

"LBJ"

by

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v1.0

FADE IN:

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

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE stand behind a chest-high chain link fence. They cheer as their anticipation grows.

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

NEWS FOOTAGE from WFAA-TV is spliced in, with the sounds of BOB WALKER providing commentary.

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

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

AGENT KIVETT
Rufus. Everything's set. That
Lincoln convertible is yours.

Youngblood nods and returns his attention to the man he protects, Vice President LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON, overweight, hunched over, and with a face much older than his 55 years.

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

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

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

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

Johnson scans their faces. Not a single eye looks back at him. Everyone stares past him at the glistening blue and white Boeing 707 that is AIR FORCE ONE. It taxis to a stop.

JOHNSON
What's the word on Senator
Yarborough?

YOUNGBLOOD

The President told Yarborough that he either rides with you today or he can walk through downtown Dallas.

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

A set of stairs is wheeled up to the rear hatch of Air Force One where a radiant JACKIE KENNEDY, 34, in her pink suit and pillbox hat emerges. Just behind her is the captivating President of the United States, JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY, 46.

BOB WALKER (V.O.)

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

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

Johnson and Lady Bird move to the bottom of the steps at the front of a RECEIVING LINE. As JFK and Jackie reach the bottom, someone hands Jackie a bouquet of red roses. Johnson is the first to shake hands with the President.

JOHNSON

Mr. President.

JFK

Hello, Lyndon.

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

JFK shakes hands. As he releases one, Johnson tries to grab it but before he can, the hand is recoiled, its owner still fixated on JFK. Johnson looks at his own outstretched hand.

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

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

LADY BIRD

Don't ya just love Texas?

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

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)
Is there any place you'd rather be?

Johnson contemplates this question.

CUT TO:

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

SUPER: FOUR YEARS EARLIER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Johnson hangs up and looks to Jenkins.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
We got him, Walter.

Jenkins makes a note of it.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Senator Yarborough-

Yarborough stands, ready to shake Johnson's hand.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
I'll be right with you.

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

JUANITA
Senator Mansfield, sir.

JOHNSON
Mike, come on in. I've been waiting on the count. Give me the number.

SENATOR MANSFIELD
About 48.

JOHNSON
No. "About 48" is not a number.

SENATOR MANSFIELD
That's the closest approximation I could get.

JOHNSON
I want you to imagine putting your pecker on this desk.

Mansfield is amused, yet terrified.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Now if we put your little 2-inch pecker right here at the edge and then I grabbed a hatchet and told you I was gonna swing it down at about 2 and a half inches from the edge, are you nervous?

Mansfield nods.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Damn right you are. Well that's how nervous I get when I hear that our count is "about 48." So go back and get me an actual number.

SENATOR MANSFIELD
Yes, Leader.

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

JOHNSON
What the hell good is a whip who can't count?

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Juanita, dear, call Dirksen's office and tell them I'd like to speak to the senator at his earliest convenience. George, get my tailor on the phone.

REEDY

Who's Mike Taylor?

JOHNSON

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

YARBOROUGH

Mr. Leader.

Johnson brings the drinks to Yarborough and offers him one.

YARBOROUGH (CONT'D)

I don't drink.

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

YARBOROUGH (CONT'D)

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

JOHNSON

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

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

YARBOROUGH

Excuse me.

JOHNSON

What in the hell are you doing critizin' the '57 Civil Rights Act?

YARBOROUGH

I'd remind you that I voted for it.

JOHNSON

As did I. But now it seems that I'm the only one of us who supports it.

YARBOROUGH

It's just not an impressive piece of legislation.

JOHNSON

It was the first civil rights law passed since the goddamn Civil War. It's historic legislation.

YARBOROUGH

It was toothless.

JOHNSON

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

YARBOROUGH

My constituents want-

JOHNSON

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

Reedy approaches skittishly and hands Johnson a note.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Baker!

The Senate Secretary BOBBY BAKER, 31, a weasel of man, has been sitting off to the side. He stands at attention now.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(re: the note)

This senator has forgotten he works for me. Bring him here and let's give him a little reminder.

BAKER

You got it, Leader.

Baker eagerly exits to carry out the task while Johnson returns his attention to Yarborough.

JOHNSON

With the Civil Rights Act of 1957 we gave the negros the right to vote. So what's your objection?

YARBOROUGH

Businesses can ban them, restaurants can refuse them, and schools won't admit them.

JOHNSON

You give a man the vote and he can speak for himself about everything else at the ballot box.

YARBOROUGH

It's not that simple.

Juanita enters.

JUANITA

Senator Dirksen is on the phone.

REEDY

I've got your tailor as well.

JOHNSON

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Lyndon Johnson... Yeah.

Put on hold, Johnson looks up to Yarborough.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You think this issue is more important to you than it is to me?

YARBOROUGH

I voted for the 1957 Civil Rights Act because black citizens ought to have equality. You voted for it because you thought it would help you get elected president. So yes, I do think this issue is more important to me than it is to you.

JOHNSON

(into the phone)

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

Johnson hangs up and looks to Jenkins.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Get ready to move.
(to Yarborough)
Now what were we talking about?

YARBOROUGH

Civil rights.

JOHNSON

Oh yeah, you were accusing me of
being for equality only to get
elected president. Speaking of
which, you haven't endorsed me.

YARBOROUGH

You haven't announced.

JOHNSON

That's beside the point.

YARBOROUGH

I'm not endorsing anyone... But if
I were, it wouldn't be you.

JOHNSON

You like Kennedy?

YARBOROUGH

Senator Kennedy and I share many of
the same principles, yes.

JOHNSON

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

YARBOROUGH

What's most important to me-

JOHNSON
Hold that thought.

Johnson picks up his phone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
This is Lyndon Johnson... Hello there. Listen, last year you made me a blue suit that was near perfect. Now I want three more just like it but you gave me the standard trousers last time and they don't fit me right. What I need is for you to let out the crotch about four inches. See, I'm what they call "well-endowed" so you give me the average man's pants and I get all bunched up. I need some added room in there from my nuts to my bunghole so that my valuables can hang free... All right, I sure appreciate it.

Johnson hangs up.

YARBOROUGH
I was saying that what's most important to me is-

JOHNSON
Shit. Hold that thought.

Baker enters and Johnson motions him over. Baker whispers into Johnson's ear.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
(to Baker)
Bring him in.

Baker, still holding the note that Johnson gave him, leads a SENATOR, 50s, into the office. Johnson moves to him and gives him a two-handed greeting, never letting go.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Hello, Senator. Here's the deal - we're bringing this thing to a vote A.S.A.P and I need to know right now that I have your support.

SENATOR
With all due respect-

JOHNSON

Now here's what I'm gonna do. My office has sent some flowers over to your wife to show our appreciation for her letting us keep you here tonight to burn the midnight oil. We have also rented you a room at that Hay-Adams. Now, you can either stay here and fight me all night until I beat you, as you know I will, or you can take that beautiful secretary of yours to the hotel and get a nice meal and maybe a little shuteye.

Johnson winks and the Senator knows he's being threatened.

SENATOR

All right, Mr. Leader. You have my vote.

JOHNSON

Why thank you, Senator.

Only now does Johnson let go of the Senator's hand. The Senator leaves.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(to Yarborough)

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

Jenkins puts a call on hold and hands Johnson a note.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(re: the note)

Remind him that he's up for reelection and nobody here liked him that much in the first place.

YARBOROUGH

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

JOHNSON

Show horses. Workhorses. Remember, you only get to back one horse.

Johnson looks to the door to the outer office where Georgia Senator RICHARD RUSSELL, 61, a living legend, enters. TWENTY SOUTHERN DEMOCRATIC SENATORS march behind him.

Russell enters the main office while the others stand in the outer office. Johnson and Yarborough stand.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Senator Russell, I appreciate you getting here on such short notice.

RUSSELL

My troops are ready, Lyndon.

JOHNSON

I see that. Senator Yarborough here was just informing me that he is not a fan of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

RUSSELL

Amen.

YARBOROUGH

Yeah, but I think we should have done more for black people, not less.

RUSSELL

(to Johnson)

God, I hate liberals.

Jenkins hangs up from a phone call.

JENKINS

We got him. That puts us over.

JOHNSON

I want to call for unanimous consent right now. Let's go!

Everyone prepares to leave.

YARBOROUGH

Mr. Leader, you don't even know how I intend to vote.

JOHNSON

Yes I do, Senator Yarborough. You're going to vote for my bill. And not because you're afraid of me or because I told you to - you're going to vote for it because you know it's the right thing to do. Not my favorite reason but in this case, I'll take it. Those pesky principles of yours. Good talking with you.

And with that, the Senate Majority Leader and his men exit.

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

AT JOHNSON'S LIMO

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

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

YOUNGBLOOD

Let's go.

Johnson puts his Stetson on his head.

The half-mile long motorcade of 22 cars, 3 buses, and several police motorcycles begins its departure from Love Field.

BOB WALKER (V.O.)

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNSON RANCH - TEXAS - DAY - 1959

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

Johnson grins as Bobby stands and brushes himself off.

JOHNSON

Son, you got to learn to handle a gun like a man. I guess you Kennedys don't do much deer huntin'.

BOBBY

When Kennedys fire weapons its usually at Nazis.

Bobby moves stride for stride with Johnson. His fierce determination and keen instincts make up for his smaller size.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I didn't come all this way to shoot at a defenseless animal. The primaries are less than a year away and my brother is making inroads all over the country. We need to know if you're going to run.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

Then perhaps you could endorse my brother.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

But there's no chance that will be you, correct?

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

One would suffice.

Johnson stops and moves face to face with Bobby.

JOHNSON

I have zero intention of running
for president.

INT. THE ELMS - NIGHT - APRIL 5, 1960

Johnson's Washington home on 52nd Street. Jenkins, Reedy, and JOHN CONNALLY, 43, (3 years before he'll become Governor of Texas) watch primary election coverage on a TV while Johnson has a telephone conversation in the back.

ON TELEVISION:

A NEWSCASTER reports from his desk.

NEWSCASTER

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

JOHNSON

(into the phone)

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What?

JENKINS

I think it's time you announce.

JOHNSON

I haven't made up my mind.

CONNALLY

Then what am I doing here, sir?

JOHNSON

Basking in the pleasure of my company.

JENKINS

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

JOHNSON

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

CONNALLY

Kennedy is starting to pull away from the pack. And people can't support another candidate if he won't declare his candidacy.

JOHNSON

Nominations aren't won on the campaign trail - they're won at the convention. So let Kennedy hopscotch the United States kissing babies. I'll be here in Washington running the goddamn country!

EXT. THE ELMS - NIGHT

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

CONNALLY

I didn't leave Texas for this, Walter - to run a campaign that doesn't have a candidate.

JENKINS

He'll run.

CONNALLY

It'll be too late.

JENKINS

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

CONNALLY

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

JENKINS

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

CONNALLY

Then why won't he commit?

JENKINS

He's afraid. If he goes after this with everything he has and loses, it'll eat him up.

INT. "TAJ MAHAL" - MAY 10, 1960 - NIGHT

Johnson stares intently at the television. Lady Bird stands behind him, staring intently at Johnson. They are surrounded by Jenkins, Reedy, and Connally.

ON TELEVISION:

A NEWSCASTER reports.

NEWSCASTER

In a surprising upset, Senator John Kennedy has won the West Virginia primary. Many experts believed the issue of his religion was insurmountable in a state like this, but here is what Senator Kennedy had to say about this issue...

THE TV CUTS TO JFK GIVING A SPEECH FROM A PODIUM.

JFK

When any man stands on the steps of the Capitol and takes the oath of office of president, he puts one hand on the Bible and raises the other hand to God as he takes the oath. And if he breaks his oath, he is not only committing a crime against the Constitution, but he is committing a sin against God.

BACK TO SCENE

CONNALLY

Have you ever seen a politician look that good on TV?

JENKINS

I've never seen a movie star look that good on TV.

ON TELEVISION

JFK places his hand on an imaginary Bible.

JFK

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

Lady Bird notices Johnson mouthing the words along with JFK.

JFK (CONT'D)

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

REEDY

I think he just swore himself in.

Lady Bird pulls Johnson away while the others continue watching the TV.

JOHNSON

What is it, Bird?

LADY BIRD

When I first met you, you insisted on taking me out for breakfast. As we were driving along I found myself so enamoured with you that I commented how I'd like to meet your mother some day.

(MORE)

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

You turned the car around right then and there and headed straight for your mother's house. You didn't wait for me to agree, or object, you just drove.

Johnson smiles as he remembers this.

JOHNSON

And then we went to see your father.

LADY BIRD

That's right. You told him all about your plans, your ambitions. And when you finally left, you know what my father said to me? He said, "Daughter, you have brought home a lot of boys; this time you brought home a man." You knew exactly what you wanted. And here I am.

Johnson remembers this with pride. He looks to his men who are all looking at him.

CONNALLY

Sir, the time has come. Right now. We have to know - are you a candidate?

JOHNSON

You're damn right I am.

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

FOOTAGE:

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

The CHAIRMAN takes the podium.

CHAIRMAN

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

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - CRYSTAL BALLROOM - DAY

Across the street from the convention itself, TWO HUNDRED DELEGATES have come to see the two candidates.

Johnson speaks at a podium. JFK and Bobby sit on stage, behind Johnson. Jenkins and Reedy are off to the side, watching Johnson mid sermon, almost in admonition.

JOHNSON

For six days and nights we had 24-hour sessions. Six days and nights I had to deliver a quorum of 51 men. And I'm proud to tell you that on those 50 quorum calls, Lyndon Johnson answered every one of 'em!

The Delegates applaud, many supporters in this bunch.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Although some men who would be president answered none. On the roll calls on that bill there were 45. Some senators missed 34 of 45! Lyndon Johnson answered all 45!

Applause. Many stand for Johnson as he returns to his seat.

JFK moves to the podium.

JFK

I'd like to commend Senator Johnson on his exemplary attendance record.

Laughter. Bobby loves it.

JFK (CONT'D)

Let me just say that I appreciate what Senator Johnson had to say. He made some general references to perhaps the shortcomings of other presidential candidates, but as he was not specific, I assume he was talking about other candidates and not about me.

More laughter. The Kennedy wit defuses all the tension.

JFK (CONT'D)

And so I come to you today in full support of Senator Johnson for Majority Leader.

Laughter and applause. Even Johnson has to grin and bear it.

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

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

ROWE

You need to go see the Wyoming delegation.

JOHNSON

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

CONNALLY

Their delegates are meeting with Kennedy right now.

JOHNSON

Jack or Bobby?

CONNALLY

Teddy.

JOHNSON

Jesus Christ, this place is infested!

Ding. The elevator doors open revealing Bobby, Yarborough, and two members of Kennedy's so-called "Irish Mafia" - Aide LARRY O'BRIEN, 43, and Special Assistant KENNY O'DONNELL, 36.

All eyes on Johnson as he simply walks on and stands right next to Bobby. Johnson's staff follows and the doors close.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

A tense silence. All eyes face forward.

BOBBY

"I have zero intention of running for president."

JOHNSON

Had a change of heart.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

Well it helps when the man I'm looking at is you.

Bobby looks around at Connally and Johnson's men.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

I thought you said he's never felt better. That wouldn't be a lie, would it? And don't threaten my guys.

Bobby turns, squaring off with Johnson.

BOBBY

I can assure you that no one in this elevator or anywhere on the planet for that matter has ever been as loyal to you as I am to my brother. There is nothing I wouldn't do to protect him.

Johnson looks at his watch.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

There won't be a second round.

JOHNSON

You're awful confident.

BOBBY

That's because I can count.

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

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - NIGHT

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

FOOTAGE:

An on-screen tally reads:

"1st Ballot. 761 to nominate...

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

MCCRACKEN of Wyoming's delegation goes next.

MCCRACKEN

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

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

CUT TO:

EXT. DALLAS MOTORCADE ROUTE - 12:08 P.M. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963

A couple miles down Lemmon Avenue.

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - SAME

The occupants look ahead to see what's happening.

JOHNSON

Why are we slowin' down?

Youngblood listens to his earpiece and relays information.

YOUNGBLOOD

School children. Up ahead. The
President wants to get out to shake
hands. You want to join him, sir?

JOHNSON

No.

EXT. LEMMON AVENUE - DALLAS - MOMENTS LATER

The motorcade has stopped. Youngblood stays nearby and keeps
watch as Johnson and Lady Bird walk away from the cars.

JFK and Connally (now Governor of Texas) speak with a group
of SCHOOL CHILDREN and a NUN.

Johnson kicks a rock with his boot.

JOHNSON

How'd he manage to find the only Catholics in Dallas?

LADY BIRD

Could you please try to cheer up? I don't want you like this when the President and Mrs. Kennedy visit our ranch.

JOHNSON

You know Connally's the most popular politician in Texas now?

LADY BIRD

Seems to me the people love the whole lot of ya.

JOHNSON

Come on, Bird. You've seen the numbers - I'm as unpopular here as Kennedy is now. You hang around these liberals long enough and the voters start to worry that it rubs off on you.

LADY BIRD

You forget how much people love you.

JOHNSON

Used to love me. Fickle sons of bitches. I can't even deliver my own home state. If the President knew what was good for him, he'd put me out to pasture.

LADY BIRD

He couldn't ask for a better vice president.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S SUITE - MORNING - JULY 14, 1960

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

BOBBY

First round knockout, boys! Like Rocky Marciano!

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

SALINGER

The Times wants a comment.

BOBBY

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

O'DONNELL

How's the acceptance speech coming?

SORENSEN

Easiest speech I ever had to write.

O'BRIEN

(calling to the bathroom)

Bobby, we're getting 20 calls a minute. Everyone wants a name.

BOBBY

First we need to pick a name.

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - BEDROOM - 8 A.M.

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

LADY BIRD

Hello?... Lyndon. Lyndon! Wake up!

JOHNSON

Huh? What's wrong?

LADY BIRD

It's John Kennedy.

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

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - MINUTES LATER

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

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

JFK
Good morning, Lyndon.

INT. BOBBY'S SUITE - MINUTES LATER

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

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

O'Donnell bursts in.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

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

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - SAME

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

JFK
How would you feel about being my
vice president?

INT. KENNEDY'S SUITE - DAY

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

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

JFK
You agree with Bobby?

O'Donnell stops pacing and goes to speak but can't find any words to express his frustration. His face gets redder.

BOBBY

You see that - Kenny's so pissed he can't even speak!

JFK

I think we need to let cooler heads prevail.

BOBBY

Johnson and his men spent the last 72 hours trying to convince the entire delegation that you have Addison's disease!

JFK

I do have Addison's disease.

BOBBY

That's not the fucking point!

O'DONNELL

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

JFK

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

BOBBY

We can't trust this man! He is a snake in the grass. The only person he'll ever be loyal to is himself.

JFK

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

BOBBY

If you're president, I want Lyndon Johnson as far away from your presidency as possible.

JFK

Well who knows, maybe you'll get your wish.

BOBBY

What do you mean?

JFK
He hasn't accepted it.

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - MINUTES LATER

A disheveled Bobby stands alone near the couch.

Johnson enters, alone.

BOBBY
You can't take it.

JOHNSON
Come again?

BOBBY
Decline the offer. Say it was an honor to be considered but your duty is to the Senate.

JOHNSON
You don't like the idea?

BOBBY
No, I most certainly do not. I don't think this is good for the Party and I don't think this is good for my brother.

JOHNSON
And for me?

BOBBY
I could give a damn if it's good for you!

OTHER ROOM IN THE SUITE

Jenkins, Reedy, Connally, and Lady Bird stare at the door where they can hear the louder words being spoken.

BACK TO SCENE

JOHNSON
Is Senator Kennedy withdrawing his offer?

BOBBY
You know he can't do that.

JOHNSON
But he sent you down here to ask me to decline?

BOBBY

I'm here on my own volition.

The slightest of grins comes across Johnson's face.

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Bobby exits the room and walks past Jenkins and the rest.

Johnson emerges from the room looking rather pleased.

INT. KENNEDY'S SUITE - DAY

Bobby sits on the edge of a bed. JFK sits in a chair pulled right up to his brother. They both stare down at the floor in this iconic shot of their silhouettes backlit by the window.

BOBBY

You've never made a decision like this without consulting me first.

JFK

And I won't do it again. But I spoke with Dad. We agreed that we need to Johnson in order to win. And we also agreed that we'd never convince you it was a good idea.

BOBBY

This is a mistake. I know it.

A phone sits nearby, waiting to receive an incoming call.

INT. JOHNSON'S SUITE - DAY

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

ROWE

If you run with Kennedy and lose, what about your senate seat? Are you able to run for both offices?

CONNALLY

Yeah. We changed the law last year.

ROWE

Why?

JOHNSON

Because I asked them to.

Reedy enters.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
What did you find out?

REEDY
Ten of 36.

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

JOHNSON
What do you think?

JENKINS
There's a reason that you're thinking about saying no - it's a thankless job.

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

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

AT THE TABLE

Rowe leans in to Reedy.

ROWE
Ten of 36?

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

BACK TO THE WINDOW

JOHNSON
How long have you been with me, Walter?

JENKINS
Twenty-one years, sir.

JOHNSON

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

JENKINS

No.

Johnson picks up the phone to dial.

JOHNSON

Power is where power goes.

CUT TO:

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

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

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - SAME

Lady Bird sits between Johnson and Yarborough again.

Youngblood receives information through his earpiece and turns around to relay it to Johnson.

YOUNGBLOOD

We're five minutes behind schedule.
Should be at the Trade Mart in 15.

POP-POP!

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

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

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

YARBOROUGH

They love him.

JOHNSON

Go figure.

YARBOROUGH

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

JOHNSON

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

YARBOROUGH

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

JOHNSON

(sort of to himself)
Shit for brains.

An awkward silence. Lady Bird wants to break the tension.

LADY BIRD

I thought Jackie looked absolutely radiant this morning.

YARBOROUGH

May I say you look very pretty as well, Mrs. Johnson.

JOHNSON

Rufe, turn the radio on.

Youngblood tunes the radio to coverage of their trip.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - AFTERNOON - JANUARY 20, 1961

Outside the Executive Office Building, the excitement from a presidential inauguration floods the street.

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - SAME

Johnson stares out the window of room 274, a three-room office. Impressive to be sure, but it's not the Taj Mahal.

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

ON THE TELEVISION:

A NEWSCASTER reports...

NEWSCASTER

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

The screen switches to JFK speaking from outside the Capitol,
delivering his Inaugural Address.

BACK TO SCENE

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

REEDY

You unpacked?

JENKINS

Yep.

REEDY

So now what do we do?

JENKINS

I haven't the foggiest idea.

Johnson stares across Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House.

JFK

(from the TV)

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

Johnson gets a flash of inspiration.

JOHNSON

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Dear Mr. President...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

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

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

BOBBY

He didn't write this. You're pulling my leg, right?

JFK

That's his signature.

BOBBY

He did not write this. Even Lyndon Johnson is not this stupid.

(reading)

"I hereby request that the State Department, the Defense Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency cooperate fully with the Vice President." Who does he think he is - William Seward?

O'DONNELL

He also requested oversight of the entire space program.

JFK

Johnson literally wants to control everything from here to the moon.

BOBBY

I'm going over there to personally tell him what he can do with this request.

JFK

No you're not.

BOBBY

Better still, I say we send this letter to *The Washington Post*. Publish it and humiliate the bastard.

JFK

No one is to do anything that's going to embarrass my vice president. Last month Lyndon Johnson was the most powerful Democrat in Washington. Now he answers to my kid brother and his Harvard roommate. It's hard enough for him to swallow that without us embarrassing him.

BOBBY

He embarrasses himself.

O'DONNELL

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

BOBBY

Well he's no FDR, nor is he a JFK. He's Lyndon I'll-Never-Be-President-In-A-Million-Years Johnson and I'm not about to waste my time worrying about the Vice President.

JFK

I know that, Bobby. That's why I'm putting Kenny in charge of him.

O'DONNELL

What?

JFK

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

O'DONNELL

Sir, please-

JFK

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

BOBBY

What do you want to do about this letter?

JFK

Let's just pretend it never happened.

BOBBY

We've got to find something to keep Johnson occupied.

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY - JANUARY 1961

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

JOHNSON

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

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

REEDY

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

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

JENKINS

Sir, the President wants to ensure that all government agencies and contractors exercise fair hiring practices with regards to race.

REEDY

It's Kennedy's first major initiative on civil rights. The Southern Democrats are going to hate this committee.

JOHNSON

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

When 1968 arrives, I'd like to run for president. That means that we need to spend the next eight years building up new support, maintaining old friendships, and generally making sure that people fuckin' like me!

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

REEDY

How could anybody not like him?

The toilet flushes. Johnson exits from the bathroom. He paces for a moment, getting an idea, working it out in his mind.

JOHNSON

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

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

REEDY

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

JOHNSON

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

JENKINS

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

JOHNSON

This damn civil rights issue is gonna tear the Democrats in two. We got rival camps in this Party and they are never going to come to an agreement.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But as long as they sit at the table, they need an interpreter. The Kennedy's don't speak "Southern." And the Southerners don't speak "Kennedy." I'm the only man who knows both languages.

REEDY

And which side are you on?

JOHNSON

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

JENKINS

And how do we make sure that happens?

JOHNSON

Compromise. Endless compromise.

INT. SENATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MARCH 1961

At a large table in the austere room, Johnson and Russell dine together, alone. Russell sits at the head of the table.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

Yeah, I drew the short straw on this one.

RUSSELL

Don't worry about it. I don't imagine this committee will be around very long anyway.

JOHNSON

I wouldn't be so sure.

RUSSELL

That's what they said about the Fair Employment Practices Commission.

JOHNSON

Well it's not 1948 and Truman's not in the White House.

RUSSELL

I've had this fight with three presidents and I am fully prepared to have it with a fourth. My army may be small, but our cause is mighty.

A BLACK WAITER clears some plates and leaves.

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

Mm hmm. And I know just the place where that contract should go.

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

Glad to hear it. So convince your committee to sign off on it.

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

We're not making any changes.

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

You need to do more on this one. The plant needs to hire negros.

RUSSELL

Someone has to mop the floors.

JOHNSON

I'm talking about engineers, skilled labor. These companies have to hire negroes for some of these jobs. They're calling it "affirmative action."

RUSSELL

What right does the government have telling employers who to hire?

JOHNSON

Well it's the government's one billion dollars so I suppose we have some right.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

Those brothers from Massachusetts aren't going to tell us how to run the state of Georgia.

JOHNSON

Of course not. But they won the election by appealing to the colored man. They need to give him something in return. That's just how politics works.

RUSSELL

You asking me to surrender?

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

Am I talking to Richard Russell or Stonewall Jackson right now?

Russell laughs.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I'm the only ally you've got in the White House - make it easier for me to help you. All right?

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY - APRIL 1961

Johnson enters and a ELEVEN MEN rise to their feet.

Johnson moves to the head of the table.

JOHNSON

This meeting of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity is called to order. Take your seats.

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

By presidential order, this committee is to be comprised of...
(consulting his notes)
Three of the joint chiefs, four members of the cabinet, and five heads of commissions. Just out of curiosity, who the hell are all of you?

Everyone looks around. No one answers.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

KATZENBACH

Sir, the Attorney General had a previous engagement.

JOHNSON

Splendid. Well despite the fact that none of your bosses are here today, the Vice President did in fact show up so let's get this meeting started.

Johnson sits.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

KATZENBACH

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

JOHNSON

That's because it is.

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR

That Lockheed plant is one of the worst offenders on civil rights.

JOHNSON

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

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR

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

He slides a MEMO to Johnson.

UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR (CONT'D)

We need to use this opportunity to demonstrate the full power of this committee.

JOHNSON

If your boss wants to make demands,
you tell him to deliver them to me
personally.

(pointing at the memo)

And, son, if this committee had
that kind of power, the men you
work for wouldn't have sent you.
This meeting is adjourned.

Johnson remains seated as everyone else stands to leave.

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

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

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - SAME

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

In the front seat, Youngblood looks up at the buildings of
downtown Dallas - the Criminal Court, Old Courthouse
Buildings, and the Texas School Book Depository.

Youngblood hears Agent LEMS JOHNS through his earpiece.

AGENT JOHNS (V.O.)

Five minutes to the Trade Mart.

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

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

Johnson is lost in thought...

BANG!

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

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

Youngblood looks ahead. The Queen Mary blocks his view of JFK's car. In the Queen Mary, Agent GEORGE HICKEY stands. He holds an AR-15 ASSAULT RIFLE and he is ready to use it.

YOUNGBLOOD
Get down! Get down!

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

Youngblood jumps over the seat and pins Johnson to the floor with a knee into his back and an elbow into his shoulder.

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

BANG!... BANG!

Two more loud explosions cry out.

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

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

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

Youngblood looks outside where people are scattering.

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

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

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

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

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

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

YOUNGBLOOD
 Stay down!

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

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

Jacks steps on the gas. They go over a curb, knocking
 everybody around.

Jacks accelerates as they enter the shadow of the underpass.

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

EXT. STEMMONS FREEWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

AT THE TRADE MART

A few hundred feet from the freeway, an EXPECTANT CROWD waits
 for the motorcade to arrive. All they hear are sirens.

At an adjacent building, a tall marquee reads: "MARKET HALL -
 WELCOME PRESIDENT AND MRS. KENNEDY."

BACK TO THE FREEWAY

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

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

EXT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S CAR - SAME

Youngblood grabs the door handle as they approach.

YOUNGBLOOD

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

JOHNSON

Okay, partner. I understand. You ready, Bird?

LADY BIRD

I'm ready.

The car screeches to a halt.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY - SPRING 1961

Just outside the Oval Office, a child's laughter fills the air. Sounds of play come from the open door of the President's office.

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

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

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

BOBBY

Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln.

MRS. LINCOLN

Good morning, Mr. Kennedy.

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

JFK

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

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

JFK, Johnson, and O'Donnell move to the couches in the center. Bobby goes to the desk and leans against it.

JFK

How are you doing with the Committee?

JOHNSON

Fine, Mr. President.

No one seems to buy this.

JFK

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

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

That's not what I hear.

JOHNSON

You're the Attorney General, if you're so concerned why don't you come to our meeting instead of getting second-hand information?

BOBBY

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

JFK

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

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

If we take this contract away from Russell, all that'll show is that we can't force him to do a single thing he doesn't want to do. And you don't want to make an enemy of Senator Russell. He'll put the brakes on every piece of legislation we have in Congress.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

You want to see how powerful that one senator can be?

JFK

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

JOHNSON

Taking away their contract won't change anything either, Mr. President.

JFK

So what's your recommendation?

JOHNSON

Let's keep the contract in Georgia, but let's turn it into a victory for us.

JFK

And how do we do that?

JOHNSON

By making sure that we get some of what we're asking for from that plant. I can convince Russell to convince the plant to integrate. Give some of those jobs to negros. We'll have white men and black men working side by side on assembly lines building America's newest airplane. Now that would be a victory for this administration.

JFK

All right, Lyndon, let's get that plant integrated.

JOHNSON

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

O'Donnell shoots Bobby an inquisitive look. This was not part of the scheduled meeting.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What's happening with Sarah Hughes?

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

BOBBY

The judge from Dallas.

JOHNSON

You haven't accepted my recommendation to nominate her.

BOBBY

It's not your place to make that recommendation.

JOHNSON

(to JFK)

Not only would she make a damn fine federal judge, what's more is I promised her that nomination. Now how's it going to look to the people from my state if I can't even get a federal judge appointed?

BOBBY

She's too old.

JOHNSON

Everybody seems old to you.

JFK

We have to let senators from their respective states make those recommendations, and Ralph Yarborough is the senior senator from Texas now.

JOHNSON

Well tough luck for Ralph Yarborough then. He hails from the same state as the Vice President.

JFK

I can't just ignore his request.

JOHNSON

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

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

JFK

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

JFK stands, letting Johnson know the discussion is over.

EXT. LOCKHEED FACTORY - MARIETTA, GEORGIA - SPRING 1963

Russell and Johnson stand on the tarmac just outside of an open factory where the C-141 AIRCRAFT is being constructed.

WORKERS inside construct the remaining parts of partially-assembled new airplanes. Some of the workers are black, some are white. And they're working side-by-side.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

You sure that big bitch'll fly?

RUSSELL

She'll fly. Built by Georgia's finest. Half of 'em anyway.

Russell eyes some of the black workers.

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

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Did you see this?

JOHNSON

On every news stand in the whole damn country. They're calling him the number 2 man in Washington.

RUSSELL

(reassuring)

No one has ever gone from Attorney General to President.

JOHNSON

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

Russell puts the magazine away.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

I'm hearing it too.

RUSSELL

And what are you doing about it?

JOHNSON

I can't walk into the Oval Office and start barking orders.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

You were unopposed.

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

What's your point?

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

I'm doing everything in my power.

RUSSELL

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

CUT TO:

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

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

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

AGENT ROBERTS

Clear that area!

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

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

Youngblood gets the attention of a nearby AGENT.

YOUNGBLOOD

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

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

Youngblood moves Johnson to the wall farthest from the door.

Agent Kivett listens to his earpiece and relays a message.

AGENT KIVETT

Youngblood, they want you to call
Washington for an update.

YOUNGBLOOD

I'm not leaving this man's side for
anything.

(to Johnson)

I'm sticking to you like glue.

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

JOHNSON

Rufus, can I see Jackie and Nellie?

YOUNGBLOOD

I can't let you leave this room.

JOHNSON

How about Lady Bird? Can she go?

Youngblood thinks for a moment and then nods.

Agent Roberts enters and moves to Youngblood and Johnson.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What's happening, Emory?

AGENT ROBERTS

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

YOUNGBLOOD

(to Johnson)

We need to get you back to
Washington as soon as possible.

AGENT ROBERTS

I agree.

JOHNSON

No.

YOUNGBLOOD

Mr. Vice President, the safest place for you in Dallas is Air Force One. And the safest place for you in the world is the White House. We can't stay here.

JOHNSON

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

Youngblood sees that Johnson means it.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Come on, Jack.

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT - SUMMER 1963

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

BOBBY

Come on, Jack!

(catching himself)

Mr. President - every day it's more demonstrations, it's fire hoses and dogs. The South is burning. We have got to act now.

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

JOHNSON

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

SALINGER

I'm being bombarded with questions about when we're going to send the civil rights bill to Congress.

O'DONNELL

We made promises during the campaign. If we sit idly by, our supporters will never forgive us.

SCHLESINGER

It's also the right thing to do.

JOHNSON

It's the wrong time to do it.

Bobby holds up *The New York Times*.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

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

JFK

You think they'll hold my budget bill hostage to block civil rights?

JOHNSON

I think they'll hold everything hostage to block civil rights.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

You can't go around Richard Russell.

BOBBY

Then we'll go through him!

Bobby throws the paper to the desk. JFK picks it up.

JFK

(reading)

"For years now I have heard the word 'Wait.' It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity.

(MORE)

JFK (CONT'D)

This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see that justice too long delayed is justice denied."

JFK folds the paper and places it back on his desk.

BOBBY

Mr. President, we're talking about bombs. About lynchings.

JOHNSON

I am not unsympathetic to the plight of the nigras-

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I know I'm not as smart as some of the men in this room. Maybe I'm not as smart as any man in this room. But when it comes to the workings of the Congress of the United States, I know what I'm talking about. Mr. President, if you send the civil rights bill to Congress right now it will never become law.

JFK thinks for a moment.

JFK

Thank you, Gentlemen.

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

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

JFK (CONT'D)

What do you think?

BOBBY

The time for negotiation is over.

O'DONNELL

We have to do something bold.

JFK

What about the Southern Democrats?

O'DONNELL

We're never going to get their support.

BOBBY

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

JFK

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

BOBBY

What makes you think he's on our
side?

JFK nods and walks to his desk.

JFK

Kenny, can we get this bill passed?

O'DONNELL

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

JFK

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

Bobby and O'Donnell wait for a concrete order.

JFK (CONT'D)

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

O'DONNELL

What should I tell Lyndon?

BOBBY

The Vice President is no longer
part of this discussion.

JFK nods in agreement.

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

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

RUSSELL

I have had it up to here with
Yankees talking about racism in the
South!

(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

These Kennedys spent their entire lives in private schools and now they want to talk about equality?

JOHNSON

I swear that White House has more Harvards running around it than the whole city of Boston.

RUSSELL

Is there nothing they think is outside of the scope of governmental control? Voluntary integration is one thing. But don't you think that I, as an American citizen, have the right to eat a hamburger in a restaurant without being forced to sit next to someone that I don't want to bump elbows with?

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

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

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

MRS. WRIGHT

May I clear your plates, sir?

JOHNSON

Yes. Thank you, dear.

RUSSELL

"If the law can compel me to employ a negro, it can compel a negro to work for me. Such a law would do nothing more than enslave a minority." That's what one senator had to say about civil rights legislation.

JOHNSON

Well that senator's a moron. That was probably Strom Thrumond.

RUSSELL

Actually it was you. 1949. Your very first speech on the Senate floor.

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

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

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

JOHNSON

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

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

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

RUSSELL

(re: Mrs. Wright)

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

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

You telling me that woman is your equal?

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

I don't know how I missed the resemblance.

(a beat)

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

JOHNSON

Then why are we whispering?

INT. THE ELMS - NIGHT - JUNE 11, 1963

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

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

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

ON THE TELEVISION

JFK

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

Johnson can't believe what he's seeing.

JFK (CONT'D)

I am therefore asking the Congress
to enact legislation...

Johnson throws his glass at the wall, shattering it.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT - FALL 1963

JFK stands behind his desk, reading an opened newspaper.

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

JOHNSON

Good evening, Mr. President. I-

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

BOBBY

The President's at a dinner.

JOHNSON

I'll reschedule.

BOBBY

What do you need?

JOHNSON

It can wait.

BOBBY

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

Johnson hesitates but decides to proceed.

JOHNSON

I would like to know what the
President's intentions are for
1964.

Bobby is not sure what Johnson's getting at.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Does he still want me on the
ticket?

BOBBY

Dropping you from the ticket would
be more trouble than it's worth.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Now if that's all, I don't have much time.

Bobby grabs his jacket.

JOHNSON

Why don't you like me, Bobby?

BOBBY

I definitely don't have that much time.

Johnson has to follow Bobby as he moves.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

We see the world in two very different ways.

JOHNSON

Then why keep me around? You don't use me for anything important and half the time you send me out of the country just to keep me away.

Bobby offers no help.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I was in Congress for 24 years, but you never want my help on legislative issues. I'm from the South but when you need help down there, you have other Southerners you'd rather work with. I'm irrelevant.

BOBBY

Did you ever consider that that's by design?

JOHNSON

Just let me go.

BOBBY

What would you do if you weren't vice president?

JOHNSON

I'd go home to Texas where I could live in peace.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You've made damn sure that I'm through with politics. I'll never be able to run for office again. Hell, I'm not even sure I can help the President win reelection in '64.

BOBBY

We've got concerns beyond that.

JOHNSON

You're not worried about me in '68?

Bobby looks up - Johnson is getting warmer.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You're not worried about me in '68.
(thinking to himself)

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

BOBBY

You think I'd be that conniving?

JOHNSON

I would be.

Bobby puts his jacket on, readying to leave.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You're gonna keep me here next term and waste four more years of whatever life I have left so that you can have an easier shot at the presidency.

BOBBY

Any time you want to quit, I'll be happy to take your resignation to the President.

Bobby exits through the rear door of the Oval Office.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Reedy and Jenkins walk behind Johnson who is walking very slowly now, lost in a contemplative daze. They are concerned but do not dare speak.

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

JOHNSON

If either of you should get an offer for a better job, I suggest you take it. My future is behind me.

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

CUT TO:

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

Johnson leans against the wall, staring at the ground.

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

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

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

O'DONNELL

He's gone.

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

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

Agent ROY KELLERMAN enters, visibly upset. O'Donnell passes Kellerman on his way out. The room is silent and still.

AMIDST IT ALL, LYNDON JOHNSON RISES FROM LEANING AGAINST THE WALL.

HE STRAIGHTENS UP TO THE ENTIRETY OF HIS 6'4" FRAME, SHEDDING THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SLUMP THAT HAS COME TO TYPIFY HIS POLITICAL IMPOTENCE. UNNOTICED BY THE OTHERS FOR THE MOMENT, HE ABSORBS THE INEVITABLE POWER THAT FLOWS TO HIM.

Assistant Press Secretary MALCOLM KILDUFF, 36, enters the room and timidly makes his way to Johnson.

KILDUFF
Mr. President.

The room stops. All eyes turn to, indeed, the President.

KILDUFF (CONT'D)
I have to announce the death of
President Kennedy.

Everyone looks anxiously to see how Johnson will respond.

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

CARTER
Rusk is somewhere over the Pacific.
So are five other members of the
cabinet. They're on a plane to
Japan.

JOHNSON
Turn it around.
(to Agent Roberts)
I need you to tell Mrs. Kennedy
that it's time to go.

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

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

YOUNGBLOOD
Sir, we need to get you in the air.

JOHNSON
Not without Jackie.

YOUNGBLOOD
Then let's wait for her at the plane.

JOHNSON
Fine. Cliff, I need people I know close by. Find whoever you can and bring them to the plane. Congressmen, I want you flying back to Washington with me. Malcolm, you're to announce President Kennedy's death only after the rest of us are safely on board, otherwise you're gonna make these boys' jobs a whole lot harder.

Johnson sees that he has everyone's undivided attention.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
On April 14th, 1865 two would-be assassins attempted to kill Secretary of State William Seward, stabbing him in his home. At the same time, another assassin was dispatched in a plot to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson. These events happened on the same night that John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln. We do not know the extent of this conspiracy or if it has run its full course. We do not know who is behind it or what other destruction they mean to inflict. Remain vigilant. Remain focused. We all have a job to do.

Youngblood receives a radio message.

YOUNGBLOOD
We've got two cars standing by.

JOHNSON
Let's move.

INT. PARKLAND HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Youngblood leads. Kivett, Johns, and Roberts add additional protection for Johnson, Lady Bird, and their party. They move swiftly, yet as discreetly as possible.

Carter breaks away as the rest pass a classroom where the entire Press Pool sits. No one notices as they walk by.

Near the reception desk, Cecil Stoughton does notice. Unsure of what's happening, he looks at the double doors to the operating room and then back to Johnson and his movement.

It hits him. Cecil grabs his camera and runs for the exit.

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

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

Youngblood exits the front car. Johnson steps out and looks up at the glistening Boeing 707, tail number "26000" and the words "United States of America" painted across the fuselage.

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

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - AFT CABIN - CONTINUOUS

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

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

Youngblood peers out a window, scanning the rooftops.

YOUNGBLOOD

Let's get these shades pulled down!

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - STATEROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

NEWS FOOTAGE

WALTER CRONKITE sits at his news desk, reporting.

CRONKITE

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

(reading a note)

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

(fighting back tears)

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

This statement ignites a thought for Johnson.

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

JOHNSON

Congressmen, I need to decide when and where I should take the oath.

CONGRESSMAN BROOKS

I think you should take it immediately. Establish continuity.

CONGRESSMAN THORNBERRY

No, wait 'til we get back to Washington. You can have Warren swear you in.

CONGRESSMAN THOMAS

I believe we need to reassure everyone that America has a president now. But this is a delicate line to walk. You need to protect the legitimacy of the moment.

JOHNSON

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

YOUNGBLOOD
The bedroom I suppose.

JOHNSON
I need to make a phone call.

EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - MINUTES LATER

A car arrives. Cliff Carter steps out, along with LIZ CARPENTER, 43, MARIE FEHMER, 29, and JACK VALENTI, 42.

A remaining stowaway exits the car: photographer Cecil Stoughton managed to catch a ride.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson and Youngblood move toward the back of the plane. They pass Carter and his three companions.

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

Johnson moves without waiting for a reply. Youngblood stays with him. Fehmer follows them into:

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

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

JOHNSON
It's all right, get on in here.

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
This is Lyndon Johnson... Yeah.
(to Fehmer)
I need you to take notes.

Fehmer quickly moves toward the corner table.

INT. HICKORY HILL - BOBBY'S OFFICE - SAME

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

GUTHMAN

Sir.

BOBBY

We've made so many enemies. I thought they'd get one of us, but I thought it would be me.

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

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Robert Kennedy.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

JOHNSON

This is Lyndon Johnson.

Silence. Who should start?

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

BOBBY

Thank you.

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

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

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

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

BOBBY

Perhaps it would put you at ease. What's the matter, Lyndon, you afraid you'll arrive in Washington and the White House won't be here?

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

(for Fehmer's benefit)

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

BOBBY

That's just fine, Lyndon.

JOHNSON

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

Bobby would jump through the phone if he could.

BOBBY

Is that all?

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

Any judge can do it.

JOHNSON

Thank you.

Johnson hangs up and looks to Marie.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Get me Sarah Hughes.

EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - 2:11 P.M.

Jackie, O'Donnell, O'Brien, and Sorensen, along with other Aides and Agents have arrived at the plane.

The men are attempting to carry the coffin up the narrow steps. An awkward task. They stumble and nearly drop it.

From 50 feet away, Cecil Stoughton points his camera at this scene and snaps a photo.

From the open hatch of the plane, Kilduff notices Stoughton.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - AFT CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

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

JOHNSON

Oh, Jackie, excuse us.

She's visibly caught off guard. Fehmer looks to the ground, embarrassed.

JACKIE

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

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

Johnson quickly puts his jacket on.

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

LADY BIRD

Dear God.

JACKIE

What if I hadn't been there? I'm just so glad I was.

LADY BIRD

We never wanted it this way.

JACKIE

Oh, Lady Bird, we've always liked the two of you so much.

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

LADY BIRD

Perhaps we should find you something else to wear.

JACKIE

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

JOHNSON

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

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

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

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

Stoughton is perched on the couch with his camera ready.

JOHNSON

All right, Judge.

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

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

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

JUDGE HUGHES/JOHNSON

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

Stoughton snaps the historic photograph.

JUDGE HUGHES

...So help me God.

JOHNSON

...So help me God.

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

Air Force One speeds down the runway and takes flight.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NOVEMBER 22, 1963 - NIGHT

The sun has set on the nation's capital.

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Jenkins and Reedy work. Juanita hands Jenkins a note.

JENKINS

Tell him to expect a call tonight.

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

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

Youngblood and THREE AGENTS do a quick sweep.

REEDY

Welcome back, sir.

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

JUANITA

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

JOHNSON

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

(re: sheets of paper)

What do you have there?

JUANITA

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

JOHNSON

Marie Fehmer will be here shortly to help you with that. I think you all remember Jack Valenti. I've asked him to join us as well. We need all the help we can get because there is much to be done.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

We'll start with the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Richard Russell. I also want to talk to every former living president. And hell, if you can get a hold of the dead ones, I'll call them too. Maybe George Washington has some good advice for me.

Russell enters and moves to Johnson, putting out his hand. Johnson shakes his hand.

RUSSELL

Mr. President. Thank God you're safe. I'll be in my office all night. You call on me if you need anything.

JOHNSON

I will.

Russell nods and exits.

JUANITA

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

JOHNSON

Every one of them.

National Security Advisor MCGEORGE BUNDY, 44, enters.

BUNDY

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

JOHNSON

Lady Bird and I will remain at the house for the foreseeable future.

BUNDY

That's fine, sir. As far as your office, you and your staff should move into the Oval tomorrow morning.

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

JOHNSON

Good. We'll see you in 20.

Bundy leaves.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

REEDY

You want to start talking about the election already?

JOHNSON

The Republicans will be. We need to turn chaos into order, panic into calm. If we can keep the wheels from falling off the wagon, and keep the country on track, then we'll have done our immediate job.

JENKINS

We need to sit down with civil rights leaders. They're anxious to know what's going to happen to the civil rights bill.

JOHNSON

It's the wrench in the gears that's caused everything to halt. We have to remove the wrench. Simple as that. All right, everybody here knows his role. You've done it before, you'll do it again. Let's get to it.

Everyone moves. Johnson finds two sheets of paper.

REEDY

Something we can help you with?

JOHNSON

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

Reedy nods and goes to work.

Jenkins stands, mesmerized by Johnson. Their eyes meet.

JENKINS

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

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

Johnson looks out his window at the illuminated White House.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LINCOLN BEDROOM - SAME

Bobby sits on the floor, against the bed. Tears roll down his face. Alone with his emotions, the grief consumes him.

BOBBY

Why, God?

The grief begins turning into anger and the anger into resolve.

EXT. THE ELMS - NOVEMBER 23, 1963 - MORNING

The sun begins to show itself on a new day.

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

INT. THE ELMS - KITCHEN - MORNING

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

Johnson enters, throwing on his jacket.

JOHNSON

Sleep beyond five hours is just
laziness my grandma always said.

He grabs a coffee mug off the table that was clearly Moyers'.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Time's a wastin'.

Johnson heads out and the rest scramble to follow.

INT. SORENSEN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Sorensen wears casual clothes. He sits at his table with a cup of coffee. He is lost in thought. The PHONE RINGS. He snaps out of it and answers.

SORENSEN

Ted Sorensen.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMO - SAME

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

JOHNSON

Ted, this is Lyndon Johnson.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

SORENSEN

Hello... Mr. President.

JOHNSON

I'm glad I tracked you down.
Listen, Ted, I want to tell you I know how much you loved President Kennedy. And he loved you.

SORENSEN

Yes.

JOHNSON

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

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

INT. SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAYS - DAY

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

JOHNSON

Do either of you know what this meeting is about?

JENKINS

Russell just said he wanted five minutes of your time.

JOHNSON

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

INT. RUSSELL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

RUSSELL
Mr. President.

Everyone applauds wholeheartedly. The clapping dies down.

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

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

ALL
Amen.

Johnson smiles but the implicit threat has been heard.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAYS - DAY

Johnson and his staff march through the halls. Youngblood walks in front of them.

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

O'DONNELL
What the hell is he doing here?

The groups reach each other.

JOHNSON
Good morning, gentlemen. I'm pleased to see you back at work already. I know how much the President meant to you both.
(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

He had an impressive group of men working for him. I need you now, even more than President Kennedy needed you.

Neither man can respond to this request.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

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

O'BRIEN

I can't believe he just quoted Shakespeare.

O'DONNELL

I can't believe he just quoted Brutus.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

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

Johnson and his staff enter.

JOHNSON

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

MRS. LINCOLN

I don't know. That's so soon.

JOHNSON

As best you can, okay?

Johnson continues through the door into:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

JENKINS

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

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Bobby moves through the hallways. He rounds a corner and bumps into Mrs. Lincoln. She is clearly upset.

BOBBY

What's wrong?

MRS. LINCOLN

Mr. Johnson just told me to clear everything out of the Oval Office immediately.

Bobby is pissed. He jogs away.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

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

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

Excuse me?

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

I was told to use this office.

BOBBY

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

JOHNSON

I'm not trying to force anybody anywhere. In fact, I've made it absolutely clear that Jackie can remain in the East Wing for as long as she likes.

BOBBY

Well that's not really the part of the building that you're interested in, is it?

Johnson offers no reply. He wasn't looking for this fight.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

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

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

Mourning for my brother is the business of the country.

JOHNSON

The President of the United States needs an office.

BOBBY

I'll let you know when this office can be made available to you.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

Your cabinet?

JOHNSON

(treading carefully)

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

BOBBY

You've already got one photograph with a grieving Kennedy at your side. You're not getting another.

JOHNSON

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

BOBBY

I know where to find you.

Bobby stands fast, letting Johnson know it's time to leave. Johnson holds steady for a beat and then heads for the exit. His staff follows.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAYS - MINUTES LATER

Johnson speeds through the hallway with his entire staff.

JOHNSON

I swear to Christ I'm done worrying
about that son of bitch!

They round the corner and see Bundy.

BUNDY

Mr. President. I just left a note
at your desk. It turns out you
can't use the Oval Office today.

Johnson gets right up in Bundy's face.

JOHNSON

You're in charge of intelligence
for the United States of America,
right?

BUNDY

Yes, sir.

JOHNSON

Then God help us!

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson moves to his desk, still heated. Most of the staff
stay in the outer office. Jenkins and Reedy follow Johnson
inside. Jenkins closes the door.

JENKINS

Sir, we need to discuss when you're
going to address a joint session of
Congress.

JOHNSON

I'm not ready for that yet!

JENKINS

President Kennedy's burial has been
set for Monday. With Thursday being
Thanksgiving, we don't have much of
a window. You're going to have to
get ready.

Johnson looks out his window at:

THE WHITE HOUSE GATES

THOUSANDS OF MOURNERS pay tribute to the fallen president. They surround the gate while NEWS CREWS capture footage.

Johnson moves to the TV and turns it on.

ON TELEVISION

CRONKITE

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

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

WHITE WOMAN

I feel the profound grief that surrounds the whole area and that something dreadful has happened and uncertainty about what is going to happen after this.

WHITE MAN WITH GLASSES

Well I think that we all, more than with any other president, I think the people of the United States have identified themselves with the Kennedy family and I think the grief that we all feel at this event, this tragedy is much more real and much more personal than if it would have happened to other presidents.

BLACK MAN

Just words, I just can't describe how I feel at this time.

(looking at the White House)

It just seems empty. It just doesn't seem like anybody else could fill the place the way he did.

BACK TO SCENE

Johnson is impacted by these sentiments.

JENKINS

Sir, right now you need to focus your attention on Kennedy's cabinet and his staff.

JOHNSON

They'll never love me either. But
you're right, I have to have them.
They're my link to John Kennedy.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - AFTERNOON

A black catafalque stands in the center of the room. Upon it rests the bronze casket with an American Flag draped over it. A NAVY LIEUTENANT stands at attention at the head of it. Candles flicker at all four corners.

Sorensen, O'Donnell, O'Brien, Powers, and Schlesinger stand close by.

POWERS

He said he needed me more than
President Kennedy did.

O'DONNELL

That's the same line of shit he's
given all of us.

O'BRIEN

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

SORENSEN

So what should we do?

Bobby appears, having overheard this. Everyone looks to him. Bobby looks each man in the eye and then walks to the casket.

BOBBY

My president is in this coffin.

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

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

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

Sorensen and O'Brien enter and seem a little surprised to discover what they are walking into.

O'BRIEN

You need a Harvard degree to eat here?

WALTON

Hey!

O'BRIEN

Oh, sorry, Walton. I didn't see you there.

O'Brien and Sorensen move to O'Donnell and Salinger while the rest return to their side conversations.

O'DONNELL

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

SALINGER

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

They laugh.

SORENSEN

So what are we doing here?

Schlesinger enters and moves to the head of the table. This is his meeting. He remains standing as everyone quiets down.

SCHLESINGER

In his inaugural address, President Kennedy declared that the torch had been passed to a new generation of Americans. The question before us now is who should be the custodian of that torch?

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

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

SCHLESINGER (V.O.)

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

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

A SINGLE DRUM begins to play...

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Back to the dinner that Schlesinger leads.

SCHLESINGER

But does anyone here believe that Lyndon Johnson is the rightful heir to President John F. Kennedy?

INT. LIMO - DAY

Bobby stares straight ahead. Johnson sits in the seat behind him, looking over Bobby's shoulder.

SCHLESINGER (V.O.)

Does anyone not think that we can do better?

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - DAY

FOOTAGE

The caisson passes thousands of CRYING FACES in Washington.

A riderless horse marches on, symbolizing a fallen leader.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Schlesinger has finished and now the floor is open.

O'BRIEN

I didn't come to Washington just to work for John Kennedy; I came here to work for what John Kennedy believed in.

GALBRAITH

(rebutting)
As did we all!

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

FOOTAGE

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

O'BRIEN (V.O.)

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

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

O'BRIEN

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

BEER

You think Johnson will continue the work of President Kennedy? This is a man who voted against every piece of civil rights legislation for 20 years.

SALINGER

And even if Johnson believed in what we believe in, how much do you think he could really accomplish in one year?

GALBRAITH

Can we mount a challenge by then?

SALINGER

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

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - ROTUNDA - DAY

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

SORENSEN (V.O.)

Dividing the Party might only make matters worse.

BEER (V.O.)
 You can't honor Kennedy by serving
 Johnson.

An ARMY SERGEANT walks backwards, carrying a large WREATH. He sets it down in front of the casket. Johnson follows and stops at the wreath, lowering his head in prayer.

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

FOOTAGE

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

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

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

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

FOOTAGE

The funeral procession crosses the Potomac.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sorensen looks to Schlesinger.

SORENSEN
 Just what are you asking us to do?
 To quit? Or betray Lyndon Johnson?

O'Donnell stands up and everyone gets quiet.

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

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

FOOTAGE

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

MILITARY MEN prepare to fire a 3-volley salute.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As O'Donnell continues, INTERCUT THE RIFLE SHOTS.

O'DONNELL

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

FIRE ONE.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

...if he should fall...

FIRE TWO.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

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

FIRE THREE.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

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

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

Somewhere on the hillside between Johnson and Bobby, John F. Kennedy's casket is lowered into the ground.

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

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

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

INT. THE ELMS - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

In Johnson's home, Reedy, Moyers and Valenti are joined by ABE FORTAS, 53, and SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY, 52 at the dining room table.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

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

FORTAS

He has to make some progress on civil rights.

REEDY

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

INT. THE ELMS - KITCHEN - SAME

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

Mrs. Wright chops vegetables. Lady Bird makes a cup of tea.

Jenkins exits the meeting and approaches Johnson.

JOHNSON

How's it going in there?

Jenkins shrugs. Johnson nods.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Have we heard back from any of the Kennedy men?

JENKINS

Two nights ago they had a meeting.

Johnson's eyes meet Jenkins.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

All of them.

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

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

SENATOR HUMPHREY (O.S.)

The civil rights bill was the cornerstone of Kennedy's presidency!

MOYERS (O.S.)

The civil rights bill stalled in the Senate months ago. Even Kennedy was going to have to compromise eventually.

REEDY (O.S.)

Exactly! And nobody expects Johnson to be John F. Kennedy.

That sentiment strikes Johnson to his core. Lady Bird watches as Johnson exits.

INT. THE ELMS - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson walks to the closet and removes his jacket. He hangs it up and loosens his tie.

Lady Bird enters and moves behind him.

JOHNSON

The country will never accept me. History will say I was the illegitimate heir to the throne.

LADY BIRD

It's been four days.

JOHNSON

No man should rise to the top this way.

LADY BIRD

But many have. Truman did.

JOHNSON

FDR was never going to live through his last term. The moment Truman became Vice President, he knew it was his inheritance. Somewhere between Majority Leader and Dallas, I lost all hope that I would ever have this opportunity. And now that it's mine... What if I fail?

LADY BIRD

You won't.

He shakes his head. He turns to face Lady Bird.

JOHNSON

I used to spend so much time thinking about how to get here.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I never thought about what I'd do once I arrived.

LADY BIRD

I don't worry for one second that the answer to that question lies within you. A former congressman, a former senator, the majority leader, and a vice president. I knew you as all of those men. I loved you as all of those men. I loved you before you were any of those men. And now you're the President of the United States, and what a grand one you will be.

Johnson lets this sink in.

INT. THE ELMS - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Johnson enters and his eyes meet Mrs. Wright's. They listen to the argument from the other room.

VALENTI (O.S.)

If we don't make some progress on civil rights, we'll face a challenge at the convention.

MOYERS (O.S.)

From Bobby?

VALENTI (O.S.)

From someone.

REEDY (O.S.)

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

On this, Johnson gives Mrs. Wright a half-smile and then looks away, toward the door to the dining room.

INT. THE ELMS - DINING ROOM - SAME

The argument continues.

JENKINS

All right, then what kind of compromise can we live with?

Johnson opens the door. Everyone stops. He moves to his seat and nods at them to continue.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

Compromise.

MOYERS

We need to pass some piece of legislation.

VALENTI

Kennedy's bill has a lot of provisions in it. Which ones can we get rid of?

FORTAS

You're squandering an opportunity.

REEDY

We need to work towards realistic objectives.

FORTAS

And weaken the bill right out of the gate?

REEDY

Absolutely. We shouldn't risk everything going after ambitious goals.

JOHNSON

Then what the hell's the presidency for?!

The room stops. Johnson looks at each of them.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

It can't just be about a shiny airplane and a room with no corners. More power emanates from this office than any other position in the world. Surely we can have larger goals than merely occupying this office for as long as possible. Surely there is some better use of this awesome power.

VALENTI

So you want to back Kennedy's civil rights bill?

MOYERS

It'll monopolize all of our resources.

REEDY

And are you even in favor of it?

Johnson contemplates before answering.

JOHNSON

About a year ago, Mrs. Wright, my private cook, was driving from here back to the ranch in Texas. I asked her if she would take my dog with her so that it'd be there when I got home. Mrs. Wright said no. She said it's hard enough driving through the South as a black woman without having a dog to worry about. Finding a place to eat, to sleep, to use a restroom is a challenge in and of itself. The personal cook for the Vice President of the United States had to drive through towns without stopping, and then squat to pee on the sides of roads. A hundred years ago she'd have been a slave. A hundred years from now, hell maybe she could be president. But today is a time of too much uncertainty. Where can she eat? Where can she sleep? Can she vote? If she does, will she be harassed for casting that vote? Can she attend school? And if so, which school? Can she travel the cities and towns of this land without fearing for her safety? What rights that belong to the men in this room are not afforded to her? There are too many questions looming over this country today. It's time to answer them.

REEDY

You're going to lose the support of the people who have always had your back. And if you aren't successful, you're never going to earn the support of anyone else. There's no points for effort. Your entire future will hinge on the outcome of this bill - a bill that four other presidents have failed to pass.

(MORE)

REEDY (CONT'D)

And if you fail, that's it. You'll have the third shortest presidency in history. Every time a president fights Congress on this, Congress defeats him.

JOHNSON

This time Congress won't be fighting a president - it'll be fighting two. Never underestimate the intensity of a martyr's cause, or the size of a Texan's balls.

(standing up)

There will be no compromise. There will be no negotiation. And there will be no failure. We're going to do something historic. We're going to do something grand. Otherwise, what the hell's the presidency for?

EXT. THE ELMS - NIGHT

Johnson's staff exits the house, many of them with a newfound pride in their boss. Valenti and Moyers hang back. The rest move toward cars. Jenkins addresses them all.

JENKINS

Gentlemen, make it so.

Humphrey pulls Jenkins aside.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

Does he really support the civil rights bill?

JENKINS

With his whole heart.

SENATOR HUMPHREY

Since when?

JENKINS

About three minutes ago.

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

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - WALKWAY - NOVEMBER 25, 1963 - DAY

Agent Youngblood escorts the President and his staff.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

JUANITA

Good morning, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Good morning, Juanita.

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

INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

A new PORTRAIT OF FDR hangs above the mantle.

Kennedy's rocker has been removed.

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

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

The staff members flow in around. They are mesmerized by the mystique of the room.

JOHNSON

Let's get to work.

Reedy approaches Johnson.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

What is it, George?

REEDY

Sir, now that we know what you're going to say in your speech to Congress, who's going to write it?

INT. OVAL OFFICE - LATER

Johnson and Sorensen sit on the couches. Johnson leans in.

JOHNSON

We scheduled a speech before a joint session on Wednesday.

SORENSEN

I've heard.

JOHNSON

I'd like you to write it.

SORENSEN

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

JOHNSON

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

SORENSEN

Mr. President-

JOHNSON

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

INT. WHITE HOUSE - TINY OFFICE - DAY

Sorensen stands at an empty desk in a small office. Moyers, Reedy, and Jenkins drop piles of notes in front of him.

JENKINS

That should bring you up to speed.

Sorensen looks at the mountain of work before him.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson and Secretary of Defense ROBERT MCNAMARA, 47, stand near the rear glass doors.

MCNAMARA

Mr. President, I need to know what you're thinking about Vietnam.

JOHNSON

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

McNamara isn't satisfied with this answer.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

MCNAMARA

All right, Mr. President.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - TINY OFFICE - DAY

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

He picks up his notes and heads for the door. He bumps into Jenkins who was on his way in, spilling his notes.

JENKINS

Whoa, you okay?

SORENSEN

I'm sorry.

Jenkins kneels and helps Sorensen collect his pages.

JENKINS

I wanted to see if you needed anything.

SORENSEN

I don't know what you want this to be. Is it a speech or a eulogy?

JENKINS

It's both. This is the country's final goodbye to President Kennedy, and its first real introduction to President Johnson.

(MORE)

JENKINS (CONT'D)

It's a eulogy, it's an opening statement, it's a state of the union, and an inaugural address. And you have less than 21 hours to write it.

SORENSEN

Walter, do you really believe he can accomplish all of this?

JENKINS

I do.

SORENSEN

How can he?

JENKINS

The same way he always has.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - LATER

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

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

JOHNSON

(into the phone)

You know you're as worthless as porkless pig.

(to his staff)

Yeah?

VALENTI

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

JOHNSON

No. We need that man's help. I'll go to him.

MOYERS

Rusk needs 10 minutes.

JOHNSON

He can have them in 20.

Senator Mansfield enters.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Mike, give me good news.

SENATOR MANSFIELD

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

JOHNSON

No shit, Sherlock. How are we looking on cloture? What's the count?

SENATOR MANSFIELD

About 56.

JOHNSON

(trying to remain calm)
About 56? Thank you, Mike. Leave. Now.

Mansfield exits.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

SENATOR HUMPHREY

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

Johnson nods in agreement.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - LATER

Juanita escorts Senator Yarborough past her desk and into:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Yarborough looks around at the newly redecorated office.

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

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

JOHNSON

Senator Yarborough, it's good to see you.

Yarborough shakes Johnson's hand. He looks confused.

YARBOROUGH
Good to see you, sir.

JOHNSON
Senator, we're about to go to war on civil rights. We're gonna push that bill through Congress, intact. I need men, men with principle who are prepared to take some shots along the way. You up for that?

YARBOROUGH
I serve at your pleasure, sir.

JOHNSON
Good. Hubert will get you set up.

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

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

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

JOHNSON
Don't call me names in my own office.

YARBOROUGH
No, sir.

JOHNSON
Get to work.

INT. SENATOR DIRKSEN'S OFFICE - EVENING

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

JOHNSON
Do you know why I've come here?

SENATOR DIRKSEN

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

JOHNSON

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

SENATOR DIRKSEN

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

JOHNSON

Just stand back and watch us kill each other?

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Why not?

JOHNSON

Because there's more at stake than just politics.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Yes, there is.

JOHNSON

The civil rights bill is going to have its day.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

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

JOHNSON

Yes it will.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Might I suggest removing the parts of the bill that many find-

JOHNSON

Can't do it, Ev. I'm not gonna weaken this bill.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

I'm not interested in the politics on this one.

JOHNSON

That's why you and I are having this conversation.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

SENATOR DIRKSEN

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

JOHNSON

I will. And once I do, it is my sincere hope that the Republicans will cast the deciding vote on the Civil Rights Act. And I can't think of anything more appropriate, more poetic for the Party of Lincoln.

SENATOR DIRKSEN

Neither can I, Mr. President.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

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

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMO - NIGHT

Johnson sits quietly as the car moves.

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

JOHNSON

(to Lincoln)

You know this is your fuckin' mess
I'm cleaning up.

IN THE DISTANCE

The stone face of Lincoln offers no reply.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

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

JOHNSON

Good to see you, Dick.

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

RUSSELL

How dare you, Mr. President.

JOHNSON

Why don't we have a drink?

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

Civil rights is an idea whose time has come.

RUSSELL

I have gone head-to-head with four different presidents on this issue.

JOHNSON

You haven't gone head-to-head with me.

RUSSELL

This could define your presidency.

JOHNSON

Let's hope so.

RUSSELL

You'll never get enough Democrats to support it.

JOHNSON

Then I'll use the next best thing.

RUSSELL

Republicans?

Johnson's face indicates he'll do just that.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

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

JOHNSON

I'm tired of having this conversation with you. We talk all day long but don't say a thing.

RUSSELL

What is it you want to say to me? That you intend to turn your back on me? That you don't care about everything I've done for you? That you're willing to betray me!

JOHNSON

That you're a racist!

RUSSELL

I beg your pardon.

JOHNSON

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

RUSSELL

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

JOHNSON

You're not a good man, Dick. You're a great man. World class. I admire you more than you'll ever know. But you're wrong on this one. You're just plain wrong!

RUSSELL

I will fight you with everything I have.

JOHNSON

Then fight me, but not in here, not in the back rooms or inside these walls. Fight me before the entire world. Fight me on the Senate floor. And on that battlefield, let each man write his own legacy.

RUSSELL

My army is small, but our cause is great.

JOHNSON

Well my cause is great too. And my
army is bigger.

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

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

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

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

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

O'BRIEN

You need to settle down.

REEDY

He's never delivered a speech of
this magnitude.

O'BRIEN

I'm sure the speech is excellent.

REEDY

I'm not worried about the speech -
I'm worried about the speaker.

O'BRIEN

What are you talking about?

REEDY

You ever seen him address an
audience?

O'BRIEN

He's passionate.

REEDY

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

O'BRIEN

I'm Irish.

REEDY

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

O'BRIEN

George, does Johnson scare you?

REEDY

Every day.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - SAME

Sorensen stands at the President's desk while Johnson looks over the speech in front of him. He has a pen in hand and scratches notes in the margin, crosses a few things out, and with each stroke of the pen gives more concern to his speechwriter. Finally, Johnson looks up.

JOHNSON

This is one of the finest things I've ever read.

SORENSEN

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

JOHNSON

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

(pointing to the door)

Would you bring 'em all in?

Sorensen moves to the door to let everyone in.

Johnson stands and grabs his speech. He looks to the door as both staffs, Johnson's and Kennedy's, enter the Oval Office and spread out.

He walks to the front of his desk.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The President's motorcade leaves the White House.

INT. PRESIDENT'S LIMO - DAY

Agent Youngblood sits in the front seat, ever vigilant.

In the back seat, Johnson looks out his window at the
buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue. Flags blow in the wind,
still at half-mast.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - LARGE HALL - DAY

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

REEDY

Sir, just remember not to look at
the Southern caucus when you're
talking about civil rights.

JOHNSON

Where will they be sitting?

REEDY

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

JOHNSON

You're annoying me.

Reedy backs off.

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

MILLER

Are you ready, sir?

Johnson looks down.

CUT TO:

INT. HICKORY HILL - BALLROOM - NIGHT - WINTER 1962

Bobby Kennedy's house. A big dinner ball. Twenty tables are spread throughout the room, each with a dozen GUESTS.

AT JOHNSON'S TABLE

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

HEAD TABLE

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

O'DONNELL

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

They all laugh.

O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

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

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

Johnson slumps in his chair and lowers his head.

CUT TO:

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

Johnson looks up at Miller and gives an affirmative nod.

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

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

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

MILLER

Mr. Speaker, the President of the
United States!

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

On the floor sit 435 CONGRESSMEN including Thornberry, Brooks, and Thomas. Also present are all 100 SENATORS, including Yarborough, Mansfield, Humphrey, Dirksen, and Russell.

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

UP IN THE GALLERY

A mixture of FRIENDS, FAMILY, and CITIZENS.

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

CAMERAS are set up to broadcast live across the world.

IN THE BACK

Along the walls, STAFFERS are bunched together.

Schlesinger joins O'Donnell and the other Kennedy men.

SCHLESINGER

Will he stumble?

O'DONNELL

Will he fall?

Reedy, Jenkins, Moyers, and Carter huddle together.

AT THE FRONT

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

Johnson walks up to the podium. He puts his glasses on and opens his speech.

Everyone sits. Silence.

JOHNSON

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the House, Members of the Senate, my fellow Americans: All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today. The greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the foulest deed of our time. Today, John Fitzgerald Kennedy lives on in the immortal words and works that he left behind. He lives on in the mind and memories of mankind. He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen. No words are sad enough to express our sense of loss. No words are strong enough to express our determination to continue the forward thrust of America that he began.

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

A strong, supportive applause from everyone.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

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

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

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

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

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

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

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

Those who support Johnson are invigorated. Those who oppose him are petrified.

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

And then there's Bobby...

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY - SPRING 1964

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

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

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

O'DONNELL

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

BOBBY

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

Bobby shakes his head in disbelief.

SCHLESINGER

He's got the support of both houses and the country. He's no longer vulnerable. Not now.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson stands at his desk. Jenkins, Reedy, Valenti, Moyers, and Carter face him.

VALENTI

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

REEDY

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

JOHNSON

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

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

Bobby and his men continue their conversation.

SALINGER

You could run for Governor of Massachusetts.

O'DONNELL

Or the senate seat in New York.

SCHLESINGER

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

BOBBY

Never in a thousand years would I take that job.

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

BOBBY (CONT'D)

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

SORENSEN

Then be Bobby Kennedy.

A soft wind blows in Bobby's face.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Johnson continues his meeting.

JENKINS

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

JOHNSON

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

JENKINS

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

Amidst the activity in the scene, words appear on screen:

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

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

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

"During the next term of his presidency, Johnson continued to pursue an aggressive domestic agenda in hopes of achieving his dream of The Great Society. Johnson would also continue to escalate the war in Vietnam. By 1968, American deaths reached an all-time high.

"On March 16, 1968, the junior senator from New York, Robert Francis Kennedy, declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Fifteen days later, Lyndon Johnson withdrew from the race, becoming the last sitting president to choose not to seek reelection.

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

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

FADE OUT.