

THIRD DRAFT
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V.I.N.

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Story by
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GENERAL NOTES

This is the true story of two men: Alex Haley and George Lincoln Rockwell. Most of their interactions with one another are taken from recordings, letters, and published material over the course of about two years.

The film is framed by news articles that reflect either accurately or inaccurately on the events as we see them unfold.

The header of a newspaper serves as a TITLE CARD reading: New York Times, October 2, 1964.

EXT NEW YORK SUPERIOR COURT, NYC, AFTERNOON. 1964.

A sunny fall day in New York City. A small crowd has gathered to watch a tall, dark, and handsome man--GEORGE LINCOLN ROCKWELL, 44. He wears a khaki uniform.

Rockwell speaks from the steps of the courthouse to a growing number of OBSERVERS--some hostile and some curious.

ROCKWELL

We believe in this country! And we will fight to protect this country, and white people, no matter how long it takes!

REVEAL: the Swastika armband on Rockwell's uniform. On either side of him: two young STORMTROOPERS, wearing the same khaki uniform. JOHN PATLER, 26, is one of them.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

We haven't got the power to compete with the Washington Post and the Daily News! I can't reach the millions of civilians that the papers reach, that the television reaches. I only have one way to answer the lies and slander they print about me. And that, ladies and gentlemen is to become notorious, to become well known, in spite of their efforts to silence us! I've been making such a fuss--it's obvious the newsmen *just won't* print it. People know: somebody is censoring our news.

A few in the crowd CHEER. A few others BOO and look at the supporters with disgust.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Is that how we win a fight in America? No!!!

The crowd cheers.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

In America, if we think a man is wrong, we have it out with him in the open and we *PROVE* that he's wrong. We don't silence him! We don't bury him!

Several men wearing matching baseball caps--Jewish Veterans of America. Rockwell stares at a YOUNG VETERAN in the crowd. The veteran stares back.

PAN TO: a REPORTER, followed by a TV camera.

REPORTER

(to camera)

George Lincoln Rockwell, head and founder of the American Nazi Party, speaks on the steps of the New York Superior Court. We're with him now.

The reporter finds an older man, shaking.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Sir, I can see you are disturbed. Can we get a reaction?

The man speaks, his voice trembling and small, overwrought.

OLDER MAN

I-I-I-I spent two years in--in a--in a...concentration camp...one year in Auschwitz. How do I feel? There's no way to describe my feeling.

Rockwell continues.

ROCKWELL

You can see it now--the cold, calculating Jew is the most dangerous. But when you get him riled up, when you get him hysterical, he loses control. His nose starts to wave in the breeze.

The Young Veteran's eyes narrow and he balls his fists. Rockwell notices, and tries to provoke him further.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentleman, one lesson is learned over and over again for 10,000 years.

(MORE)

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Gladiators have risen up out of the ring and overthrown mighty empires. Slaves have revolted and dominated countries!

The Young Veteran BREAKS OUT of the crowd and strides toward Rockwell.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Throughout history there is example after example of men who have come up from the bottom, and have changed the world because of the force of their ideas!!

As the Veteran lands in front of Rockwell, Rockwell speaks both to the crowd and to the man directly.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

There is no power on this earth that can equal a human being who is ready to die because he believes in something, and has the brains to push it forward!

With that, Rockwell SMILES a great big smile as he is PUNCHED by the Veteran.

SMASH TO:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: papers across the U.S. cover the rally.

The last paper is the NEW YORK TIMES we opened on: "RIOT ERUPTS AT NYC ROCKWELL RALLY!"

INT ALEX HALEY'S APARTMENT, GREENWHICH VILLAGE, DAY

CLOSE ON: ALEX HALEY, 43, black, bespectacled, a man full of cheery intelligence.

On Alex's desk is a copy of today's newspaper, which we've just seen, including Rockwell's picture.

Alex speaks on the phone with his literary agent, PAUL REYNOLDS.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)

Did you stick to the original pitch?

ALEX

More or less. I think I said
"America's most dramatic,
successful demagogue--a new breed,
the young, black one--is on stage."

The shabby Greenwich apartment is piled high with paper.
Clippings of MALCOLM X, notes, and lots and lots of bills.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)

Doubleday is a large house, a
conservative house, a conscientious
house, and publishes quite a lot of
distinguished writers. Convincing
them that this book could be
profitable is truly a feat. This is
incredible for you, Alex.
Congratulations.

ALEX

I couldn't have done it without
your negotiating for me. Thank you.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)

I hope the first writing sessions
with Malcolm have been fruitful.

Alex's face tells a different story, but of course Reynolds
cannot see him. He changes the subject.

ALEX

That reminds me: I'm thinking I
might not want to be listed as
Malcolm's coauthor since that
implies I share Malcolm's views.
What about "The Autobiography of
Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley?"

REYNOLDS (O.S.)

Look--your first book being as
splashy as this means you can
credit yourself however the hell
you want. I might suggest, though,
that you get it in somewhere in the
introduction that you're not a
Black Muslim. I'm just thinking of
your future career.

Haley nods, mulling that over.

ALEX

Incidentally, I bought a car--that
runs! A 1955 Dodge, for \$80. Isn't
that just wild!

REYNOLDS (O.S.)
 (seeing through it)
 You need an advance.

ALEX
 Yeah. To keep the phone on. And fix
 the typewriter.
 (while he's at it)
 Oh, and Malcolm wants his half of
 the advance made payable to
 Muhammad's Mosque No. 2...I'm
 pretty sure he believes the
 autobiography will demonstrate his
 loyalty to the Messenger.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)
 Elijah Muhammad? He and Malcolm X
 are on the outs?

ALEX
 That's the impression I'm getting.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)
 Oooh...trouble in paradise.

ALEX
 You didn't hear it from me. Both of
 them tolerate negative
 interpretations of their movement
 for the sake of the publicity, but
 when it comes to internal bickering
 I think the Nation prefers to
 present a unified front.

REYNOLDS (O.S.)
 Sure.

ALEX
 Bye. I'm going to run across the
 street and grab a bite.

Hanging up, Alex opens his apartment door and almost jumps.

A stern-faced young GUARD stands at ramrod attention in his hallway, ready to knock. The man's black pillbox hat is emblazoned with "FOI," Fruit of Islam, the paramilitary wing of the Nation.

Alex scans his face--he didn't hear that last part of the call. Did he?

FOI GUARD
 Mr. Haley?

ALEX

That's right.

FOI GUARD

I'm here on behalf of Minister Malcolm, who apologizes but must cancel his appointment with you this evening. His wife will pick up the pages tomorrow and he will review them.

ALEX

All right. Thank you.

FOI GUARD

I will return tomorrow with Miss. Shabazz and wait outside.

ALEX

Miss Shabazz? You mean Betty? Malcolm's wife?

FOI GUARD

His daughter. *Miss Attallah* Shabazz. As Mrs. Betty Shabazz will not be available to pick up the manuscript until later this evening, she needs somewhere for her daughter to wait.

ALEX

...Uh...yeah I...sure.

Alex locks his apartment and heads exits the building.

EXT ANOTHER BUILDING, LARGE MARBLE STEPS, DAY

A copy of the Times DROPS on the marble steps of the--

INT PLAYBOY MANSION BASEMENT BAR, CHICAGO, SAME MORNING

SUPER CU: A white man's closed eyes, fluttering. A groggy moan.

Pull out to reveal: MURRAY FISCHER, 31, very hung over. He lies under the bar.

Murray rolls over and attempts to stand up--hitting his head on the bar.

WIDE of the room: in tatters from the previous night but perfect 60s TIKI decor. Blue light dances across Murray's face.

Its source is a window--into a POOL. A woman's bathing-suit clad body shoots across it.

Murray buttons his shirt and looks around for his jacket.

The woman, wearing goggles, returns to the pool window to ogle Murray. She watches him search in vain, then taps on the glass.

She points above the bar. The tiki face wears Murray's jacket around its shoulders, and holds a clock in its hands. As Murray grabs his jacket he sees the clock reads 12:30.

He bolts out the door and we move with him through--

INT PLAYBOY MANSION BREAKFAST ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY, CONTINUOUS

Two BUNNIES (i.e. two young adult women) finish their breakfast. They are shuttled to the next room by JONI MATHIS, 30s, head of Mansion and Hef's secretary, holding a clip-board.

JONI

(to a "Bunny")

Have you spoken with Bev, dear?
She's the photo editor and might be
willing to meet with your sister
about the assistant role.

Joni spots Murray.

JONI (CONT'D)

You better hurry, Murray.
(pointedly)
Hef's "Dexie" cycle is on the up.
Your pitch window is now.

The "Bunnies" look Murray up and down. They poke fun at his appearance.

BUNNIES

Hurry, Murray!

A third Bunny has been watching the interaction, sipping on grapefruit juice and reading a newspaper--the New York Times.

BUNNY 3

You don't have a pitch, do you?

MURRAY

(defensive)
Sure I do.

The Bunny wordlessly folds the newspaper and hands it to Murray.

EXT PLAYBOY MANSION, CHICAGO, DAY, CONTINUOUS

The mansion is a French neoclassical brick and limestone residence in the Gold Coast district of Chicago.

Through various windows we catch glimpses of Murray, head down, searching the front page of the paper as he strides from room to room.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LIVING ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY, CONTINUOUS

INSERT: the New York Times story on Rockwell's rally, A PHOTO of Rockwell's face with a swollen eye and stitched lip.

Murray stares at it as he lands in--

A huge oak-paneled room with low-lying mid-century furniture semi-circled around a stone fireplace.

On every sofa and chair sit men in sharp suits and shiny shoes. The only female is BEV CHAMBERLAIN, late 20s, photo editor, in cat-eye glasses and a sweater. Everyone sips on coffee, whiskey or both.

In shirtsleeves, cross-legged below the fireplace: HUGH HEFNER, 38, beautiful but gaunt, hasn't slept in days. This is normal.

HEF

It's an interview Spec, we're not making him Playmate of the month.

He speaks to AC SPECTORSKY, 53, editor. Before them Bev has laid out black-and-white photos of Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali).

HEF (CONT'D)

Murray! Glad you could join us. Spec here was just raising objection to our Cassius Clay piece. He wouldn't be able to see a draft, by any chance?

Murray squeezes onto the couch next to Bev.

MURRAY

Not quite yet. Alex is still working on it.

SPECTORSKY

He's been working on it for months.

MURRAY

He's got his hands tied with the Malcolm X Autobiography. He's subject to Malcolm's schedule so the Clay piece always gets sidelined. What's your concern, Spec?

SPECTORSKY

He's a violent hate-monger.

MURRAY

Would you prefer to do your Three Decades of Shirley Temple story?

Murray gets a laugh from the group and succeeds in deflecting attention from the late draft.

HEF

(to Murray)

Maybe we can do something to offset it. Who's next on your interview list?

MURRAY

George Lincoln Rockwell.

SPECTORSKY

...Not quite what I had in mind.

Hef claps his hands in excitement at the idea.

Spec, not so much.

SPECTORSKY (CONT'D)

We could lose subscriptions over this. We are profiling a Negro Muslim, and you're suggesting the Nazi is an appropriate counter weight??

Murray and Spec don't get along.

BEV

Won't be pretty.

MURRAY

You don't think so? I think Rockwell's a handsome guy.

Bev rolls her eyes.

A wide-eyed intern, LOGAN, 22, is passing out coffee and pretending not to listen.

LOGAN

I hear he's planning a
gubernatorial race!

Bev makes fun of his pronunciation.

BEV

Gubernatorial.

Hef speaks over his laughter.

HEF

(to Murray)

You're leaving for New York
tonight?

Bev raises an eyebrow at Murray's unkempt, last-night's-suit look. Murray ignores her.

MURRAY

Yes.

HEF

Just make sure Alex turns it in.
He's still on our payroll, even if
he *is* writing
(with faux gravitas)
"the book of a lifetime."

Some nod, others snicker.

SPECTORSKY

(to Murray)

Get your writer in tow. Otherwise
we'll have blank fucking pages.

INT GORGEOUS APARTMENT, NYC, NIGHT

Alex is at a "swingin" party, full of backless dresses and cocktails. The only commonality among the diverse crowd is success.

He looks a little shy as he talks to a group of alluring people.

ALEX

I did have to get in the boxing
ring with him a bit first, though.

WOMAN

I've heard Cassius Clay is quite the boxer. Did he win?

ALEX

The match or the interview?

He gets a laugh. A DRUNK MAN stumbles into their conversation.

DRUNK MAN

Susan! There you are.

WOMAN

You found us! So sorry we lost you.

(she isn't)

Joe, this is Alex. He's in publishing as well...I'm sorry, what did you say your last name was?

ALEX

Haley.

JOE

Oh, yes! I know you!...You're the Reader's Digest fellow who flies around all over the place--but I can never find anything you've written?

The cheer drains from Alex's face.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NIGHT, LATER

Alex sits at the threadbare desk, reading and writing furiously. Clippings of Malcolm X have multiplied, along with a stack of paper beginning to look like a MANUSCRIPT.

A KNOCK at the door. Murray stands in the doorway.

MURRAY

Hello my friend!

ALEX

Mur! Thought we were having lunch?

MURRAY

We are.

(not explaining)

So--is Malcolm opening up?

ALEX

A bit. But every time he comes in here he snaps his fingers and yells "Testing--one, two, three!"

MURRAY

(laughing)

He thinks the FBI bugged your pad?

ALEX

They probably did.

MURRAY

Well maybe you oughtta stop calling him a "black demagogue" and he'd open up a bit more.

ALEX

I stopped calling him that.

MURRAY

To his face. Malcolm X is a smart guy. Not every writer gets to debut by profiling one of the most sensational figures of the decade. He's using you. And he knows you're using him, too.

Alex doesn't seem overly bothered by Murray's implication that he is capitalizing on Malcolm's image.

ALEX

...As you say.

MURRAY

All I mean is, given the circumstances, it might take a while for him to tell you anything.

(switching tones)

Which is what I'm here about. I'm genuinely interested in your success with this, Alex. But this Malcolm book does *not* belong to Playboy. What *does* belong to Playboy, and the 5 million readers we are allowing you to reach--is that fucking Cassius Clay interview. Spec is really crawling up my ass about it.

ALEX

Ok. I'll get it done.

MURRAY

You will bring it to me tomorrow at lunch. Also, you will report back to me about your new assignment.

ALEX

New assignment?

MURRAY

George Lincoln Rockwell.

Alex's eyes go wide.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

I know. Exciting. Splashy as all hell, too. It'll be really good for you, Alex. But if it's too much work...I can always give it to somebody else.

ALEX

Lay off.

MURRAY

Bring me that Clay interview tomorrow. And *call Rockwell*. Tonight.

(handing Alex a notecard)

The number is VA 3066.

ALEX

And if he agrees?

MURRAY

We'll get on a plane to Chicago and spend time getting you briefed and ready. And maybe get you a bullet-proof vest.

ALEX

Kidding?

MURRAY

Serious. Bye!

Murray is out the door. Alex pushes his Malcolm notes to the side of his desk, plucks up his Clay interview and types away.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NIGHT, LATER

The Clay piece is in a neat pile on Alex's desk.

Alex looks at the number Murray gave him. Slowly, he picks up the phone and dials.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

Rockwell.

ALEX

Good evening Commander Rockwell.
This is Alex Haley, I'm a reporter
with Playboy Magazine.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

I'm familiar with your publication.

ALEX

Then you may know our magazine
features a lengthy interview once a
month. We are very interested in
profiling you.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

All due respect, sir, I am gearing
up to run for governor in Virginia
and I can't afford to appear in a
girly magazine.

ALEX

I assure you, our publication is
regularly granted interviews with
men of influence across America. I
recently completed a profile of
Malcolm X. He was so pleased with
it that we are now discussing a
book.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

...I admire Malcolm X. He has a
vision for his people just as I
have for mine. All the same...

ALEX

It's my belief, Commander, that Mr.
X, with Elijah Muhammad's blessing,
agreed to our story because of our
wide reach. We currently enjoy a
subscription base of 5 million.

Silence.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Sir?

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

...I would need a written agreement stating my right to look it over before publication, ensuring I won't be misquoted or misrepresented.

ALEX

Many of our subjects request the same courtesy, that should not be a problem.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

I'll do the piece, then. On one condition.

ALEX

Yes?

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

Mr. Haley, are you Jewish?

Alex looks in the mirror across from his desk.

ALEX

Commander Rockwell, I can assure you I am not Jewish.

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

Alright then. We have a deal. I will see you in Arlington, please have your people send me a choice of dates.

ALEX

I will. Thank you.

Alex hangs up and stares at the phone.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, ARLINGTON, NIGHT

Rockwell's silhouette, staring off into the Virginia Hills. We see nothing else. There is little light at all save the occasional spark from Rockwell's corn cob pipe. It's eerily quiet.

Footsteps. Rockwell turns, his handsome face comes into view, still puffy from the beating, dark eyes glinting.

John Patler, the young stormtrooper from the rally, approaches. Patler is short, swarthy, with a head of thick, black, curly hair.

PATLER

Commander, the unit in Washington says the D.C. police will be on protection for our White House picket.

ROCKWELL

Tell them I don't want police protection.

(looking up)

Settle down, John. At ease.

Patler drops his stiff shoulders, the military clip leaves his voice and he speaks to Rockwell as if to an older brother.

PATLER

...Linc, you could be really hurt.

Rockwell doesn't address this concern.

ROCKWELL

You got into an argument with Lieutenant Koehl, John. Why?

Patler looks ashamed.

PATLER

He...called me an Olive Nigger.

Rockwell snorts. Patler is upset, but Rockwell can't help it.

ROCKWELL

Not everyone can tell the difference between a Greek and a nigger.

(more serious)

I need you to stop fighting, John. I need you to put on a brave face and I need you to be diplomatic. If we are to persevere, our ranks must stay unified.

(patting Patler's shoulder)

Only when we have a real, unified front can we get exposure. We lose exposure, we lose donations.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NEXT DAY

Alex stands in his open kitchenette making a PB+J sandwich.

Lanky ATTALLAH SHABAZZ, Malcolm X's eldest, in a school uniform, red-tinged hair pulled into braids, sits on the couch staring at Alex.

There's nothing "cute" about her. In fact, she's intimidating, for a six-year-old.

ALEX

You like peanut-butter?

ATTALLAH

Sure. My mom say what time she'd be by?

ALEX

Around 4:30. So you're in the first grade, huh? You got a favorite subject?

Attallah gives him a look that says, "you don't have anything better than THAT?"

It's so serious that Alex says--

ALEX (CONT'D)

...sorry.

He hands her the sandwich, then stuffs pages of a manuscript in a manila envelope. Attallah notices.

ATTALLAH

What you gonna write about my daddy?

Alex remembers what Murray said about Alex's use of "fearsome black demagogue."

ALEX

Oh...just his life, you know. How he grew up, his...background.

ATTALLAH

Like when he was a pusher?

Not what Alex was expecting.

ALEX

You know what a pusher is?

This is a face off. He's not gonna tell her more than she knows, and she's not gonna tell him what she doesn't.

ATTALLAH

...something you get arrested for.

ALEX

I'm not writing any more or less than what your daddy tells me.

Attallah stares right through Alex. She seems to be evaluating how fair he will be to her dad.

She takes a bite of her sandwich, then puts it down and strolls around Alex's place, looking at his notes.

Some napkins with scribbles on them hang out of a set of notebooks. Before Alex can stop her--

ATTALLAH

(opening the notebooks)

This is dad's writing.

She flips through the notebooks--pages and pages of doodled-on napkins and accompanying dates. She looks up at Alex suspiciously.

ATTALLAH (CONT'D)

This is weird.

Alex is nervous but her bluntness makes him laugh anyway.

ALEX

I guess it is, yeah.

Attallah waits for an explanation. The scrutiny makes Alex almost break a sweat.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Truth be told, I'm having a tough time getting your dad to open up. And I noticed that he doodles on scrap paper...so I started leaving things out, y'know. For him to write on. And then I kinda can get more of a clue of what he's thinking.

She leafs through the pages.

ATTALLAH

(reading)

"Here lies a YM, killed by a BM,
fighting for the WM, who killed all
the RM."

(making sense of it)

...here lies a yellow man, killed
by a black man, fighting for the
white man who killed the red man.

ALEX

I figured that one out, yeah.

She reads some more.

ATTALLAH

"Sh--show..."

Alex looks over her shoulder at the words she struggles with.

ALEX

"Shocking"... "Shocking to reveal."

ATTALLAH

"Shocking to reveal the names of
the BM leaders who have secretly
met with THEM."

ALEX

I don't know who "them" is.

Attallah thinks it over. Her cageyness drops a little when she gets thoughtful. She clearly enjoys a good puzzle.

ATTALLAH

Well...if "BM" means black
man...and "WM" means white
man...than "THEM" prolly isn't the
word. It's prolly t-h-e-m.

ALEX

(dawning on him, to
himself)

The honorable Elijah Muhammad...

Attallah is now more interested in analyzing Alex than her dad's discarded doodles.

ATTALLAH

You a writer, huh?

ALEX

Well...I--I'm a journalist.

ATTALLAH

So you just write about other people all day?

He's not sure if she means to be disparaging...

ALEX

Uh, yeah. I have a new interview I gotta prepare for, which is why I'm sending your dad this new chapt-

ATTALLAH

(struggling with the word)
An...*interview*...like when you ask questions?

So begins a rapid-fire exchange:

ALEX

Yeah.

ATTALLAH

Well why you gotta prepare then if all you gotta do is ask questions.

ALEX

Because I gotta know what questions to ask!

(pointedly)

We can't all just spin 'em off the top of our heads.

ATTALLAH

What's the guy do?

ALEX

He's the head of a political party.

ATTALLAH

He like my dad?

ALEX

No! Not like your dad. He's trying to work against the things your dad is working for.

ATTALLAH

Why's that?

Alex figures at this point he won't be saying anything she hasn't heard.

ALEX

He doesn't like black folks.

ATTALLAH
 ...But you're a Negro.

ALEX
 Yes little lady, I am.

ATTALLAH
 So how you gonna get him to talk to you?

ALEX
 Now you see why I gotta think up some good questions, don't you?

ATTALLAH
 Yeah.

Attallah pauses to think. Then suddenly--

ATTALLAH (CONT'D)
 You think you're gonna be somebody?

Alex is again caught off guard but a KNOCK at his front door saves him.

BETTY SHABAZZ, 28, wife of Malcolm X, arrives. Attallah immediately goes to pack up her bag.

BETTY
 Hey baby! Hello, Alex. Thank you for baby-sitting. I'm sorry it was so last minute.
 (explaining)
 Malcolm had to take the car. He wanted to make sure I got--

Alex hands her the manila envelope.

BETTY (CONT'D)
 These the new pages?

ALEX
 Yes, sister.

BETTY
 And how did my girl behave herself?

Attallah watches Alex out of the corner of her eye.

ALEX
 Oh, she was great. Just as sweet as your cinnamon sugar pie.

The no-nonsense clip of Betty's voice is tinged with sympathy for Alex.

BETTY

(re the manuscript)

I'll help you with everything you've got so far, as much as I can. Malcolm is going away for the next few weeks.

Attallah looks up.

BETTY (CONT'D)

But he's coming home early tonight!

A wide grin splits across Attallah's face. For the first time, she actually looks like a little kid.

Betty lowers her voice.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Truly, thanks for your help today. You know, I shared some of Malcolm's suspicions of you when you first came to my house. But you know what changed my mind?

ALEX

My complimenting your cinnamon pie?

BETTY

No Alex. Your *perspective*. After you left--I thought, 'God, this is a man of the world.' I didn't say as much to Malcolm, I wanted to make sure you could keep coming around.

Alex laughs.

ALEX

Thank you Sister Betty, I appreciate it greatly.

BETTY

Good, because I believe it. One book can change a man's life, you know.

Alex is not sure if she's talking about him, Malcolm, the book's potential reader--but it doesn't matter. It makes him smile.

BETTY (CONT'D)

And alright, yes I liked what you said about the pie. Now you get back to work!

ALEX

Yes ma'am.

Betty and Attallah leave. Over her shoulder on the way out--

ATTALLAH

(eyebrow raised)

Good luck with that...interview.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION SPARE ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY

A lavish room in the mansion. Playboy issues framed on the walls. Alex and Murray prep.

ALEX

His dad was in vaudeville. Did really well, *really* well. Parents got a divorce. But I can't find anything major.

Alex has brought everything he can find on Rockwell, including a photo of him as a youth. Murray looks over it.

MURRAY

What went wrong?

ALEX

No idea. His brother is fine. Not a Nazi, a bright businessman. Works with their high school friend Stanley Tupper, who is now a Republican Rep from Maine in Congress...

MURRAY

Damn.

Murray has a pin-board of Nazi propoganda, cartoons and paraphernalia.

ALEX

(re propoganda)

Courtesy of John Patler.

Murray picks up of a PHOTO of Patler.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Propaganda Minister. Ironic, because Patler's not quite your fierce-Nazi-warrior type. He's Greek--real name is Patsalos. Started out a mentee of Rockwell's.

MURRAY

You know Rockwell's planning on running for governor?

ALEX

(nodding)

He wants to be governor of Virginia, then use that as a platform to run for *president of the U.S.* In 1972. The thing I haven't been able to get a read on from the papers is: how big is his following really?

Murray shakes his head and shrugs.

MURRAY

It's almost certain he won't give you an accurate response to that. See what you can glean when you get there anyway.

ALEX

How much mail, how big a house, how well monied, how functional--

MURRAY

How many jack-booted assholes...Speaking of which! We'll need to arrange for protection.

ALEX

What do you have in mind?

MURRAY

We can fly one of Hef's body guards down there with you. Plainclothes. He can be your "assistant."

ALEX

My 6 foot 5, 250 pound assistant? I don't think so, Murray.

MURRAY

Alex, you're black.

ALEX

I know.

MURRAY

Did you give Rockwell that detail?

ALEX

No. He only asked if I was Jewish.

MURRAY

Oh, alright. You're just gonna waltz into the American Nazi Party barracks with your self-assurance and your smile?????

ALEX

Rockwell has political ambitions. He's not going to *kill* a Playboy interviewer. Murder won't look good on a presidential ticket.

MURRAY

There are a lot of things he could do to you short of murder.

Alex shakes his head. For a moment it looks like he might reject the story.

ALEX

In order to get what you want I need him to relax. How can I catch him off guard with "my assistant" towering over him?

MURRAY

I hear he's actually pretty tall.
(Alex isn't budging)
I should have you sign a release.

NEWSPAPER DATE: JANUARY 7, 1965

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: papers across the U.S. report the debate over Voting Rights Act.

EXT WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C., DAY

CLOSE ON ROCKWELL: He holds a sign way up over his head reading: "WHO NEEDS NIGGERS?"

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: two very large, black policemen on either side of Rockwell. Blank expressions all around.

INT AMERICAN NAZI SEDAN, WASHINGTON D.C., NIGHT

Rockwell, Patler, and several other troopers drive in silence through the capitol.

ROCKWELL

They stuck police on us to keep the news away.

Patler speaks quietly, so the other men cannot hear him.

PATLER

Not much the police can do about Playboy.

ROCKWELL

Playboy will never print us. Have you spoken about getting us that spot on the Today Show?

PATLER

Linc...we cannot afford a national program at the moment.

ROCKWELL

Fine! The local station then.

Patler shakes his head. Rockwell looks irate.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

We need a new approach. Something they really can't keep out of the papers.

A trooper reads a PAPER with the Voting Rights Act coverage we just saw.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION SPARE ROOM, CHICAGO, NIGHT

A small bag is packed in the corner, notes and clippings of Rockwell are spewed across the desk.

Alex is losing focus. He paces the room, unable to read anymore. Finally, he sits at the desk to make a final round of notes. New determination in his eyes. He begins to write.

A knock at the door. Of course.

ALEX

Hello?

Murray opens it.

MURRAY

He's going to want a rise out of you. Stay cool, Alex. The only way we're ever gonna find out if this wacko is a real danger, if he has any real potential, is if you stay cool.

ALEX

Thanks Murray. I'm cool.

MURRAY

Call me if you need anything, of course.

Murray exits.

ALEX

....I'm cool.

EXT WASHINGTON D.C. TRAIN STATION, DAY

Alex stands in line with fellow travellers clad in 60's mod and Washington business casual.

EXT ARLINGTON VIRGINIA/INT ALEX'S LIMO, DAY

Alex is driven along the Potomac River. The bright sun glints off the water. Across the bridge he can see the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial.

JUMP CUTS:

Alex's limo passes the Pentagon. Arlington National Cemetery. American memories carved into stone under a bright blue sky.

The car turns, headed off down long wood-lined road. The safety of the national monuments fades into the distance. Alex looks back at them.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, ARLINGTON, DAY

A large white wood-slatted house sits at the end of the peaceful drive. Hanging from all four windows are large SWASTIKA FLAGS, and over the roof a billboard reading "White Man Fight! -- Smash the Black revolution!"

Birds chirp. Alex's limo pulls up.

Six STORMTROOPERS, from late teens to middle age, stand at attention in a line on the porch. A young trooper, later known as JAKE CAMPBELL, 18, trots down to the limo. He cannot see the passenger through the tinted windows.

Campbell opens the passenger door for Alex, and straightens to SALUTE before he makes eye contact.

Alex's legs emerge from the car, then his torso, finally his face. He stands to greet the trooper.

ALEX

Hello.

Campbell does not succeed in concealing his surprise. He looks to his friends on the porch, who provide no answers.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hi there. My name is Alex Haley, I am here on behalf of Playboy magazine for our interview with Commander Rockwell.

The limo driver is having none of this.

LIMO DRIVER (O.S.)

Mr. Haley, I'll be back at 3. Alright?

ALEX

(not so sure)

Alright, thanks.

The car pulls away. Alex watches his last guarantee of safety drive down the long backwoods road and out of sight.

CAMPBELL

I...will alert the Commander of your arrival. Follow me.

ALEX

Thank you.

Alex walks up the steps of the house. The stormtroopers stare straight ahead, still at attention.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hello gentlemen. No need to stand on ceremony on my account, I hope!

Alex's attempt at levity falls on deaf ears, sending a chill down his spine.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, DAY

Campbell leads Alex through a dark hallway into a "reception" room.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ RECEPTION ROOM, DAY

The walls are black, the room dimly lit by red candles. Their flames dance across Alex's glasses as he looks at the decor.

On the wall are three portraits: Adolf Hitler, George Washington, and Rockwell himself. A banner reading "America Awake" hangs beside an honorable discharge from the US Navy. Everything is bathed in the candles' red glow.

CAMPBELL

Wait here.

ALEX

Where am I, exactly?

CAMPBELL

The shrine room.

ALEX

Ah! Of course. How big is the house?

Per Murray, Alex is trying to assess the real size of the organization without asking flat-out.

CAMPBELL

9 rooms.

ALEX

And they contain what else, besides the shrine?

Campbell is uncomfortable answering Alex's questions. He doesn't know how much information to give.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You sleep here?

CAMPBELL

Yes. We have barracks in the building.

ALEX

Mess hall?

CAMPBELL

Yes.

ALEX

That's good. Can't do anything without a mess hall. Learned that in the navy. I was a cook! Not very good at that job, sorry to say. You like the food here?

CAMPBELL

I'll eat what I'm given, the party has more important aims than my stomach.

ALEX

Naturally, sure. All the same, a warm belly never hurt any cause.

Campbell is still unsure how to respond.

CAMPBELL

I'll go alert the Commander now.

Alex notices a small table with a stack of crudely bound books.

ALEX

Mind if I take a look while I wait?

CAMPBELL

The Shrine Room is open to the public, and I guess you are the public.

He exits. Alex turns his attention to the books. A stack of pamphlets called "The Rockwell Report" filled with disturbing, vicious cartoons. An autobiography featuring Rockwell's picture entitled *This Time, the World!*

The candles flicker and Alex looks up. A Doberman stares in at him. Alex doesn't move. The dog leaves the doorway.

Alex breathes a sigh of relief and leafs through the literature. "Was Lincoln a Bigot?"

Campbell reappears.

CAMPBELL (CONT'D)

Commander Rockwell has instructed me to bring you to him. Follow me.

He turns on his heel. Alex follows him--

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ HALLWAY, DAY, CONTINUOUS

--back down the dark corridor, and up a set of stairs.

ALEX

What's your name, Private?

CAMPBELL

...Campbell.

ALEX

And your first name?

CAMPBELL

Jake Campbell.

ALEX

Nice to meet you.

INT ROCKWELL'S OFFICE, DAY, CONTINUOUS

Campbell opens the door. Alex enters.

WIDE of room: Similar to the shrine room, less ornate. A self-portrait of Rockwell hangs above a desk where Rockwell himself sits, waiting.

Another trooper stands between Alex and Rockwell, at attention. Rockwell motions to the chair in front of his desk.

Alex slowly takes his seat. Rockwell hits a button on a RECORDER. As he does Alex sees a pearl-handled PISTOL sitting next to it.

Alex tenses.

ROCKWELL

Ready when you are.

As Alex brings out his own recorder he notices his hand shaking. He hides it back in his pocket.

ALEX

Before we begin, Commander, I wonder if you'd mind telling me why you're keeping that pistol there at your elbow, and this armed bodyguard between us.

ROCKWELL

Just a precaution. You may not be aware of the fact that I have received thousands of threats against my life. If you are who you claim to be, you have nothing to fear.

Alex is not sure of that, but he feigns comfort.

ALEX

I am.

Rockwell nods.

ROCKWELL

Good. I'd like to make something else crystal clear before we begin. You're here in your professional capacity; I'm here in my professional capacity. While here, you'll be treated well, but I see you're a black interviewer. It's nothing personal, but I want you to understand that I don't mix with your kind, and we call your race "niggers."

Alex takes his hand out of his pocket, it's steadier.

ALEX

I've been called "nigger" many times, Commander, but this is the first time I'm being paid for it. So you go right ahead. What have you got against us "niggers?"

ROCKWELL

I've got nothing against you. I just think you people would be happier going back to Africa where you came from. I'd have you go on a Cadillac shaped luxury liner! When the pilgrims got pushed around in Europe, they didn't have any sit-ins or crawl-ins; they got out and went to a wilderness and built a great civilization.

ALEX

It was built with the help of Negroes.

ROCKWELL

Help or no, the white people in America simply aren't going to allow you to mix with them.

ALEX

The purpose of the Civil Rights Movement is equality of rights and opportunity, Commander--not miscegenation, as you seem to be implying.

Rockwell dismisses this out of hand.

ROCKWELL

Equality may be the stated purpose, but race mixing is what it boils down to in practice. That's what makes white people mad.

ALEX

Do you think you're entitled to speak for white people?

ROCKWELL

Malcolm X says the same thing I'm saying.

ALEX

He is certainly in no position to speak for white people.

A trace of amusement graces Rockwell's face, though he remains unfriendly.

ROCKWELL

The masses of common, ordinary white people will want a leader like Malcolm X. No more spineless jelly fish, no more glamorous matinee idols. They'll want a white leader with the balls to stand up and say, "I'm going to send the coons back to Africa, and I'm going to have the Jew communists gassed for treason." And if you don't like it, you know what you can do about it.

ALEX

Do you seriously think you can be elected on that platform?

ROCKWELL
I know so. In 1972.

Alex ever-so-gently raises an eyebrow.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)
Things are going to be so desperate that it won't matter whether I've got two horns and a tail; I'll be swept into office. I'll appoint a crack cabinet--J. Edgar Hoover, George Wallace--none of them are known as anti-Semitic.

ALEX
How about anti-Negro?

ROCKWELL
I'd prefer to call them pro-white.

ALEX
Would you, as chief executive, create a dictatorship like Hitler's?

ROCKWELL
No, I would reinstitute the American Constitutional Republic the way it was set up by our authoritarian forefathers.

ALEX
In what way did the founding fathers abridge "liberty and justice for all?"

ROCKWELL
They created an authoritarian Republic with a limited electorate. When these white Christian patriots sat down to pen the Declaration of Independence, there were no black citizens for them to worry about. All the niggers were slaves; but today, thanks to several misguided amendments--

Alex can't help but marvel at his phrasing.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)
--our Constitution provides even the blackest of savages with the same rights and privileges of his former white masters.

ALEX

Then you advocate the disenfranchisement of Negroes?

ROCKWELL

And the revocation of their citizenship. I would simply deport them back to Africa--including you, by the way. Nothing personal, you understand.

(pause)

Even if I liked you personally; I couldn't make any exceptions.

Now it's Alex's turn to be amused.

ALEX

Think nothing of it.

ROCKWELL

I'll admit one great failing of my own people: the white man is getting too soft. The niggers are forced to do hard manual labor, and as a result, most niggers are healthy animals -- the way nature intended a male to be. When you take a look at how the average, bourgeois white man spends his time: hunched over a desk, riding around on his electric lawn mower or squatting on his fur-lined toilet seat--they've become soft and squishy. Especially some of the skinny, pasty-faced white peace creeps. What normal woman would want one of these cruds?

Alex keeps an earnest tone, but toys with him *just* a bit.

ALEX

Are you implying that the Negro male is sexually superior to the white male?

ROCKWELL

Certainly not. The average white workingman is just as tough and ballsy as any nigger who ever lived. It's the white *intellectuals* who have allowed themselves to degenerate physically, mentally and especially spiritually.

ALEX

Do you consider Negroes superior to white men in any other way?

ROCKWELL

Look at history; investigate the different races. The Chinese perform--they've created a great civilization. All the white races certainly perform. But the nigger race, until very recently, has done absolutely nothing.

ALEX

How recently?

ROCKWELL

The past 20 or 30 years.

Alex grins.

ALEX

Recent archaeological findings have documented the existence of advanced black African civilizations centuries before the dawn of comparable cultures in Europe.

ROCKWELL

If they were so far ahead of us then, why are they still shooting blow darts at each other while we're launching rockets to the moon?

ALEX

The American space program isn't a segregated project, Commander. There are many Negroes working for NASA and in the space industry.

ROCKWELL

I'm well aware that there are exceptions on both sides. All I'm saying is that the average of your people is below the average of my people; and the pure-black ones are even further below us.

Rockwell's professorial response ends abruptly, and his next words are icy.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

But I don't know why you're wasting my time with this conversation. You'll never print any of this. Are you hungry?

Alex is startled by the question.

ALEX

It does seem close to lunchtime.

ROCKWELL

No Nazi eats with blacks, I'm afraid, but I know a great spot.

Rockwell barks into the hallway.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Private Campbell. Come drive Mr. Haley down the road.

Alex really does not like the sound of that. But not having an option, he gets up and follows Campbell out.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY SEDAN, DAY

Campbell and another trooper sit in front, while Alex sits in back. They drive deeper into the Virginia woods down a long, lonely road lined by tall trees.

Alex's eyes scan the landscape.

ALEX

Where are we going, gentlemen?

TROOPER

Where your kind go.

Alex shuts up. Now he's very scared.

EXT DINER, VIRGINIA, DAY

Alex looks out the window at the diner. Perhaps nice when it was built 30 years ago, now it is a little dilapidated.

CAMPBELL

We'll be back for you in a while.

INT DINER, VIRGINIA, DAY

Alex opens the diner door to a "ring" from a bell on a string. The clientele turn to look at him.

Everyone is black, and everyone is on a break from some local job. Gas-station attendants, nurses, and other service uniforms. Alex sticks out like a sore thumb in his well-tailored New York suit.

ALEX
Afternoon, all.

He gets a few smiles and tips of the hat. He walks to the counter and speaks to the young waitress.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Uh...may I have a hamburger, please
ma'am?

WAITRESS
(thick Virginia accent)
Sure thing. Cheese?

ALEX
Yes, please.

WAITRESS
(yelling back to kitchen)
One hamburger! Cheese. And a nice
side of pickles and fries!

Alex smiles at her kindness and welcoming attitude.

ALEX
Thank you.

INT ROCKWELL'S OFFICE, AFTERNOON

Alex re-enters. Rockwell is different, as if he has given himself permission to relax. He's not cordial, but he's not combative either.

ROCKWELL
Have a good lunch?

ALEX
I did, thanks.

Rockwell pauses, about to give an explanation for his change in demeanor.

ROCKWELL

Now, you're an intelligent person;
I enjoy talking to you...But:
you're not pure black.

He has been formulating this theory over the lunch break.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

This may insult you, but we're not
here to throw pansies at each
other: there had to be some white
people in your background
somewhere, or you wouldn't be brown
instead of black. Right?

ALEX

Right.

ROCKWELL

Well, I'm saying that your
intelligence comes from the blood
of my people. The fact that you can
show me one very black individual
who is superior to me doesn't
convince me that the average nigger
is superior.

ALEX

The words superior and inferior
have no meaning to geneticists,
Commander. Every authority in the
field has attested that the world's
racial groups are genetically
indistinguishable from one another.
All men, including hybrids, in
other words -- are created equal.

The depth of Alex's belief in this phrase does not manage to
penetrate Rockwell's wall.

ROCKWELL

You're bringing tears to my eyes.
This equality garbage is straight
Soviet biology, preaching that by
changing the environment you could
grow one plant from another plant's
seeds. You can't grow wheat from
corn by changing the environment.

Alex changes delivery, back to his purely logical tone.

ALEX

You can't grow wheat from corn by
changing anything.

Rockwell's response is swift, almost funny.

ROCKWELL

I don't feel like quibbling.

(pause)

Delude people into believing that the nigger is only "underprivileged" rather than inherently inferior; that he can be cleaned up and smartened up by letting him study in our schools and move into our neighborhoods. The next inevitable step is to take him into our beds--and hence the destruction of the white race.

ALEX

You said that the Jews are behind this plot. Since they're whites themselves, how would they benefit from their own destruction?

ROCKWELL

They believe they're too pure to mix; they think they're "the chosen people"--chosen to rule the world. When the white man permits himself to be mixed with black men, then the Jews can master him. That's what the so-called Civil Rights Movement is all about. They're liable to get away with it if the good white Christians of this country don't wake up and get together before it's too late to restore the natural order of things. Chimpanzees do not run with baboons; they run with chimpanzees. In thoroughly integrated colleges, when I visit them, I notice that niggers usually sit and eat at tables with other niggers--even though they don't have to. And the white people sit with other white people. I think this is the natural tendency, and to attempt to pervert this is to fight nature.

ALEX

You fail to make an important moral and Constitutional distinction between choosing to associate with one's own race and being forced to do so.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

Left to themselves, some people will mingle and some won't; and most Americans think this is just the way it ought to be.

ROCKWELL

You're wrong. White Americans just don't feel free to say what they're really thinking to you.

A knock at the door and another TROOPER enters with a--

TROOPER 3

SIEG HEIL!

ROCKWELL

Yes?

TROOPER 3

The limo is back.

ALEX

...May we reach out to you for a follow up interview before publication?

ROCKWELL

Most certainly.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, HALLWAY, CONTINUOUS

Trooper 3 walks with Alex and Rockwell as they move to exit the building.

ROCKWELL

(to Trooper 3)

Yes?

Trooper 3 whispers in Rockwell's ear.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

See if Barbara has panty-hose you can borrow.

Trooper 3 whispers again. Alex is intrigued, and tries pretend he's "not listening."

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

(frustration growing)

Well I don't know about opaque vs not opaque. What kind of a...here.

Rockwell takes out his wallet and hands the trooper cash.

ALEX
 (re the request just made)
 Commander, I must ask.

Rockwell gives an arch smile.

ROCKWELL
 It will be clear to you soon
 enough.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, DAY, CONTINUOUS

Rockwell and Alex descend the front steps. The troopers looks straight ahead. Alex tries to acknowledge them again.

ALEX
 Bye gentlemen!

He gestures to the flag pole and the meeting ground around it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (to Rockwell)
 Do you have some sort of ceremony
 there?

ROCKWELL
 Every Sunday, our regular
 gathering. Swearing in ceremonies
 and giving of medals.

ALEX
 Medals?

ROCKWELL
 The highest I've ever yet given was
 Silver--that was to a man who
 couldn't contain himself and he
 belted Martin Luther Coon in
 Birmingham.

Alex flinches at the pun. Rockwell points to Alex's limo.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)
 Nice transport.

ALEX
 It's no Cadillac shaped boat.

Rockwell lets out a genuine laugh and extends his hand.

ROCKWELL

Mr. Haley, it's been a pleasure. I must say I've enjoyed talking to you, but I don't think your editor will print the piece.

ALEX

Why do you say that? The alleged blackout?

ROCKWELL

Precisely.

ALEX

I'll take my chances, if you will.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LIVING ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY

Murray scans Alex's notes. Alex and Bev sit sorting the pages.

BEV

(thinking)

...this whole "race mixing" fear...Seems like the white supremacists might be a little preoccupied by controlling who women sleep with.

MURRAY

You talked to that undercover Bunny, didn't you?

(to Alex)

We had a girl in here while you were gone, pretended she was a Bunny for two weeks then goes and publishes an article. An *exposé*.

BEV

..."A Bunny's Tale."

ALEX

Ha!

MURRAY

Yes very funny, very funny.

(to Alex)

...This thing about the panty-hose.

Alex shrugs. Both men are stumped on that score.

Spectorsky walks by and peaks his head in.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

The guy really is a half-penny
Hitler.

Alex is a little less cavalier than at their previous
strategy session.

ALEX

Hitler was a half-penny Hitler.

Bev notices. Murray does not.

Spectorsky reads some of the interview transcript over
Murray's shoulder.

SPECTORSKY

I can't believe he looked you in
the face and said this.

MURRAY

I can't believe he looked Alex--a
reporter--in the face while saying
no one will report on him because
of a Jewish conspiracy.

SPECTORSKY

Well that's true.

MURRAY

What?

ALEX AND BEV

What??

Logan, the intern, unnoticed in the corner until now--

LOGAN

What?

SPECTORSKY

The AJC--American Jewish Committee--
I wouldn't say they won't *let*
people report it. Clearly. But a
Rabbi there has been calling
reporters about not reporting on
Rockwell for...years really. Called
me once.

Everyone sits in stunned silence.

MURRAY

Did he bribe you?

SPECTORSKY

No, he just told me what he thought about printing Rockwell.

MURRAY

(not buying it)

Ok...Does he exert any "influence?" Pressure?...Threats?

SPECTORSKY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, Murray. The threat of the Nazis gaining power in the US. That's pretty much all a member of the free press needs to hear, *I should think.*

Spectorsky leaves.

MURRAY

I always knew that asshole could be bought.

ALEX

Holy shit, Murray.

Alex seems confused by the revelation, but intrigued.

MURRAY

You wondering if Rockwell's right about the rest too?

Alex gives Murray a "watch yourself" glance, but he's still thinking about what this means.

ALEX

No I'm wondering...who is Rabbi Blackout?

INT NYC UPPER EAST SIDE RESTAURANT, DAY

The Rabbi DR. SOLOMON ANDHIL FINEBERG, 40, unassuming but dignified, eats at a restaurant.

He sits with a representative of the Jewish War Veterans, LARRY SIMCHOWITZ, 30s, who wears a uniform baseball cap we recognize from the opening scene. It's the one the young veteran who punched Rockwell wore.

FINEBERG

People picket the White House every day.

SIMCHOWITZ

Nazis don't! You do appreciate that the man plans to run for governor in Virginia?

FINEBERG

There is no reason to fear his success in that endeavor.

Simchowitz is frustrated by Fineberg's calm.

SIMCHOWITZ

It took Little Adolf ten years to come to power, and he was the laughing stock of Germany for most of that time.

FINEBERG

I understand your frustration.

SIMCHOWITZ

Do you? I live with the memories of friends--Jewish and otherwise!-- whose bodies have faded into foreign soil so that this ideology might never come here. You asked those of us that are left to *stand by and do nothing* while a Nazi walked freely down Pennsylvania Avenue. And now you tell us to continue doing nothing. You ask too much!

Fineberg sees the pain in Simchowitz's eyes, but he stays steady.

FINEBERG

This, my dear man, is not that kind of war. It is *just as much* about what we *do* as what we *do not do*...Did you see any press coverage of the event?

SIMCHOWITZ

(admitting it)
I didn't.

FINEBERG

Though he held up a sign that said...what?

SIMCHOWITZ

"Who needs niggers," it said.

FINEBERG

Despite that inflammatory language, there was no coverage. And why? Because there was no violence. No doubt, you have been following Reverend King's efforts to register Negro voters?

SIMCHOWITZ

With interest and admiration. We are thinking of joining them in their marches.

FINEBERG

Then I advise you to do so. Support those who deserve it. That is where your attention belongs. Dr. King, and others like him, are angling for legislation. *Major legislation.* They'll get it. As they do-- Rockwell's potential for gaining devotees grows. And he knows it.

Simchowitz quiets

FINEBERG (CONT'D)

So as far as your concern about his political ambitions--with the enfranchisement of Negroes, how likely do you think it is he will win the governorship? How many Negroes will vote for a Nazi?

EXT NYC UPPER EAST SIDE RESTAURANT, DAY

Dr. Fineberg's assistant ISAIAH, 25 and fresh out of Brandeis, and another assistant, JEAN, 20, wait outside the restaurant. Fineberg joins them and they walk back to work.

JEAN

Rabbi, may I ask you a personal question?

Jean's face is riddled with concern. Isaiah's reaction makes it clear that this is a regular occurrence.

FINEBERG

Of course.

JEAN

I've noticed my brother often leaves the house without his yarmulke.

FINEBERG

Dear, there are a myriad of reasons why a man might venture outside bare-headed. The requirements of his work, for one. I would not allow it to trouble you.

JEAN

And the meeting?

ISAIAH

How did it go?

FINEBERG

The veterans have agreed to stand down. Rockwell should stay out of the papers as long as he doesn't concoct some other doltish scheme.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ HALLWAY, NIGHT

A dark hallway. Light spills out from an open door.

Rockwell's voice emanates from the room, effecting what he might consider a "sissy" timbre:

ROCKWELL (O.S.)

"The Mississippi Freedom Democrat Party insists that 450,000 Negroes in Mississippi are systematically and deliberately prevented from voting."

INT ROCKWELL'S OFFICE, NIGHT

John Patler, Trooper ROBERT LLOYD, 20, and Rockwell sit around a table speaking in hushed voices. Shadows fall this way and that. Rockwell holds the newspaper he reads from.

INSERT NEWSPAPER: three black women (Mrs. Hamer, Devine, and Gray). The title reads: "MFDP ATTEMPTS TO SEAT THREE NEGRO WOMEN IN HOUSE OF REPS."

The men hunch over a MAP which the ominous light makes impossible for us to see.

LLOYD

We still need a briefcase big enough to hide the materials.

ROCKWELL

How much security will you need to get through?

PATLER

We did some recon yesterday. It seems that there's none in the public entrance, but if we want to get to the floor, there's a guard we'll have to get past.

REVEAL MAP: a floor plan of the U.S. CAPITOL.

EXT U.S. CAPITOL BUILDING, WASHINGTON D.C., DAY

Patler and Lloyd enter the Capitol, as senators and tourists mill around. They pause conspicuously to "look at a painting" and attempt to act natural.

Patler stands under the oil painting of those legendary men sitting around a desk planning his country. For a moment, his face changes to something like wonder.

He is tugged back to reality as Lloyd pulls him toward the men's bathroom.

INT US CAPITOL BUILDING MEN'S BATHROOM, DAY, CONTINUOUS

Patler stands by the door, while Lloyd slips into a stall.

IN THE STALL: Lloyd unzips his briefcase, taking out black PANTY-HOSE, a long-sleeved black shirt, and a crushed-down stovepipe hat.

LLOYD

I need the mirror. Clear?

Just as he asks the bathroom door swings open and a CONGRESSMAN enters. Patler clears his throat.

Lloyd, now frustrated, opens up a tiny compact filled with BLACK FACE PAINT. He struggles to put it on with no mirror.

Outside the stall, the Congressman uses the urinal. He notices Patler standing in the corner.

CONGRESSMAN

Good day.

PATLER

Sir.

(taps foot nervously)
Lloyd? Let's?

LLOYD (O.S.)

One minute!

Inside the stall, Lloyd's hands fumble as he ties a LOINCLOTH around his waist. He then stuffs his "plainclothes" back into the briefcase.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Alright. Coming.

Lloyd, now in minstrel attire, leaves the stall and saunters past the Congressman, just finishing at the urinal. The Congressman does not have time to react. Lloyd gives him a salute as he exits.

INT CAPITOL BUILDING HALLWAY, DAY, CONTINUOUS

Lloyd hands the briefcase to Patler and BOLTS for a side staircase, through which members of Congress file into the House.

Long, moving shot up the stairs--

INT CAPITOL BUILDING LOBBY LEVEL, DAY, CONTINUOUS

--past two policemen who are barely out of their seats before he's gone.

Nearing the chamber, a DOORMAN makes a final jump in front of him, but Lloyd rams the man sideways and tunnels onto the House floor.

INT CAPITOL BUILDING HOUSE FLOOR, DAY, CONTINUOUS

LLOYD

I'se the Mississippi delegation! I
demand to be seated!!!

The House goes quiet. Lloyd, enjoying the spotlight, hops around on the floor, hooting.

CONGRESSMAN IN CHAMBER

Get him out!!

The policeman finally run in after Lloyd. One grabs Patler, who looks humiliated at the capture. Lloyd is jubilant till the end as police and several Representatives drag him out.

LLOYD
 God bless America! Long live
 Rockwell!!!!

SMASH TO:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: Washington Post, New York Times,
 LA Times etc show photographs of Lloyd on House
 floor.

EXT/INT ALEX'S CAR, AFTERNOON

Alex's 1955 Dodge idles outside a primary school in Harlem. He reads the New York Times, chuckling at the photos of Lloyd being escorted out of Congress.

ALEX
 (sighing to himself)
 Bless.

ATTALLAH (O.S.)
 Bless what?

Attallah has appeared in his window and opens the passenger door of the car, scooting down the long seat.

ALEX
 Oh hello young lady! Bless Allah,
 it would seem.

Attallah is followed by her little sister QUBILAH, 4.

ATTALLAH
 (to Alex)
 You don't bless Allah, you praise
 him! Crazy.

ALEX
 My mistake.

Attallah takes her seat and Alex pulls away from the curb. The red in Attallah's hair shines in the afternoon sunlight.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You know how come I call your dad
Big Red?

ATTALLAH
(blankly)
Cause his hair is red?

The paper Alex was reading has fallen to the floor, and Qubilah stares at it.

ALEX
Oh don't pay that no mind, honey,
that's just a dumb kid.

ATTALLAH
It's in the newspaper ain't it?

ALEX
It's news.

ATTALLAH
Well if it's news how's she gonna
pay it no mind then?

Alex tries to play the jovial uncle, laughing it off.

ALEX
She read the news?

But little Qubilah keeps staring at the picture, face riddled with confusion.

Lloyd may have been comical in action, but his blackface caught in the black-and-white photograph makes him look eerie. Even grotesque. More so the more the child stares.

Attallah takes the paper off the floor and tosses it behind the seat, out of her little sister's sight.

ATTALLAH
You shouldn't have that stuff
around when there's kids.

Alex chafes at her critique.

ATTALLAH (CONT'D)
(re the paper)
My mamma says white people's mad
because we're trying to vote.

ALEX

Does she? Your mamma is a very smart lady, I'll bet there's truth in what she says.

ATTALLAH

They won't let you vote but they'll let you write a book, huh?

ALEX

They let me vote!
(echoing her)
Crazy.

ATTALLAH

(skeptical)
Then what's all the fuss about?

Alex is starting to get a feel for what she'll respect. He gives her a good clean response.

ALEX

The fuss is because they don't let everybody vote. And it's not *letting*--it's a right. But sometimes we gotta...remind people. Like your daddy does.

ATTALLAH

Is that what you're doing?
Reminding people?

Alex looks to her to try and read her meaning.

ATTALLAH (CONT'D)

You're writing about my daddy ain't you?

ALEX

Of course! As you say, Little Red, that's all part of the game.

CLOSE ON Alex. The confidence in his voice is not matched in his eyes. He hopes he's not lying to her.

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HQ LOBBY, DAY

Fineberg enters with bags of luscious deli food. Jean, acting as receptionist, rushes to him.

JEAN

Rabbi--

FINEBERG

Yes Jean?

She hurries with him toward the elevator.

JEAN

It's my roommate. She's going to Barnard. She says her course load is too heavy for her to join Hillel and it makes me very, very nervous for her.

(under her breath)

She already strays as it is...

FINEBERG

Jean, dear, your roommate understands her own schedule better than anyone. If it does not allow for Hillel, I am sure she can still make time for temple and Shabbat. We live in a modern world! We must grow accustomed to it.

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE FINEBERG'S FLOOR, DAY

Fineberg's assistant Isaiah rings his hands at his desk.

FINEBERG

Don't worry about food for the meeting, I stopped on the way. Calls?

Isaiah gives him a tortured look.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE FINEBERG'S OFFICE, DAY

Fineberg and Isaiah stress eat mouthfuls of blintzes.

On the table, a copy of the Times featuring Lloyd's picture.

FINEBERG

On balance, we know he's getting desperate. These are the acts of a desperate pipsqueak gasping for air.

ISIAIAH

(mournful)

...You make him sound kind of cute.

(MORE)

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

It's the only time anyone has made it to the floor of Congress to demonstrate.

FINEBERG

Just because the blackout is broken, doesn't mean it's over. Clearly it's working because the man is relegated to childishness.

INT F.A.O. SCHWARTZ, FIFTH AVE, NYC, DAY

Alex is in the doll section. He walks past a display of Madame Alexander dolls--each more white than the last. A cowgirl. A bride. A princess. Scarlet O'Hara. Snow White.

A saleswoman walks by.

ALEX

Excuse me?

SALESWOMAN

Can I help you?

ALEX

I...My friend forgot to buy a birthday present for his daughter. I might need some help picking the right doll?

SALESWOMAN

(judgemental)
Forgot?

ALEX

He's a very busy man.

SALESWOMAN

You're a good friend.

ALEX

Believe me, this is the least I can do.

SALESWOMAN

What does she like?

Alex looks helplessly at the Snow White doll.

ALEX

...She thinks her mother Betty is very pretty. None of these dolls look quite like her mother.

SALESWOMAN

Ah. Let me check the back.

The Saleswoman exits. Snow White stares at Alex.

After a moment, the woman returns holding a black doll in a modest white dress. Alex is underwhelmed. He thinks hard. This is not his forte.

ALEX

Do you have...I don't know...a bow?

The woman softens. She reaches into her uniform pocket and takes out a bow for wrapping gifts. She fastens it into a sash around the doll's dress.

She glances around for her supervisor before plucking the bonnet off Scarlet O'Hara.

SALESWOMAN

I'll ring you up.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ ROCKWELL'S BEDROOM, MORNING

Curtains drawn, Rockwell sleeps. His radio alarm clock clicks on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

...third Bond film, *Goldfinger*, coming stateside this week. And on the *national* stage, the reverend Martin Luther King Jr. takes his fight to Selma, Alabama, where he will be leading a voter-registration drive.

Rockwell slowly rises from his bed and puts his feet on the floor.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ MESS HALL, MORNING

Rockwell addresses several of the men over their breakfast (of what looks like slop) in jubilant tones.

ROCKWELL

Road trip to Alabama, boys!
Agitate, agitate, agitate. We know the Jews go crazy for Dr. Coon! They'll certainly be printing whatever happens there.

Rockwell looks at their bowls of slop.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

And since we're strapped, and we're all having to make sacrifices, we can't afford any more TV time, we'll have to earn it. Whaddya say?

A cheer goes up from the breakfast-eaters, albeit a hungry one.

PATLER

Commander, don't you think we oughtta...be a bit more *specific* in our approach?

ROCKWELL

(blank)

What in the hell are you saying?

PATLER

I just...I thought we might try something a little different.

ROCKWELL

John before you get any more brilliant ideas let me see your sketches for the Coon-Liner.

Patler unhappily hands him the file in his hands.

It's a "ticket" for a "Coon-Ard Lines Boat to Africa." Propaganda material. "This ticket entitles one nigger to..."

It is illustrated by cartoonish monkeys in suits marching happily towards a ship.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Ha! Alright, I need you to scamper on down to the printer. And--

(to the room)

What did Koehl say the other day? We wanted to add something to the ticket. Chicken coop and water melon patch on deck and...?

TROOPER

A complimentary framed photo of Eleanor Roosevelt!

Rockwell guffaws. Patler scowls.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ HALLWAY, CONTINUOUS

ROCKWELL

Don't ever contradict me in front of the troops again. You know better than that, John.

PATLER

You weren't there in Congress.

Rockwell doesn't understand what he means.

PATLER (CONT'D)

It was embarrassing! It got us nowhere!

Rockwell is surprised at the outburst. It's furious, like a son talking to his dad.

PATLER (CONT'D)

We can make it into that building as *congressmen*. I felt it. But not if we keep dressing up Lloyd in a monkey suit and never--

ROCKWELL

We will make it there! *If* we follow the plan. We need to be *in the public's eye, really in their eye*-- before we can deliver the real message. Otherwise the Jews and the pinkos will keep undermining us. They'll never let us reach anyone until enough people are clamoring for what we have to say.

PATLER

But *when* will it be?

ROCKWELL

Soon dammit! I'm as eager as you! Now get down there and print those Coon-Liners. We can't leave the niggers standing on the dock!

EXT ALBERT HOTEL, SELMA, DAY

Rockwell holds a press conference, while Patler stands by him and an American flag.

ROCKWELL

I'm here to do my very best to stand up for the people of Selma!
(MORE)

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

You can't have niggers voting in Alabama any more than we can have them voting in Virginia! I believe I can run Mr. Coon out of town. We'll have signs in every window of every shop and restaurant: "Welcome niggers to coon day in Selma!"

Some locals boo, some cheer.

EXT SELMA STREETS, LATER

Rockwell and a few troopers stroll down the street singing a "Hate-Nanny" and giving away vinyl records and fliers to passersby.

ROCKWELL & TROOPERS

Ring that bell, shout for
joy...white man's day is
here...Gather all those equals up
...Herd them on the pier...

JUMP CUTS:

THE DAY WEARS ON as Rockwell and troopers hand out fliers and shake hands, asking for support.

They pass a group of black students who look at them warily. Some white citizens stop and speak with the ANP, others stare.

EXT ALBERT HOTEL, SELMA, NIGHT

Rockwell and company return with smiles on their faces, sorting the small bills they've been given.

ROCKWELL

Goodnight, boys. Be on the porch by
8 tomorrow morning to start
organizing people.

EXT ALBERT HOTEL, SELMA, NEXT MORNING

Rockwell and the troopers wait expectantly on the hotel's porch.

EXT ALBERT HOTEL, SELMA, AFTERNOON

Rockwell's face has changed to disgust. He sits and smokes his pipe.

ROCKWELL

Well, that's that. No posters, no signs, no help. If we want to reach King, we'll have to do it in front of cameras and we'll have to be smart.

(pointing at a trooper)

You, go to King's hotel and run back as soon as you see him leaving.

EXT ALBERT HOTEL BACK DOOR/SELMA STREET, AFTERNOON

The Scout Trooper has returned. Lloyd, in his ape costume, creeps out the back door with the Scout.

They are barely around the corner when--

CU on Lloyd and he is TACKLED to the ground by a cop and handcuffed.

CU Rockwell, rubbing his temples.

As the cops take Lloyd away, Patler hands Rockwell a big wad of bills from his pocket.

PATLER

There goes our collection from yesterday.

EXT SELMA COURTHOUSE, AFTERNOON

Rockwell, un-crinkling and counting the bills goes to bailout Lloyd.

As he walks up the steps he sees a PACK OF REPORTERS. They encircle King, trailed by black Selma citizens, about to register to vote.

Rockwell's fury at the coincidence is overpowering. But it changes to the realization that he has an opportunity. He marches towards King.

SMASH TO:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: papers across the U.S. feature a photo of Rockwell with his corn cob pipe in King's face. "ROCKWELL CONFRONTS KING"

INT ALEX'S NEIGHBORHOOD DINER, GREENWICH VILLAGE, AFTERNOON

A copy of the paper sticks out of Alex's tattered briefcase. He sits with Attallah, who eats fried fish and a pineapple and cottage cheese salad.

ALEX

Your mom let you eat junk food?

ATTALLAH

Sure.

He leaves it. By now he's comfortable with her running the show.

ATTALLAH (CONT'D)

Thanks for my doll.

ALEX

(lying badly)

What? What doll?

ATTALLAH

The one I got for my birthday.

ALEX

I didn't get you that. Your dad did.

She doesn't even pretend to believe him a little.

ATTALLAH

Ok. But anyway, it's a nice doll...How's your book?

ALEX

You know what? I think it's coming along.

ATTALLAH

(irritated)

Sometimes my dad doesn't come home from your house till I go to school.

ALEX

I'm sorry to send him back so late. But you know he's only got so much time for talking with me because he talks to a lot of other important people during the day.

Attallah does not need any explanation about what her dad does. She seems to believe she's more aware than anyone.

ATTALLAH
(with pride)
I know.

ALEX
It may surprise you, but *I* even
have some other work I have to do.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Mhm.

Alex points to the photo of Rockwell and King in the paper.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You remember that interview I had
with the guy who hates Negroes?

ATTALLAH
Sure.

ALEX
That's the guy.

ATTALLAH
You ask him good questions?

ALEX
We're not done yet.

ATTALLAH
You haven't asked why he hates
Negroes?

Now she's just playing. He seems to have broken her shell,
finally.

Alex throws one of his french fries at her. She catches it
and eats it, then grins.

For a minute, the world does not feel like such a hard place.

EXT GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET, NIGHT

Alex walks home with a bundle of paperwork and groceries. He
passes an Italian restaurant with a small TV.

Malcolm is speaking. Alex stops to watch. Something is not
right.

The Italian waiter watching gets up wordlessly and opens the door for Alex to come in. They watch together as Malcolm speaks in front of his burning house.

INT ITALIAN RESTAURANT, BACK ROOM, NIGHT

Alex talks on an old rotary phone.

MALCOLM X (O.S.)
You found me.

ALEX
Malcolm! Are the girls ok?

MALCOLM X (O.S.)
They're shook. But they're ok.

Alex does not know what to say.

MALCOLM X (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I know we were meant to meet Friday
but can we reschedule? Monday? I
have a few more things to work out
now.

ALEX
Like where to sleep?

MALCOLM X (O.S.)
No, I got that covered for now, but
thank you...How is it possible to
write one's life in a world so fast-
changing as this?

Alex doesn't know what to say.

ALEX
See you Monday, Big Red.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY, CHICAGO, EVENING

Murray tiptoes out of the living room, clothes from last night, shoes in one hand.

HEF (O.S.)
Murray!

Murray freezes. Hef, wired, comes at him, holding notes.

HEF (CONT'D)
Why is the guy bothering with this
Nazi shit?

He has a tendency to start in the middle of a conversation and assume others will catch up.

MURRAY

...Rockwell?

HEF

It doesn't make sense. If he's really trying to get somewhere he's gotta know Americans want their own, home grown bigotry. Not some German import...He's gotta be pathological.

Murray has an unspoken "pot calling the kettle" moment.

MURRAY

It's occurred to me.

HEF

You have another interview on the books with him?

Murray is tired of making excuses for Alex's dilatoriness.

MURRAY

Alex is working on it...

HEF

Well tell him not to ask him about politics this time.

MURRAY

(genuine)
...what else is there? What's on the inside of a guy like that?

HEF

There we go! That's the spirit!
(changing his tone radically)
...And when you speak to Haley give him my sympathies, of course.

MURRAY

About what?

DATE: February 21, 1965

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: Malcolm X Murdered. Papers across the country with various versions of the headline. The New York Times reads: "The Apostle of Hate Is Dead."

INT DOUBLEDAY PUBLISHING HOUSE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, NYC, DAY

A copy of the New York Times sits on the desk. Alex sits crumpled in a chair before the PRESIDENT of Doubleday.

DOUBLEDAY PRESIDENT

The trouble is, Mr. Haley, we simply cannot know the consequences of putting out this material. There could be reprisals against the house. Who knows what the reaction might be. My understanding is, the police still aren't even sure who did it!

ALEX

The people that did it won't be coming for your company, or anyone in it. They got what they wanted.

DOUBLEDAY PRESIDENT

I'm afraid I cannot share your certainty on the matter...We forfeit the advance, of course.

Alex cannot believe what he's hearing.

DOUBLEDAY PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

And we wish you the absolute best in your endeavors. But it is a risk the company cannot take.

ALEX

It's a risk you are not willing to take.

DOUBLEDAY PRESIDENT

...However you prefer to see it. We will *not* be publishing this book. I'm sorry.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, EVENING

Alex staggers into his apartment, delirious. He can't quite come to grips with what's happened. He looks around the place aimlessly at his notes, manuscripts, photos of Malcolm. What to do? Continue writing? Malcolm's photo stares back at him and he looks away.

He decides to check his messages and picks up the phone.

OPERATOR
Sue's Answerphone.

ALEX
Any messages for Alex Haley?

OPERATOR
Yes, sir. A Mr. Fischer called, asked for a return. A Mr. George Haley. And a woman who called herself Betty. I asked for her last name, but she didn't leave it. Said you would know.

Alex's face crumbles.

ALEX
...What did Betty say?

OPERATOR
She said to please call her back at 5-2271. And she asked that you not share the new number with anyone? I tried to clarify with her but--

ALEX
Thank you. You said 5-2271?

OPERATOR
That's right.

ALEX
Thank you.

He hangs up. The thought of calling is too painful. He wishes for a way out. He looks toward his door. He lets his head fall back and he looks up past the ceiling.

Taking a big breath, he picks up the phone and dials.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hello?

ALEX

Hello, this is Alex Haley. I'm calling for Betty.

VOICE (O.S.)

Betty who? We don't have a Betty at this--

ALEX

She asked for me. She left me the number. Alex Haley. Please ask her.

VOICE (O.S.)

One moment.

Alex waits.

BETTY (O.S.)

Hello Alex.

Her voice is serene. Unsettling.

ALEX

Betty. How--

But "how are you?" doesn't seem right.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Where are you? Are you alright? The girls?

BETTY (O.S.)

We're safe, I can't say where right now. We probably wouldn't have stayed at the house after this anyway, but the firebomb destroyed it. I assume you spoke with Malcolm about the bomb last week---

ALEX

Yeah. We were gonna meet Friday, but he resch...rescheduled to Monday.

Alex is having trouble holding back tears.

BETTY (O.S.)

The detectives have been asking about the auditorium and if I saw the shooters, if my husband had ideas about who might want him dead. Funny, they didn't wanna ask him that before...now he's gone they're curious.

(MORE)

BETTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(confessing)

Qubilah keeps asking when daddy's coming back. She saw him fall, you know...When he and the girls watched Westerns on Sundays on the TV, he used to tell her not to be scared because the actors were just pretending to be shot. Attallah's been crying. I wanted to find the doll he gave her for her birthday but I think it may have gone with the fire.

This is too much for Alex. Tears roll down his cheeks and he wipes them away, wrestling to keep them out of his voice.

ALEX

Is there anything I can bring?
Anything I can get to you somehow?

BETTY (O.S.)

The thing is Alex, Malcolm used up his advance.

ALEX

He told me.

BETTY (O.S.)

And he'd been funneling all his money from the road back into the movement...We didn't have life insurance or home insurance. No house. No savings. Qubilah is starting school, I gotta feed all four and Alex...I'm two months pregnant.

He didn't know.

BETTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So my question to you is: do you think you'll be finished with this book soon? I gotta figure something else out until then, but it will be a big help to know there is at least the completion check coming in before the initial sales.

ALEX

Uhm...

A calm descends on Alex. He successfully stops crying without Betty hearing.

For the moment, he's reassuring and collected. He doesn't tell her about Doubleday. He lies.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Yeah, Betty. Yeah I almost got it done. My meeting with Malcolm was gonna be just to go over the sections..how we were gonna end the book.

BETTY (O.S.)

Well, being that it's a biography, I guess you know now.

Alex grimaces. But his voice stays soothing.

ALEX

Yes. I'll write up what I have and call you with any questions. It shouldn't take too long, sister.

BETTY (O.S.)

Thank you Alex.

ALEX

I'm sending you all the love I got, Betty.

BETTY (O.S.)

I feel it. Malcolm believed in you. You're gonna write a really good book.

He turns back to his piles of papers. Back to the apartment, empty and even more lost than before.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ ROCKWELL'S BEDROOM, MORNING

CLOSE ON: Rockwell sits at a small desk, smoking his corn cob pipe, reading a newspaper that covers the assassination.

CAMERA PANS across the desk and wall behind it: floral wallpaper. A globe. A homemade swastika banner with tassels. A wall calendar filled with photos of Hitler and his troops.

Rockwell picks up his phone and dials.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, DAY

Alex looks like he has not slept, and has clearly been crying. His phone rings. Intercut as necessary:

Alex
 (hoarse)
 Hello?

ROCKWELL
 Mr. Haley, this is Lincoln
 Rockwell. I was very sorry to hear
 about the fall of Malcolm X,
 despite the things he's said about
 me. I wanted to send my
 condolences, and let you know I
 look forward to your book.

This is about the last person Alex was expecting to hear
 from.

ALEX
 Thank you. But the publisher is
 dropping it. They think the book is
 a danger to their company.

ROCKWELL
 Those pansies think the Commies are
 gonna come blow up their little
 press?

Alex can't help but laugh.

ALEX
 Malcolm was murdered by the Nation
 of Islam, Commander. As he said he
 would be.

Alex is so surprised to hear from Rockwell that he speaks
 candidly.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 Whoever else was wanted him dead,
 Elijah Muhammad's followers riddled
 him with bullets. He was murdered
 by his own people because he no
 longer believed that the path they
 were taking was the right one.
 (to himself, more than
 Rockwell)
 I told him to stay in Africa for a
 while, to be safe. I told him to
 think of the movement, his wife.
 (laughing)
 Hell, I told him to think of
 me!...I've never had a close friend
 die before.

Silence.

ROCKWELL

You'll find another publisher. One that isn't filled with sissy boys sitting on fur-lined toilet seats. Would you still like to schedule our second interview?

ALEX

Yes.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, ARLINGTON, DAY

Alex walks up the steps to the door.

ALEX

(to troopers)
Heya boys!

CAMPBELL

Hello Mr. Haley.

Alex was not expecting that, and smiles in surprise.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ ROCKWELL'S BEDROOM, DAY, LATER

Rockwell sits in a chair near his bed, Alex at the desk.

ROCKWELL

If Malcolm had been alive for that march in Selma, when the state troopers advanced on the marchers, I believe that it would have led to a black revolution. Martin Luther Coon and his Jewish masters aren't doing the niggers any favors.

Alex's next question, though delivered calmly, is icy.

ALEX

Does it *bother* you that Dr. King, a "race-mixing" Negro, is widely respected and admired by the majority of the American public, black and white--while you, a champion of white supremacy, are contemptuously regarded by most people as a "butt" and a "psychotic"?

Alex has caught Rockwell off guard. The question cuts at him.

ALEX (CONT'D)

...Shunned as a pariah, threatened and beaten and shot at, harassed by the Internal Revenue Service. *Abominated...*by almost everyone?

Rockwell clears his throat.

ROCKWELL

King may go on pulling the wool over the public's eyes for a while longer, but they're going to find him out for what he is--black on the outside, *Red* on the inside. An 18-karat fake, a fraud on the Negro people. As for my being a nut...that term has been applied to some of the greatest men the world has ever known--from Christ to the Wright brothers. I say it's therefore one of the highest accolades I could be given.

Alex is not giving up this line of questioning.

ALEX

Your own father rejects you publicly, he is ashamed that you are his son. How do you feel, facing that?

ROCKWELL

It's simply that my father...doesn't believe in what I am doing. My father is in show business. And has a lot of Jewish friends--who don't believe in anything but cash. This is where the Jews fail: in their lack of idealism.

Rockwell is managing to avoid questions about how he "feels."

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

We've got an ideology. I deeply believe that there is a power greater than ourselves that's helping us in our fight to keep the world natural and racially pure. This house is almost like a *hate monastery*. That's why, eventually, we're going to prevail.

ALEX

Do you feel, then, that Hitler was a martyr? Do you consider yourself a martyr?

ROCKWELL

...Myself, no I'm not yet a martyr. My battle has lost me a wife and children, and I've suffered a lot.

ALEX

You'd say your wife left you over this?

ROCKWELL

Actually, I've had two wives. The first one I lost simply from marital inexperience and stupidity. The second...we had a happy family and home, and this battle just made going on impossible.

Alex watches the flicker of pain across Rockwell's face.

ALEX

What do you believe is the purpose of life?

ROCKWELL

...The purpose of life is to struggle as hard as you can for what you believe in and enjoy the struggle. Even to stand up is a struggle against gravity! And I think that the joy of life is in the struggle itself and not the victory--because we all lose. We're all gonna croak. So if you can't find fun in the fight to live, and to live to the fullest, then you're a failure already before you even start.

Alex gives that response some thought before his next question.

ALEX

The only pleasures are derived from struggle? There are no pure, unalloyed joys?

For a fraction of a second, they are just two boys talking.

ALEX (CONT'D)
...Do you believe in love?

Rockwell gives him a side-eye.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Do you think there can be a positive relationship between two human beings called love?

ROCKWELL
Well certainly, I've experienced it.

ALEX
And you find it a struggle?

ROCKWELL
Uh...yes. Indeed it is. It's a struggle to control yourself and...your emotions so that you don't *hurt* the person you love, with things that you can't help sometimes doing.

Rockwell realizes he's gone too far, and shifts back to detached professionalism.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)
But I don't consider myself persecuted. Maturity is to accept the consequences of your own acts. I think it's a symptom of paranoia to feel that it's anyone's fault but your own if you fail to accomplish what you set out to.

ALEX
...You claim that you are "gagged and slandered" by the Jewish press, sabotaged by a nationwide conspiracy. You state this conspiracy of silence and misrepresentation is preventing you from getting your revolutionary message across to the white, gentile masses. To some people, Commander, these might sound like the remarks of someone trying to blame his failures on someone else.

ROCKWELL
You think I'm being paranoid, is that it?

Alex now knows there's some truth to this. But how much? He chooses not to respond.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

I only *wish* it was my imagination. But the Jew blackout is as real as a hand over my mouth. Before we know it, freedom of speech in America isn't going to be any different than the kind they have in Russia: you're free to say anything you want--just as long as it rubber-stamps the party line. Well I'm guilty of *disagreeing* with the establishment, so the press has decided to keep me muzzled.

(gesturing towards Alex)

It's possible this whole thing has been some perverted practical joke.

Alex smiles.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, DAY

The troopers snap to attention as Alex and Rockwell descend the front stairs.

PATLER

Commander, should I call a cab?

ROCKWELL

That's alright, Patler. I'll drive Mr. Haley myself.

Patler gapes as Rockwell leads Alex to his Chevy Camper.

INT/EXT ROCKWELL'S CHEVY, DAY

Rockwell and Alex drive together down the wood-lined road, rounding a corner where they pass several of his MEN walking home from town.

Their incredulous faces stare in at Haley and Rockwell.

ROCKWELL

It's too late! I've joined the NAACP!

They glide down Arlington's main boulevard and stop at a light. A MAN on the street recognizes Rockwell. The light goes GREEN and Rockwell takes off, cackling.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)
 They'll never believe him, swearing
 he saw Rockwell with a nigger!
 Hahahahah!

Alex can't help but crack a smile watching this man act like a goon.

EXT NATIONAL AIRPORT, CURB SIDE, WASHINGTON D.C., DAY

Rockwell pulls up. Alex opens the door.

ALEX
 Thanks for the lift.

ROCKWELL
 Surely.
 (re the article)
 I'm glad for the opportunity, but I really don't know why you are wasting your time. Your editor is pulling your leg on this one.

ALEX
 Playboy believes in freedom of speech, and so do I. People will argue with one another no matter what. I, personally, would rather have it done with words than with blows, or worse, with bullets. So no, I'm not wasting my time.

And then a dig at Rockwell.

ALEX (CONT'D)
The American people can distinguish opinion from fact. So we'll run the story, don't you worry.

ROCKWELL
 Here's hoping.

ALEX
 ...Do you really believe all this you preach?

Rockwell's mood turns solemn again. He looks Alex dead in the eyes.

ROCKWELL
 This has cost me the most beautiful wife in the world. Seven kids.
 (MORE)

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

I was a commander in the Navy and a half-year away from my pension. Certainly I believe all of this.

ALEX

And you think you can win a campaign with it?

ROCKWELL

Let me explain something you might find useful in *your own endeavors*. I reject the term "human being" as an absolute category. I see man as part of nature, with some types of man being less human than others. A natural continuum, in which there is no sharp line.

Rockwell pauses. He wants Alex to hear the following as advice.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Now, many white Americans might not literally think you, or even your people, are categorically inferior. But that won't stop them from profiting off the idea that you are. All I need is a few people who believe it, and the rest who are not so eager to contradict them. So yes, I believe I can win. If not now, then soon.

ALEX

I will watch your campaign with interest, Mr. Rockwell.

ROCKWELL

Mr. Haley.

HEADER OF NEWSPAPER: July 23, 1965

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: "Virginia election will be first since historic voting rights legislature."

CLOSE ON: a Confederate Flag.

CLOSE ON: a sign reading "Vote Right; Vote White; Vote Rockwell."

EXT STOREFRONT, ARLINGTON, DAY

As Rockwell and a few troopers sweat over the ramshackle construction of Campaign Headquarters, we hear Alex's V.O. of a letter:

ALEX (V.O.)

Dear Commander, I've been sitting here now for three cigarette's duration, surveying the comings and goings of London's leisure class tea time. Perhaps it's my status as a journalist, but the waiters don't seem to have a problem silver-traying me. I thought of you this afternoon as I hunted through documents at the National Archives. I'm researching my ancestors' travel across the Atlantic (not the white ones). This has proven difficult, as it mainly involves looking through ship logs--under cargo. Here's hoping you're not working too hard. Cordially, Alex Haley.

The storefront finally becomes--

EXT/INT ROCKWELL FOR GOVERNOR HEADQUARTERS, ARLINGTON, DAY

NEWSLETTER: "ANP INTRA PARTY NEWSLETTER"

CLOSE UPS ON: "grow up" "sick humor" "true message"
"OUR FIGHT IS NO JOKE."

Patler stands by the ANP Printing Press as it churns out this latest material.

Rockwell enters, disheveled, and takes the newsletter from his hands. Patler eyes him, expectant, nervous, as he looks over the new instructions. Rockwell smiles, hands it back to Patler, and heads outside.

EXT VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS, DAY

Rockwell, having cleaned himself up and looking dashing, descends the steps to speak to a group of reporters.

REPORTER 1
Mr. Rockwell, how did you file?

ROCKWELL
As an independent.

REPORTER 2
Representing the American Nazi
Party?

ROCKWELL
Representing the *White Majority*
Party.

**A copy of the Rockwell newsletter announcing his candidacy
SLAMS on a table in--**

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HQ, NEXT MORNING

--where Fineberg stands glowering over it, and at his fellow
Rabbis and AJC members, sitting at a round table.

RABBI 1
What a schmuck.

The group speaks in a tone that waffles between Yiddish
colloquial and highly erudite.

JACOB BLAUSTEIN, head of the AJC, responds first.

BLAUSTEIN
Well, if it's that obvious--
Americans should be able to tell.

FINEBERG
That's like asking if the ape in
the freak show is an ape or just
some putz with too much armpit
hair. It doesn't *stop* people--it
attracts them. They'll want to see
for themselves.

BLAUSTEIN
Rockwell isn't some ape in a freak-
show. The national stage isn't a
circus.

Uncomfortable pause.

BLAUSTEIN (CONT'D)
Solomon...Rockwell has broken
through the press quarantine. It's
time for a new strategy.

FINEBERG

Rockwell is a *professional* bigot!
 He's running on a plattform--
 (emotional)
 that isn't designed to reach you,
 or the Park Avenue crowd, or the
 hippies. He wants to find people in
 the dark. You're unsure? You're
 lost? It's because of the Jews!
 It's because of the Negroes! All he
 needs is the press to help him
 reach a base that will hear him.

A hush falls over the room. The first Rabbi slowly shakes his head.

RABBI 1

Listen. With this method--here's my
 problem: I have a friend down south
 who says there are people down
 there trying to keep school
 integration out of the papers. They
 think it's bad for their kids.
 Now...I'm not saying Rockwell has a
 point. Myself--I'd prefer not to be
 gassed. But...who's to decide what
 can and can't be printed in a
 paper. You? All of us in this room?

FINEBERG

That Rockwell does not have die-
 hards in every American city is
 due, I believe, to the work that
 has been done to quarantine him.

RABBI 1

Are we willing to compromise the
 free-speech principles of this
 country, of this room, to stop him
 gaining followers?

BLAUSTEIN

Those in favor of continuing the
 quarantine efforts?

Fineberg raises his hand.

BLAUSTEIN (CONT'D)

Those in favor of combatting
 Rockwell openly in the press?

All other hands go up. Fineberg is beside himself.

FINEBERG

What does it cost us? Have I asked
for money?

BLAUSTEIN

Your time is valuable too, Solomon.
And I think it's time you start
spending it developing a new
strategy.

Fineberg looks at the stack of newspapers carrying Rockwell's
name.

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HQ ELEVATOR, DAY

Isaiah and Fineberg ride the elevator.

ISAIAH

So are we stopping?

FINEBERG

...I think we monitor him, make
sure nothing really huge is in the
pipeline. And take it from there.

The elevator stops on another floor and Jean enters.

FINEBERG (CONT'D)

Hello Jean.

JEAN

Rabbi, my cousin in Chicago goes to
the same temple as one of the
editors at Playboy.

Isaiah snorts.

ISAIAH

...sorry.

FINEBERG

Now, now, dear. You cannot judge a
man from afar--it's quite likely
this editor is a good Jew and a
good man. I'm told they have a
wonderful monthly interview, in
fact.

ISAIAH

It's quite good.

Jean looks misty-eyed from one to the other.

FINEBERG

Jean, my dear, it serves us best to focus on our own path, our own relationship to Hasesh.

JEAN

Oh, no, I'm not worried about him. I just thought you might want to know that they are doing a profile on George Lincoln Rockwell next month.

Fineberg and Isaiah look at her with dread.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LOBBY, CHICAGO, NEXT MORNING

Fineberg sits, uncomfortable, as the milieu of Playboy swirls around him. Logan, the intern, comes to retrieve him.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION SPARE ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY

Murray is once again using a spare room as his office. Fineberg walks in and sees Murray in his shirtsleeves.

MURRAY

Mr. Fineberg, is it? How can I help you?

FINEBERG

Mr. Fischer, I'm here to talk to you about your Rockwell piece. If you run this story, you'll be undoing five years of toil on the part of not only my committee, but local and national editors across the country.

Murray's face falls.

MURRAY

Oh my God. You're it. The blackout. You know, I thought he was insane.

FINEBERG

He is insane.

MURRAY

Mr. Fineberg, the man is making himself known as a hater across the country, and people deserve to understand why.

FINEBERG

So you're going to help him then?

MURRAY

I--you might as well say that every interview with any public figure is an ad!

FINEBERG

I am here to tell you that it is. And that if you run this piece, you will help a deranged man reach--how many people subscribe to your magazine?

MURRAY

(proudly)
5 million.

Fineberg wasn't expecting a number that high.

FINEBERG

5...million. Can you imagine, sir, how many people within that base have anti-Semitic sympathies? Racist sympathies? *Radical* sympathies?

MURRAY

When I, as an editor, begin to screen what my reporters write out of unease over whether the reader will react *correctly*--I cease to be an editor and they cease to be reporters.

FINEBERG

Are you aware that Rockwell is running for governor of Virginia?

MURRAY

I am. Do you think he has a chance?

FINEBERG

I do not. I think that all those who *might* vote for him, though they be few, *will* vote for him if you run this piece. And I think that will keep him going. You cannot imagine the legitimacy he will feel as a result of being printed in your publication.

MURRAY

He will be exposed for what he really is.

FINEBERG

It's apparent what he really is!

MURRAY

Rockwell has no chance of taking over this country. But some might say a voice like his will never be defeated until it is acknowledged.

FINEBERG

Do your fears leave you, Mr. Fischer? Your insecurities and your angers--now that you are a grown man, you must know what they are. So--have they left? A voice like Rockwell's--a noxious, small, *fearful* voice-- will always live in our country just as it will always live in each of us. The only thing we can do is choose whether or not to listen.

MURRAY

I'm an editor, Mr. Fineberg--not a rabbi.

FINEBERG

It's only people like you who think bigotry and hate need to be *revealed*. Their reality is already obvious to many of us because we live it. Don't print that story. *Please*.

Bev opens the door to Murray's office with a stack of photos but stops, feeling the tension in the air.

BEV

I can come back.

MURRAY

No need. Mr. Fineberg was just leaving.

EXT PUBLISHING HOUSE, NYC, DAY

Alex, in his best suit, holds a copy of his manuscript, with a photo of Malcolm clipped to the front, and a tattered briefcase. He takes a deep breath.

INT/EXT VARIOUS PUBLISHING HOUSES -- MONTAGE

ALEX (V.O.)
 Fearsome black demagogue or
 philosopher? The story of Malcolm
 X's life is full of drama...

Alex walks up front steps and through doors of various
 storied establishments.

ALEX (V.O.)
 ...of pride, indeed of all the
 questions of this decade and our
 time...

From his POV we see--

--INT PUBLISHING HOUSE 1

EDITOR 1
 The problem is...at this house
 we've covered the racial issue.

--INT PUBLISHING HOUSE 2

EDITOR 2
 Isn't his story a
 bit...distasteful?

--INT PUBLISHING HOUSE 3

EDITOR 3
 You understand, the public is less
 inclined to read a book about a man
 no longer alive.

Reactions Alex: quizzical, disapproval, disbelief.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NIGHT

Rockwell's interview transcript is strewn across the
 apartment. Every inch of floor is covered. Alex tiptoes
 across it, eating a bagel and drinking whiskey.

He moves the papers here and there--adding notes and bright
 construction paper tags to various sections.

He stares at it. Puts the cold glass to his head. Reads
 carefully. Stares more.

A KNOCK makes him jump.

ALEX
Oh Jesus!

Murray stands in the door. Again.

MURRAY
How's it coming?

ALEX
It's sensational.

MURRAY
Alex, I really think it's going to
be just that.

ALEX
Yeah, yeah I think so too.

MURRAY
Do you have any doubts?

ALEX
Doubts?

MURRAY
A rabbi visited me.

ALEX
Rabbi Blackout?!

MURRAY
Rabbi Blackout.

ALEX
Did he...offer you anything? Did he
bring money?

MURRAY
No.

ALEX
Did he...

MURRAY
He didn't do anything at all...he
just told me what he thought.
(pause)
Do you think there's a chance that
we're helping Rockwell?

ALEX
Yes.

MURRAY

...I'm gonna leave this call with you. Do we print it?

Caught off guard, Alex pauses.

ALEX

Yes.

Alex moves his toes around the papers so he can read.

ALEX (CONT'D)

He really says some crazy shit, I'll tell you.

MURRAY

Well--the crazier the better.

ALEX

He does make some interesting points though. I *would* like a free trip to Africa.

MURRAY

Goodnight Alex.

He starts to leave.

ALEX

Hey Murray?

MURRAY

Yeah?

ALEX

I have to get Malcolm's book published.

MURRAY

And you will. You've got to believe that something greater than yourself will intervene. This book won't just disappear.

Murray exits.

ALEX

(calling down the hallway)
Night brother Murray.

MURRAY (O.S.)

Night.

Alex moves his toes over Rockwell's words: "believe that there is a power greater than ourselves that's helping us in our fight."

Swig of whiskey. Bite of bagel. Shakes his head.

EXT GREENWICH VILLAGE, EARLY NEXT MORNING

Alex, bleary-eyed stumbles down the street. He stops in front of a church. Morning mass is taking place and he wanders in.

INT GREENWICH VILLAGE CHURCH, EARLY MORNING

The pastor speaks with a thick Italian accent.

PASTOR

Come si fa a pregare? The pharasees asked of Jesus--how does one pray? Jesus answered them: "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your vision is clear, your whole body also is full of light. But when it is poor, your body is full of darkness." LOOK THEREFORE, that your vision is clear. That the light within you is not darkness. *Che cosa intende?* What does Jesus mean by this? He means--when you are in darkness--there are two possible reasons why. There may be no source of light! OR...or...the darkness may be within yourself.

Alex's sleepy eyes are little slits, but he's deeply effected.

INT ALEX'S NEIGHBORHOOD DINER, GREENWICH VILLAGE, MORNING

Alex finishes a large cup of coffee on the terrace of a deserted cafe. A young, black waitress comes to check on him. She indicates her coffee pot and Alex gives her a downcast nod "yes."

WAITRESS

Have the third on us, Mr. Haley.

She gives him a knowing smile as she pours.

INSERT the table: A "Yellow Pages" and a list of publishing companies, some crossed out, that Alex works through.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LIVING ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY

Bev lays out photos of Rockwell for Murray to review. Logan looks at the schedule.

LOGAN

Mr. Fischer, we have a problem.

MURRAY

Yes, Logan?

LOGAN

With Mr. Haley's new Rockwell piece, we either have to move the November Jesse Jackson piece or the December Joe Namath one if we want Rockwell issued before end of year.

BEV

(pointed)

So...if we waited...it would publish after the race in November?

Logan hasn't forgotten when she made fun of his pronunciation.

LOGAN

The *gubernatorial* race.

Murray thinks it over. Bev raises her eyebrow.

MURRAY

...Push it. A few months is fine.

EXT GROVE PRESS, GREENWICH VILLAGE, DAY

Alex looks in through the glass door of the tiny, new publishing house. A white girl with big dumb glasses writes notes at the front desk. Alex sighs, then opens the door.

INT GROVE PRESS, GREENWICH VILLAGE, DAY

Alex faces BARNEY ROSSET, president of the house.

Alex starts the speech he has been giving every visit with every editor since before Malcolm died.

ALEX

Fearsome black demagogue or philosopher? The story of Malcolm X's life is full of drama, of pride, indeed of....

Alex trails off. He's not giving this dumb speech one more time. He's just going to talk about Malcolm.

ALEX (CONT'D)

When I first met Malcolm at the Black Muslim restaurant uptown near the mosque, a white college girl had come there. She asked Malcolm, "What can I do?" Malcolm turned to her and he said, "Nothing." She left in tears. That's not something that I would have done. I'll tell you what: Malcolm didn't always think like me because Malcolm hadn't always had the same options as me. He used to tell me: "you trust white men and I don't. You studied what he wanted you to learn about him in schools, I studied him in the streets and in prison, where you see the truth." But not long after that, I saw Malcolm exhilarated in lectures with white student bodies at colleges. At one of these lectures I reminded him of that time at the restaurant. He said, "I did a lot of things that I'm sorry for now. Well...I guess a man's entitled to make a fool of himself if he's ready to pay the cost." Malcolm was no fool. Because I read books in school and he read them in prison, he knew learned something few people do--to teach himself. Because he could do *that*, he *always* acted for himself, and he *thought* for himself. So when we was wrong, he was generally on his way to being right. More right than most of us. So I hope to God that all the studying and working and options I ever had can teach me to be more like him.

Rosset is paying rapt attention.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Now, I was told recently by a white supremacist that, although *most* white people don't believe my race is literally inferior, they will happily profit from the idea that we are...I don't believe that.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I believe a lot of white Americans, certainly all those college kids that Malcolm realized he liked so well, are eager to take a stand. And that is why I believe that there is a large audience for this book. Do you?

Rosset smiles.

DATE: SEPTEMBER 7, 1965.

INSTEAD OF A NEWSPAPER, the date is written on Grove Press letterhead, enclosing a check for the publication of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.*

EXT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, MORNING

Alex trots up the stairs to his place and sees a large package. He picks it up, along with a letter addressed to him in childish handwriting.

INT ALEX'S APARTMENT, GREENWICH VILLAGE, DAY

Alex hungrily cuts the tape off the box and opens it to see fresh copies of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X." He cracks it open and reads the contents.

INSERT book: "EPILOGUE by ALEX HALEY."

Then he opens the letter. It reads:

"Dear Alex. Thanks for my copy of the book. I'll make sure to read it once I can read better. SYS. LR."

ALEX
(to himself)
See you soon, Little Red.

EXT/INT NEW YORK HOTEL, DAY

Alex glad-hands and laughs over a banquet breakfast, while people come up and shake his hand. Copies of *The Autobiography* are stacked about the room. Various shots of Alex drinking tea from pristine China, people listening intently to him speak, accepting an award. Over it all:

ROCKWELL (V.O.)

I'm not surprised your book has been awarded a prize, although I am sadly familiar with the fact that Negroes tend to win prizes all over the place providing they do not wet themselves and refrain from gnawing on the shinbones of the prize committee etc. You pledged me that in the autobiography there would be a clear statement of Malcolm X's position on the Jews as I often heard him put it. Yet a careful reading of the book and the Saturday Evening Post condensation shows the material to be totally missing...I will always regret that I did not have more opportunity to meet Malcolm and talk with him at some length, rather than the quickie hand shake and hello we exchanged...I enjoy hearing from you and maintaining contact across no man's land.

Newspaper Header: NOVEMBER 4, 1965

SMASH TO:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: Virginia Sun reads "Godwin Wins for Governor!"

INT PLAYBOY MANSION LIVING ROOM, CHICAGO, DAY

Pull back from newspaper to reveal Bev reading the coverage to Murray.

BEV

Democrat Mills Godwin Jr.: 296, 526. That's a majority with 47%. Republican Mr. Linwood Holton Jr.: 37%. And Mr. George Lincoln Rockwell: 5,730.

MURRAY

...5,700 votes???

BEV

5,730, yes Murray. Just over 1%.

MURRAY

That feels like a lot of votes.

BEV

Not quite enough to get him
elected.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ ROCKWELL'S BEDROOM, MORNING

Rockwell, exhausted, falls into bed.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY MESS HALL, DAY

The men eat Cream of Wheat while Rockwell muses.

ROCKWELL

The blackout got us this time,
boys. That's the first reason. The
second, of course, is prosperity.
How can we make revolutionaries out
of men with full stomachs and two
electric lawn mowers? Our moment
will come. We must wait for it.
Good work, everyone.

(pause)

Take a few days, if you like.
You've earned it. We'll further
evaluate at our Sunday meeting.

Patler does not eat. He's bitter.

INSERT PLAYBOY HEADER: APRIL 1966

SMASH TO:

**PLAYBOY MAGAZINE COVER: Photo booth strips of a girl
and a bunny hand-puppet. An item on the contents list
reads: "AN EXPLOSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NEO-NAZI
ROCKWELL."**

INT ALEX'S WASHINGTON D.C. HOTEL LOBBY, DAY

Pull back from cover to reveal: Alex thumbing the latest
issue.

Bobby Kennedy posters surround Alex as he talks in a lobby
phone booth.

ALEX

I should be able to visit with Bobby next trip--autographed copies of MX helped there. It's a crackle-pop efficiency in his office, Mur. Male and female assistants! Dedicated, aggressive, smart kids. Don't need to be a seer to see he's going places. And don't take too much crystal-balling to guess where.

MURRAY

You got the next flight ok? Need us to wire you any funds?

ALEX

Nah--I can expense it now! I'm flying out tonight, just have one more friend to see here.

EXT ALEX'S WASHINGTON D.C. HOTEL, DAY

Alex exits his hotel headed for a taxi, but instead he sees:

Rockwell, looking his best, sunglasses on, leaning against his Chevrolet. Rockwell gives a little wave.

INT/EXT ROCKWELL'S CHEVY, DAY, LATER

Rockwell drives Alex.

ALEX

You were right.

ROCKWELL

(joking)

Oh good! I'm so glad you came around!

(more serious)

About what?

ALEX

The blackout. You were right that there are people working to contain your ideas. But they're not paying anyone. And they're not bribing anyone. And they're not intimidating anyone.

ROCKWELL

Well...explains why it didn't work
on you.

Rockwell is kidding him. Alex can't help it. He laughs.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, ARLINGTON, DAY

Rockwell and Alex pull up. The troopers, including a scowling
Patler, are gathered around the flag pole.

ALEX

What's all this?

Rockwell opens the door for Alex, who steps out warily.

ROCKWELL

The men and I have a surprise for
you.

Rockwell motions for Campbell to join him. Campbell walks
with quiet purpose, a small box in his hands.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Alex Haley, for service to the
party and for keeping your word, I
am awarding you the special honor
of V.I.N.

The troopers all salute. Rockwell opens the box to reveal a
silver lapel-pin, inscribed with the letters V.I.N.

ALEX

Well...gee...thanks Commander.

Alex looks at his pin. It glints in the sunlight.

EXT ARLINGTON WOODS, NEAR ANP HEADQUARTERS, DAY

Alex and Rockwell take a stroll.

ALEX

...I have to ask you something.

ROCKWELL

Sure.

ALEX

While your political success is not in my personal interest, I can't help but think that you would be far more successful were you to abandon this Nazi symbolism all together.

ROCKWELL

...You can never convert people's attitude by lecturing and reasoning. Attitudes can only be changed through 'emotional engineering.'

Alex waits for him to elaborate.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

This is the key thing. It doesn't matter what the emotion is: love, fear, hatred. As long as there is an emotion in a person, I can change him. When I agitate in uniform, I want people to hate me. I want them emotionally worked up...

(looks up to see the sun)

It's getting a bit late. I've got a plane to catch too--lecturing at Stanford! I'll have one of the boys take us to the airport.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, DAY, LATER

Alex waits by the ANP station wagon. Campbell packs a bag into the trunk.

ALEX

Thanks for the presentation, Jake.

CAMPBELL

Oh, no problem. Just doing my duty.

But he gives a sideways smile.

ALEX

Hey Jake, can I ask you a question.

CAMPBELL

Sure.

ALEX

What does this all mean to you?
What's the goal? I mean...what's
your perfect world?

Campbell closes the trunk. His answer is matter-of-fact.

CAMPBELL

What's anybody's? No one would ever
be lonely--right?

ALEX

Right. Sure.

CAMPBELL

Where you headed next?

ALEX

London.

CAMPBELL

Wow...who are you meeting there?

ALEX

Julie Christie.

CAMPBELL

Wow. Well...have a good trip. I
suppose I won't be seeing you
again.

ALEX

Suppose not.

Campbell turns and heads inside.

INT ALEX'S LONDON HOTEL, DAY

Alex fingers the V.I.N. pin in his hand. He talks on the
phone.

MURRAY (O.S.)

Very Important Nigger?? I can't
fucking believe it.

ALEX

Yeah...musta been kinda expensive.

Murray catches the emotion in Alex's voice.

MURRAY (O.S.)

Yeah. Probably.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ ROCKWELL'S BEDROOM, MORNING

Patler and Rockwell sit on the edge of the bed, sorting an enormous stack of mail.

PATLER

(counting letters)

That's six invitations just this week. And the colleges are \$1500 each for speaking fees.

ROCKWELL

The Ivies pay more. You see, John? There's *always* a way to bounce back. Don't you forget it.

(continuing to read)

Which means I'll need my minister by my side. That's a *lot* of propaganda to distribute all on my lonesome. So you better get to work!

Patler smiles.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ BARRACKS, DAY

Grubby beds line the room. Several men watch a small television set. Patler and Rockwell enter.

TV ANCHOR

Dr. King leads a housing march through the outskirts of Chicago in an effort to protest de jure segregation, his first efforts in a northern city.

On TV: King and his marchers are pelted by a barrage of bottles and rocks. Each time a rock is thrown, the troopers cheer.

A leaderless mob of whites, reacting spontaneously. A huge opportunity and everyone knows it. Rockwell enters, grinning.

ROCKWELL

Looks like we're going to Chicago, boys! Get in touch with headquarters there.

Patler pulls him aside.

INT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ HALLWAY, CONTINUOUS

PATLER
I want to print something special.

ROCKWELL
...What are you thinking?

Patler whispers something in Rockwell's ear. Rockwell laughs.

PATLER
You've always said you want me to quit fighting. I think this will really bring the Greeks and the Aryans together.

Rockwell laughs harder.

ROCKWELL
It's good. Print two hundred, at least. And then try for a big banner.

PATLER
...I don't know that we can afford it.

Its against his best instincts, but Rockwell's approval gives Patler courage. He turns back to the printer and gets to work.

EXT GAGE PARK, CHICAGO, AFTERNOON

Troopers hand out SIGNS AND SHIRTS to hundreds of people, who wait to hear Rockwell speak.

REVEAL: the phrase Patler came up with is on every sign.

ROCKWELL
White--

CROWD
Power!

ROCKWELL
WHITE!

CROWD
POWER!!!!

The crowd roars.

LONG MOVING SHOT pulling back from Rockwell, through the park and out into the street:

Police stand in a line along the park. A group of young white men OVERTURN a car.

Several more RUN at the cars carrying black passengers with ice-picks in their hands.

T-shirts, signs, chanting: White Power is everywhere.

CLOSE ON: Rockwell's face as he watched the bedlam. He's never experienced success like this before.

SMASH TO:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: Chicago Tribune, NY Times, Washington Post, LA Times, German Newspapers, London Evening News show photos of the "White Power" riot.

EXT LONDON SIDE STREET, DUSK

Pull back from London Evening news to reveal: Alex sees the photographs from the Chicago march on a London newsstand. He buys a copy of the paper.

Hold on his face: wondering what it will mean.

EXT AMERICAN NAZI PARTY HQ, ARLINGTON, DAY

CLOSE ON: Rockwell's face, angry, humiliated.

Patler and Rockwell stand together on the lawn.

An IRS AGENT puts a padlock across the front door of the white wooden house. Property is strewn across the lawn as several other AGENTS tick things off clip-board lists.

We stay close on Rockwell as he speaks to Patler.

ROCKWELL

I can't miss my engagement at Columbia. You'll have to stand in while I'm gone and see what can be done legally. They can't confiscate the printing press at least, that was on a loan to begin with...

When Rockwell finally looks up, Patler is no longer by his side, but across the yard.

Patler slowly shakes his head, then turns his back on Rockwell and walks off the property. He's leaving for good.

INT AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HQ, NYC, DAY

Isaiah and Jean sit around, at a truce. They wait for Fineberg outside his office with giant smiles on their faces.

Fineberg enters.

ISAIAH

Dr. Fineberg! Did you hear the news?

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

The IRS shut down his headquarters.

JEAN

Lot of good that speaking tour money has done him! They can't even keep their doors open.

Fineberg smiles.

FINEBERG

Yes, that's excellent news. That's should gut their proceedings for a while.

With that Fineberg goes into his office. Jean sighs.

ISAIAH

What?

JEAN

If you can't bankrupt an idea...where does it end?

Isaiah cracks open a bag of potato chips. Jean takes one.

INT CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES, WASHINGTON D.C., DAY

Congressman STANLEY TUPPER, 45, sits at his desk. A female aide, DEBORAH, knocks on the door.

DEBORAH

Congressman, a Mr. Hunt is here. He says you know him from Hebron Academy.

Tupper looks up, alarmed.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
What's wrong? Isn't that your high school?

TUPPER
It is.

DEBORAH
But...

TUPPER
My friend James Hunt died when I was in college.

DEBORAH
So...should I show him in?

TUPPER
I suppose you should, yes.

The aide exits and returns with Rockwell.

TUPPER (CONT'D)
Linc!

For a split second, Tupper is frozen, unsure how to respond. Clearly, he is not supportive of his old friend's politics.

But before anyone really notices, he recovers, gets up to shake Rockwell's hand, then pulls him into a hug instead.

TUPPER (CONT'D)
(to Aide)
Thank you, Deborah.
(to Rockwell)
Sit down!

Rockwell is beaming at the sight of his friend. It's infectious.

ROCKWELL
I was just in Washington on some business and I thought I'd drop in and say hello!

TUPPER
What kind of business?

Rockwell shakes his head.

ROCKWELL
Some funding issues.
Organizational. Can't get people to
communicate with each other, you
know?

TUPPER
Certainly do. I heard you got
married again?

ROCKWELL
Yes! But she left me.

TUPPER
I'm so sorry, Linc.

Today, Rockwell won't be disheartened.

ROCKWELL
You can't win 'em all!

TUPPER
Well...I'd have said if anyone
could, it would be you. I was
thinking about you the other day
because my kid brought a ukulele
home.

The two of them look at each other and roar with laughter.

ROCKWELL
How old were you at that dance?

TUPPER
11. So you must have been 15...I
don't even remember where the hell
I *found* a ukulele and I certainly
don't know where I got the violin
bow to play it with.

Rockwell waves his hands. He's almost crying laughing.

ROCKWELL
All those dumb kids tried to tell
you that's not how you play it.

TUPPER
And you made them dance to it
anyway. All. Night. All night to
that noise.

ROCKWELL
Yeah. And I got laid that night
too.

Tupper almost falls out of his chair.

TUPPER

I can't. I can't take this. You really could get people to do anything.

(catching his breath)

Would you like to come by for dinner? We picked up some great lamb this weekend.

ROCKWELL

Thank you, some other time. Have a lecture to give at Brown in a few days that I have to prepare for.

Tupper nods, then gets up to walk his friend out.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

Well look at us now, eh, Stan? You a Congressman, me the head of the American Nazi Party.

Tupper is astonished. He calls out the elephant in the room.

TUPPER

Linc...why?

Rockwell looks as if he might admit something.

TUPPER (CONT'D)

Why don't you just leave?

ROCKWELL

...I've got a tiger by the tail.

Tupper stands in silence. Before he can respond--

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

I've got to get going.

He leaves. Deborah re-enters.

DEBORAH

So...who was he, after all?

TUPPER

That was George Lincoln Rockwell.

Deborah's face falls.

INT ALEX HALEY'S APARTMENT, GREENWHICH VILLAGE, DAY

INSERT: a letter from Rockwell addressed to Alex Haley, V.I.N.

CLOSE ON: Alex, as he folds up Rockwell's last letter. His desk is covered with material for a new project:

A 17th century etching of black bodies crammed together in the hull of a ship. A 1930s photo of well-dressed, young black couple in a photo booth. Photographs of a smiling family--Alex's family.

Alex tucks Rockwell's letter under his new project and looks up. His gaze is caught by--

The red glint of Attallah's hair as she sits in the sun.

WIDE of the room: Attallah, older now by several months and several hundred years, sits doing her homework.

Alex's POV. Attallah notices Alex watching her and rolls her eyes.

ATTALLAH

Don't you have some work to do or something?

She does not know that Alex just read Rockwell's letter, nor that when he looks at her he sees victory embodied. She throws him one of her flippant glances and continues to go about her business.

CUT TO:

HEADER OF A NEWSPAPER: AUGUST 25, 1967

EXT STRIP MALL, ARLINGTON, DAY

Rockwell's car sits outside a laundromat.

INT LAUNDROMAT, ARLINGTON, DAY

Rockwell struggles to stuff his clothes and sheets into a single dryer. A woman, RUBY PIERCE, 30s, watches him.

RUBY

Here. Take my machine. My clothes
are just about dry.

Rockwell gives her a genuine, beautiful smile.

ROCKWELL

Thank you, ma'am.

He moves half his clothes to her machine, pours in soap, and
fiddles with the coin levers. Counting his change, he
realizes he doesn't have enough coins to run both machines.

ROCKWELL (CONT'D)

(to Ruby)

Oh..I forgot something. Back in a
minute.

SMASH TO:

**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE: Across the country and the world:
"ROCKWELL ASSASSINATED."**

INT PLAYBOY MANSION, CHICAGO, EVENING

A party is underway. Alex, glass of wine in hand, moves from
room to room.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION KITCHEN, CHICAGO, EVENING, CONTINUOUS

As he enters the kitchen, the TV in the corner catches his
eye. It's the Arlington parking lot. Black and white images
of the scene flash across the screen. One includes PATLER IN
HANDCUFFS, being led by police.

Alex absorbs the photos of Rockwell's body and the open car
door.

ON the TV: a reporter's microphone points toward Ruby, the
woman from the laundromat, as she begins to answer his
question.

RUBY

I know that Mr. Rockwell is...was a
man that had an opinion. And I know
that we have the greatest country
on earth, and I know that it's only
great because we have the freedom
of speech.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

Whether we be Jews, or Catholics, or Protestants, or Negro...I will remember Mr. Rockwell as a tall, handsome, neatly dressed man that came into the laundromat very graciously. I was most happy that I could give him this second machine, and I will remember him just that way, as a very charming man.

FLASH BACK:

INT LAUNDROMAT/EXT PARKING LOT, DAY, CONTINUOUS

As Rockwell leaves the laundromat and walks towards the car, his V.O. starts. His last letter to Alex:

ROCKWELL (V.O.)

Dear Mr. Haley, V.I.N., I am getting up all the steam I will need on my train, the *white* train. I am stoking the fires, training the fireman and the second engineer and oiling the gears. We shall be ready! But, meanwhile, when I meet such a black passenger as you, I cannot help shaking my head in horror at the madness ahead.

INT ROCKWELL'S CAR, DAY, CONTINUOUS

OTS: Rockwell begins to perspire in the heat, rolling down his window. He puts the car in reverse and turns toward camera to back it out of the parking spot.

ROCKWELL (V.O.)

You, personally, have become a 'gentleman.' A *black* gentleman--and you can bring civilization and goodness to millions of people who need you desperately, *in Africa*. I cannot help wondering if perhaps you know how to apply reason to stop the inevitable and bloody smash up ahead.

A gun's loud BANG.

The bullet TEARS through Rockwell's chest, flattening him against the seat. Another bullet. Red BLOOD flows up onto his shirt.

His car rolls backward and hits the parked car opposite.

EXT ROCKWELL'S CAR/STRIP MALL PARKING LOT, DAY, CONTINUOUS

The commotion attracts attention. People come out of strip mall storefronts.

Rockwell opens the door. But he cannot stand up, his body pours down the side of the car and onto the pavement.

More people gather. No one comes to his side. Rockwell's blood seeps into a larger and larger pool on the asphalt and, finally, he dies. Alone.

INT PLAYBOY MANSION KITCHEN, CHICAGO, EVENING

BACK WITH ALEX, gazing at Rockwell's body on T.V.

ROCKWELL (V.O.)

If not, I shall one day sadly stand
over the smoking and twisted
wreckage of the Black Train,
shaking my head over the ruins of a
great black man--and a black
friend. Sincerely, Lincoln
Rockwell, Commander, American Nazi
Party. Typed personally.

And yet, there stands Alex. Still alive.

CUT TO BLACK.