a prayer. 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 (CONT'D)
Troopers!!

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

CLOUD (CONT'D)
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.

The man next to him - is CAGER. He stares at KING, mystified, like everyone else, by his silence and stillness.

King sniffs the air almost like a hound-dog. Closes his eyes. Prays.

CLOSE-UP of KING: fear - he turns to CAGER.

KING
It's a trap.

236 INT CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

236

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

LINGO
C'mon... c'mon...

237 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

237

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

KING
We're going back.

238 INT CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

238

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

CLARK
Damn!

LINGO picks up the phone.

LINGO
Gimme the Governor.

239 INT WALLACE'S OFFICE - DAY

239

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?

240 EXT PETTUS BRIDGE - DAY

240

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. LEWIS and FORMAN are alongside - FORMAN becoming volcanic with frustration.

KING
They would've sealed off that 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.

FORMAN erupts.

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!
(MORE)

FORMAN (CONT'D)
Because those crackas won't be
around long, they never are, cause
this ain't their motherfuckin
movement!!

The MARCHERS slow almost to a halt as they hear FORMAN's voice carrying back through the silent ranks - where we pick out James REEB. He exchanges self-conscious glances with two white male COMPANIONS. We pick out ANNIE - who reaches out to the nearest white person: VIOLA LIUZZO.

ANNIE
Don't pay no mind to that boy and
them words of his. He just likes to
keep things going. Dr. King knows
what's right. I'm grateful you're
here.

VIOLA LIUZZO
Its ok. I got five kids. And
they've all heard worse.

ANNIE
Five kids? Viola, why didn't you
ever tell me that? What you
planning on doing tonight?

VIOLA LIUZZO
Leroy and I are supposed to be
driving people back to Selma after
the march.

ANNIE
Your kids'll be proud of you
someday. Where you say you from
again?

VIOLA LIUZZO
Detroit.

ANNIE
Like Motown Detroit?

VIOLA LIUZZO
Yeah missy... I'm the white Diana
Ross.

ANNIE
Go 'head, sister.

They both laugh.

242 EXT JUST OUTSIDE SELMA: HIGHWAY/CAR/MOVING - NIGHT 242

Dark country section of highway. The sweet sound of THE SUPREMES singing "I Hear A Symphony" plays on the radio. VIOLA LIUZZO is laughing with a PASSENGER, a young black man, LEROY MOTON, in the front seat.

VIOLA LIUZZO
I'm tired. That was rough back there.

LEROY
Thank you, Miss Viola for dropping all them people off. Can I ask you something? Why...

Viola looks up in her rear view mirror and sees HIGH BEAMS of a car coming up and pulls side by side with her car. She looks into the other car. She sees:

244 244 The other car contains a group of KLANSMEN. The KLANSMAN in the back is holding the shotgun.

KLANSMAN
Hey!

He fires. VIOLA LIUZZO's face disintegrates.

Her car starts running off the road as the KLANSMEN's car accelerates away.

KLANSMAN (CONT'D)
Now that bitch knows what its like to be a real nigger.

246 INT WHITE HOUSE/BREAKFAST NOOK - DAWN 246

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...

247 EXT WHITE HOUSE - DAWN 247

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

248 INT WHITE HOUSE/BREAKFAST NOOK - DAWN 248

JOHNSON turns from the window and looks down at a newspaper - at a picture of VIOLA LIUZZO smiling. 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, deep in thought. Then he gives a long, deep sigh.

GOODWIN
Mister President?

Johnson snaps out of it, sees Goodwin, who is holding up two glasses of scotch.

249 INT WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - DAWN 249

JOHNSON walks down the hall with Goodwin drinking the scotch, and they pass the famous portrait of LINCOLN on the wall.

251 CLOSE-UP of LINCOLN - gazing down at Johnson. 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.

252 INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY 252

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

JOHNSON

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!

253 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT 253

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.

254 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 254

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.

255 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT 255

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...

256 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 256

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.

257 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT 257

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.

258 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 258

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
 Get in here ya'll. Listen to this.

259 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT

259

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?'

260 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

260

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

261 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT

261

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.

262 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

262

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:

263 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT 263

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.

264 INT CHURCH HALL - NIGHT 264

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...

265 INT SEVERAL BLACK AMERICAN HOMES - NIGHT 265

We visit several homes in Selma with BLACK FAMILIES.

These families are living in dirt-poor poverty and they are all listening to King's speech.

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION)

And if he manages to fill out an application he is given a test.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (ON TELEVISION) (CONT'D)
 The registrar is the sole judge of
 whether he passes this test. He may
 be asked to recite the entire
 Constitution, or explain -

266 INT WELL-TO-DO WHITE FAMILY HOME IN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT 266

We visit a home in L.A. with a wealthy WHITE FAMILY having dinner and watching the speech on TV.

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.

267 INT BAR - NIGHT 267

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!

268 INT CLARK'S HOME - NIGHT 268

CLARK and his WIFE are watching the Johnson speech. She's crying bitter tears - Clark is wearing his firearm. They've both been drinking.

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

She turns on CLARK.

WIFE (CONT'D)
 And it's your fault! All this!

Clark's hits his Wife on her head, she falls to the floor.
Maybelle appears.

MAYBELLE
Don't put your hands on her, Mister Jim. You hear me?

His wife cries as Maybelle helps her stand.

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)
(her back to Clark)
I'm leavin. I can't take this no more. I breast fed you like you was my own. I didn't raise you to be like this. You see what you did to my Calvin? Why you like this, Mister Jim? Why come you be like this?

Maybelle pushes past Clark to leave.

CLARK
(fury)
Maybelle! Don't you dare! Don't leave!
(then, desperately)
...Please.

Clark pleads with his eyes. Maybelle grabs her coat and leaves.

Clark turns, pulls his gun and SHOOTS JOHNSON TALKING ON THE TV.

269

INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT

269

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. Their cause must be our cause, too. It is all of us -

271 INT BAKER HOME - NIGHT

271

Wilson BAKER and FAMILY watch JOHNSON on TV. They're absolutely silent.

JOHNSON ON TV

JOHNSON

...it is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

Barely perceptibly, BAKER nods in agreement.

272 INT WALLACE HOME - NIGHT

272

WALLACE stares at his television - he's silent, still, expressionless, eviscerated. MRS WALLACE looks at him with deep concern.

273 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT

273

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.

274 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

274

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

(smiling, proudly)

We did it ya'll.

275 INT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - NIGHT

275

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.

276 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 276

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

KING
(sotto)
They're gonna try to kill me.

278 EXT WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT 278

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

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

JOHNSON gets out.

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

279 INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT 279

JOHNSON is in the WHITE HOUSE/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
(mouths gleefully at the others)
Dick Russell!
(removing 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!

280 INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT 280

Later. JOHNSON is alone in the WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE except for LADY BIRD, who's just leaving. JOHNSON now looks depressed.

LADY BIRD
Don't be long, honey.

JOHNSON
I won't.

LADY BIRD leaves. JOHNSON stares outside of his window at nothing in particular. Silence is suddenly broken when his secretary Janet opens the door.

JANET
Doctor King. Line two.

JOHNSON waits a moment, then picks up the phone.

JOHNSON
Martin.

We INTERCUT to follow the conversation:

281 INT BOYNTON HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 281

KING is alone.

KING
Sorry to call so late, Mr.
President.

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

(a beat)

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 ain't
never gonna be there again. But
least I been there. And fact is...
I never would have, without you
driving 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.

282

INT WHITE HOUSE/OVAL OFFICE - DAY

282

JOHNSON talking to Hoover, watched by GOODWIN and an AIDE.
The TV is in the background with the NEWS of KING looking
direct at camera - MARCHING.

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 for news on
one, but we know who killed the
woman.

JOHNSON
'The woman'. You mean Viola Liuzzo.

HOOVER
Yes. Viola Liuzzo.
(involuntary repugnant)
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 organization 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 characterize 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.

285 Johnson stares at the TV and watches MARTIN LUTHER KING, ²⁸⁵ CORETTA, Abernathy, Young, and posse as they march over the Pettus Bridge. MARCHERS sing 'Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!'

Johnson smiles. ZOOM INTO TV:

Our God is marching on.

Glory, hallelujah! Glory, hallelujah!

Glory, hallelujah! Glory, hallelujah!

FREEZE on CLOSE-UP of KING.

END