

America: Dreams and Nightmares

The life and death of Martin Luther King

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2024

Q1

(Emmett Till playing among the audience as they enter – He is cheeky but jovial - on stage two impoverished black men at a table, playing dominos and drinking ice tea – it is hot – it is Mississippi. The dominoes clack clack. The sound of crickets, maybe music from a tinny radio. As the audience is seated the black kid chooses an audience member in the front row, (white) and playfully holds hand and kisses it. He then cheekily asks her for a date – he is not serious and explodes with laughter then runs away to the stage where he is welcomed by the older domino player).

Older Man: Hey where you bin, young Emmet? Gittin 'late, now git to bed to bed.

Kid: Aw uncle, it ain't nine – I always stays up past nine in Chicago.

Older M: Well we does things different down in Mississippi; (Ruffles kid's hair). Take a glass o col 'tea and git on in the back an 'tomorrow we'll take you fishin for the biggest catfish you ever did see. Don't have no catfish in Chicago.

KID: Gee, I love to fish!

Other man: Then git to bed Emmet and mind you say your prayers!

KID: Yes sir. I gonna pray for a big catfish on my line – whoa-ho gottya gottya (mimes fishin and exits).

Other Man: (Resuming dominoes) Bright boy, how old's he?

Older Man: Fourteen, goin' on twen'y five. Them coloured folk from up north sure got a mouth on'em. Still ma sister's raised 'im well. Writes to

me and says he gonna go to college. Hey ain't that a wonder? College for a black boy!!

Other man: Sure is. (Crickets, clacking dominos – the crickets fall silent – the two domino players look up, sensing something, a sense of menace.

Man dressed as Klu Klux Klan member and a woman in shadows. The man with the rifle knocks at the door.

Older man: Who cud that be at this time? (Goes to door).

(They burst in).

Older M: Lawd help us!

Other M: Klan!

Older Man: We ain't dun nothin'!

Roy: Maybe you ain't. But you got a kid from Chicago in this shack right?

Older man: Nah, we ain't got no kids here. My two boys 's in Noo Orleans.

Cut sound (Roy hits him, he falls across the table sending dominoes flying – He levels gun at Older Man – pause – finally the other man falls to his knees and speaks).

Roy: Don't lie to me, boy!

Other Man; Kid's in the back – come out boy. Come on out. These fine gentlemens won't do you no harm cos Jesus is watchin 'over you and over them too, his eyes is upon them. (Rifle man hits Other man with rifle butt and drags out terrifies Kid when he appears).

Emmett: I ain't done nuffin, Sir.

JW: That's him, that's the little niggah that asked my sister for a date.

Older Man: He's a child!

Roy: Get him over here.

JW: Un-dressing her with his eyes.

(Roy and JW leave with Emmett, drag him from the house. Old Man grabs Roys leg.)

Older Man: Emmett run!!

(Emmett runs in to audience and plead with them. Roy stamps Old man. Roy go's into audience get Emmett throw him back on stage beat him then throws him off stage. Legs out. More beating the audience hear the violence. Then a single shot). Q2 (long decay.....)

JW: You killed 'im!

Roy: Yeah, din't mean to, but he were lippy I could not control my righteous anger.

JW: You're a good man. Now what?

Roy: Tie a weight round his neck and toss him in the Mississippi. Catfish can eat 'im.

M1, Oh Freedom, female solo (Song starts off stage – it may have started quietly earlier as cast assemble and enter a black church – Martin Luther King goes to the pulpit).

Q3: recorded music for church

MLK:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love triumphs! Corinthians chapter 13 – That's the word of God. (Waves Bible) And I have tried to listen to his voice, ever since I was a child. I grew up here in Alabama. An many of you wise folk might say I am not grown up enough to be your preacher, it is indeed a grave callin 'for so young a man as I. But I feel I have been

called, called by a greater power that speaks to me and through me. I look for love as I look for God. And I pray that we may find love together. Amen.

All: Amen!

(Song, MLK gets down from the pulpit and Coretta puts her arms around him).

MLK: How'd I do Coretta? (Worried).

CORETTA: You have the gift Martin, an 'each day I wonder that the Lord gave me such a gift as you. (They kiss).

MLK: But Coretta, I don't need flattery. I need the truth.

CORETTA: I will always tell you the truth Martin. (Hesitating).

MLK: Then shoot.

CORETTA: Deacon told me they love you at this church, you are their boy that went up north and came back wise beyond his years. But that maybe you lost a little feelin 'of what goes on around here, what Alabama is.

MLK: An what is Alabama?

CORETTA: Unjust, Martin, this skin (touches him) this skin that I love is a mark of shame in this state and you know it but you don't preach it.

MLK: I feel it, Coretta, I know it but I am afraid. I have fear.

CORETTA: You don't need to be afraid we love –

MLK: No, no – I am not afraid of the Klan or the police, I am afraid of Martin Luther King. If I preach justice how shall I preach love? How shall my anger, not turn to hate? I don't want to hate! (Almost weeping) Lord help me I don't want to hate.

(They embrace – there is no answer). Q4: Blues lick down to worksong drone

M2 (Music morphs into work song – black share croppers hoeing).

(Newsman appears – and addresses TV cameras).

JACK: This week the spotlight falls on the South from where reports of rising tensions between negroes and their white neighbours have been reaching our newsroom. We're here to find out the truth behind stories of violence and harassment and to ask the questions that matter most. This is Jack Nader on the Network you know you can trust. Now, I am talking here to Mr Tom Stanley, a cotton farmer from here outside of Montgomery Alabama.

White Farmer (masked): Pleased to meet you Jack, means somthin ' when you TV folks up North come down and recall that there is a South that ain't some beach in Miami!

JACK: Well, it's too darn 'sticky to sunbathe in an Alabamma august.

WF: Too right, Jack, Best you and I keep out of the sun. These folks (waves to share croppers), they got Africa in 'em and can take a good day's work in this here heat. An that's what they do git. A fair day's pay for a fair day's work an 'I won't have no fancy folk say that ain't a fact.

JACK: Well there are indeed some folk who don't hold with that view, Tom. They're saying loud and clear that colored citizens in Alabama are facing discrimination and that their lot is not much better than it was a hundred years ago when they were in chains in these same fields.

WF: Now who would be saying that? Communists?

JACK: Preachers?

WF: I go to church, Jack, I know what the bible says. God has his chosen people and he keeps them separate.

JACK: Yes but the Ku Klux Klan hold the Christian cross on high. Are the Klan active round Montgomery?

WF: Hey boys! (To share croppers) You seen any Klansmen on my farm? You seen any guys with white sheets runnin 'roun town? Come on, Joe, answer me. Answer Mister Nader.

CROPPER: No, suh, I ain't never seen no Klan.

WF: You happy to be workin 'here for me?

CROPPER: Yes suh. Mighty happy. Twelve years, suh.

WF: You're a good boy. Now git on back to them fields and git yourself a few more greenbacks hey?

CROPPER: Thank you, suh.

(JACK points mic to Share cropper two. Who has a hesitant look and tries to say something)

WK: (Interrupting) He's the dumb one he aint got nothing to say. Now, Jack, there's not bin a lynchin 'round here for years now... no call for Klan here. Negroes here are sweet folk, like children I reckon, you treat em OK and they work, everybody's happy ... you know what I am saying...

JACK: I do, Tom. Looks like I got a fair view from you and your ...

TOM: Boys.

JACK: OK, OK. That's Jack Nader. Reporting from the deep South. Here on the ground there's maybe less tension and wild radicalism than in the newspaper reports. An that's what TV's got, a camera and a voice not an opinion crafted by some Ivy league know it all who thinks the South stops, as Tom says, at a Miami beachfront. So time for a break and word from our sponsors: Chevrolet- The car that gets you there every time.

Q5: Radio link music

TOM: Thanks Jack, you throw questions like a Yankee pitcher but I know your heart's clean. (Smacks his back). Pure white. (Jack shakes his head, treating it as a joke.) Come on down to my stoop. I got me a fine bottle o 'rye.

JACK: Soon as we're packed up here, I'll be with you

TOM: You're one of us! See yer on the porch.

Jack: (As if to team) OK that's a wrap. (As he bends to put away his gear a black woman approaches him).

WOMAN R.P: Excuse me Mr Nader, Sir. I'm no share cropper.

JACK : I can see that by your dress, Ma'am.

R.P: I'm jus 'here to see my cousin. But I couldn't help overhearin 'you and the -boys - I mean men here. For these are not boys, Mr Nader, any more than you are.

JACK: It's just a country expression, Ma'am, a custom to call coloured folk boys. I mean it is the way, it's the South, ain't it?

R.P: It's a wrong way, Mr Nader. An 'I wonder if you would like to hear the opinions of myself and these men now that their owner, their slave owner, has crept back to his mansion to toast the Ku Klux Klan and Scarlett O'Hara.

Jack: Mrs...?

RP: Parkes, Rosa Parkes .

JACK: Mrs Parkes, now listen - we are here to give voice to the ordinary folk, not the agitators and activists. You are surely an educated woman and I respect that, but you are not the voice of these people and I wouldn't be doing my job if I pretended you were. So if you are as smart as your dress says you are, quit talking about slavery, it's gone with the wind. And when you've got a real story, a now story, something that's happening, then we'll be pleased to cover it. Until then, good day, M'am. I'm sorry I can't oblige you. (As if being waved to) Yeah, Tom - on my way and woah do I have a thirst! (Exits)

Q6 – hi hat shuffle (Rosa Parkes sighs and watches as Jack exits – then walks off the plantation – meanwhile to music the cast assemble and set up elements)

R.P. Excuse me, Sir, what time's the next bus back to Montgomery?

MAN: One on the hour every hour.

R.P: Is there a bathroom I can use?

MAN: There's a bathroom, but you can't use it. It's for lilly white ass to perch their fine cheeks on, not for nigguh shit.

R.P: (Trying to control herself) I wonder, Sir, if you could point me in the direction of a coloured bathroom.

MAN: They used to have one but not no more. Maybe them niggus trashed it, stole the chain. Niguh's like chains. You better cross your legs and pray.

RP: Thank you, Sir. It's a pleasure to meet a Southern Gentleman.

MAN: (Confused and angry) You smart—you damn – aw – why we teach 'em to read? (exits).

M3 bus riff, live (Cast create a bus – Rosa gets on and buys ticket)

DRIVER: Not so fast girl. Coloured folk git on at the rear door. You know that! So git off the bus, my bus, and walk back to the door where you folks are welcome to climb aboard.

RP: Yes, Sir. (she descends, holding her ticket – but as she walks back the bus pulls away). Hay, hay !

DRIVER: (Shouts) Too slow lady, too slow! (Roars off)

ROSA: I paid for my ticket! I paid for my ticket. (She collapses head in hands, kneels and prays). I gotta love, as the preachers say. I gotta love but I gotta love justice too.

Q7, M4 – bus riff 2 (Rosa paces up and down, looks at her watch another bus pulls up – she climbs aboard – the driver yanks his thumb to the back she obeys - this time manages to get on the bus. She walks to the front and sits down. A white man boards the bus from the front.)

WHITE PASSENGER: That's ma seat, lady. Up you git. (Rosa shakes head).

DRIVER: Get out of that seat woman. There's a white man wants it.

RP: Sir, I am sitting here.

DRIVER: I told you once, now shift it, nigguh.

RP: I have paid for my bus ticket, sir, and I have paid the same sum as this gentleman. And I am a citizen of the same country as this gentleman.

PASSENGER: Lady, don't make trouble for yourself. There is a law in this state. And you know it.

RP: There may be a law, Sir, but there is no justice. And where a law is unjust the bible teaches us to disobey it. I abide by the constitution of the United States, which states that we are all created equal.

DRIVER: I am givin 'you one more chance. Up or I call for the law.

(RP shakes her head).

White Passenger: Your heard the driver, M'am, you don't want no trouble. You don't want the law comin 'down hard on yer. Git up M'am.

Black Passenger: You, you just a shit stirrer. We, we all of us want this bus to move.

DRIVER: Sherriff, Sherrif (shouts) over here!

(Sheriff boards bus – fat can hardly mount steps).

DRIVER : This lady here is a trouble maker, Sheriff. I 've bin mighty civil but she jus sits in the white folks seats an won't shift her black ass.

Sheriff: I blame the TV myself. Shoudn't let no nigguh have no Television - puts ideas into 'em. Now, what is your name, gal?

R.P: I am Rosa Parkes and a citizen of the USA.

(Black Passenger, Driver and White Passenger all laugh.)

SHERIFF: You're a damn fool. Rosey, you got two seconds to jump out this seat or I gonna arrest you. One, two – OK, if that's how you want it. You're under arrest for breakin 'the segregation laws of the state of Alabama.

(Rosa Parks Case gets thrown out-The Bus begins to clear he handcuffs her). You gonna love my jailhouse - I got some sweaty black holes for uppity niggahs like you, oh yeah.

Rosa Parks: My Case

(Sheriff Goes to pick up case picks up then puts down)

Sheriff: Pick it up from there!

(Rosa goes to the case and struggles to pick it up handcuffed and leave stage with the Sheriff)

Abernathy Enters Stage right turns bus top round to show a cross on the other side "BUS BUS BOYCOTT!! BUS BUS BOYCOTT" to exit stage left.

JACK: Montgomery Alabama is suddenly propelled into the front line of a struggle - some say it is an assault on the way of life, civilization and separate identity of the South. Others say it is a fight for equality and civil rights for the coloured people of the nation. At this time, there is no greater symbol of this divide than segregated passengers on the buses that work these streets. Now members of the negro community have been calling on their neighbours to walk to work, or to pool cars or stay home, but, whatever they do, not to take a segregated bus. The coloured leaders vow they never will until any man may ride and sit where he wills. Who

will win here in Montgomery - the boycotters or the boycotted? This is Jack Nader first with this breaking story, reporting direct from Montgomery. And now back to our sponsors – Greyhound transportation!
Q9 Radio link: Mozart

MLK: (Reading as he listens to music) Don't you just love that Mozart Coretta?

Coretta: Sure do Martin

MLK: Boycott, boycott, boycott. (Reading as he listens to music sighs) The organizers of this bus boycott they said they want me to meet with them... I don't know if it's right to get involved.

CORETTA: Right for who, Martin?

MLK: I just don't Know?

(Enters, the imposing figure of Ralph Abernathy.)

RALPH: You 'don't know'? You ain't asked God yet, Reverend King! If you did He'd tell you this boycott is the most important thing ever happened in this town since he created it!

Coretta: Martin, this is Reverend Abernathy from the ...

RALPH: 'Ralph', I'm 'Ralph' to my friends, and especially my friends in the Lord.

MLK: Ralph, yes. We met at the Conference of Churches, but I was not ordained then... (They shake hands.) Coretta, could you fetch a coffee for Reverend Abernathy, please?

RALPH: (to Coretta) "Ralph"!

Coretta: Of course, Martin... Ralph....

(She backs away and exits.)

RALPH: Nice house.

MLK: This is not a social call, is it? I heard you are deep in the bus boycott.

RALPH: Only place to be.

MLK: I don't know about that, Ralph. I am new here. (Ralph shakes his head with disbelief) OK, not as my father's son, but as a minister, in my own right. In my own way. A black preacher people can take seriously – I want people to hear and understand as well as feel.... And if I were to get mixed up with this, well, will anyone listen to me ever again? Some Boston big head jumping on the first issue that comes along, speaking out on issues that a politician or local leader should speak out upon.

RALPH: The more you speak, Martin, the more I know you are our man. I've got five ministers back there who want to lead this boycott, just to stop the other four from being the leader! (MLK laughs.) They're running about down there like headless chickens puckpuck puck! (Starts beating arms like a chicken – MLK laughs). Our chicken needs a head, Martin Luther. Like the man you got your name from. Knockin 'his nails in the door of injustice. (Bangs on table repeating "Martin Luther" like hammer blows). That's history calling! (He takes MLK by the shoulders.) Now listen up, Martin. You are the local boy, your Daddy ' preacher's son. Montgomery's one and only bright star, Ivy League educated. You're the only one they'll follow. (Very serious.) Satan is sowing discord in the ranks of the righteous...

MLK: I don't know, Ralph. I feel the justice of the cause, of course I do, brother! But am I am called to this?

RALPH: We'll never build heaven on earth unless we change the earth.... Listen to me!! I ain't gonna talk theology to a college boy, you'd whup me at that! I am talking buses. And I ain't offering you anything except trouble!!! I know that! But we need you and we need your chapel. You got that fine Dexter Road Church right next to the city hall! Where else better to meet?

MLK: You know I won't deny you use of my church. And you know I can't let you meet at my church without me speaking. You are as cunning a rattlesnake.

RALPH: All you need to do is give some fancy sermon on justice and love. Love. That's the most powerful thing we have on our side! Loud or quiet, Martin, simple or college, the people will feel your love... you strike me as a man who speaks gently, but loves more loudly!! Hahaha! Yes? Yes? (He glances to where Coretta has exited. MLK embarrassed but amused too. Abernathy punches him in fun. MLK giving in, holding up his hands).

MLK: You do mean to win this, don't you? If we say God is on our side and we lose then we hand victory to the Devil.

RALPH: I promise you that we may and will suffer but we will win. (RALPH holds out hand, MLK pauses then shakes it) Hey, Coretta, forget the coffee – you got two beers? We need to celebrate!

Q10, M6 (BUS, BUS, BOYCOTT, BUS, BUS, BOYCOTT!- Amasing Grace) MLK walks towards the pulpit – while lines of marchers get into front.

(MLK mounts pulpit.)

MLK: (Beginning quietly and building to emotional crescendo) This is serious business. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being thrown across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amidst the piercing chill of an Alpine November. There comes a time when a man must assert his dignity and say "No! No! I am not an animal or a slave but a free citizen of the greatest country on God's earth!" And that time has arrived. That time has come!

(The marchers fall down now, beaten by truncheons that are not seen their banners snap and fall they writhe in agony).

I call out to Montgomery's white officials and policemen as you wield your nightsticks and clench your fists to beat unarmed and innocent marchers: We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we will not obey your evil laws. We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer.

(Now the marchers rise and gather round as if at a church or meeting they sing gospel underscore).

This is not a battle between two forces, this is not a challenge to see which of two violences will prevail. It is a struggle that is as old and wide as the universe itself, it is a struggle between the darkness and the light! And the sun is rising. I see it I see it! The sun is rising and flooding this state of Alabama. Because the arc of the moral universe is long and it bends towards justice!

(Music rises to crescendo – MLK almost collapses with exhaustion into the arms of Ralph. Others rush forward to touch him –as if his body were magical).

RALPH: You are chosen, Martin. You are a chosen one.

MLK: (Almost in tears) I don't know where that came from, Ralph. It didn't come from me, did it? What if... You know.... like those crazy women in the boondock chapels spouting in tongues that no one understands....

RALPH: But the congregation did understand you, preacher. More than that – look at them - they are going to follow you! To wherever you lead them!

MLK: No, no I don't know if it's right.... I don't know if I can carry the burden of that.... Ralph, I am not a good enough man.... do you understand?

Black WOMAN: (Pushing forward breaking up the intimate moment before Ralph can reply). Let me touch you, Preacher. (Presses handkerchief to his face and takes his sweat – this will be horribly echoed

at his death as others now move forward to wipe his brow, perhaps the poses of the final tableau are prefigured here.)

MLK: Hey Lady, lady that just my sweat. Folks sweat - this is Alabama! (But he is laughing, enjoying the celebrity and the woman's ambiguous touch).

RALPH: Now move along there lady...

WOMAN: (cupping MLK's face in her hands) You know, s'almost a sin for a preacher to be so pretty!

(Laughs exits kissing handkerchief. MLK getting to his feet.)

RALPH: Hey, brother Martin, Jesus was a joyful man. There was wine at the Last Supper...

MLK: ...and at Canaan he turned water into wine...So?

MLK & Ralph: Let's get a beer! (exit).

Q11 to cover scene change

JACK: (Enters with microphone). The eyes of the nation and the cameras of the national news focus on Montgomery Alabama where almost all colored citizens boycott bus travel. I have Sheriff Watson here with me to answer a few questions. Sheriff, thank you for spending time with us on what must be a busy day.

SHERIFF: Too darn busy. Jack. This boycott is too nice a name for the orgy of law breakin 'and violence that is disfiguring 'the whole county.

JACK: Some say the violence is very one sided, coming from White citizens organisations that may be a front for the Ku Klux Klan.

SHERIFF: You been watchin 'too many movies, Jack, listenin 'to too many New York Jew Lawyers and Chicago communists. We got a decent town here and we had no trouble until outside folk came and stirred things up.

JACK: But I thought the leader of the boycott committee was a local born preacher, Martin Luther King?

SHERIFF: He's as local as a polar bear. Maybe he be born here but he was at some smart college in Boston. They messed up his mind. Just as they mess up the coloured folks heads here with their fancy talk. Do you think these nig- oh coloured folk (looks nervously towards the TV camera) wanna walk every day in this here heat, no Sir, they do not, they are under duress. That's the legal word, Jack, under duress and it's gonna end in trouble.

JACK: Some say it could end in racial equality.

SHERIFF: What the hell is that? Would you want that, Jack? Would you want a coloured man to marry your daughter?

(Pause as Jack tries to evade question.)

JACK: Well... hey, now... I'm asking the questions here.

SHERIFF: It's got to stop, white is white and black is black.

WHITE PASSER BY: I tell you ,Sir, this boycott will fall apart. Them Niggah's is lazy, they ain't gona walk for long – you seen their shoes? Loose!!! They ain't made for walkin 'just sittin 'in the sun like them folk always done.

JACK: Thank you, M'am.

WHITE PASSER BY: Yeah I said niggah on camera.

JACK: Well tensions are rising here in Montgomery. But who is the young preacher who is accused of heightening those tensions and preaching confrontation rather than the message of the Prince of Peace. Martin Luther King has agreed to appear on this show and explain himself. Reverend King, thank you for speaking to us all today.

MLK: My pleasure, Jack. We want to reach out to the whole nation. And television is just the way to do that.

JACK: Can you do that? Does not your support divide on colour lines?

MLK: It is my firm belief that in every human being, black or white, there exists, however dimly, a certain natural identification with every other human being, so that we feel that what happens to a fellow human being also in some way happens to us.

SHERIFF: Martin Luther King?

MLK: You know my name.

SHERIFF: I arrest you for violating the state ordinances of Alabama by intimidating and threatening the trade of a lawful business.

JACK: This is sensational!

SHERIFF: Turn off that camera!

JACK: But – (Waves to cameraman to keep filming.)

SHERIFF: Turn that damn thing off, (kicks over camera – then kicks MLK behind the knees – Jack is horrified).

MLK: I demand to see a lawyer.

SHERIFF: You won't see anythin 'where you are goin'. I gotta dark hole for you. You can't even see your niggah skin there. (To Jack as MLK led off by Deputy). We ain't here to entertain you folks up North. You better go back to watching your John Wayne movies. Now git!

(Exits).

JACK: Shit! My microphone is bust. (Pretends to be holding one). This is Jack Nader, not on air, not speaking what he is supposed to speak on air, not saying that he is shocked, not telling his loyal viewers that the Reverend Martin Luther King is a great American and the bus boycott must succeed. Goddam.

Q12

(Black out. In the darkness, voices – audience makes out figure of MLK kneeling in prayer his hands chained saying the Lords prayer – a banging of wood on metal).

Voices: Lynch him, lynch him, lynch him!

(Sudden light – MLK blinded).

SHERIFF: (Takes of his chains) Your Yankee Commie friends paid up and you is free.

MLK: Praise the Lord. And thank you, officer, for your hospitality.

SHERIFF: I don't know if I were you if I would be so happy to leave the safety of this jailhouse. I can protect you here, boy. But out there – whew – you're a sittin' duck. (Pops imaginary gun at MLK's head - but MLK just shakes his head and walks off feeling his wrists – Sheriff calls after him): Your family too.

(Ralph arrives with MLK Jacket, He helps put it on MLK)

Ralph: Wipe your face Martin.

MLK: Thank you Ralph, you are my one true friend of the Lord. (MLK composes himself then steps forward)

Moses came out of the desert, Moses came out of the dry place of death, Moses came out of Sinai and saw before him the Promised Land. My people, our people, I see before me the promised land shining and we will bathe in the river of justice. God bless you Alabama, you will become the Promised Land of racial equality!

ALL: Amen!

CORETTA: Martin!!

MLK: Coretta!!

CORETTA (In dressing gown): Come on dear, come to bed. Those folk is good folk but they had you for long enough now. Your kids wanna say good night to their Daddy and I wanna say hello. Hello, husband.

(They kiss. Coretta leads MLK back inside the house.)

MLK: If I could shut this door and put my feet up and say it's all over now... Why, in God's name I would.

CORETTA: I got you steak – I know you like it.

MLK: You know what I like. (He playfully slaps Coretta's behind as she goes- they share a moment.)

Q13

(Huge explosion)

(Runs across stage)

WHITE KLAN: Burn in hell, Nigga!!

(Flash of red light then blackout then screams. Sirens – Coretta emerges in torn and blackened robe with child in her arms – she stands there swaying as in shock)

(A BLACK SUPPORTER ENTERS)

WHITE KLAN: You gonna bomb our preacher, we gonna murder you!

(The Sheriff Enters followed by TWO Black Supporter with weapons).

SHERIFF: Hey Now what's going on here?

(They knock the Sheriff to the floor and kick him when he is down).

RIOTER 1: Kill the Klan, (Others join in) Kill the Klan, Kill the Klan!

(MLK Runs out in tattered clothes and covered in white soot and get's down to shield the Sheriff)

MLK: Wait! Wait! Stop that! Stay your hands! Brothers! Brothers! We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence. Remember the words of Jesus: 'He who lives by the sword will die by the sword'.

(The Supporters throw down their weapons)

'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you'. This is what we must live by. We must meet hate with love. And remember, if I am stopped, this movement will not stop, because God is with the movement. Go home with this glowing faith and this radiant assurance. Bless you.

(The supporters exit MLK helps the astounded Sheriff to his feet.)

SHERIFF: You saved my life.

MLK: How you doin there sir?

(SHERIFF stumbles onto MLK. He sees the Sheriff's hat, goes to pick it up, looks at Coretta for confirmation then places it on Sheriff's head)

MLK: Sometimes the Lord moves in mysterious ways.

SHERIFF: (Waddles off. Holding Ribs Abernathy is heard off stage. "Martin, Martin." Enters with a newspaper and sees the Sheriff who offers his hand Abernathy tentatively shakes it then Sheriff goes.)

RALPH: Martin, Martin you gotta come with me! They are waitin 'for you at the Dexter Road Church. That congregation is spillin 'out onto the streets, and it's rainin 'but no one cares, they dancin 'in the rain!

CORETTA: Can't you leave him alone, Ralph? Can't you see they bin trying to kill him, kill us all?

RALPH: I got eyes Coretta, I got love for this man more than any man I know –...but Coretta, the supreme court has spoken. We just got it! We got the – (Waves paper, composes himself then reads) "The Supreme Court of the United States of America rules that the racial segregation of transport within the state of Alabama is unconstitutional." So help me God!

MLK: (Amazed) Is that it?

RALPH: That's it!

MLK: Shit! Shit! I mean Praise The Lord!! (Correcting himself, Hugs Ralph).

RALPH: Satan lost. I told you we would win.

CORETTA: But will he live, Ralph, will he stay alive?

RALPH: I believe God has a plan for your husband, M'am. To fulfill that plan God needs Martin to live.

CORETTA: (Shaking her head) Amen. Amen to that.

MLK: I got to go, Coretta. My congregation....

CORETTA: Like that? All soot and blood? (Meaning torn blacked clothes and face almost white with powder from the debris).

RALPH: Oh yeah – just like that – specially like that.

MLK: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil. (said as they both exit)

Blackout. **Q14 – scene change music**

JACK NADER: Ever since the extraordinary success of the campaign to desegregate bus transportation in Montgomery, Martin Luther King has become the face of negro America.

(MLK Enters through audience he is wearing an outside coat. He walks shaking hands and making three table moments with the audience to reach stage right)

And that face has been seen on the cover of Time magazine, in the highest councils of the land, on the international stage and in the White House itself. It may only be now that this young preacher is finding his place, but where might that place be? How far will he go? Wherever he does, it will not be a place achieved by violence, for this man is the greatest apostle of non-violence since Mahatma Gandhi freed India from British colonial rule. Ok that's a wrap, take a break.

(As music rises we lose the soundtrack of an interview between Jack and MLK – but it clear that MLK is humble and candid. The music and interview ends – MLK is about to smoke enjoying his time alone. He realises that he has nothing to light it with, he then see's Jack who offers him a light and in return MLK offers JACK a cigarette which he takes).

Jack: I didn't realise you smoke.

MLK: I don't, well not in public. It's hard you know, being what they want you to be.

JACK: But I think you are what they want. I meet a lot of people, Mister King, some of them famous leaders and idealists and opinion formers – you might be surprised to know how many of them are frauds. I don't like frauds, I don't like hypocrites, but I think I like you.

MLK: Why, thank you...

Jack: I think you're a moderate at heart forced to take extraordinary action to right a terrible injustice...

MLK: All injustices are terrible....

Jack: Is that why you have been saying you want to take your campaign to other cities? That could be dangerous for you. It was your time here, but maybe you should leave other towns to decide when it's time for them? Your new campaign is ill-timed...

MLK: Mister Nader, I have yet to be engaged in a direct action that was 'well-timed'. It is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say "wait", but when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at a tip-toe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer frustrations at every turn, then maybe you would understand why we find it so obnoxious to "wait". Mr Nader, I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's greatest stumbling block to freedom is not the Ku Klux Klan, but the white

moderate who is more devoted to business as usual and peace and quiet than to justice. Now, I have to go (exiting MLK Stops) God bless you Jack. (Exit)

JACK: Wow... hey! Will you say that on air? (But he has gone - Jack shouts) Will you say that on air – shit, what a scoop and I missed it. But no..I heard it. (Touches his heart) I heard it and it... hurts.

Q15 *(A Dark figure runs towards Jack holding a BLACK FOLDER he runs off stage. He is brought back on by a mask figure. Jack has a sack on his head he is placed under a spotlight stage centre, by a Masked figure. A voice speaks to him):*

VOICE/Agent: This is what they did to your brother in Korea.

JACK: (Muffled) How do you know about my brother? He's dead.

AGENT: We know that.

JACK: (Broken) Why don't you let me go?

AGENT: We jus want remind you of your brother. A good man, you would agree?

JACK: Yes, yes the best.

AGENT: Killed by the Communists. Murdered in a prison camp. Beaten in a sack (The shadowy man punches Jack.). Beaten like they beat puppies to death so the fear tenderizes the meat. Half human those Korean commies. Eatin 'a dog – that's not the American way – you'd agree?

(Masked man pulls Jacks head up to Answer)

JACK: Yes, yes. Whatever you want...

AGENT: Good, so there is an American way?

JACK: Yes, yes.

AGENT: You ain't sayin 'that cos you're in a sack are you, Jack. Jack in a sack!

(Masked man Punches Jack)

Jack: No, no.

AGENT: And you admire your brother for sticking up for the American way even if he might die, did die, for that.

Jack: Yes, yes.

AGENT: Say it.

(Masked man pulls head up again)

JACK: Yes!! I admire my brother!

AGENT: Good. We are almost done. So if you were offered the opportunity to emulate your brother, you'll jump at that chance.

Jack: I'm not a soldier. I don't want to go to Korea.

AGENT: The Commies ain't just in Korea, Jack. They are right here.

Jack: Are you communists?

AGENT: Hahahaha! (The Masked man laughs in response to agent). No, we're not the Commies, Jack. You're a funny man, Jack. But are you reliable? Can we rely on you to take a stand against the party that murdered your only brother?

Jack: Yes, yes. I will do that if that is what you want.

AGENT: Cut him loose.

(Mased man picks up Jack takes off the sack, then threatens him with the chair before laughin and leaving the stage)

Agent: I do apologise for roughing you over a little but you had to know we were serious. Would you like a little Bourbon? (Agent offers him drink).

JACK: No, I'd like a little respect.

AGENT: Respect is something you have to earn; by serving your country. (Agent swigs his Bourbon) Now, I'm here to outline to you the services you may do for the FBI, your country and the memory of your brother.

Jack: (amazed) You're the Feds!

AGENT: Who the hell did you think we were? The Beach Boys? I am your contact with the Bureau. While you're working for us I'm the closest thing you got to a friend. I am the one and only person you can trust.

Jack: For what? How am I gonna infiltrate the Communist party of America? I got a Cadillac and a condo in Miami!

AGENT: You are trusted and respected by the Communist Leader Martin Luther King. You also form the opinions of the Nation about that particular Communist in your reports upon him and his organization. Unless you say it on TV, Mister Nader, it ain't true or it didn't happen.

JACK: You're kidding? You're crazy!!!! Martin Luther King is not and never was a Communist – he's a preacher!

AGENT: Best cover there is. Here is a list of the known Communists in his entourage. (Gives him the Black folder). You may know the name Levinson.

Jack: I do.

AGENT: Senior member of the Communist Party of the USA since 1941.

Jack: He writes speeches for the Reverend King, he ...

AGENT: Yes..

JACK: He...organizes all the things that King hates to organize

AGENT Go on.

JACK...transport, logistics, finances.

AGENT: Finances from Cuba, from Russia..hmm?

JACK: I don't know... but they don't spend much....

AGENT: You don't want to know. But we do. And you, Jack Nader, your brother's brother, you are going to help us find out.

JACK: I am a journalist, impartial and...

AGENT: Don't give me that bull. No one's impartial when the country's at stake. Or do I have to ask you again?

JACK: (Finding courage) If I see any evidence of Communist infiltration in the Civil rights movement then, I will report it to you. But, if I find dignity, principles, courage and an adherence to our constitution and declaration of independence, then I will tell you that too. I don't think that you will like that truth much because you guys trade in lies and you live off the fears they breed. Good night and God bless my brother who died for freedom not fear.

AGENT: (Applauds sarcastically) Nice speech. I can see where you got it from.... Now take my card.

JACK (Takes card) Agent Smith.

AGENT: Call me any time. (He offers hand). And don't forget to watch your back. Jack!!

Q16 (Blackout).

(MLK is eating steak at table in his pajamas. Abernathy is outside speaking with AIDE/Sonny at his side.)

RALPH: We are here in Birmingham because Birmingham Alabama is the most segregated city in the United States of America. We are here in Birmingham not to challenge that segregation but to end it. And to end it by refusing our custom, the custom of the black majority in this city of

Birmingham, to every store, counter or restaurant that refuses to allow citizens of any color to purchase, consume or simply be on its premises. All men are created equ – (a stone – blood) Christ –

Sonny: Get him inside – get him in!

RALPH: Christ it could have been a bullet.

MLK: Hey hey, Ralph are you OK?

Sonny: Hey sorry to spoil your dinner, Mr King.

Ralph: Now don't do that - he's a right to eat.

Sonny: Yeah he's sitting there in his fancy pant pajamas while we take the heat. He talks to the President and Time Magazine while we march and bleed. Bleed. Christ, look at all this blood! Well that's just what we get, Christ's blood. And we shedding real blood and we had enough Mr Pajama Gandhi. I wanna kill those white fuckers! (Waves fist outside)

MLK: (Quietly, without anger.) Sometimes when the phone rings and they say they'll murder my children, rape my wife, I want to kill them too. Because we are only human we live with the temptation to take an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth but if we ever did.... then that day we all end up blind and toothless.

Sonny ranting: We're letting them kill us, man! We're standing there and they're arresting and beating five hundred of our school children every day...

RALPH: I want to keep to our path...

Sonny: We don't have no path, they just smashed us off it! They just smashed your head!

MLK: We have a spiritual path, I have faith in ordinary decent white Americans, when they see the terrible things that have happened in Birmingham here on their TV sets, they will rise up on our behalf...

Sonny: But where are they? The TV isn't covering the black churches the Klan are bombing five miles out of here! The Kennedys won't even answer your calls! (Fishing out a letter from his pocket and handing to

MLK.) And have you seen the letter the ten white preachers sent you ... 'it's not time'... they don't want you in their city, brother!

(MLK studying the letter, concerned.)

RALPH: Our friends in Washington can't do this alone, Martin. And we're running out of protesters here. The jails are full... that bastard Chief Pritchard is lockin 'up 500 of our kids, kids every day.

MLK: I know, I know...

Sonny: You know what the young radicals are saying about you: they keep asking – where is his BODY? They want YOU there! Put yourself on the line! They're getting killed out there.

MLK: I think I should have some say in the place and time of my Golgotha!

Sonny: You're crazy!!! You think you're Jesus, as if Christ ate steak in his pajamas while the disciples were cut down.

Ralph: Crazy? – you're the loon, Sonny!

Sonny: (to RALPH) You just follow every self-destructive idea that Martin has, Ralph!!! Look at you. In love with the Kennedys! You're an Uncle Tom..... probably planted here by the God damn FBI!

Ralph: Let me at him...I'll bury him.

(Punches are swung and people are restrained by force).

MLK (calm): Brothers, brothers... we are doing their work for them. They beat us today and then you want to beat each other again tonight! We should be praying together, not fighting.... (He falls to his knees - they all pause).

RALPH: We should be drinking together!!! I ordered a crate!! You pray, Martin, while I get the beer. (Exits. MLK prays.)

Sonny: I want to admire you, I want you to lead us. Lead us now. Don't wait for those lilly whites to get off their asses and vote in Congress because they don't like their TV dinners spoilt by bleedin 'blacks. I want us to be the tide, the force and I want you to lead us, the negro nation. And if you need to feel like Moses to do that then you go ahead. But I

want us to smite them as David did Goliath, (crying now) I want to put a stone clean through their heads.

MLK: (Taking Sonny in his arms). I know, I know , Lord, that I am the least here ready to answer the call, the last in the march of the brave, the least able to fight our way to victory, but Lord I am prepared to feel and suffer my way, to love and forgive my way, to cry and bleed my way... and if that is not enough, then, Lord, you must do the rest for I am offering my all... make us strong, make us wise, make us generous. Amen.

Ralph: (Entering mid way thru speech with beer crate, transfixed) Amen!

Sonny: Amen (sniffing).

(RALPH opening the bottles and handing them round.)

MLK : Now, if could organise the boycott the way Ralph plans the beer... I could desegregate the south.

ALL: Amen to that!

(Sonny and Ralf exit with set. MLK leaves the room with Bible and gets cigarette from it. He reads bible. Jack is smoking as well he see MLK)

JACK: How's it going, Reverend King? Not so easy as Montgomery?

MLK: No it ain't. Which is why we need you and your cameras to show the nation the truth.

Jack: That depends.

MLK: On what?

Jack: On whether you're straight or not.

MLK: I don't believe I'm in the habit of lying.

Jack: Good. Then you won't mind me straight talking. I have to know this. It is very important to me. (He takes out a photo from his jacket) See that.

MLK: is that you?

Jack: That's my brother. Was my brother...

MLK: He's in uniform.

Jack: Korea. He fought and died so people he didn't know could be free. Reverend, if I report that you are struggling for the same freedom, tell me that I am not betraying his memory. You're not working for communism are you? Or the people around you. Are they Communists?

MLK: (pauses) Mister Nader, I am sorry for your loss. I have studied the works of Karl Marx and you will find no mention there of sacrifice. No mention of peace or non-violence. No mention of suffering nor forgiveness. These are the means by which we will find our path to the American Dream, but we will not travel the communist path of revolution. Is that enough? Or do you doubt the word I give you, on the bible. (He takes out a bible rests his hand upon it).

JACK: That is more than enough, Reverend.

MLK: Now. Can I be frank with you, Mr Nader.

Jack: Jack.

MLK: Martin.

Jack: (nods) Martin.

MLK: Jack, I am not *naturally* humble, I am not *naturally* self-sacrificing, I am not a *natural* man of God, I have to work at what I do. I much prefer listening to a Mozart symphony, eating a steak, wearing a good suit – or pajamas! - I much prefer those things to suffering the hell of the jail. I have an injunction that forbids me to march. I know - pretty much - what faces me in jail –Hell. But what would give that Hell meaning were if you were to cover it and cover it with ... understanding.

JACK: I can only report what is.

MLK: Show it like it is and that will be enough to move men's hearts. God bless you.

(Jack shakes his hand and backs off – but impulsively opens the bible and passes a pen to MLK to sign it – he smiles and does so).

MLK: To Jack for telling it like it is.

JACK: Good night...Martin (Holding the Bible)

MLK: Goodnight Jack.

(MLK composes himself and enter room. Sonny enters with Two bottles)

SONNY: Where you goin'?

MLK: Jail.

SONNY: What? What you going to jail for? Martin? MARTIN!! Darn.

Q17 (Blackout – the sound a of a huge metal door being swung shut) – does cast sing Go Down Moses? – MLK Stage right in shaft of Blue light kneeling and chained. Lights up on stage left as Jack in shaft of white light speaks as song continues as underscore):

JACK : I'm here in Birmingham, Alabama, and tonight behind these walls of a feared and hated jailhouse is the most talked about man in America. Yes, the Reverend Martin Luther King is back in prison.

Daniel, John, Paul, Jesus himself – these great figures from the Holy Bible - themselves spent time in jail, suffering for what was right. Tonight in Birmingham, Alabama, America itself is being asked to make just such a choice – between a quiet life with a law book filled with injustices and the hard work of drafting new laws which will treat all its citizens with equal dignity and rights. Jack Nader, for the evening news. Good night.

Q18: bass riff to prepare for Go Down Moses

(During this speech MLK has been writing on toilet paper with a stub of pencil – the lights fade on Jack as Coretta enters the jail and hugs her husband, the letter is passed secretly to her – we do not hear their speech – then a Voice).

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CORETTA: This letter was smuggled from Birmingham Jail. This is the prison testament of my husband.

M7 – Go down Moses

MLK: (Recorded as the spotlight picks out MLK behind bars and the cast move forward in chains singing GO DOWN MOSES quietly beneath the speech)

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and

brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers trapped in a cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you find your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the amusement park because the answer is: Child you are a negro. And worse, you, you yourself, are a nobody

To struggle against that wrong I am imprisoned with thousands of my fellow protesters. But if the road to freedom leads through the jailhouse, then, jailer, swing wide the gates! Some of you are afraid. I know fear. But we must overcome fear. We shall march nonviolently. We shall force this nation, this city, this world, to face its own conscience. We will make the God of love in the white man triumphant over the Satan of segregation that is in him. The struggle is not between black and white - but between good and evil! (That's it, that's it!) And whenever good and evil are in conflict, good always wins! (...let my people go.)

WHITE BUSINESS MAN: (Approaching MLK and holding out his hand and leading him blinking out of the dark jail into the light). Reverend King, I represent the businessmen of Birmingham. I have a downtown store. First the black folk stopped comin', then the white folk stopped comin 'cos they feared the black protests and the police gittin 'mean, so now the only customers we're likely to get is green folk and there aren't too many of them in Birmingham. So I need you to stop this protest – my bank needs it! - and in return I and my fellow store owners are prepared to allow colored and white folk equal rights in Birmingham's shops, lunch counters and downtown facilities.

MLK: And the Mayor and the police will back this?

W B: The Mayor does what we say cos 'we pay the Mayor's bills, sir. An 'the mayor pays the police.

MLK: All protest will cease, all boycotts will end if and when race segregation ends in this city of Birmingham.

W.B: You have my word of honour. Do I have yours? (He offers out his hand and MLK shakes it.)

MLK: The road to freedom truly ran through the jailhouse. Glory Halleujah.

BOTH SONNY/RALF: Glory Hallelujah

M8 – Glory Hallelujah

MLK: Glory Hallelujah, Jesus love me, Jesus knows the trouble I have seen.

Jack: Congratulations ..Reverend.

MLK: Martin – why can't you call me Martin?

Q19 (They embrace – then the lights change, MLK disappears, Jack is pulled aside.)

JACK: (On air) The campaign for negro civil rights achieved what no one thought was possible: the desegregation of the greatest city in Alabama. That's a wrap.

(Agent gets behind Jack who is unaware of his presents)

AGENT: I need to thank you, Jack. Twenty five per cent of Soviet Russian news reports is now devoted to these Birmingham protests. And most of that beamed to Africa too. Your footage is the best thing that ever happened to Communist Television.

JACK: I tell the truth.

AGENT: You betray your brother, you spit on his grave. Commie.

(Jack swings at Agent who side steps and floors him then reaches down to pick him up as MLK comes over).

MLK: Hey, hey, what's going on?

AGENT: Just an outbreak of non- non violence, Reverend. That's the way this is going to be, Blood, so much blood.

Q20 - (Blackout).

(A lone gunman climbs up above the stage – or perhaps appears in a spotlight on the theatre balcony – a shot).

Q21 JACK: recorded: *Jack Kennedy was shot this morning in Dallas Texas by an unknown assassin. It is with great regret that I announce that the President of the United States is dead.*

(MLK and RALF are sat, while SONNY is stood. All in a hotel room listening to the radio)

RALF: (Turning the radio off) I can't believe that was Gods plan.

SONNY: Hell, they gonna kill everyone of us and every one of the whites that raise a finger to help us. Who we gonna get next in the White House?

MLK: Johnson's a shoo in.

SONNY: What's the difference? Another Redneck, blocked every civil rights bill he could.

MLK: I think you're wrong, Sonny, Johnson eats fried chicken, his Daddy fought against the Klan and he wants to be the President that changes America. We going to give him that – on a plate.

Sonny: Giving, giving, giving – what about taking? Four little black girls blown to pieces in Birmingham. You know how we won in Birmingham, Martin? Violence – yes, violence. Sure, it wasn't ours, but it was violence that got us on TV.

RALPH: We got it by power, Sonny. Not violence. The Supreme Court that ruled for us, Union power that paid our bail.

Sonny: What about our own power! (Smacks fist in palm.) Black power. You know what Malcolm X is saying.

RALPH: And I don't like it, he ain't even a Christian.

SONNY: But he speaks and the brothers hear him.

MLK: I will not raise a gun, a knife, a fist... anything... we will suffer and that will be our weapon...

Sonny: Then why aren't we even going after votes? Our votes, our rights which we do not exercise!

RALPH: And how we gonna use those votes?

Sonny: Selma County, has the biggest percentage Negro population in the USA and do you know what percent is registered to vote?

RALPH: Five per cent?

Sonny: No. It's not enough for *one* per cent!! Two Negro voters in that whole county!! They've concocted a test that no Negro voter can pass and that's if they haven't battered your head trying to get into their building to take the darn test! But if you could get them all registered, you could elect any negro to any post you like!

MLK: There's nothing more non violent than a vote. Sonny I bow to your wisdom. It's gotta be votes!

ALL: Amen!

SELMA ONE

(Mrs Hamer – a portly middle aged black woman in her rather shabby but “best” dress goes to front of stage and knocks on a large door that does not open)

Mrs Hamer: I am here to register my vote. (She knocks again).

I said I'm here to register my vote.)

Q 21 A slammed door.

Q22: Blues into worksong, as before.

Q23 Jazz riff into work-song, higher.

M9: work-song SELMA TWO

Work song blues. Lighting change. Two male sharecroppers working in the fields. A white female Farmer patrolling the field. she is furious and agitated. She keeps looking about as if She is expecting someone. One of the sharecroppers takes a momentary rest and the Farmer nudges him violently back to work with her stick and then resumes to looking about.)

Farmer: Lemon! Moses! Get your arses in here and get back to work!

Lemon and Moses: (From offstage) Coming Boss!

(Mrs Hamer enters – she is a sharecropper, a large woman, and she has clearly travelled far. When the Farmer sees her she marches over, furious).

Farmer: Where the goddam hell do you think you've been, Fannie Lou!!!

Mrs Hamer: Indianola court house.

Farmer: I know where you been! – tryin 'a damn register to vote– what the hell business is that of yours!!! If you don't get your black ass back to Indianola and withdraw your vote you're gonna have to leave here forever! Jeez! (Deeply troubled.) We ain't ready for your kind votin 'in Mississippi!

Mrs Hamer: You may not be ready, sir, but I am. I didn't register for you, sir.

Farmer: That's enough. You be off this plantation by tonight. You take Pap and your children and you go!

Mrs Harmer: I been working for you since I was married nearly twenty year, ma'am, I been pickin 'cotton since I was six year old...

Farmer: Then you should have learned by now... things don't change... now if you ain't leaving of your own free will... Billy Bob!

Billy Bob: Yeah.

Mrs Hamer: I don't want any more trouble, ma'am, I been harassed all day...but this is my home an I ain't ready to leave.

Farmer: You should have thought of that.... Billy Bob.

Billy Bob: (entering) I'm right here! Another damn voter? What is the matter with you folk! Why can't you leave things to us who understand best. You want the vote, I got a little vote here for yah...(Takes out the truncheon.) You still wanna taste of Alabama democracy, well do yah?? (He intimidates her she hesitates and knees the COP in the privates.) Ah, you goddam spitfire!

(Billy Bob gradually gets up and stumbles off stage right, taking off Mrs Hammers hat, his hat and truncheon.)

Farmer: Lemon! Moses! Get the whipping post!

(The two sharecroppers exit to retrieve the whipping post.)

Mrs Hamer: I'm sorry I didn't need to-

Farmer: Oh you in trouble now Fannie Lou.

(The two sharecroppers enter with the whipping post. The Farmer and Billy Bob take Mrs Hamer to the whipping post.)

MRS HAMER:
Master he be hard hard man
Sold my people away from me

(The beating grows out of a work song with Mrs Hamer's cries merging with her singing melody line as beaters and farmer sing the drone).

Farmer: Now get outta here!

(Lemon and Moses Exit)

Farmer: Now that's what I call Alabama democracy (exit leaving her semi-conscious on whipping post).

(MLK enters and washes Mrs Hamer).M10: Martin solo “Nobody Knows...”

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
 Nobody knows but Jesus
 Nobody knows the trouble I have seen
 Glory hallelujah
 Sometimes I am up sometimes I am down, oh yes Lord
 Sometimes I'm almost to the ground
 Oh yes Lord. Oh yes Lord.

(MLK with Mrs Hamer - MLK leads her to the top of steps, MLK stands respectfully beside her with SONNY).

SONNY: March 25th 1965. The steps of the Capitol building of Alabama.

Mrs Hamer: Is this America the land of the free and the home of the brave where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings in America? Because we ask only for the same rights as any other citizen in this democracy: the right to vote. So I stand here and ask – no, demand - that I and the people of colour who stand in line behind me be placed on the electoral register of the state of Alabama.

WHITE OFFICIAL: The President has spoken, Congress acted and the Supreme Court have ruled in your favour. Mrs Hamer I hereby accept your registration. (She signs his book).

MRS HAMER: Look who I am, I am somebody! I am a citizen.

JACK: It is a truly incredible sight – here in Washington the entire open space from the Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol is taken up by a huge and peaceful gathering of marchers, black and white, old and young, rich and poor. And on their faces is a smile, the smile of peace, the smile of victory for whatever the legislative result of this march the case is already won in the hearts and minds of their fellow Americans – they will and must overcome.

Ralph: The moral leader of the Nation: Dr Martin Luther King!

Q24: applause (MLK takes the stand). **Into M11, O Freedom/Free at last**

MLK: I have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

That *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

Blackout end of Act 1.

ACT TWO

Q25 (A radically different urban northern landscape — with electric funk. America shifts its gaze north into its own troubled heartlands).

JACK: Detroit, a hot summer afternoon. This is the capital of black America and change, even menace hangs on the humid air. The change grows out of anger at poverty and discrimination, the change grows out of pride in being a black American; for black is beautiful and black can now be strong.

Street kid punching an imaginary opponent in the ring: Float like a butterfly sting like a bee! What's my name, what's my name?

Jack: HI kid, who's your hero?

KID: The champion. The number one! The greatest!

JACK: Muhammed Ali, no longer Cassius Clay.

KID: Slave name, he don't take no slave name no more! What's my name, what's my name! I am the greatest!

Jack: Heavy weight champion of the world but more than that champion of the black nation of America and that is the new phrase that is heard on these stifling summer streets: the black nation.

(Now the music is reaching a climax or maybe changing to something threatening and through smoke which may be nightclub effect or burning buildings – Malcolm X slowly walks downstage)

Jack: (As if mid way through an interview with a black woman) But if the pride speaks for Ali, the anger speaks through another man: Malcolm X separatist, a prophet of violence and in the words of Martin Luther King: a racist.

WOMAN: Malcolm X is the man that we needed to see in the North and in the South. He has become the man that most African-American women want their men to be: strong. "See, I want to take you on, America. Here I is. Look at me. I'm going to say the things that you've wanted people to say." That's why the men and women love him. That's why we all love him so very much. Because he makes us feel holy. And he makes us feel strong and proud. A nation.

(More music – Malcolm X has reached the front of the stage now backlit dramatic- he may have toted a gun in the smoke – so its not clear if he is a symbol or a person but by the time he comes downstage the gun is gone and he is sharply dressed. He does not acknowledge Jack – he addresses the audience -

MALCOLM: Fools ask us to love the white man as if anybody could love someone who has treated them as the white man has treated us. This blue-eyed white devil genetically beyond any moral appeal, a bleached parody of a human, an ole pale sickly-looking thing but a killer; a killer of black, red and yellow men. They want me to integrate with THAT! A two legged white dog!

Jack: Excuse me, Mr X , Mr X! (it is not clear that Malcolm will acknowledge that this is an interview – he talks to the audience and gives asides to Jack). You have talked about the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, I think the snake has a particular symbolism for you...

MX: (uncertainly) ...yes... the symbol represents something that is hidden...

Jack: I believe you think the Serpent is the white race...

MX: Yes. Yes... that is correct...

Jack: Do you believe that the white race is evil.

MX: I believe that the black race was created divine. The white race was created... not divine.

Jack: Evil?

MX: Yeh.... It's evil for anyone who is being attacked to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself. . . . You might see these Negroes who believe in nonviolence and mistake us for

one of them and put your hands on us thinking that we're going to turn the other cheek— but we'll put you to death just like that!

JACK: (Shouts) And non violence, the creed of Martin Luther King?

MALCOLM X: (Looking out as if not sure who has spoken). Uncle Tom, traitor to the Black Nation (They raise their fists with black gloves in the black power salute).

WOMAN: (AS Malcolm walks down through the audience – perhaps with spotlight on him): Malcolm is our manhood, our living black manhood! This is his meaning to his people. And in honoring him we honor the best in ourselves and know him for what he was and is - a prince – our own black shining Prince! Who did not hesitate to die because he loved us so.

Q26 (Blackout now – fading into hotel room – Martin Luther King is watching TV – the images are not seen but the soundtrack of Jack recorded and the howl of sirens – MLK, Ralph and Sonny enter exhausted and haggard and flop down in front of the TV).

JACK's VOICE: So Detroit burns for the fourth night in a row, the looters control the streets and the only question is: when will President Johnson send in the army? Will we see tanks on the streets of an American City? Is this where the civil rights movement has taken us: civil war?

MLK: Is that really Detroit?

SONNY: It's no better in Harlem.

RALPH: Why now? After what we achieved, after what the President gave us?

MLK: We shall overcome, the President himself: we shall overcome on his lips.

SONNY: President this and President that – that don't mean a thing to these brothers on the streets. What do they know of Alabama? Jus 'some place their stupid grandpa came from.

MLK: Switch it over. (Sonny flicks switch).

Q27

(But more violence – this time Vietnam – huge impact of B52 bombers).

TV: Massive bombardment of Communist positions around Hanoi continues with Vietnamese sources...

MLK: Switch it off!

SONNY: What you want to do Reverend? Go to the Opera?

MLK: (Switching off TV) No I want to switch it off. Switch off all the violence, in Detroit and Vietnam.

RALPH: How you gonna do that?

MLK: God knows.

SONNY: Well Malcolm X thought Allah has the answer.

MLK: God, the one God, knows that the only thing that will fight great evil is great good. So we must be great, we must go to the root of the violence and the poverty. (Grabbing Ralph) Its got to be a big one: no to Vietnam and no to poverty. Everything – not small things but the whole big big thing.

RALPH: Sure, Martin, we can pull down the whole USA – or you can. (Sighs)

MLK: But you'll back me, yeah?

RALPH: You'll need me, cos your President will move heaven and earth to bring you down.

(A knock – Ralph goes to door).

RALPH: It's that white chick. Says she's a reporter but looks more like a Beauty Queen.

MLK: (Adjusts tie) Gentlemen, I might ask you to leave my hotel room for a while. I'd like a private interview with that young lady.

SONNY: Again?

RALPH: Easy Sonny, (Pushing him aside so MLK can't hear). You don't know the pressure on him the death threats.. (To Martin) Sure, Martin.

SONNY: The moral compass of the nation- my ass. (Exits).

MLK: Hey Ralph, thanks. And take Sonny for a beer.

RALPH: He stopped drinking. He got religion.

(Blackout) **Q28 (link music to phone ringing)**

(Jack sitting in a chair – whisky in hand – sleeping – phone rings) Christ
– (wakes – picks up phone):

Jack: Hello, Martin, is that you....? Martin? Martin? Who you callin ' 'honey'? ... White trash? Is that you? – Reverend King.... Is that.... You? (Listens.) Oh my God. (Slams down phone) It's a damn recording!
Q29 – phone

JACK: I don't know who you are or why you are doing this – or what you think gives you the right, but anyone who is creepy enough to record another man having... making love to woman... is some kind of a worm. You hear me? I know there's someone there... So you listen to me, you phone me one more time and I will get the cops to trace the call. Do you hear me?

AGENT: (Enters) O, yeah, we hear you. We hear you all the time, Jack. All the time. You wanna call some cops? Well here we are. That quick. Nice Scotch. I know it's not very patriotic, but sure as Hell beats Bourbon, eh? (Pours himself a drink). Nostrovial!

JACK: I should throw you out but I'd end up in a heap again.

AGENT: Here's to the moral leader of the nation, the moral compass of America. (Raises glass – Jack shakes his head and does nothing). Maybe the Communists's are too smart for you, they fooled you, but this hypocrite – this fornicating preacher...what sort of journalist are you?

JACK: How do I know it's him, how do I know it's not just a pack of lies like you serve up in Vietnam? (Pointing to the phone.) That could be an actor...

AGENT: Maybe you *are* a Communist. I maybe I should inform your employers. But until then here is a dossier – photographs like this one – he likes the white trash. And here is the testimony of a hooker in Vegas. She was treated real rough by your Prince of Peace. I mean I don't go to Vegas but if I did I wouldn't rough up a whore there. Would you? I mean we got standards you and I? We might have different even conflicting politics but we know right from wrong, Jack, don't we. And we know that a journalist has the obligation to broadcast the truth. After all, you said so.

JACK: I think this is a scam, a slur and a dirt digging exercise. The Reverend King is a married man I know his wife.

AGENT: Well you have me convinced there, Jack, married men are always faithful. Why, look at Jack Kennedy!

JACK: I suppose he was a Communist too?

AGENT: Might as well have been. The damage he inflected on this country. (Hands Jack a sheaf of papers/tapes.) Now... Names of the Reverend's women. Hotels, motels, room numbers, transcripts of conversations, well grunts and slaps and "Oh Martin's..." – not much theology in there. Your King has the morals of an alley cat.... he has lied and cheated all the way!

Jack: No.... (Revolted and fascinated).

AGENT: It's all here – tapes, photographs, sworn statements. Your precious King is nothing but a fraud.

Jack: You don't get it, do you!!! You just don't get it... because we're never going to run these stories, and you're never gonna bring down anyone... Martin Luther King is only up on his pedestal because people join his marches, I'm only on TV because people watch my show, Johnson won't be in the White House unless folk vote for him, and those businessmen in Birmingham desegregate their washstands to get their customers back.... But who elects you, who checks you, who pays for

you, who do you report to? ... You're not like us, you're not a part of the American Way, you're in some nasty bunker that you've managed to build up under our noses, a little haven for Nazis inside our democracy.... why should anyone take moral lessons from the Gestapo! Well, I won't do your dirty work. Like you said, if I don't say it, it ain't true and at the moment I think it's best for America if this (brandishing the tape recorder) is not true.

AGENT: You a faggot? You wanna fuck King or what? (Jack throws scotch in agent's face – but agent just shakes his head as Jack storms out. – Agent shouts after him). 'Cos we're going to fuck that fucker and we gonna fuck you over too!

Q31 energetic fill

JACK: (In spotlight) Put me through to Doctor King please. It's urgent. What do you mean he is no longer in Washington? I thought he was here for the Poor People's March – what? He's where? Memphis? (Puts phone down) What's he in Memphis for?

Q24 energetic fill

Ralph: Why are you going to Memphis?

MLK: Because the strikers asked me to go.

RALPH: You call the biggest demonstration in American history and then dump it for a few hundred Garbage workers?

MLK: I am not dumping the Poor People's March, I'm taking a break.

RALPH: To march with a few hundred guys who want a few bucks more instead of march with a million who want a life.

MLK: I'm no good at organizing, Ralph. You do that. You and Sonny, he's sharp. Me I am mud. I am bad, (breathes deeply) bad at that, I'm just not - I need something clear. Like Birmingham. Memphis has that. We gotta get them reinstated... not fired for asking for justice.

RALPH: Sonny says they are not Church led, that they got Black Power kids there looking for trouble. It could get nasty...

MLK: All the more reason to go. I will lead them on the path of non-violence.

RALPH: You're crazy. *Q33 phone*

MLK: Yeah, I am. (Phone rings) Pick that up for me will you.

RALPH: Don't you answer the phone no more?

MLK: No, they keep saying they're gonna kill me. I can't pray for them no more.

RALPH: It's... It's Coretta.

MLK: Tell her I've gone. Tell her I love her. I Gotta go, Ralph.

RALPH: Martin left for Memphis an hour ago but he told me to tell you he loves you. (Pause – puts down phone). And me a minister.

(Blackout.) *Q34 -3rd fill*

JACK: (With suitcase – heat motel reception) . Memphis, I ought to be doing a story but I am the story – or at least the story that is not going to happen. Hello, reception? Press. Yes I am Jack Nader. Can I call the Reverend King please. Why's he not taking calls? Too much abuse. Of course. Which room – hey you know me. OK first floor, one-o-nine. Thank you Ma'am. (moves across stage as lights change. Knocks)

SONNY: (Door opens) Where you goin', Jack?

JACK: I need to see Martin. Urgent.

SONNY: He's not seeing no one.

JACK: Is he resting?

SONNY: Look, pal, just get off his back will yer. He's under strain. It's not easy.

JACK: Yeah, but it might get a whole lot messier. That's why I need to help him out. (He holds package out).

SONNY: I'll pass it on.

JACK: This is personal. Confidential.

SONNY: Look here, "brother," you presuming that Martin has things that he keeps confidential from me but not from you, you...

JACK: Honky? Yeah you're right. I am just another white guy but you can't see this...(he's starting to break). The FBI...

SONNY: What do you know about the FBI?

JACK: What do I know? Well I know that once they got me to spy on you all, to break you on National TV, and when that did not work out they put this on my table and I know it's a pack of lies. Tell me it's a pack of lies (almost weeping now).

(SONNY leafs through package).

SONNY (Turns to room): Martin, looks like you best talk to this FBI agent here.

JACK: I didn't say I was now, I just said....

SONNY: Martin, Martin open the door. Aw shit – (It's not Martin but a tipsy woman – is she a hooker? Woman comes out of room laughing).

Woman: I'll be next door, Martin - Hey! You're Jack Nader – I watch your show – I like your message...

JACK: Really.

Woman: (To MLK) Hey, we didn't do anything bad! (To Jack) We're just doing what everyone is doing – except that you ain't allowed to say so on the evening news. I love your show!

Jack: You do? (Flustered).

WOMAN: (Going to next room then popping out) Here's my room key Jack. Any time, just give me an hour to freshen up! (Falls back I into room – Jack looks with horror at the key but something makes him keep it - he turns to go when MLK runs into the corridor).

MLK: Honey baby, where you goin'... we could be fucking for Go....

(MLK stops. Sees Jack. Both men are paralysed with shock.)

MLK: Jack, you... (he looks about himself) ... this isn't... what it seems...

Jack: What is it then?

MLK: Jack, please... I mean to change, I do... I'm on the road every day, I never see Coretta, the death threats keep comin'...

Jack: Don't you understand what this would mean for your civil rights? Don't you get how this would play to white moderates?

MLK: Don't hurt the people, Jack... Don't rat on me.

Jack: Shut up, Martin... this isn't you! I saw you! You were God's words on earth – yes God on earth! Look , Martin, you are playing a dumb game and the table is stacked against you – (stops himself leaving).... you ought to know that every word you say goes straight to the FBI...

MLK: You don't know that.

Jack: I do, Martin. I'm sorry. I do. I was asked by the Bureau to keep an eye on you... I told them what they did not want to hear, though... I told them you were a good man a moral man... and a good husband – but they were right you are not better than a... (stops himself)... they have everything, Martin, everything... (starts to go).

MLK:, Jack... wait, Jack, wait....

Jack: "Wait"? "Wait"? For the love of God, Martin, you could have been President of the USA!

MLK: Not me...

Jack: Why not?

MLK: Look at me... Don't turn on me.

Jack: I thought you were something new, not a fraud but you are just another phoney fraud. (Turns and goes)

SONNY (who has had head in hands in despair suddenly stands): You don't have the right to judge him Mr FBI. He's a man and everyday he could be dead meat. Now get out and get back to your white masters.

JACK: (Almost to himself as he staggers away as if hit by a truck) The moral compass of the Nation...

Q35 (Exits- Sonny goes to MLK who is slumped and then praying).

SONNY: You gotta dream, Martin, we know you got a dream. But do you have a plan?

MLK: I don't know. (He's in pajamas or vest etc sitting on floor looking glum).

SONNY: I mean I dream every night, but I wake up and got to face real waking life out there.

MLK: I'm in Memphis. I answered a call. I can only do what I always done. Get out there, preach what's right even if I can't do the right myself. Are you gonna help me, Sonny? A broken compass... Ass'ole that I am?

Q35 (Blackout then):

(Music, Jack sucks on a cigarette trying to force himself to be ready to go on air).

JOURNALIST: Hey Jack, you got five – we're going live on the Garbage guys march!

JACK: You take it, you're good. I'm sick. I'm real sick (Hands him the microphone and leaves.)

JOURNALIST: Hey, Jack, get well – OK, OK on air!
Memphis Tennessee. City garbage and sanitation workers have been on strike now for four weeks, protesting for better pay and conditions –

BLACK WORKER: That's a lie – why do you always lie? Cracker. We protestin 'the killin 'of Robert Walker and Echol Cole, crushed to death in the back of their garbage truck – an 'why- do you know why?

JOURNALIST: No, I do not know why, Sir.

BLACK W: 'Cos your shiny white mayor says that no black garbage worker can shelter from the rain anyplace 'cept inside the crusher. Do you get that - *inside* the crusher! So they died. Dead. (To camera.) Now stick that on your fuckin 'news!

JOURNALIST: (Horrified) Cut, cut!

BLACK W: Yeah! Cut all truth, you honky liars! (Smashes camera and swings at Journalist). **Q36** (*sirens*)

JOURNALIST: Police! Police get this nigger away from me.

BLACK W: Nigger? Who you calling Nigger? (Sirens – B.W exits chasing after the journalist – sound of smashing glass – riot – blackout then music and time lapse).

RALF: Brothers an 'sisters, you made the call, and the call has been answered. He was our leader, he is our leader he will always be our leader and our light: Martin Luther King! *Q37 – applause*

MLK: Now God's preacher may talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, and new Memphis! Don't let them tell you that you are only a negro garbage worker. You are precious citizen of the new Memphis - of the New New World. For if America is to remain a first class nation it cannot afford second class citizens.

JOURNALIST: (She fixes and composes herself after being chased by the garbage worker) Once again Martin Luther King has revealed himself as the moral leader of the Nation. This is Caroline Thompson for Breaking News Live in Tennessee. OK. Cut. Has anyone seen Jack yet?

Q38 – bar ambience (Music, a bar – Jack seated drunk talking too loud to bored barman):

JACK: Martin was such a good man... such a good man... an ordinary man... he was no communist - I asked him..but you wouldn't believe it! She went into the room next to his... she was a hooker or maybe what do they call them: a groupie – you know like the Rolling Stones do - she gave me her room key..she 'been with him ..you could tell she was a tramp and he was with her, the Reverend Doctor King....they wanted me to spy on him... I don't care who hears it... I won't spy on a good man!! ... well, I thought he was...

(A big white thug in the bar comes over.)

Thug: Excuse me there, friend, but I couldn't help overhearing – you talkin 'about that brave preacher Dr. Martin Luther King, by any chance?

Jack: Who wants to know?

Thug: An interested citizen... we wouldn't want anything happening to Dr King here in our town – we have a good name to preserve, traditions, decency, hospitality... etcetera...

Jack: Sure... it's a great town... where am I? Etcetera?

Thug: In the best bar in downtown Memphis. Me and a few of the boys were thinking we should go down that hotel he's staying and make sure no bad types get in there, threaten him, mean types from the country you understand, folks who hide their faces, those types....

Jack: He's a brave man... such a goddam shame...

Thug: What room should we be protecting?

Jack: What?

Thug: What room is Dr King in... so we can take care of him...

Jack: (Standing, staggering) You! You – I know... you, you, you... that man up there is a hero, a Gandhi, our Gandhi.... Your days are coming to an end.... It's over, Buddy, it's over.... White confederate trash like you c....

(Thug knocks Jack to the ground. The thug searches through Jack's pockets and finds a room key. He takes it away. Thug whispers in the ear of the supine Jack, lifting him up by his shirt front.)

Thug: You won't have to worry about the reputation of your dear Dr Martin Lunatic Coon, no one cares about reputations where he's going.... Six feet under.

Barman: Well he had it coming to him. Niggah lover.

Q39 (Jack passes out. The Thug lowers him to the floor and exits.)

(Cast step forward carrying I AM A MAN banners – but in a replay of Selma etc they are beaten down as racist abuse rings out on the sound system – the banners break – but now the marchers and garbage workers take the torn I AM A MAN banners and roll them into missiles which they hurl towards the auditorium).

MLK: And that is why we carry these banners – because although we are treated like beasts we are men!

(A rifleman hits the garbage workers with the butt of his rifle.)

MLK: Sonny. SONNY!

Sonny: (Entering) Yeah!

MLK: Get me out of here (They go to exit) No, No. I need to speak to them.

Sonny : Are you crazy.

MLK: Get me up there!

Sonny(Goes to calm crowd) Wait! Wait! Dr Kings got something to say.

(Sonny helps MLK to take to the podium)

MLK: Love is our weapon, unity is our weapon, the strike is our weapon, the march is our weapon... but the weapon is never our weapon!

Garbage workers: (taunt MLK) O de lawd! De lawd now!!

MLK: They have beaten you here today in Memphis, they have killed a young man... they have fired upon you...

Garbage workers: Black power! Black power!!!

MLK: Now, now... they may have treated you like things instead of persons! But you must not allow anybody to make you feel that you are not powerful, that you are not important, that you are not a child of god! You are somebody!! Say it with me! I am somebody!!

Sonny: I am somebody!

MLK: I am somebody!

Garbage workers: Get back to Alabama, Uncle Tom!

(MLK is thrown, but persists, gaining confidence again.)

MLK: We...we.... we have a power that's greater than all the guns in Memphis or the state of Tennessee, a power... a power.... greater than all the guns and bombs of all the armies in the world!

Woman marcher: Your dick!

(Huge laughter. Workers laughing at MLK and chanting Black Power slogans – singing “we shall overrun” to the tune of “We Shall Overcome”).

MLK: If we are to change America we must change ourselves too!

Garbage Workers: Black power! Black power!

(RALPH appears and starts to escort MLK away.)

MLK: (being ushered away by RALPH) Our souls. We shall win by the power of our souls. *Cut sound track*

Worker: Our souls Ass –ole!

THE BAR:

(Jack is in a phone booth)

Jack: (Finds coins and calls). You told me to call you. Well here I am calling you Agent..Smith. Yes, yes, No! Listen, they're going to kill King. I know it. They got his room number. From me, damn it! Me! I let them take it! NO, no! Listen...(Then drops phone).

Q40 'For operational reasons, and for the safety of our agents, the FBI does not to inform Dr King of threats to life and person...' (starts to run)
Martin! Martin!

(The Memphis motel. Sonny and Abernathy boxing with a pillow. MLK enters pours drink slumps in chair.)

MLK: What do they get from this! Why do they want this, more than love. I'm tired, Ralph. I'm not a real preacher... I want to go back to being an ordinary person....

RALPH: You never were that, Martin, you were always one of kind.

MLK: You know what Stokely and those black power types say " –Ol, King, all he wants to do is eat steak dinners in his pajamas and make fine speeches" well, you can tell them, no speeches no more, I just want the steak and the pajamas.

RALPH: But no one else is speaking up for non-violence, Martin....

MLK: Speaking, speaking, my words fall on stony ground. Ralph, and they pick up the stones, my o my, today did they pick up those stones!!

RALPH: (Sad) Yeah, they sure did pal.

M11 – quiet spiritual. (MLK drinking scotch as he does so. Split scene as Jack races to hotel).

Jack: (To Sonny) You gotta let me in. He's gotta move rooms, they know he is here.

SONNY: Oh what do you want now Mr FBI

JACK: I am not FBI.

SONNY: OH but you were yesterday – who you now – CIA? Shift it.

JACK: They're gonna kill him.

SONNY: Yeah, they're gonna do that every damned day. (Jack tries to push past). Get the hell outta here.

JACK: Out of my way! Martin! (Sonny swings punch and floors him).

SONNY: Jesus Christ Jack. (Jack exits Sonny exits after him).

(MLK and Abernathy continue scene).

MLK: Each of us has two selves. How can I keep my higher self in command? Maybe I can't no more. I am tired of trying.

Ralph: But you have tried, Martin, you have tried so hard. That's a type of miracle. (Knocks) The press are out there, waiting for you.

MLK: (Suddenly tearful but firmer in his self belief). You talk, you talk to them. When the press come in, tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize, that's not important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards, that's not important. I'd like them to mention that Martin Luther King, tries to give his life serving others. I'd like them to say that I tried to be right on the Vietnam question. I want them to say that I tried to love and serve humanity. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. All the other things that I am will not matter.

Ralph: It doesn't matter (Ralph hugs him).

MLK: Now, give me a cigarette, will you.

RALPH: Sure pal. Best light up on the porch. Don't want those cameras poppin 'you.

MLK: No, sir. See, they gotta believe I am the man that I am not.

(MLK smiles at Ralph. Ralph goes to MLK's chair and sits in it. MLK goes out the balcony for a cigarette. A shot. Jack, outside, hears it shouts.)

Q41 – the shot

Jack: No!

(But it is too late. MLK dies – momentarily frozen in red light the others rush to him and lift him as they did in the GO DOWN MOSES sequence in ACT 1 –they lift him into a pose reminiscent of the Christ taken from the cross).

CORETTA (Sings Freedom oh freedom)

*Oh Freedom, oh, oh freedom,
Oh, oh freedom over me over me.... (Corretta cuts off and is broken)*

(White Supporter comes on and sings)

*And before I'll be a slave,
I'll be buried in my grave.*

(Coretta and white supporter holding hands)

And go home to my Lord and be free.

(Coretta walks forward then closing Martin's eyes she speaks):

Free, free at last, thank God almighty, free at last.

END

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Please note this text may be amended in rehearsal. This text is also the longest version of the production and for a 90 minute version may omit one or two shorter scenes.

Thank you
Paul Stebbings

NOTE: All historical and biographical information is carefully researched. All "Invented" dialogue can be backed up by research references.