

SLAY THE DREAMER

Written by

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And

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The central characters in this film are real. These include: Reverend James Lawson, Grace Walden, Charlie Stephens, Detective Ed Redditt, Fireman Floyd Newsum, Dick Gregory, Frank Holloman, Percy Foreman, Marrell McCullough , Arthur Murtaugh, James Earl Ray, and Richard Sprague. The characters of Lucas Jenkins, Jeffrey Jenkins and Katy Bolton are composites. All the assertions made in this film are based upon factual evidence. On request, the producers will provide the documentation upon which these assertions rest.

SLAY THE DREAMER

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH -- MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE -- DAY - - 1976

The last rays of sunset stream through a large stained glass window. The resonant SOUNDS of the CHOIR are infused with an unmistakable gospel spirit.

The choir, like the CONGREGATION, is almost all black. The hymn reaches its rousing conclusion. A distinguished looking MINISTER, mid-forties, finishes his sermon.

MINISTER

... yes, we have been wounded. The forces of darkness have conspired to turn what we fought for in the '50's and '60's, justice, dignity, compassion - into the shame and poverty of the 1970's. There are some who say that we should give up hope, that we will never see the blessed community we dreamt of. But remember - you cannot wait for the Lord, you must seek him. So too you cannot wait for justice. Don't give into despair. Have the courage to seek, for in searching you will find dignity and the light of the Lord will be upon you.

CONGREGATION

(in unison)

Amen!

MINISTER

May your love of God Almighty give you peace as you leave this place and set out into the world.

CONGREGATION

(in unison)

Amen!

As the CHOIR begins the exit hymn ("Marching to Zion"), the MINISTER moves down from the podium and begins to greet his parishioners.

EXT. CHURCH RECTORY - - NIGHT

A flood light illuminates the night. Reverend Lawson emerges carrying his homework.

He's intercepted by IONE TURNER, two hundred pounds of love. She engulfs him with a hug.

IONE

Reverend, you sure did the Lord's work today, and then some!

Pulling a sweet potato pie from her bag.

LAWSON

Sister Ione, you're too kind.

IONE

And I know you loves sweet potatoes. He sings like a bird.

LAWSON

What...?

Ione pulls her chunky grandson, a ten year-old version of herself, from behind her mammoth flanks.

IONE

My grandson, Willie
(prodding the boy)
Willie... Eye On The Sparrow...

LAWSON

Y'know, Brother Boxer has choir practice every...

WILLIE

(singing badly)
I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free... etc.

LAWSON

Oh boy, Brother Boxer's gotta hear this...

He tries to extricate himself, but she snags him and pulls another pie from her paper bag.

IONE

Got a peach cobbler here, too, Reverend. I was thinking maybe a solo next Sunday...

LAWSON

Brother Boxer has complete control of solos. But... you never know...

He makes his escape, heading toward the parking lot, laden with desserts.

IN THE SHADOWS

A FIGURE emerges and moves in the direction of the parking lot. Soft-soled shoes move silently across the pavement.

ON LAWSON'S VW BUG

The Minister puts his work into the car, then stops. He senses a presence. He turns around slowly, his face registers concern.

MINISTER'S POV

A middle-aged WHITE WOMAN approaches. She clutches a large handbag. She stops.

WHITE WOMAN
Reverend Lawson?

LAWSON
(tentative)
Yes...

The Woman reaches into her purse, fumbles for something. A gun? No. She finally pulls out a SMALL FOLDER.

WHITE WOMAN
I found her. They had her under a different name. It was like she didn't exist.

She offers the file to Lawson.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - - DAY

The corridor is crowded. The door to the men's room swings open. A handsome gentleman exits. The man is HIRAM EVANS, elegantly dressed, late fifties, a prominent African-American lawyer in Memphis. Evans heads toward Courtroom 4.

LAWSON (O.S.)
Hiram!

Evans turns to see Lawson emerge from the crowd. These two are old friends. Evans is still moving toward the courtroom. Lawson follows.

EVANS
God-damn brother Lawson, you still growing or am I shrinking?

LAWSON

(grinning)

New boots. It's the heels. And if you keep taking the Lord's name in vain, I'm gonna put you on the Raffle Committee with Sister Ione.

EVANS

Cruel and unusual punishment...

LAWSON

Hiram, I need your help...

A BAILIFF sticks his head out of courtroom 4.

BAILIFF

Everybody for Judge Harper's courtroom, we're back in session.

EVANS

Gotta go. Harper is about to rule in my favor. He's tough as a two dollar steak - don't want to keep him waitin'.

LAWSON

Hiram... We've found Grace!

EVANS

(chuckles)

I should hope so, Reverend!

LAWSON

Grace Walden. She's been locked up in the State Asylum for almost a decade. I need you to get her out.

EVANS

Brother, times have changed. We ain't marching any more.

LAWSON

Hiram, she's the key. We gotta get her out.

EVANS

If you can't let this go, then what you need is one of them.

(he indicates the white faces in court)

You and I together wouldn't get past the back door.

LAWSON

You're the sharpest lawyer I know.

EVANS

Flattery ain't gonna do it, Jim.
There are times when a white face
is the right face. Gotta go.

(a smile)

And Jim ... we don't need any more
martyrs. Watch your back, brother.

Evans turns abruptly and heads back into the courtroom.
Lawson stands alone. This isn't the first time he has been
rebuffed.

INT. COURTROOM - - DAY

The JUDGE eyes Hiram as he returns, sitting next to his
wealthy white client.

JUDGE

Nice of you to rejoin us, Mr. Evans.

LAWSON enters the courtroom, and sits towards the back.

EVANS

The matter is clear as a screen door,
your honor, The Tennessee code
annotated is explicit as to the
points we've presented. We therefore
rest on the briefs submitted and ask
for a directed verdict.

JUDGE

Mr. Morgan?

The Judge looks at CLAY MORGAN JR. Morgan is a corporate
lawyer in his late thirties who talks Southern, dresses
London, and charms all the time. Morgan gets up from behind
the defense table. He knows that he's holding a busted
straight but still is compelled to strut.

MORGAN

Thank you, you're Honor. I realize
my esteemed colleague has presented
a compelling case...

BOOM. Morgan turns to the origin of the sound.

MORGAN'S POV

The rear doors to the courtroom SLAM shut. Enter JEFFREY
JENKINS, walking quickly, holding a large legal volume.

Jeff's hair is a little too long and his clothes reflect his indifference to appearance or trends. Jeff walks up to the defense table and sets the book down.

JEFF

(to Morgan, sotto voce)
I've got to show you something.

ON MORGAN

MORGAN

Excuse me your honor.
(irritated)
What?

Morgan walks back to the defense table. Jeff slides the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to him.

ON LAWSON

(MORE)

From Lawson's distant POV, Morgan appears to be assisting his awkward junior associate.

ON MORGAN AND JEFF

Morgan's expression changes from irritated to inspired.

MORGAN

Your Honor, Please excuse my young associate. As I was saying, our research shows that the question of jurisdiction enjoys precedence.

(picks up the book)

Title 28, Section 1441[a] and Rule 81[c] of the federal rules of...

JUDGE

Mr. Morgan, maybe y'all haven't noticed, but we are in a state court. The Federal Court is down the block.

LAUGHTER from the room. Lawson watches, intrigued.

MORGAN

Good point, Your Honor. And that's where this whole shebang oughta' be. According to Title 28, we do not require an order of this court to remove this case to the United States District Court. That court is, as you noted, just down the block.

(to Jeff)

MORGAN(CONT'D)

Jeff, why don't you pass that
Federal Rules book to Judge Harper.

Jeff hands the book to the Bailiff who passes it to the
Judge. The Judge quickly reads the passage to himself.

JUDGE

Mr. Evans, this court no longer has
jurisdiction. Next case.

Lawson takes notice. Evans' confident demeanor has given way
to resignation. Evans walks over to Morgan who is just
standing. Evans offers his hand in congratulations.

EVANS

Good job, Clay. You could steal
the flowers off a dead man's grave.
See you in Federal Court.

~~MORGAN~~

Ready when you are, counselor.

Jeff watches Morgan bask in victory. As Hiram turns to leave
he notices Lawson approaching the defense table. Hiram winks
at Lawson, then exits. Lawson holds out his hand to Clay.

LAWSON

Congratulations, Mr. Morgan. Very
impressive.

MORGAN

Thank you, Reverend.

LAWSON

You have a gift. Be nice to see
that gift working to help the less
fortunate.

Morgan puts his files in his briefcase. Snaps it shut,
looking for a graceful exit.

MORGAN

It does, I assure you. But right
now I'm so busy I should be twins.

LAWSON

I could use your help. A civil
matter. A woman, wrongfully
incarcerated...

MORGAN

(to Jeff)
Give the Reverend my business card.
(to Lawson)

MORGAN (CONT'D)

I'm already late. Why don't you call me at the office.

Morgan picks up his case and leaves.

INT. LAW OFFICE -- THE NEXT DAY

Classy surroundings. Georgian furniture and wood paneling. Start CLOSE on the receptionist, CYBIL STURGIS, 50-something and very prim. She's plugged into a hands-free PBX.

CYBIL

Good morning. Branson, Davis and Douglas. One moment please. I'll transfer you.

LAWSON (O.S.)

Miss...

REVEAL Jim Lawson. He's been waiting patiently for some time. He gets up from the stiff couch and approaches the receptionist.

LAWSON

(continuing)

...Do you think you could try Mr. Morgan again?

CYBIL

Sir, I've told you. Mr. Morgan is in conference.

INT. CLAY MORGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A toy basketball arches through a small hoop.

MORGAN (O.S.)

Nothing but net!

Pull back to reveal the plush office, the carefully appointed space that befits a junior partner of a prestigious white-shoe firm. Morgan sits at his desk, playing toy basketball with CHUCK ARMSTRONG (39), another rising legal star.

MORGAN

(continuing)

The crowd goes wild. That's another Jackson, pal.

Armstrong hands twenty dollars to Morgan. There is a KNOCK at the door.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 Come in.

Jeff enters carrying a sizeable legal brief.

JEFF
 I've finished the response to the
 Conway case.
 (to Armstrong)
 Morning Chuck.

Armstrong just nods. Morgan reaches for the brief.

MORGAN
 You've finished the first draft of
 the response.

CYBIL (V.O)
 (on the intercom)
 Mr. Morgan, I just want to remind
 you that Reverend Lawson is still
 waiting.

MORGAN
 Cybil, I'm busy. Tell him to leave
 the file. I'll get back to him.
 Please.

JEFF
 Wrongful incarceration. It sounds
 pretty straightforward.

Morgan is surprised that Jeff even knows about the case, let
 alone has an opinion.

MORGAN
 Nothing's straightforward in the law,
 Jeffrey. Didn't your distinguished
 daddy tell you that? If the state
 took the time to put some old black
 lady in the basket factory, there
 must be a damn good reason.

JEFF
 Maybe just look through the file...

MORGAN
 It's pro bono, kid. Gotta bill the
 hours or hit the showers. Branson
 will never go for it. But hell, go
 ahead. Present it at the Partners'
 meeting. It's all yours.

Morgan retrieves another toy ball and shoots.

MORGAN
(continuing)
He shoots, he scores!

BRANSON (V.O.)
You are to be commended. Billing
for the quarter is outpacing the
same quarter '75 by ten percent...

INT. LAW FIRM CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATE THAT AFTERNOON

Start on WILLIAM 'BILL' BRANSON, a southern gentleman with a shark's toothy smile. Senior and Junior partners are seated at the table, while Associates sit behind them along the wall. Jeff is seated on the outer perimeter, next to KATY BOLTON, an attractive, poised, twenty-six year old, and the only black face in the room. Katy is taking notes on a yellow pad.

BRANSON
Let's keep the billing hours up.
(a beat)
If there's nothing else, I'd like
to adjourn.

ANGLE the room as Jeff slowly stands.

JEFF
Uh... Mr. Branson... I gave your
secretary a file on Grace Walden.
She was not represented by an
attorney or examined by a
psychiatrist. I was wondering if
you had a chance to look at it.

BRANSON
Yes, Jeffrey, I read it.

JEFF
Uh... According to my preliminary
research, there was no apparent
reason why she was placed in that
institution and is still there
eight years later.

BRANSON
We're not talking fee here, are we?

JEFF
I believe she is indigent. We were
contacted by her Minister.

MORGAN

Where do we draw the line, Jeff?
We're in the business of billable
hours. We're not storefront lawyers.

A painful pause. To everyone's surprise, Katy speaks up.

KATY

A case like this could land us an
article in The Memphis Lawyer, sir.
It could actually bring in more
business. The Reverend is quite
well known.

JEFF

(grateful)

Yes... yes. It's James Lawson.
He's a friend of my father's.

MORGAN

In that event, maybe I should take
a look.

BRANSON

If I recall correctly, Clay, your
billing rate is somewhat higher
than Jeff's.

(to Morgan)

This firm can afford ten hours for
better relations with the Negro
community.

(to Katy)

You'll keep the editors of The
Memphis Lawyer informed of our
commitment, and due to the nature
of the case, maybe you should
assist Jeff on this one.

EXT. CORRIDOR - - DAY

Jeff sidles up to Katy as the other lawyers exit and disperse.

JEFF

(on the move)

Thanks... Branson can be a little
unreceptive at times.

KATY

It's a good case. It's the kind of
thing we should do more of. We
already have enough meters running
in this building.

Clay moves past on his way to his office.

JEFF
Listen... Katy... I was thinking,
since we're working together, we
could stop by Bolivar State Hospital
on Saturday and see Miz Walden.

Clay looks on, amused by Jeff's apparent awkwardness.

JEFF
(continuing)
Then, if it's okay with you, we
could swing by and enjoy some of my
Dad's stringy barbecue. He's
cooking. It's kinda informal.

KATY
Go to your father's for dinner?

Clay has paused in his doorway to watch, grins.

CLAY
He shoots. He scores.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTION -- JEFF'S P.O.V.

Dim lighting, high ceilings, peeling paint, stone floors,
narrow wooden benches - spare forms and haunting shadows
abound. Silence and echoes including JEFF'S OWN FOOTSTEPS
striking the stone, as he walks, now tentatively, into

THE LOBBY

JEFF stops and becomes aware of another SOUND: the CLICKING of a
WOODEN TOY in the hands of a solitary inmate seated on a bench.

The inmate is BRIAN GREENE, between 40 and 60, dressed in an
institutional cotton bathrobe. His eyes are unfocused.

Jeff continues on to the empty Reception Window and
Information Desk. His mood is darkening, his breathing
reacting to the heavy antiseptic smell of the place.

CLOSE-UP on an old yellowing index card taped to the window:

CARD:
**"IMPORTANT NOTICE: GRACE WALDEN IS
TO RECEIVE NO VISITORS AND NO
TELEPHONE CALLS. JUNE 6, 1968."**

Jeff studies the note... Then reaches through an opening in the glass partition, picks up a Visitor's Pass, and puts it on his lapel. He turns and approaches the inmate on the bench, and offers his hand.

JEFF

Hello. I'm an attorney. Jeffrey Jenkins. I came to see Grace Walden.

The SOUND of the wooden TOY stops.

GREENE

Esquire. Jeffrey Jenkins, Esquire. I'm Brian Greene. Green like the color green. But there's an extra "e". It's at the end. I'm English. So it's not like the color green.

JEFF

Mr. Greene, do you know Grace Walden?

GREENE

Walden. And that's spelled "e" "n" not "o" "n".

JEFF

... You know where I can find her?

GREENE

"O" "n" is Swedish -- "e" "n" is Danish... She's in 14. Right down that hall and to the right. "O" "n" is also your Norwegian --

JEFF

Thank you, Mr. Greene.

Jeff walks down the hall, turns right and comes to a door:

WARD 3 -- ROOMS 1-18: "NO ENTRY WITHOUT VISITOR'S PERMIT"

Jeff checks his stolen permit and continues into the ward.

INT. ROOM 14

GRACE WALDEN is seated on the bed, dressed in a robe, pajamas and slippers. She is white. Grace is fifty-five but looks at least twenty years older. She has no teeth, wears no makeup, and her sparse hair is white and wispy. She has the vacant look caused by heavy medication.

JEFF

(expecting a black woman)
Oh, excuse me ma'am. I was looking
for a Mrs. Grace Walden. I was told
she was in Room 14, but...

GRACE

Can't be sure anymore. What with
all that's been happening...

JEFF

Do you know Grace Walden?

GRACE

That's me. For all the good it's
done.

Grace looks up, gives a toothless smile. Jeff reacts.
Awkwardly, he pulls out a business card and hands it to her.

JEFF

I am Jeffrey D. Jenkins with the
firm of Branson, Davis and Douglas.
(Grace just stares)
Reverend Lawson asked me to come
see you... You know Reverend James
Lawson?

She shakes her head no; her eyes unfocused.

JEFF

(continuing)
I understand that you have been
put here without benefit of
counsel...

GRACE

Ain't no benefits in this place.
You got that right.

Silence. A WILD LAUGH cackles from a far ward. Jeff takes
out a small tape recorder.

JEFF

Do you mind if I use a tape
recorder? It'll save me taking
notes.
(she nods, he starts the
recorder)
Why did you get put in here? Can
you remember?

GRACE

Yep.

JEFF

Can you tell me?

GRACE

Cause Charlie told them. Not me. I wouldn't lie.

JEFF

Charlie? Who's Charlie?

GRACE

Threw him outa Jim's. He's in the Hornet's Nest now.

INT. ASYLUM CORRIDOR

Two guards, EARL AND TRENT, are walking. They wear non-specific police uniforms. Earl is bald. Trent is fat. They hear VOICES down the hall, react. They move toward Room 14.

JEFF (V.O.)

When did you last see Charlie?

INT. ASYLUM - GRACE'S ROOM

GRACE

I called him once. Can't call him no more...

The door to the room is pushed open and the Guards enter. Earl sees the tape recorder.

EARL

She's not supposed t'have any visitors. Where'd you get that pass.

JEFF

I'm her attorney.

TRENT

She doesn't have an attorney.

JEFF

She does if she says she does.

GRACE

She sure does, if she says she does.

Jeff looks at Grace.

EARL
The Director is goin' to want t'see
you. Bring the recorder.

JEFF
I'll see you later, Grace.

GRACE
We'll see.

The two Guards follow Jeff out of the ward.

INT. THE CORRIDOR

Suddenly the Guards brace Jeff and rip his tape recorder
away.

TRENT
(gesturing to Jeff)
This way to the Director's office.

JEFF
Yes sir. Right behind you.

Jeff pretends a meek compliance, then, with a fast pivot, he
grabs back the recorder, leaps clear of the Guards and runs.
Jeff sprints full speed down the corridor, past Brian Greene,
and toward the main doors.

EXT. HOSPITAL

Bucolic. Birds CHIRPING. Jeff's yellow TR3 is parked not
far from the main building. Katy sits in the driver's seat,
a legal brief is propped against the steering wheel. She is
carefully revising the document.

JEFF (O.S.)
(shouting to Katy)
Start the car! Start the car!

Katy looks up. Jeff has just run out of the main entrance.
He leaps down a set of stairs and rushes toward the car.

KATY
Jeff, what...?

Earl and Trent in pursuit. Jeff yanks open the door.

JEFF
Go, Katy. Just go! Go!

Katy puts the car in gear but the Guards race to ten feet in
front of the car. They throw their hands up in a "stop" signal.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Drive. Step on it. They'll move.

KATY
How do you know?

JEFF
'Cause they're not crazy. Go!

Katy floors it. The Guards dive away at the last instant.
Katy races toward the highway.

INT. TR3 -- ACCESS ROAD -- DRIVING - - DAY

KATY
What's going ~~ON~~ ^(MORE)!

As Katy drives onto the highway, Jeff removes the tape from the recorder and hides it in her purse. He takes a blank tape from the glove compartment and puts it into the recorder. He puts the recorder on the dash in plain sight. A SIREN announces the Guards' pursuit. Katy sees the POLICE CAR in the rearview mirror.

KATY
(continuing)
What the hell'd you do back there?

JEFF
I interviewed my client! Pull over.

The car pulls over. The Guards approach, guns drawn.

TRENT
Out of the car, both of you.

JEFF
Yes, sir. But can I ask one question first, Officer? Do you work for the state police?

EARL
"Special Officer."

JEFF
What does that mean, "Special Officer"? You sure it doesn't mean "Hospital Security"?
(Trent hesitates)

JEFF(CONT'D)

'Cause if it does, I believe your jurisdiction extends just as far as the hospital grounds -- and no farther -- right? Trust me on this. If you pull us out of this car, it's technically a kidnapping 'cause you got zero authority here on this highway.

Katy looks with admiration. She sees a new Jeff.

JEFF

(continuing)

Now unless you want her to drive right over those shiny brogans, I suggest you step back, officer, 'cause we're going now.

The Guards step back slowly in apparent defeat. But then, Earl suddenly reaches into the car and grabs the tape recorder off the dash.

Jeff stares as the two Guards hurry away, get into their vehicle and drive off. Now the highway is empty. Katy reaches into her purse and withdraws the tape.

KATY

What the hell is on this thing?

JEFF

I don't know... gibberish.
(off Katy's look)
But who the hell is Grace Walden?

CUT TO:

INT. N.D. OFFICE - - DAY

An angular MAN is backlit against a window with venetian blinds. We HEAR a door open and an AGENT enters INTO FRAME. Drops a file on the desk.

AGENT

Sir, the incident at Bolivar. We traced the young man. A lawyer. Working for James Lawson.

BACKLIT MAN

(a long pause)

That's unfortunate. Maybe the old Reverend needs a reminder.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUCAS JENKINS' ESTATE - NIGHT

Quintessentially Southern. Neatly landscaped and beautifully lit, it leans magnificently against a moonlit sky.

EXT. JENKINS'S ESTATE - POOL AREA - NIGHT

Tight on a fire. PULL BACK to reveal LUCAS JENKINS presiding over the enormous brick barbecue. Lucas is 60, distinguished. Katy and Jeff stand close by. HAROLD, a black butler with alert eyes, wearing a white coat, hovers.

LUCAS

Hope these sirloins aren't too thin. Harold picked 'em up at the Piggly Wiggly.

HAROLD

Sorry, sir. It was all they had.

Harold's eyes connect with Katy's. He holds out a platter. Lucas removes the three steaks from the grill.

LUCAS

I wasn't making a criticism, Harold. You pick 'em and I cook 'em. It's a Wednesday night tradition. Let's see if we can cut these without a chainsaw.

Harold moves off to set the nearby table. Katy stands in a white dress. She looks ravishing. Jeff is in a blazer.

LUCAS

(continuing)

So, Miss Bolton, Jeff tells me your father is in transportation.

KATY

(a glance at Jeff)

After a fashion, I guess. He, uh, drives a City bus.

LUCAS

A bus. Jeff tells me you're taking the bar exam next month.

KATY

Did Jeff tell you - Branson gave him his first solo client.

LUCAS
(to Jeff)
A courtroom situation?

JEFF
Just a motion to install due
process.

LUCAS
Did Bill Branson reset your hourly
rate for a solo court appearance?

JEFF
It's pro-bono. Your friend,
Reverend Lawson, brought the case
to us.

Lucas wrinkles his brow slightly, then motions to the table.

LUCAS
Why don't we get started?
(they walk to the table)
What's the client's name?

JEFF
Grace Walden.

Harold is pouring the wine. He hears the name, looks up momentarily, catching Lucas' eye. Everyone sits, an appetizer at each place. Katy glances down, puzzled, at her place setting. There are four forks. She doesn't know which to use.

KATY
(stalling)
Looks wonderful.

HAROLD
Oh, my, that fork looks tarnished.

Harold, the master of subtlety, picks up the correct fork, polishes it and hands it back to Katy.

KATY
(grateful)
Thank you.

LUCAS
Have you met your client yet?

JEFF
Sure did.

LUCAS
And she seems sane?

JEFF
To be honest, Dad, she seemed a
little disoriented...

LUCAS
Maybe she's where she belongs.

JEFF
She was denied due process. And
before I could finish my interview,
two guards ran me off. Confiscated
my tape recorder.

LUCAS
That's strange. Whatever it is,
I'm sure you'll do the right thing.
Remember, it's just one case.

JEFF
My first case.

LUCAS
The first of many.

Lucas cuts the steak. MOVE IN ON the knife.

INT. JENKINS ESTATE - LATER

The ornate grandfather clock CHIMES. Lucas and Katy walk
through the foyer. Jeff is absent for the moment.

LUCAS
The night's young, but old men
retire early. It was a pleasure
meeting you, Katy.

KATY
Thank you, sir.

They walk to the front door and out onto the veranda.

LUCAS
When I look at you, I see a
fighter. Maybe you could teach
some of that to my son.

ANGLE -- FRONT DOOR

Jeff and Harold are exiting the library. Jeff is putting on
his jacket. Harold holds Katy's coat.

HAROLD

Mighty fine young lady, Mr. Jeff.
Smart as a whip and pretty enough
to make a man plow through a stump.

JEFF

Sure is, Papa H... but, we're just
working together.

HAROLD

(knowingly)

Hmm...Well, now that they adjusted
your hourly rate, you ever need to
unwind, lose some of that new
money, I'm still at The Rack and
Cue every Tuesday.

The walk out the door onto the veranda.

LUCAS (V.O.)

Son of a bitch!!

INT. LAWSON CHURCH - NIGHT

Lucas and Lawson walk down the dark church corridor. The
lights are off. Lucas is fuming. Lawson has a flashlight.

LAWSON

Lucas, calm down. And watch your
language.

(calls out)

Clarence, call the power company
again. I need these lights back on.

LUCAS

You're crazier than she is.

A Choir is rehearsing in an adjacent area by candlelight.

LUCAS

(continuing)

... Why didn't you come to me first?

LAWSON

I did. Eight years ago. And you
didn't want to hear about it!

LUCAS

I wasn't alone. Every reputable
lawyer in town turned you down. So,
now you've gone to my son. Behind
my back! You know this could
destroy him.

LAWSON

I didn't want him to go up to Bolivar. I just wanted him to file the writ... Grace has been locked away for almost a decade...

LUCAS

James, you don't give a damn about that crazy old white woman! You just want to reopen the case.

LAWSON

Those efforts aren't mutually exclusive!

LUCAS

So you came to my son, to my only son...

Lawson looks at his old friend.

LAWSON

He wasn't my first choice, Lucas.

LUCAS

You can't do this. After all we've meant to one another... all we've been through. Promise me you'll get another lawyer. Promise me, Jim. I need your word.

Lawson hesitates.

INT. LAWSON'S HOME - LATE THE NEXT DAY

A modest home. A LOUD KNOCK. The SOUND of youthful footsteps approaching.

Lawson's nine-year-old son, SETH, complete with a Jackson Five Afro, is about to open it, when DOROTHY LAWSON (30s) strides into the scene.

DOROTHY

Seth, I told you before... Don't open the door to strangers.

She moves her son back with her hand. She looks through the fish eye in the door.

DOROTHY'S POV: JEFF IN DISTORTION

DOROTHY
 (continuing)
 Who is it?

JEFF (O.S.)
 It's Jeffrey Jenkins, Mrs. Lawson.
 I'm here to see Jim.

Dorothy opens the door.

DOROTHY
 Jeffrey Jenkins. Last time I saw
 you, I think you were still in
 short pants.

JEFF
 I still wear 'em, but now it's just
 to play ball.

DOROTHY
 Good, someone needs to put the
 Reverend in his place. He's out
 back, shooting hoops.

Jeff enters the home and Dorothy begins leading him through
 the neat interior. Seth runs ahead.

DOROTHY
 (continuing)
 Sorry about the door... It's
 just... you can't be too careful.
 There've been some threatening
 phone calls.

EXT. LAWSON BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

A basketball arcs through the sky. WOOSH. Nothing but net.
 The shooter moves in to retrieve the ball - it's Jim Lawson,
 dressed in a damp shirt, jeans and tennis shoes.

SETH (O.S.)
 Gimme the ball, Dad!

The back door flies open. Seth comes running out of the
 house. Jim looks up to see his son - followed by Jeff and
 Dorothy. Jim hesitates, bounces the ball.

LAWSON
 Seth, take the ball inside.
 (tosses it to him)
 You've got to practice the piano. And
 I need to be alone with Mr. Jenkins.

Jeff walks toward Jim. Seth takes the ball into the house. Dorothy follows her son, closing the door behind her.

JEFF
I went to Bolivar.

LAWSON
That's more than I asked for.

JEFF
I wanted to see for myself. I made a tape recording...

LAWSON
You did what?

JEFF
Grace kinda rambled. But something strange is going on.

A weary Jim moves to a picnic bench, sits down.

LAWSON
It doesn't matter.
(Jeff looks confused)
I've contacted another attorney to take the case. I'm sorry. I'll see that your law firm gets paid for your time.

JEFF
Is this because I never tried a case before?

LAWSON
It's because of a lot of things. I made a mistake. I'd need you to return that tape.

JEFF
But I can do this.

LAWSON
You've done enough. Just return the tape. I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

A radio somewhere is BLARING out a disco beat. Katy is waiting with several files.

PULL BACK to see out the glassed front door. Jeff pulls up in his TR3, gets out, comes up the walk. Katy turns as he enters.

KATY

I brought the stuff you wanted. But do you mind telling me what's going on.

JEFF

Thanks. I'm sorry. It's all coming unwound.

KATY

What's coming unwound?

JEFF

Come on up. I need a beer. And you deserve an explanation.

KATY

(unsure)
You think I should?

JEFF

Come on. You won't believe what just happened.

They MOVE OUT OF SHOT and head upstairs

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeff and Katy walk up the stairs. He moves along to his door, takes out his key.

JEFF

... When Lawson found out I went to see Grace, he got really pissed.

Across the hall, a neighbor is peeking through a chain locked door. Katy turns and catches her disapproving look.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Katy and Jeff enter. The interior is dark. Jeff flips on the light switch and nothing happens.

JEFF

These are out.

A lamp comes at camera.

NEW ANGLE - JEFF & KATY - WIDEN

The lamp smashes into Jeff and a man shoves him.

Jeff falls into Katy and they both go down. The man bolts out of the room and into the hall.

Before Katy can react, Jeff gives chase out into the dark hallway, running down the stairs, taking them three and four at a time, tripping, falling, rolling, coming to his feet in the entry and out the front door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jeff runs out into the street just as a gray sedan takes off, heading right at him.

ANGLE - JEFF AND SEDAN

Jeff dives up onto the sidewalk to avoid being hit. The sedan roars away, up the street.

JEFF'S POV - LICENSE PLATE HOLDER

It is empty - no plate.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jeff comes into the apartment. He has a cut over his eye where the lamp hit him. The lights are now on. The place has been thoroughly ransacked.

JEFF

Gone... he got away. You got the lights back on...

KATY

He only unscrewed the bulbs.
(she sees his cut)
You okay?

JEFF

Yeah.

She hands a tissue to Jeff who moves to the telephone.

JEFF

(continuing; dials 0)
Operator, connect me with the police.

KATY

Wait a minute.

She depresses the phone button. Jeff is confused.

KATY (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 Look at this place. TV's still
 here... stereo...

She moves to a ransacked dresser.

KATY
 (continuing)
 Gold cufflinks, watch...
 (holds them up)
 Not much of a burglar.

JEFF
 (puzzled)
 What the hell's going on?

KATY
 Where's the tape?

JEFF
 With the rest of the case material -
 - at the office.

INT. LAW OFFICE - NIGHT

TIGHT ON a tape player.

GRACE (V.O.)
 Yep.

JEFF (V.O.)
 Can you tell me?

GRACE (V.O.)
 Cause Charlie told them. Not me. I
 wouldn't lie.

Katy and Jeff are listening, exchanging glances.

JEFF (V.O.)
 Charlie? Who's Charlie?

GRACE (V.O.)
 Threw him outa Jim's. He's in the
 Hornet's Nest now.

Jeff reaches out and shuts off the tape.

JEFF
 Who's Charlie? And what did he
 tell them?

KATY
And what's the Hornet's Nest?

EXT. HORNET'S NEST - NIGHT

Tight on an old neon sign that depicts a wasp. The Hornet's Nest is a grimy bar located by the river. PULL BACK to show Jeff looking at the sign. He moves inside.

INT. HORNETS NEST - NIGHT

There are a few listless drunks leaning at the bar. Jeff moves to the BARTENDER, (60, decrepit).

JEFF
I'm looking for Charlie.

BARTENDER
Charlie who?

JEFF
Old Charlie. Hangs out here.

BARTENDER
What are you drinking?

JEFF
Two of whatever Charlie drinks.

The bartender pulls two long necks from the cooler. Jeff drops a twenty on the counter.

BARTENDER
Hey, C.Q.

An old drunk looks up from a booth in the back.

CHARLIE
Huh?

JEFF
(to the bartender)
Thanks.

Jeff takes the two bottles, moves to the booth and slides in.

JEFF
(continuing)
Mr. Stephens?

CHARLIE
I ain't looking for no new friend,
so git.

Jeff sets a beer in front of Charlie

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Strike that. Glad ta' meetcha'.
Charlie Q.

Stephens is not falling down drunk, but, on the other hand, he's never sober. Jeff hands Charlie a business card. In the dim light, Charlie tries to read it.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Attorney In Law.

JEFF
At Law. I represent Grace Walden.

CHARLIE
(bursts out laughing)
Grace is a ghost, ain't you heard?
They locked her up, man, threw 'way
the key. She called a couple years
back. But the line went dead.

JEFF
She's in trouble, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Why? She din't sign no affidavit.
They don't owe her no money.

JEFF
Why'd they lock her up?

CHARLIE
Cause she wouldn't listen to me. I
told her to sign that stupid paper.
Hell, she's the one what saw him.

JEFF
Saw whom?

CHARLIE
Man, you don't know shit.
(he stares)
She saw the guy they say shot
Martin Luther King.

Jeff sits there stunned.

JEFF
I beg your pardon.

CHARLIE

Take the wax outta' yer ears, kid.
They say she saw King's killer.
They showed her a picture. She
told 'em it weren't the man she
saw. Then zap! Ol' Gracie is gone
faster'n Jack's cat.

JEFF

What did you see?

CHARLIE

Hell, I din't see shit. But I told
them what they wanted. Signed a
paper and everything.

JEFF

Who told you to sign a paper?

CHARLIE

The FBI. They was nice, at first.
Offered me a reward. One hundred
thousand crisp US dollars. After I
signed, the shitheads never paid.

JEFF

But you didn't see anything.

Charlie erases this irrelevant observation with his hand in
the air.

CHARLIE

They didn't say nothin' about
paying me for what I saw. They
said they'd pay me for what I
signed!

Jeff studies Charlie Q. Stephens, sure now that whatever else
may have happened, Charlie is telling the truth.

JEFF

Is there anything you know that
could help get Grace out of
Bolivar? There's no money in it.

Charlie winces.

CHARLIE

I could swear that Grace was never
crazy... But I reckon you wouldn't
want me for no witness, would you?

Jeff is moved by the human being, Charlie Stephens, peering out from the "character" of the notorious loser.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Have you seen her? How's she doing?

JEFF
Not real good. When I met her she seemed awful confused.

CHARLIE
Sounded fine when I talked ta her on the phone. 'Course that was some time ago.

JEFF
What time a day was it?
(Charlie looks confused)
When she called? What time of day was it?

CHARLIE
Mornin. Had to be 'fore 7. Why? What you thinkin'?

JEFF
Just wondering what time of day they hand out the meds...

INT. LAWSON'S CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Lawson is at his desk, on the phone.

LAWSON
(into receiver)
Look... I need the power back on. I have an evening choir service. Can't we get somebody to take a look at it?

PUSH PAST his shoulder to the WINDOW. A gray TERMITE INSPECTION TRUCK is parked across the street.

INT. TRUCK - - DAY

Two AGENTS are monitoring the phone tap on Reverend Lawson.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(filtered)
We'll try and get a crew out there in a little bit.

INT. LAWSON'S STUDY - DAY

He presses the button to disconnect. After he does, he hears two more CLICKS. He looks at the phone, then notices the truck outside the window. He flips open his Rolodex, and dials.

LAWSON
Hello, Sister Ione? It's Reverend
Lawson...

INTERCUT - SISTER IONE'S LIVING ROOM

Gospel music PLAYS. There is a picture of a White Jesus on the wall. Ione holds the phone, elated.

IONE
Oh, Reverend? Must be my lucky day.

LAWSON
Well, Sister Ione, luck ain't
nothing but preparation meeting
opportunity. Now, before Willy
gets the opportunity to sing for
Brother Boxer, we gotta be sure
he's prepared. Is he around?

IONE
(bellowing)
Willeee!!!

INTERCUT - INT. VAN

The men with the headphones wince.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Willie comes to the phone.

WILLY
Yes sir...

LAWSON
Willy, I want you to practice for
me right here, on the phone. Eye
On The Sparrow.

WILLY
Oh, yes sir!

He clears his throat, starts singing badly.

WILLY (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 I sing because I'm happy, I sing
 because I'm free...

LAWSON
 Louder, Willy, louder. Take me
 home, son!

WILLIE
 Yes sir.

Willy belts out the song louder and way off key.

INT. VAN

Willy's grating singing fills the enclosure as the two Agents suffer. Tape wheels spin, recording it all.

CUT TO:

INT. BOLIVAR STATE HOSPITAL LOBBY - - DAY

Close on a wall clock. It reads 6:30. PAN DOWN TO Brian Greene, with an "e". GUARD #3 is trying to guide Greene out of the hallway, back into his room.

GREENE
 ... I believe it was a Rottweiler --
 "e" "i" "l" -- that's a German dog!
 It was wandering in the hallway...

GUARD #3
 Mr. Greene, get back to your room.

JEFF, in a well-soiled food service uniform, pushes a cart down the hall. A hair net and dark glasses complete his disguise. As the attendant leads Greene back to his room, Greene stops. He stares at Jeff. Then it hits him.

GREENE
 Jeffrey Jenkins, Esquire! Jeffrey
 with a J not a G. Esquire, not
 like a knight, but a barrister...

Jeff tries to contain his panic. The Guard looks at the grimy food service uniform, then back at Greene.

GUARD #3
 Get your ass in your room!

The Guard leads Greene off. Jeff breathes deeply, moves on.

INT. PATIENTS' WARD -- GRACE'S CUBICLE

Jeff slips into Grace's cubicle. Grace looks up and stares. Jeff removes his glasses, starts talking quickly.

JEFF
Mrs. Walden -- it's me. Your
lawyer. Jeffrey Jenkins?

She looks back at him. Grace is surprised. Jeff removes the tape recorder from his pants.

JEFF
(continuing)
The firm of Branson, Davis and
Douglas. Don't you remember?

Grace stares. Jeff suddenly remembers. He removes the hair net. Grace smiles.

GRACE
Mr. Jenkins?... They sure ran you
out of here the other day -- I
remember that.

JEFF
Mrs. Walden, why are you here?
(no response)
We don't have much time.

GRACE
Are you really my lawyer?

JEFF
Yes, Ms. Walden. This is just a
disguise...

GRACE
Are you goin' to get me out of
here? I need your word.

JEFF
I'll do everything in my power...

GRACE
No! No excuses. Last time I told
what happened, it landed me in
here. I need you to promise.

Jeff pauses. This old woman has clearly been through hell.

JEFF
 You have my word, Grace. I
 promise. I'll get you out.

She studies Jeff's eyes. Hesitates, then

GRACE
 After the gun shot. I saw the man
 who ran down the corridor. And I
 wouldn't lie about it.

JEFF
 What happened?

Grace looks away; her voice and eyes remember.

GRACE
 I was living with Charlie Q.
 Stephens back then... It was April
 4th of '68.

FLASHBACK:

INT. ROOMING HOUSE -- BLACK AND WHITE

Grace sits reading in her room. The door to her room is open.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE HALLWAY

Charlie Q. Stephens, drunk and disorderly, is pounding on the
 door of the bathroom which is shared by the entire floor.

CHARLIE
 (shouting)
 Hey, did you move in there? There
 are other people out here, you
 know. Will you get out of that
 g'damn bathroom?

There is no answer. Charlie kicks the door, then turns to
 walk down the hallway. He passes the room he shares with
 Grace, then starts to descend the stairway.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE -- DAY

Charlie leaves the building and heads for the alley beside
 the house, complaining.

CHARLIE
 Sonofabitch thinks he owns the
 bathroom...

Charlie begins to urinate, still mumbling and complaining.

INT. GRACE'S ROOM

Grace remains in her room, reading her book. As she rocks in her rocking chair, an EXPLOSION from a high-powered rifle rattles the room! Grace bolts up. She hears FOOTSTEPS. Grace turns towards the hallway. Her door is partially open.

GRACE'S POV

A MAN -- short, approximately 50 years old, rushes past Grace's door. He is carrying something in his right hand. His body intervenes between the object and Grace.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GRACE'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- THE PRESENT

Start TIGHT ON Grace.

GRACE

Five minutes later, seemed like there were police everywhere. They brought in some guy who wanted me to help put together a picture of the man I saw...

JEFF

An identikit?

GRACE

Something like that... And after I finished with that artist, the FBI came. I told them everything I knew and they left...

FLASHBACK:

INT. GRACE'S ROOM -- BLACK AND WHITE

GRACE (V.O.)

... But they came back that summer, in early June...

TWO FBI AGENTS have photos and documents spread out before Grace. Charlie Stephens sits in a corner watching and listening. One agent is PAUL and the other is BOBBY LEE.

BOBBY LEE

... Alright, now, honey, sign right here.

GRACE

I don't have my glasses.

PAUL
It's an affidavit. It says that
this man --
(flashes photo)
-- James Earl Ray, is the man you
saw on the day of the murder.

GRACE
You already know who he is?

PAUL
They got him over in England. And
when you sign this, they'll ship
him back to us. You'll be famous.
It's for your country.

Charlie's big eyes are looking for an opening. Grace sees
Charlie signaling her.

BOBBY LEE
Then there's the money. Some
people here in Memphis have offered
a reward of \$100,000. Wouldn't you
like to have \$100,000?

GRACE
That would be very nice.

The FBI Agents share a look.

PAUL
You bet. So just put your John
Hancock right here.

GRACE
(finds her glasses)
Could you show me that picture
again?

Bobby Lee pushes a photo over to her. Grace studies the
picture.

GRACE
(continuing)
You got the wrong man.

PAUL
(impatient)
Let me assure you, Mrs. Walden, we
have the right man.

GRACE

The man I saw come past that door was older, shorter, and thinner than this man. Didn't look anything like him.

BOBBY LEE

Don't you want to help your country?

GRACE

Yes, sir, I sure do. You find the right man and I'll sign that affidavit. Gotta say what I truly seen.

Bobby Lee knows he's got a problem.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GRACE'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- THE PRESENT

JEFF

You never signed the affidavit?

GRACE

I couldn't. They had the wrong man.

JEFF

You're sure?

GRACE

I wish I wasn't...

FLASHBACK:

INT. GRACE'S ROOM - BLACK AND WHITE - NIGHT

A BLACK SCREEN. Suddenly, a hole gets kicked into the middle of the shot as TWO MEN, back lit, throw open the door and rush into the room.

GRACE (V.O)

... But I wouldn't lie. So they came back... middle of the night. They break into our room.

The two men drag a half awake Grace out of bed.

GRACE

(continuing)

Whatcha doing? Stop it! Leggo' a me!

One of the men has restraints in his jacket. Grace is bound and pulled out of the rooming house.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GRACE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - PRESENT - DAY

GRACE

Next thing I know, I'm in here.
Won't let me talk to anyone on the
outside. I'm the only one. No
visits. Not even by telephone. And
that's over eight years now.

Jeff just stares with a growing concern. He shuts off the tape recorder.

JEFF

I'm going to get you out of here,
Grace. I promise.

CUT TO:

INT. N.D. OFFICE - - DAY

The Backlit Man is on the phone. Grainy black and white surveillance photos of Jeff and Lawson are on his desk.

BACKLIT MAN

These guys aren't getting the
message.

(listens)

It's worth a try.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lawson is preaching without a mike.

LAWSON

We're having our service today
without electricity, but Jesus
didn't need electricity.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

Amen.

LAWSON

They can kill the power, but they
can't kill our power, because our
power's from above and we sure pay
that monthly bill right here, don't
we?

CONGREGATION

(chuckling)

Amen.

The door at the side of the rostrum opens and two men in gray suits walk toward the lectern. The congregation gets quiet. Lawson does not see the men at first, but he is struck by the quiet congregation. He turns to see the first suit withdraw a wallet from his coat pocket.

MAN

Good morning, Reverend. We're from the IRS.

LAWSON

I'm conducting a church service.

MAN

And we're conducting a tax audit.
(hands over an envelope)
Could you please have your '73 through '75 records at our office tomorrow. By ten A.M. Sorry for the inconvenience.

They turn and leave as Lawson looks after them.

INT. JUSTINE'S RESTAURANT - - NIGHT

A STRING QUARTET is playing a medley from Show Boat, rising to "Old Man River." Lucas is at a table reading the Press-Scimitar. Jeff approaches. He's edgy, slightly disheveled.

JEFF

Sorry I'm late.

(he sits)

Everything's just turned upside down. First Lawson puts me on the Walden case, then he tries to pull me off. I meet Grace. She seems crazy one day, then clear-as-a-bell the next. Then I find Grace's companion, guy named Charlie Q. Stephens...

LUCAS

Charlie Q. Stephens?

JEFF

You know him?

LUCAS

Of him. Scrambled eggs!

A passing WAITER leans in.

WAITER
For dinner, Sir?

LUCAS
(laughing)
No. Just bring us some champagne.
(to Jeff)
What do you want with Charlie?

JEFF
He's a key witness in the Walden
case...

LUCAS
... Charlie Stephens didn't witness
dogshit!

JEFF
How do you know Charlie?

LUCAS
He was a big deal for fifteen
minutes. Said he saw James Earl Ray
run out of the rooming house after
Dr. King was shot. Hell, he just
wanted the reward money we offered.

The Waiter brings and pours the champagne.

JEFF
"We"?

LUCAS
I was part of a local committee.
Set up a reward fund to solve the
murder.

(gestures Waiter over)
Henri, how's the Sole tonight?

WAITER
Very fresh.

LUCAS
(to Jeff)
For both of us?
(Jeff nods)
And some gumbo to start.

The waiter leaves.

JEFF

Why didn't Charlie ever get his reward money?

LUCAS

Because he never testified. He didn't have to! James Earl Ray pled guilty. Had no choice. They found the murder weapon with his prints all over it.

JEFF

And Grace? She's still out at Bolivar.

LUCAS

That may have been an injustice. But her incarceration is not evidence of some conspiracy.

JEFF

Look, dad, I'm not a conspiracy nut. I'm just a lawyer trying to win my first case.

LUCAS

You have to consider more than winning, son. You have to consider what's best for your client. Can she take care of herself?

JEFF

I'm not sure. But I am sure she can't stay out there at Bolivar.

LUCAS

What if you had her moved to a half-way house.

JEFF

What?

LUCAS

Forget the trial, no trial. Just a simple motion for relief.

JEFF

She was illegally incarcerated. She deserves her day in court.

LUCAS

Look, if you mention the King assassination, they'll have her certified... and the only way she'll leave that place is in an urn. Listen to me: get your motion technically perfect, keep it de minimus. She'll go to a nice place, be well cared for.

The waiter approaches, sets down two bowls of soup.

WAITER

Enjoy your soup.

Jeff is pensive. Lucas looks at him, then picks up his spoon and samples the gumbo. It's terrific.

INT. BRANSON LAW LIBRARY -- TWO DAYS LATER

Large and spacious, there is an Oriental rug over hardwood floors and a massive conference table. Law books surround the walls. Jeff is looking something up. Clay Morgan enters.

MORGAN

Hey, Jeff. What makes no money, pisses off partners and sinks faster than lead shot?

JEFF

Clay, I don't need this right now.

MORGAN

BIZZZ! Time's up. It's your Grace Walden case.

The door to the library opens and Branson enters. He notices Jeff and Morgan.

BRANSON

Clay could you excuse us for a moment?

Clay leaves, closing the door behind him. Branson looks at Jeff, then spins his case file around and looks at it.

BRANSON

(continuing)

Habeas corpus application for release? You're determined to make an opera of this, aren't you?

JEFF
No, sir. Just defending my client.

BRANSON
Ten hours, that was the deal.
You're way over.

JEFF
Well, sir it's gotten kinda
complicated. I believe if you...

Jeff stops because Branson is glaring at him. Branson sighs.

BRANSON
Okay, here's how it will be
handled. You will appear before
Judge Horace Jackson. You will
file a motion for confinement to a
halfway house. There will be no
further suits, actions or claims.
Is that clear?

JEFF
Very clear, sir.

Branson turns and leaves.

INT. MEMPHIS COURTROOM - - DAY

Jeff and Katy enter the courtroom. Katy takes a seat in the
first row of the spectator section, directly behind the
defense table.

LAWSON (O.S.)
Jeff.

Jeff turns to see Lawson get up from the opposite side of the
courtroom.

LAWSON
(continuing)
This is a mistake. Get a
postponement, do what ever...

BAILIFF
All rise! Court is in session. The
Honorable Judge Horace Jackson
presiding.

Jackson enters, takes his seat. Jeff moves to his appointed
spot at the defense table. A side door opens. Grace appears
in the doorway, escorted by a MATRON and a GUARD.

She is dressed in a horrible print smock. Her hair is a mess and she isn't wearing her teeth.

JEFF
(turns to Katy)
Where's her new dress?

KATY
I don't know. I delivered it myself.

Grace is led to the defense table.

JEFF
Grace? Are you alright. Where's the dress we bought you?

Grace stares off in the distance, drugged.

JEFF
(continuing; to the Matron)
Come on, lady, what'd you give her? Where's her new dress?!

This tense face-off is interrupted by the POUNDING of the Judge's gavel. Jackson looks disapprovingly at Grace.

JUDGE JACKSON
(sotto voce)
Good God...
(leans back)
Counsel approach the bench. You join us, too, Mr. Cooper.

C. JAMES COOPER, Assistant Attorney General, and Jeff walk up to the bench. Jeff is white with rage. Lawson looks on with consternation.

JUDGE
(to Jeff)
Your client don't look too alert to me, counselor.

JEFF
(nervous)
Perhaps, Your Honor, that's because she's been given sedatives.

COOPER
The State is outraged, your Honor!

JUDGE
That's a serious accusation, young man.

JEFF

I'm sorry, your Honor. I am simply asking for a ruling on my application for habeas corpus.

JUDGE

Well, that's flat denied. It's obvious to anyone with eyes that Ms. Walden is in no condition to care for herself. I order that she be moved to a halfway house.

Jeff, Grace, Lawson all react. In the back of the courtroom sits a stoic, elderly man, MR. PHILLIPS.

JUDGE

(continuing; indicating)
Mr. Phillips, I hereby name you guardian ad-litem to protect the interests of Ms. Walden. If you believe that interviews and involvement in controversial matters would be harmful to her, I am confident you will act appropriately.

JEFF

But your Honor...

The Judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Shut up, Mr. Jenkins, and you hear what I say. You are to have no further contact with Miz Walden. That means by phone or by mail or by smoke signals. You got me on that?

JEFF

She's never had a hearing or a psychiatric evaluation. She's been denied...

JUDGE

Don't mess with me Mr. Jenkins, unless you intend to embark on a new career.

The Judge precipitously swivels in his chair and heads for his chambers. Jeff is stunned, turns to see Lawson. Their eyes connect. PUSH IN on Lawson.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP

A black and white image of the 1968 Sanitation Workers' March. At the head of the march, walking arm-in-arm, is a row of clergy. At the center of the group is Martin Luther King. Next to him is Jim Lawson.

INT. CHURCH STUDY - DAY

Lawson sits at his desk, staring at the photo in front of him. MOVE IN TIGHT Lawson. SOUNDS of breaking glass begin to rise. SHOUTING.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. MEMPHIS STREET - DAY - MARCH 30, 1968

Black and white newsreel footage of the March. Then the images of rioting. Of the police. Mayhem. Then the row of Clergy marching arm-in-arm. MOVE-IN ON King and Lawson. Flash! The screen goes white.

CUT BACK TO:

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH OF LAWSON AND KING IN THE MARCH

INT. CHURCH STUDY - PRESENT

Pull back from the photograph to reveal that it rests on the desk. Lawson sits quietly, anguished by the memory. The room is lit only by candles.

DOROTHY (V.O.)

Were you back with Martin, again?

Lawson turns to see his wife has entered the study.

LAWSON

No... no... just thinking.

DOROTHY

I'm going home. Gotta get the tax records together. Clarence said the power company still hasn't showed up. He's checking the cable himself.

LAWSON

Thanks.

He seems down and she knows her man.

DOROTHY
It wasn't your fault, baby.

LAWSON
Yeah, I know... I know.

DOROTHY
We'll get through it. We always
have before.

She kisses him on the top of the head and leaves. Lawson
sits back and looks at the picture of Martin.

LAWSON
(sotto voce)
Am I doing right here, Martin? I
feel like I'm messing up...
(a beat)
Gimme a sign, Brother.

And right then, the lights come back on.

CLARENCE'S VOICE
I got 'em Reverend. Looks like the
line was cut.

A loud POP!!

INT. LUCAS JENKINS'S HOME - - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP on a champagne bottle. The cork flies, foam spills.
PULL-BACK to reveal Lucas Jenkins pouring the champagne into
two glasses. Jeff stands across from his father. Lucas
passes him a glass. He then raises his glass to propose a
toast. Jeff reluctantly follows suit.

LUCAS
Ubi Ius Ibi Remedium. Where law
prevails, there is a remedy. To you,
Jeff, to your first legal victory.

JEFF
Victory? I was all but run outta
court.

LUCAS
Nonsense. You have to temper your
idealism with practicality. The
Memphis Lawyer called me for a quote.
They're doing an article about you.
You've come out of this just fine.

JEFF

You think? I can't see my client. That halfway house could be just another locked room. I'll never know, because I've been prohibited from contacting her.

LUCAS

Grace will be just fine.

JEFF

You don't know that! You went to Lawson to have me pulled off the case. Didn't you?! Then you went to Branson.

(no response)

That was your idea, the halfway house? You went behind my back.

LUCAS

I protected your back! I'm trying to operate in your best interest.

JEFF

I have a client. She happens to be my first client and my only client. She's not crazy. She doesn't need a halfway house. She needs her freedom.

LUCAS

And you need to stop being so damn naive! Lawson just wanted a white face to walk into court. He knew about the strings attached to Grace Walden, about Charlie Stephens and James Earl Ray and the whole cesspool of lunatic conspiracy theories. He set you up. And he'll drag you down with him.

Jeff turns, leaving his father alone. Prelap SOUND of a doorbell.

INT. LAWSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lawson opens the front door and finds Jeff standing on his front porch.

JEFF

We need to talk.

He pushes his way into the house. Lawson follows.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

They enter. Lawson closes the door.

JEFF

This isn't about Grace Walden at all, is it?! Grace is your star witness! You're trying to use her to reopen the King case.

LAWSON

To begin with, lower your voice. I have children sleeping.

Jeff takes a deep breath, nods.

LAWSON

(continuing)

Secondly, ~~(MORE)~~ I asked you to go up to Bolivar? I just asked you to file a writ.

JEFF

(still pissed)

She was my client. I can't file papers on her behalf without talking to her first.

LAWSON

Sure you can. She was denied due process. Write a writ, plain and simple. File it. Instead, because you went up there, you got them all riled up. Now she's locked away in some halfway house and we'll never get her testimony.

JEFF

You never gave a damn about her. For you this was just about the King assassination!

LAWSON

You're wrong, Jeff.

JEFF

Yeah? Why now? It's been eight years. Case closed.

LAWSON

Wrong! The climate has changed. Hoover's dead. We're out of Viet Nam.

LAWSON(CONT'D)

Now the public's beginning to ask questions. People are organizing. There's a petition drive - demanding that the Congress set up a committee to investigate. The time is right. We have to do it now.

JEFF

We? You presume that "we" includes the young white attorney who was dumb enough to run a key part of your case by a genteel white judge? Right?

LAWSON

A Black attorney would be viewed differently. It would look more like politics than law.

JEFF

It is politics. It's nothing but politics.

(a beat.)

My father is right. I'm one naive bastard.

LAWSON

There's much more at stake here than your feelings. Martin was murdered. He was assassinated and the wrong man is in jail for it.

JEFF

You wanted me to return the tape. Here it is!

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out an audio tape.

JEFF

(continuing)

The first one was gibberish. This one tells it all. Take it, I won't need it anymore.

He hands Lawson the tape, gets up and exits.

INT. RACK AND CUE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

Start on a triangle of balls. A cue ball smacks into the pack. Jeff is shooting a solitary game of Eight Ball. He's a lone white face in the run down joint. On the TV screen over the bar, the local TV station is on.

TV ANNOUNCER

As we approach the eighth anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, our reporter, Terri Chambers, has assembled a tribute to this great American.

On the TV, a montage special of King.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Well, well well...

Jeff turns to see Harold. He is sharply dressed. Harold is barely recognizable as the Jenkins' humble houseman. He holds a cue case.

HAROLD

(continuing)

What's they ~~more~~ (MORE) Ya gotta bring some ass to whup some ass! Must be ass-whupping time.

JEFF

(down)

Ain't been that time for a while Poppa H.

HAROLD

(putting cue together)

Well, well, Mister Jeff, you not here for a whuppin'?

(no response)

You here about that pretty girl?

(no response)

Must be serious. We better rack 'em up.

Collecting the balls in the triangle. The TV keeps rolling the clips. The immediate image shows the chaos right after King's killing.

JEFF

You go to Lawson's church, right?

HAROLD

Deacon's Board. Eleven years now.

JEFF

What's with that guy?

HAROLD

The Reverend?

(Jeff nods)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Lawson's a heavyweight. Studied at that Ghandi School in India. Taught nonviolence to all them students that integrated in Selma, Montgomery...

JEFF

But what about all the conspiracy stuff? I mean, seems a little, I don't know...

HAROLD

... or you don't want to know?
 (Jeff is caught like a deer in headlights)
 Scary, ain't it? This here's the land of the free... the home of the brave, huh? One nation, with liberty and justice for all! Wake up, boy!

Jeff has been so accustomed to seeing Harold as the deferential houseman, that the sudden revelation of Harold's political cynicism is disorienting.

HAROLD

(continuing; lines up his break)
 You busy tomorrow, 'round 8PM?

Jeff nods. Harold breaks. The balls scatter. On the TV - a powerful image of King.

KING

(footage)
 The goal of life is not to seek pleasure or pain. The goal of life is to do God's work, come what may...

Jeff looks intently at the screen. King alive, vital.

SHOCK CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP -- MARTIN LUTHER KING, DEAD

A VOICE

Next!

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - - NIGHT

A flash of light reveals a slide-projector. ANOTHER SLIDE pops onto the large screen: a closer shot of King, dead.

A large sign tells us we are at MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. Only a handful of STUDENTS, mostly black, are in attendance. From a light booth, an AIDE punches up slides onto a screen.

The spill of light reveals DICK GREGORY, as he concludes his lecture.

GREGORY

...Next!

SLIDE #2: KING'S AIDES POINTING FROM THE BALCONY

GREGORY

(continuing)

Who did it? I don't know. But I do know that before you can discover the who, you have to understand the why.

SLIDE #3: THE WEARY DEFIANT FACES OF THE WORKERS IN CONTRAST TO THE HELMETED POLICE.

Jeff and Harold stand ~~(MORE)~~ at the back of the auditorium, listening.

GREGORY

(continuing)

Dr. King came to Memphis to march with the striking workers. He came because Reverend James Lawson begged him to come.

SLIDE 4: MLK AND JIM LAWSON MARCHING ARM-IN-ARM

Jeff is taken by surprise.

SLIDE 5: A WORKER WEARS A PLACARD THAT SAYS "I AM A MAN"

GREGORY

(continuing)

"I am a man!" Martin came to Memphis so that sanitation workers could have the simple right to use the city's toilets instead of a tin can in the cab of their truck!

STUDENT

Mr. Gregory, are you saying Dr. King was killed by someone opposed to the strike?

GREGORY

No. Memphis was the scene of the crime, but it wasn't the cause. The cause lay in Washington. Dr. King had organized a Poor People's March.

GREGORY(CONT'D)

People, maybe millions, were going to set up a tent city right in the heart of the Capitol.

(wipes his brow)

Martin intended to stay in DC until the economic order of this country was changed. And that terrified the authorities. It was sedition. It was insurrection!

The images on the screen continue to change, giving visual dimension to Gregory's narrative.

GREGORY

(continuing)

Exactly one month before the assassination, J. Edgar Hoover wired every FBI office: "Prevent the rise of a black Messiah". Washington, D.C. was Jerusalem to Martin Luther King - and to John Edgar Hoover.

The lights go up. The lean, intense Gregory "preaches" and teaches to the hushed audience.

GREGORY

(continuing)

Martin King was assassinated because he was a dreamer, a drum major, for all people's Human Rights! And those responsible for his death didn't just kill the dreamer - they wanted to kill the dream! We have to press for the truth. We have to relight the flame! Sign the petition. We can force the Congress to investigate Dr. King's murder.

A bell RINGS. Lecture is over. Harold looks at Jeff, then turns and walks away. Jeff stands shell-shocked, inert.

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The crowd is dispersing after the lecture. Gregory walks out carrying his slides and notes. Jeff is waiting.

JEFF

Mr. Gregory...?

GREGORY

I'm sorry. I'm running late.

JEFF
I'm Grace Walden's attorney.

Gregory stops, looks back at Jeff.

GREGORY
You know where I can reach her? We need her testimony.

JEFF
What makes you so sure that Ray didn't do it. They found the gun with his prints on it.

GREGORY
That they did. That fact alone points to his innocence.

Jeff appears confused. Pre-lap SOUNDS of running feet.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - APRIL 4, 1968 - 6:02 PM

Start on running feet. A shadowy figure emerges from the side entrance of the rooming house. In his right hand, he carries a rifle wrapped in a blanket. The figure turns left onto Main Street, drops the package in plain view and runs on.

GREGORY (V.O.)
Assume Ray did carefully plot the killing, why in hell would he drop the gun with his fingerprints on it right outside the rooming house?

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - PRESENT

GREGORY
That rifle was such an obvious plant, I'm surprised nobody watered it.

(growing impatient)
Look, the committee is about to hire a Special Counsel. Edward Ennis. He was Solicitor General under FDR. He'll need to interview Grace.

JEFF

My client has been involuntarily committed to an institution. My only concern is her freedom...

GREGORY

You can't really be that naive. Grace Walden is a political prisoner. You'll never get her justice until you deal with the larger issue. She's the key to this whole case. I need to talk to her!

JEFF

Not going to happen.

Jeff turns and walks away.

INT. LAWSON HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

We hear a persistent BANGING on the door. Jim Lawson moves through the shot, belting a robe, he is half-asleep as he leans down and looks through the peep hole.

HIS POV - FISH EYE - JEFF JENKINS

Standing on his porch in the rain. His hair and clothes dripping wet.

RESUME LAWSON

He opens the door, reveals Jeff.

JEFF

I have one question...

LAWSON

Come out of the rain, boy.

Jeff moves into the house and begins puddling on the floor of the entry hall. Lawson tosses him a towel.

JEFF

If Dick Gregory and the others can get Congress to open up an investigation and if Grace were to testify, could they protect her... keep her from being locked up in another nut house?

LAWSON

It's the Congress of The United States of America.

LAWSON(CONT'D)

They can do anything they want.

(beat)

We've already contacted a very eminent jurist to be Counsel...

JEFF

(interrupting)

I know. Edward Ennis.

(Lawson is surprised)

You don't need eminent! You need a killer, a pit bull.

LAWSON

What are you saying?

JEFF

Richard Sprague is in town for the Bar Association Convention...

(a beat)

He took on Tony Boyle and the whole corrupt Mine Workers Union and beat them to a pulp.

(beat)

You hire Sprague, and I'm with you on this.

LAWSON

(pauses)

Because of what happened to Martin, or what happened to Grace?

JEFF

I promised my client her freedom... so far, I haven't kept my word.

Lawson chooses his words carefully.

LAWSON

I'll have to make some calls, but if Sprague is available and willing, we'll go with him.

Jeff exhales. That settles it. He turns to go.

LAWSON

(continuing)

What are you gonna do?

JEFF

I'm gonna go rescue my client from that halfway house.

LAWSON

You're going to kidnap her?

JEFF
I'm going to liberate her.

LAWSON
Son, slow down here, for a minute.
You been drinking haven't you?
You're going to defy a court order?
You could go to jail.

JEFF
Yeah, I thought about that... and
that's a drag.

Lawson hesitates.

LAWSON
Hold on, a minute, I'm coming with
you.

JEFF
You gonna try to talk me out of it?

LAWSON
Somebody needs to say prayers over
this damn fool idea.

Lawson heads off to change. MOVE IN ON Jeff, still wet.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON Grace, talking on the telephone.

GRACE
Of course I recognize your voice.
(beat)
I don't think I can do that.
(beat)
Red. All right. Goodbye.

WIDEN TO REVEAL the MATRON in the room, listening.

GRACE
(continuing; to Matron)
That was my uncle. He wants me to
knit him a sweater. He likes red.

MATRON
I took the call downstairs. Sounded
like a young man to me...

EXT. STREET - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Jeff hangs up a pay phone and walks back, across the street. Lawson is sitting in his VW, parked behind a new red Chevy rental car. The rain has stopped.

JEFF

She'll be out front in fifteen minutes. Maybe a prayer about now would help.

Lawson puts the VW in gear and pulls out. Jeff walks to the rental car, gets in and hangs a U, going in the opposite direction.

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DAY

The red rental car pulls up in front of the Halfway House.

ON GRACE

She is seated on the top step, knitting. A large paper shopping bag is beside her. As soon as she sees the red car, Grace grabs the bag, darts down the steps and jumps into the car. It screams away. The Matron runs after.

THE MATRON

takes a pen and a pad from her pocket and tries to jot down the license plate number of the vehicle but Jeff has removed the plate. (He's learning the tricks).

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The red car makes a right turn at the next corner, then a left. It pulls up alongside Lawson's parked car. Jeff and Grace exit the red car and walk forward to the VW.

Lawson sits in the driver's seat. Next to him is a burly BLACK MAN. The Black Man exits the VW and walks toward Jeff. They exchange a word. The Black Man then moves to the red car, gets behind the wheel and drives away.

Jeff and Grace enter the VW and Lawson drives away.

INT. CAR - DAY

JEFF

Grace, this is Reverend Lawson. He's the one who asked me to be your attorney.

GRACE
God bless you, Reverend.

LAWSON
Thank you, Grace.
(a beat)
We've arranged a place for you to stay. We can only use it for a coupla' days, but we'll find a more permanent place. The main thing is, you'll be protected.

Grace appears relieved. They pull out.

EXT. A SMALL HOUSE ON CENTRAL AVE. - DAY

The VW pulls up. The SOUND of another car approaching gets Jeff's attention. TWO BLACK MEN drive up and park. They get out and approach Jeff. Grace looks at the men with concern.

LAWSON
These men were part of the Sanitation Workers' Strike. Dr. King came to Memphis to help them. They're going to take turns keeping an eye on the house.

Grace nods courteously to the two men.

JEFF
We're going to need you to tell your story.

GRACE
I won't say I saw something I didn't.

JEFF
That's what we're counting on.

Jeff hugs Grace.

INT. N.D. OFFICE - - DAY

The Backlit Man is seated at his desk. The door opens and an AGENT enters, stands with his back to the CAMERA.

AGENT
The Matron confirmed it. Grace Walden's gone.

BACKLIT MAN

Young Mr. Jenkins had a promising career. You have the file?

INT. BRANSON'S OFFICE - - DAY

CLOSE on a polished conference table. The Memphis Lawyer hits the shiny surface and slides across the table. We FOLLOW IT and PAN UP to Katy, who is standing in the office, looking at an angry William Branson.

BRANSON

You said you'd get us some press, Miss Bolton, but this sure as hell, isn't what I had in mind.

She picks it up.

(MORE)

BRANSON

(continuing)

Don't waste your time. It's not a pleasant read.

They stand there for a long moment, trading looks.

BRANSON

(continuing)

Frankly, I'm confused. Your people are always griping about lack of opportunity. And here you are, at a prestigious firm, where you have a chance to advance your race. And, what do you do with it?

(he points at article)

You jeopardize this firm's reputation and your own reputation for what? A crazy old lady.

(a beat)

Jeff Jenkins is listening to you and Lawson and all the rest of your people involved in this...

KATY

(interrupting)

Sir...

BRANSON

Let me finish. If Jeff is involved in the kidnapping of this woman, he will be disbarred and, likely jailed.

(a beat)

BRANSON (CONT'D)

I expect you to talk sense into that boy or don't bother to come back here tomorrow morning.

(a beat)

We've done our part. Now, dammit, you do yours.

Katy stands, her expression unflinching.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEMPHIS HOTEL - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Jeff and Lawson approach the entrance.

JEFF

(low)

Sprague may be the best criminal prosecutor in the country. He's only in town for a few days...

LAWSON

You don't have to sell me, son. Sell him.

INT. SPRAGUE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON RICHARD SPRAGUE. 40's, well-tailored. Tough as nails.

SPRAGUE

It's kinda off my beat...

LAWSON

My young friend here, tells me you're ... the best criminal prosecutor in the country.

Jeff gives Lawson a look.

SPRAGUE

(a smile)

I see...

(a beat)

Who knows about this meeting, tonight?

LAWSON

Besides us, just Congressman Fauntroy. He's in charge of the House Committee.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A dark-colored, windowless VAN is parked at the curb. A MIDDLE AGED WHITE MAN wearing a suit approaches the van. He carries three cups of coffee. He taps on the rear door. It opens. He steps inside. The door slides shut, WIPING FRAME.

INT. SPRAGUE'S HOTEL SUITE - MATCHING WIPE

As Jeff crosses frame. REVEAL Sprague, now with his tie off, holding the folder.

SPRAGUE

You realize that everyone who tries to prove a political conspiracy ends up being labeled a crackpot - or worse.

LAWSON

I've lived with that a while.

JEFF

Would you at least meet with Grace? I can have her here in ten minutes. She's been waiting to tell her story for eight years.

SPRAGUE

Let me get back to you. No need to rush into this. There's plenty of time.

Lawson reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope and hands it to Sprague.

LAWSON

This arrived at my church yesterday.

Sprague opens the envelope, withdraws a note. A small cylindrical object drops onto the coffee table. It is a .38 caliber bullet. The note is in block letters and reads:

"THE NEXT ONE IS FOR YOU NIGGER"

RESUME ALL

Jeff looks at Lawson. Sprague is clearly troubled.

SPRAGUE

So you're saying there's not that much time after all....

LAWSON
I'd sort of like to be around to
see how it comes out.

Sprague heaves a sigh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Neon signs flash from outside. Jeff's shirt sleeves are rolled up. He is pacing in the small living room of the suite. Lawson is seated, weary of Jeff's anxiety. LOW TONES murmur from the adjoining bedroom.

LAWSON
Will you just sit down.

Lawson reaches into a nightstand, withdraws a Gideon Bible.

LAWSON
(continuing)
Here. Read. It'll calm you down.

JEFF
(takes the book)
The Bible?

LAWSON
Try Genesis. Chapter 37.

JEFF
(finds the spot)
"And when they saw him afar off..."
You've got to be kidding.

LAWSON
Read.

Jeff sits, and, what the hell, he reads. After a moment, the door opens, REVEALING Grace for a minute. Then Sprague comes into the living room and closes the door, shutting Grace from view.

SPRAGUE
Lemme ask you a question... Does
she always take her teeth out when
she's talking to strangers?

JEFF
Shit.

SPRAGUE

She's an endearing old lady but she's fragile.

LAWSON

She's been isolated for eight years...

SPRAGUE

I can't go to the Congress with theories. I gotta have witnesses. Witnesses who can stand up to the most intense cross examination.

JEFF

Tell us who you need, and we'll try to get them for you.

SPRAGUE

That's your job. You find the witnesses that make your case and bring them to me.

LAWSON

Can we tell Fauntroy you're our attorney?

SPRAGUE

Not yet. Right now let's say, I'm ... willing to be convinced.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Grace is being put into the car and driven off by the Sanitation Workers who are guarding her. TEN other PEOPLE and a DOORMAN are milling in front of the Hotel.

Jeff and Lawson stand in the entry watching in silence as the windowless van pulls out to follow Grace.

ANGLE - JEFF

He sees the van and runs out into the street, blocking its way. It slams on the brakes. (They won't hit him in front of ten witnesses). The car with Grace turns the corner and is gone. The window of the van rolls down. A MAN leans out angrily.

MAN

Get outta' the way asshole!!

Enough time has passed so Jeff walks back and rejoins Lawson. The van goes up the street, but they have lost the chance to follow.

JEFF

I gotta go.

LAWSON

Where you going? We need to find witnesses.

JEFF

No, you need to find witnesses. I need to find a more permanent place for Grace to stay.

Jeff starts to walk off into the night.

LAWSON

Hey!... I wanna to hire you.

(Jeff turns)

I want you to be my Counsel.

JEFF

I thought I destroyed your case. Why would you want to hire a screw up like me?

LAWSON

(smiles)

I admire your dedication to your clients. I'm offering you a job. Start your meter.

JEFF

What about Grace? As part of my fee, can you arrange a place for Grace to live?

LAWSON

Well, I suppose...

JEFF

...With meals included.

There is a beat. Finally Lawson smiles. Then, he and Jeff shake hands.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT- - DAY

The Choir can be heard rehearsing Gospel music upstairs. Lawson is going through old newspaper clippings on the assassination. Brother Clarence escorts Katy in and motions to Lawson.

KATY

Excuse me. I'm looking for Jeff.

Lawson turns.

LAWSON

Katy. Jeff isn't here.

KATY

Where is he? With Grace?

LAWSON

At the coroner's office. You don't approve of Jeffrey's involvement in all this, do you?

KATY

Kidnapping is a serious crime.

LAWSON

Unfortunately, sometimes power concedes nothing without demand.

KATY

You're preaching to the wrong sister, Reverend. I lost my father to talk like that.

She moves deeper into the room.

KATY

(continuing)

Praying has kept my family on their knees for a long time.

(a beat)

Up until a couple of hours ago, I had the opportunity to maybe, one day, effect change from within the system. You can run around, trying to beat the doors down from the outside, and all you do is make a lot of noise. Insiders can open those doors.

LAWSON

True. But, "What does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and loses his soul"... Mark Eight, Chapter Thirteen.

KATY

"A man can't ride your back if you're standing up straight"
...Martin Luther King, April 15, 1967.

Jeff comes down the stairs, two at a time.

JEFF

Hey, I found something...
(sees Katy)
Katy, good you're here. Look at this. The slug that the Coroner removed from the body was in one piece.

Holds up a picture of the autopsy photo.

JEFF

(continuing)

The Coroner confirms it. But the slug that the FBI Lab used for a ballistic's test was in three pieces. That means there's a massive break in the chain of evidence.

KATY

Don't jump to conclusions.

JEFF

Who's jumping?! The FBI tried to match the rifle that was found in front of the rooming house to the death slug. There was no match. Katy, they can't prove that the gun with Ray's fingerprints on it is the murder weapon!

He looks at Katy, then Lawson. They're not with him.

JEFF

(continuing)

This is big. You two seem underwhelmed. Did I miss something?

EXT. CHURCH - - NIGHT

Jeff and Katy are exiting the Church, walking to her car.

KATY

... I'm not running. I'm just not going to be a part of a kidnapping.

JEFF

Look, even if none of this bullshit is true, she's a poor woman who's been institutionalized without due process.

KATY

It's easy for you to play semantics. You're a nice liberal white boy with no damn idea of what it's like out there.

JEFF

What about Grace Walden? What's it like for her?

KATY

Don't tell me about Grace. I've got a family full of Grace Waldens and they scrubbed floors to send me to college. I'm the first one out. Understand?. The farthest you're gonna fall, is your daddy's country club.

(a beat)

I'm sorry, Jeff, I can't afford to be a part of this.

She moves away from him and gets in her car and drives off, leaving him standing there.

EXT. MEMPHIS COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Lucas is seated at the outdoor bar, overlooking the luscious fairways. He's having a lemonade after finishing his morning golf. Bill Branson sits down beside him.

BRANSON

We just lost the State Employees Pension Fund and the Southern Utilities accounts.

He drops a copy of The Memphis Lawyer on the table.

BRANSON (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 And it's only Tuesday.

LUCAS
 (shaken)
 Jesus... I'll talk to him.

BRANSON
 It's too late for that. This could
 take us all down.

He gets up and exits, passing a WAITER who comes up to the table.

WAITER
 Phone call for you, Mr. Jenkins.

LUCAS
 Who is it.

WAITER
 Your son.

There is a long, reflective moment.

LUCAS
 Tell him I already left.

WAITER
 He said it's urgent.

LUCAS
 I'm not here.

The Waiter hesitates, then leaves. MOVE IN on Lucas.

INT. DARK CLOSET

A BLACK HAND in a dark closet thrusts through objects to grasp a long map carton.

INT. ED REDDITT'S DEN - - DAY

VOICE
 I was with Memphis PD for 20 years.
 I was in charge of security for Dr.
 King every time he came to Memphis.

The speaker is ED REDDITT (40s), a Memphis Police Detective: black; handsome; very intense. Reverend Lawson and Jeff sit. Jeff has his tape recorder running as Redditt unrolls a LARGE MAP from the carton and spreads it on his desk.

Lawson and Jeff rise to stand over it. (See Map in Appendix) Redditt picks up a handful of white pieces from a CHESS SET and positions them on the map.

REDDITT

This was my assignment. Here's the Lorraine Motel. Walden and Stephens were in the rooming house, here. According to the FBI, the gunman was over here.

He picks up the black chess king and places it on the diagram.

REDDITT

(continuing)

And King was here. Up until that evening, FBI agents were right here.

He picks up a handful of pieces and places more white pawns around the perimeter. Only the white queen remains in his hand. He looks at it, as do Jeff and Lawson.

JEFF

What's with the white queen?

REDDITT

No. Hoover wasn't there.

Lawson gives a huge chuckle, breaking the tension for a moment. As Redditt resumes, moving pieces, Jeff and Lawson crowd in closer.

REDDITT

(continuing)

My normal security detail consisted of ten men. But they cut me back to two. 'bout an hour before the killin', the Chief sent for me. It was like a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff...

FLASHBACK:

INT. MEMPHIS POLICE DEPARTMENT, APRIL 4, 1968, 4:30 P.M.

A large conference room filled with men seated at a table: some wearing high-ranking police brass and uniforms, others, in plainclothes, stand off to the side. Director of Fire and Police FRANK HOLLOMAN presides over the meeting. Ed Redditt has just been brought in by LIEUTENANT ARKIN.

HOLLOMAN

Ed, these gentleman are from the FBI. They have information that a group in Mississippi has a contract out to kill you. So, you go on home now and stay there.

REDDITT

Chief, I can't leave Officer Richmond alone.

HOLLOMAN

That's an order, and there's nothing to discuss.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. REDDITT HOME -- THE PRESENT

REDDITT

Two Memphis police officers took me home, and remained with me in the house.

LAWSON

You were under "house arrest"?

JEFF

Mr. Redditt -- what ever happened to this contract on your life?

REDDITT

After the assassination, no one ever said another word about it.

LAWSON

And would you be willing to testify to that? In front of Congress?

REDDITT

Man, I've carried this with me for too long... Yeah. I'd testify.

Jeff picks up several white pawns. He points to the area of the diagram that shows the fire station.

JEFF

Wouldn't the firemen have seen something?

Jeff puts down the white pawns at the fire station. Redditt smiles, picks up two black knights and places them, also, at the fire station.

REDDITT
 Especially the black firemen. If
 they'd been there.
 (to Lawson)
 Remember Floyd Newsum?

LAWSON
 Yeah. He helped organize the sit-
 in for the sanitation workers.

REDDITT
 Hey, I'm not the only one who's fed-
 up with all the lies. Talk to Floyd.

EXT. LEVEE - DAY

The Mississippi River. A stocky black man, FLOYD NEWSUM, is
 tossing stones into the tolling river. Lawson and Jeff stand
 behind him.

NEWSUM
 I should've been there! I would've
 seen the killer!

JEFF
 Why weren't you at the firehouse?

NEWSUM
 Because my supervisor called me at
 10:30 at night -- to tell me that I
 was transferred. Me and Norvil
 Wallace. We were the only two
 black firemen at Station 2.

LAWSON
 Maybe they needed you somewhere
 else...

NEWSUM
 No, Reverend: I was sent to a
 station that was over staffed.
 Understand? So was Norvil. We had
 no assignment. But at Number Two,
 they were so short-handed that the
 equipment was "inoperable for lack
 of personnel."

Jeff and Lawson exchange a look.

JEFF
 What men had the power to move Fire
 and Police Officers around like that?

NEWSUM
Not men. Man.

LAWSON
Frank Holloman.

JEFF
Who?

LAWSON
In the history of Memphis, for a brief period of time, there was one man who was the Director of both Fire and Police.

JEFF
Was Holloman working for the FBI?

NEWSUM
Best ask Arthur Murtaugh. He was with the bureau over twenty years. He's retired. Might be willing to talk.
(to Jeff)
You married?

JEFF
No.

NEWSUM
That's good.

INT. LAWSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Jeff and Lawson are working together. The office has been turned into a war room. Jeff reads from a file on King, while eating one of Sister Ione's delicious pies.

JEFF
I can't believe this stuff. They let King sit in jail with a broken arm? That's illegal.

LAWSON
That's real. Once Martin went to a maximum security prison for a traffic ticket.

Lawson moves to the bulletin board and looks at it.

LAWSON
(continuing)
What about Charlie Q. Stephens?

JEFF

If Sprague thought Grace was fragile, he's gonna love Charlie. Besides, Charlie Q. Stephens didn't witness dogshit.

(off Lawson's look)

A quote from the honorable Lucas Jenkins.

LAWSON

Yeah, well, Murtaugh sounds promising.

Jeff starts on another pie as: Dorothy opens the door and sticks her head in.

DOROTHY

Sister Ione is out here, baby. She needs to talk to you.

LAWSON

Oh no... not now.

DOROTHY

I've put her off twice already.

JEFF

(licking his fingers)

Is that the lady with the pies? Get us another peach cobbler.

INT. CORRIDOR - - DAY

The Reverend emerges from his office.

LAWSON

Sister Ione, what can I do for you?

IONE

(tears in her eyes)

I'm so sorry, Reverend, but I can't come here anymore.

LAWSON

Willie didn't get his solo? I'll talk to Brother Boxer.

IONE

No... It ain't safe here.

LAWSON

Not safe?

IONE

My sister went to 16th Street Baptist back in Birmingham. You remember?

(a beat)

Some of us been gettin' phone calls... and then, there're those men taking pictures...

LAWSON

What men? Whatta you talking about?

DOROTHY

I tried to tell you about that earlier, honey. There're two men out in the parking lot. Taking pictures of license plates.

He starts down the hall and out of the Church. Dorothy calls after him.

DOROTHY

(continuing)

Jim!

But... he's gone.

EXT. PARKING LOT - - DAY

There are TWO MEN in gray suits moving around with cameras. One is taking pictures of car license plates. Several of the Church faithful are getting into cars and pulling out. Some are standing around watching, not sure what to do.

LAWSON

Moves directly towards the men, who ignore him.

CHURCH MEMBER

(as Lawson goes by)

Who are they, Reverend?

Lawson doesn't respond. He stops in front of them and snatches the camera out of the surprised Agent's hand.

AGENT

That's government property.

Lawson strips the film out of the camera, then tosses the camera back. It hits the man in the chest.

AGENT (CONT'D)
(continuing)
You just made a big mistake.

LAWSON
Unless you have business here, you
are trespassing on private
property. You can get the hell out
of this parking lot.

A couple of the BIG CHURCH MEMBERS take their lead from Lawson and move in. The two Agents look around at the angry black faces. The Agents back up, get into their car and pull out. Lawson takes the film and walks past the Church Members.

LAWSON
(continuing)
Choir practice starts in ten
minutes, Brother Boxer is waiting.

He heads back into the church.

INT. LAWSON STUDY

Lawson comes in and slams the door. He's still hot. Jeff has watched it all from the office window.

JEFF
What part of the infant were you
looking at out there?

Lawson drops the film in the trash.

LAWSON
Sometimes I do it better than
others.

He pauses, then turns and faces Jeff.

LAWSON
(continuing)
Murtaugh lives in upstate New York.
I got problems here. You'll have to
go see him by yourself. You okay
with that?

INT. ARTHUR MURTAUGH'S HOME -- NEXT DAY

ARTHUR MURTAUGH (50s) is a shrewd, experienced veteran. His hands tremble, his face is mottled, he cannot forget.

MURTAUGH

I was assigned to the Field Office in Atlanta. For ten years I was part of COINTELPRO.

JEFF

Huh?

MURTAUGH

Surveillance and harassment. And whatever else Hoover deemed necessary to derail the Civil Rights Movement.

Jeff is shaken.

JEFF

Whatever else...?

MURTAUGH

Whatever. Remember the four little girls who were killed by a bomb in Birmingham? 1963?

(Jeff nods)

We had clear, conclusive evidence on the killers. Hoover halted the investigation. Hid the evidence. No one questioned his authority.

JEFF

Mr. Murtaugh, did you know Frank Holloman?

MURTAUGH

Sure. Holloman was the Inspector in charge of the "S.O.G."

(Jeff looks puzzled)

"The Seat of Government" -- that's what Mr. Hoover called his office. In Hoover's mind, even the President reported to him. Holloman was Hoover's man.

JEFF

He saw Hoover every day?

MURTAUGH

He did. So did I -- at one point. I saw him. I saw it. I saw the hate.

FLASHBACK:

INT. J. EDGAR HOOVER'S OFFICE -- MARCH, 1968

The office is dark except for the beam of the film projector. Murtaugh and several OTHER AGENTS sit in the deep shadows watching. The agents are arranged around the raised desk and chair of J. EDGAR HOOVER the man in darkness, who sits as if locked onto the image on the screen of MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Hoover, squat and seething, is immobile in the light spill. His voice is a steady subterranean stream of filth:

HOOVER
Commonist. Pervert. Traitor...

ON THE SCREEN (STOCK): KING #1

DR. KING
"A few years ago, it seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white... And then came the build-up of Viet Nam. And I watched this promise broken..."

INTERCUT HOOVER

Like a litany, the invective grinds out, sibilant and raw.

HOOVER
Weakling. Anarchist...

ON THE SCREEN (STOCK): KING #2

DR. KING
"The poor people's March on Washington will demand total, direct, and immediate abolition of poverty."

HOOVER
This -- is -- commonism!

ON THE SCREEN (STOCK): KING #3

DR. KING
"We seek to say to the nation that if you don't straighten up, then you're writing your own obituary. We must love each other, or perish."

HOOVER
Love the white women -- whoremonger!

Hoover pounds his desk violently.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOME

Jeff's eyes do not leave Murtaugh.

JEFF

Did Hoover hate King enough to have
him killed?

MURTAUGH

At first he thought that he could
assassinate King's character -- his
reputation.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOOVER'S ELECTRONIC ROOM

Murtaugh and TWO other AGENTS stand while Hoover sits and
listens to a TAPE -- a tape with MUFFLED SOUNDS that are
completely incoherent.

HOOVER

... Where's this one from?

AGENT #1

Stockholm.

Hoover beats on the table, his voice choked.

HOOVER

They gave that whoremaster the
Nobel Prize!

Hoover wipes his hands; slips a mint into his mouth; juts out
his jaw.

HOOVER

(continuing)

Next!

Agent Two puts on a second tape: breathing, SOUNDS of
BEDSPRINGS, soft laughter.

HOOVER

(continuing)

Turn it up... more... louder!

Hoover listens to what may be the sounds of sexual intercourse. He is clearly excited. The Agents avert their eyes from the terrible scene.

HOOVER
(continuing)
Again. Is that him?

MURTAUGH
Well, sir, it's actually Reverend
Abernathy's room, but he --

HOOVER
It's King!... I know King.

AGENT #2
Yes, sir.

Hoover rises, snarling (MORE)

HOOVER
Send it to King with a letter
saying if he doesn't kill himself,
we'll release it to the press.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOME

Start tight on Jeff's incredulous expression.

JEFF
They didn't actually send...

MURTAUGH
We did. Had it postmarked in
Atlanta, but it was written in D.C.

JEFF
Who authorized the wiretaps?

MURTAUGH
The Attorney General. Bobby
Kennedy.

JEFF
I thought Bobby hated Hoover.

MURTAUGH
He did, but he loved his own
brother more.
(letting it sink in)
We wired King for years.

MURTAUGH (CONT'D)

Hoover forced Bobby to sign off on it. Blackmailed him with tapes of Jack... in inappropriate circumstances. Hoover had tapes on everybody. Then something happened.

FLASHBACK:

HOOVER'S OFFICE - MARCH 1968

Tight on television. Lyndon Johnson is speaking straight into camera.

LBJ

... What we won when all of our people united must not now be lost... ~~Accounting~~ ^(more) I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President...

HOOVER (V.O.)

Why didn't I know about this?

Widen to show Hoover. A nervous Agent stands to one side.

AGENT

Nobody did, sir.

HOOVER

That little bastard, Bobby! If he thinks I'll let him be President...

AGENT

Sir, Senator Kennedy has been trying to call Dr. King. We think he might offer King the Vice President slot.

HOOVER

That is not going to happen.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOUSE - PRESENT

MURTAUGH

Hoover was in a panic. If Kennedy was elected, Hoover was finished. The Poor People's March was just a month off.

MURTAUGH(CONT'D)

For Hoover it was a state of National Emergency. Then King signed his own death warrant.

FLASHBACK:

INT. FBI AUDIO ROOM - MARCH 1968

Hoover, Murtaugh and three other agents are listening to a TAPE RECORDING of Dr. King:

KING

(on tape)

... The efforts by the FBI to destroy our movement by peddling gossip about my sex life must be exposed.

LAWYER

(on tape)

You cannot do this, Martin. It's suicide.

KING

(on tape)

We can weather any storm. I must make a public confession even if it means that the Movement goes on without me.

LAWYER

(on tape)

There is no Movement without you.

KING

(on tape; laughing)

There'd better be. Anyway, I appreciate your counsel, but my mind is made up.

Murtaugh rises and lunges out of the room.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOUSE -- THE PRESENT

Murtaugh turns away from Jeff, as if ashamed by what he remembers so clearly.

MURTAUGH
King was different than the others.
Simple character assassination
wouldn't be enough to stop him.

FLASHBACK:

INT. J. EDGAR HOOVER'S OFFICE - MARCH, 1968

Murtaugh and several OTHER AGENTS are seated in chairs in front of Hoover's desk. They bend forward like slaves waiting for their master's pronouncement.

HOOVER
What hotel is King staying in?

MURTAUGH
In Memphis, sir?

HOOVER
Yes, for goodness sake!

1ST AGENT
Rivermont. Here's a photograph, sir.

The Agent places a BLOW-UP of the Holiday Inn Rivermont on an easel. The photo, taken from a distance, shows the isolation of the large structure. Hoover shakes his head negatively.

HOOVER
No good. Get him out of there.

2ND AGENT
Well, sir, we have a plan that --

HOOVER
Let me hear it.

2ND AGENT
We thought of a campaign in the news media to point out that King wants to stay in a luxury white hotel while there are Negro-owned hotels that are suffering for lack of business.

HOOVER
Good. Wants to conduct a "lay-in" there.

Hoover smiles slightly, the others follow suit.

HOOVER (CONT'D)
(continuing)
What Negro motels offer the best
opportunity?

2ND AGENT
We think the Lorraine Motel, sir.

The Second Agent places a BLOW-UP of the Lorraine Motel on
the easel.

HOOVER
What's across the street from it?

2ND AGENT
There's an embankment --

HOOVER
A bank?

2ND AGENT
Sorry, sir, I meant to say an
embankment -- a cliff --

HOOVER
I know what an embankment is!

2ND AGENT
On top of the, uh, embankment are
some rooming houses and at the
corner is a fire station.

HOOVER
They have Negro firemen there?

2ND AGENT
We'll find that out, sir.

HOOVER
Well, what's the plan to get him
into the Negro motel?

3RD AGENT
We have prepared editorials that
will be placed with sympathetic
media outlets. A cooperative
Senator might even be persuaded to
read the release into the record.

The Third Agent passes the speech.

HOOVER

Let me see it... "This self-seeking rabble rouser..."

As Hoover reads the speech, overlap Jeff.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOUSE -- THE PRESENT

CLOSE ON a 1968 Memphis newspaper editorial calling for King to stay at the Lorraine, which Jeff holds in his hands.

JEFF

(reading)

"... rabble rouser will not share the squalor of his followers. Instead, he will be conducting a lay-in at a posh hotel..."

Jeff sets the clipping down.

MURTAUGH

We packed the papers with editorials. Finally King cancelled his reservations at the Holiday Inn and booked rooms at the Lorraine Motel... And it was built like a shooting gallery...

JEFF

... Jesus...

MURTAUGH

Strange thing was, the King party was originally booked on the ground floor in the back...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - DAY - APRIL 3, 1968

A DARK-SKINNED MAN of East Indian appearance walks toward the manager's office.

MURTAUGH (V.O.)

...The motel owner said that a man came by the office and asked that the King party be moved to the second floor, to room 306.

The man knocks on the Manager's door. A black woman opens the door and listens to the man's instructions.

MURTAUGH (V.O) (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 No one connected with SCLC knows
 who that man was.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOUSE - THE PRESENT

Jeff sits quietly.

MURTAUGH
 That last night, King went to speak
 at a church. His regular driver,
 Solomon Jones, drove him. I was on
 surveillance outside the church.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. MEMPHIS CHURCH -- APRIL 3, 1968 - - NIGHT

Murtaugh sits in his unmarked FBI car. Detective Redditt
 sits in his unmarked MPD car, across the street. Each is
 conducting surveillance. Rain pours down.

MURTAUGH (V.O.)
 It was pouring rain...

From the church come SHOUTS of "AMEN." THUNDER.

INT. CHURCH -- APRIL 3, 1968 -- NIGHT - - STOCK

KING
 "... Well, I don't know what will
 happen now. We've got some
 difficult days ahead. But it
 doesn't matter with me now. Because
 I've been to the mountain top. And
 I don't mind. Like anybody, I
 would like to live a long life.
 Longevity has its place. But I'm
 not concerned about that now. I
 just want to do God's will. And
 He's allowed me to go up to the
 mountain. And I've looked over."

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The heartbreaking last oration of MLK reaches out to the
 street, as do SOUNDS of the CONGREGATION... RAIN and THUNDER.
 Murtaugh and Redditt sit in their separate vehicles.

INT. CHURCH (STOCK)

KING

(continuing)

"... and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!..."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MURTAUGH'S HOUSE -- THE PRESENT

JEFF

Did Hoover have him killed?

MURTAUGH

He wanted him dead. I don't know if he ordered the killing. But I know he did nothing to stop it.

(overwhelmed)

They hated him. And they never stopped, not even after he was dead. That's why there was no real investigation. Our Security Squad was assigned by Hoover to destroy King's legacy, to destroy his widow's reputation...

JEFF

Would you testify to that?

MURTAUGH

I'll say what I know. But if you want all the answers, you'll have to subpoena the files. All the files.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - NEXT DAY

The setting sun casts erie shadows. Jeff and Lawson walk by the embankment just below the room where Grace once lived.

LAWSON

... Did he seem credible?

JEFF

You'll never find a better witness than Arthur Murtaugh. He has notes, a good memory, and a conscience. And he has guts.

The Reverend looks at his protege, his smile matures into a low laugh.

LAWSON
And so do you.

Jeff looks up at the bathroom window of the rooming house (the room from which Ray supposedly fired the shot).

LAWSON
(continuing)
That's the window where James Earl Ray supposedly perched on a bathtub and shot King.

JEFF
Looks like a clear shot.

LAWSON
It's a question of tense.

JEFF
What?

LAWSON
It's a clear shot now. But was it a clear shot on April 4th, 1968?

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Close On a blur of black and white images. The WHIRRING sound of a microfiche machine is evident. The scrolling images slow and finally stop.

ON JEFF

Bent over the machine. One image has caught his eye: A black and white photograph of the Rooming House as viewed from the Lorraine. Trees and bushes grow on the embankment obscuring the sightline from the bathroom.

JEFF
God bless the Associated Press.
This image was taken March 29, a week before the shooting.

LAWSON
Look at that tree.

Jeff makes some notes and focuses on a short article, while Lawson pours over files.

JEFF
 Listen to this.
 (he starts reading)
 Press Scimitar. Kay Pitnam Black.
 "On the advice of former Mayor Bill
 Ingram, I went to the rooming house
 the morning after the assassination.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - APRIL 5, 1968

A city maintenance crew is working with mowers and chain
 saws.

JEFF (V.O.)
 A city maintenance crew was cutting
 down the bushes on the
 embankment..."

Kay Black is across the street, a notepad in her hands.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

LAWSON
 Why'd the cops let them destroy a
 crime scene?

Jeff doesn't respond. He is reloading the machine and
 searching for something. Finding it, he turns to Lawson.

JEFF
 Did you ever hear of a reporter for
 the New York Times named Caldwell?

LAWSON
 Earl Caldwell. There weren't many
 black reporters working for The
 Times back then.

JEFF
 (reading)
 "I was staying in Room 215..."

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ROOM 215 - LORRAINE MOTEL - 6PM - APRIL 4, 1968

EARL CALDWELL, black, thirtysomething, stands in the doorway
 of Room 215 on the ground level of the Lorraine.

He's enjoying the evening breeze. An explosive SOUND. Caldwell is startled. He turns and looks across Mulberry Street.

JEFF (V.O.)
 ... After the shot, I looked up to see a white male, dressed in coveralls in the bushes...

CALDWELL'S POV

An area of brush surrounds the sloping area at the rear of the rooming house. A white male wearing coveralls is crouched in the bushes. There is no gun evident.

JEFF (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 ...A black sedan drove directly in front of me, cutting off my view. The man vanished over the embankment. The sedan kept moving, back and forth...

Caldwell's line of sight is blurred by a black sedan that passes frantically back and forth in front of the motel. Tires SQUEAL. Caldwell looks at the car, then back to the bushes. The man is gone.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Lawson reloads the machine.

JEFF
 Caldwell wrote the story, but neither the Memphis PD nor the FBI ever questioned him.

LAWSON
 My friend, James Orange, saw the same thing. They never questioned him, either.

Lawson spins the control. Zeroes in on something.

LAWSON
 (continuing)
 Look at this.

CLOSE-UP: A black and white image of four men kneeling on the balcony, pointing.

JEFF (V.O.)
I've seen that picture before.

ON LAWSON AND JEFF

LAWSON
It was taken seconds after the
assassination. Notice the guy on
the end? Next to Ralph Abernathy.
His name's Marrell McCollough.

JEFF
Never heard of him.

LAWSON
I'm not surprised. Even Abernathy
didn't know who he was.
(Jeff is puzzled)
McCollough led a group of militants.
Called themselves "The Invaders".
After the shooting, word started to
leak out that McCollough was really
an undercover cop.

JEFF
Where is he now?

LAWSON
Rumor is he works for the CIA.

JEFF
We need proof, not rumors. Where's
the phone?

Jeff gets up and starts to walk away. Lawson follows.

ON PUBLIC TELEPHONE

Jeff cradles the phone to his ear. Lawson stands to one side.

JEFF
(into phone)
Operator, I need the area code for
Langley, Virginia.

EXT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Establish the sprawling headquarters.

ON JEFF

JEFF
 (into phone)
 Marrell McCollough, please.
 (he waits)
 Mr. McCollough, My name is Jeff
 Jenkins. I'd like to ask you a few
 questions about the King
 assassination...

CLICK. The phone goes dead. But Jeff has the confirmation.

LAWSON
 He actually answered?

JEFF
 Yep. Your militant Invader is
 moving up in the world.
 (sits back)
 So, if the shot didn't come from
 the rooming house... if the man
 Grace saw was just a decoy, if the
 gun he dropped was just a plant...
 why did Ray plead guilty?

LAWSON
 Maybe it's time we try to talk to him.

The SOUND of a VW engine comes up.

EXT. PETROS, TENNESSEE - NEXT DAY

Lawson is driving his bug. Gospel music plays on his radio.
 Jeff sits beside him.

JEFF
 You think Ray was involved?

Jim, with humor and a kind of preacher's rhythm, sets up a
 question and response as if for the congregation.

LAWSON
 Let's see what he could have done.
 Did Ray dismantle the police
 protection? I need a witness.

JEFF
 No. That was Mr. Holloman.

LAWSON
 Say, Hallelujah. Did Ray saw down
 the trees? I need a witness.

JEFF
I can bear witness, brother. No, sir!

LAWSON
Say, Hallelujah.

JEFF
(seriously)
Did Ray fire the shot? I need a witness.

LAWSON
No way, brother. Ray was a bumbling burglar, not a marksman. If he was part of a plot, it's not likely he would have been the triggerman.

JEFF
But Ray would be a perfect fallguy.

LAWSON
Say Amen, brother.

JEFF
Amen.

LAWSON'S POV

The Brushy Mountain Penitentiary Entrance Gate just ahead.

INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - - DAY

There is a steel table with four chairs. There are bars on the windows and the light spills through in patterns. JAMES EARL RAY is seated at the table. He is now almost fifty years old. He speaks in a soft twang. Jeff is focusing on Ray through a VIDEO CAMERA. Lawson has files in front of him.

JEFF
Mr. Ray, why did you plead guilty, if you now say you're innocent?

RAY
I had to. But I told the Judge that I would not agree that there was no conspiracy.

LAWSON
Why did you have to plead guilty?

RAY
 Did you ever see the cell in
 Memphis, where they kept me for
 eight months?

FLASHBACK:

INT. SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED CELL -- JAMES EARL RAY'S POV

The cell is brightly lit, painted stark white. Two guards are stationed outside the cell. Television cameras are focused on Ray and are monitored in a control room by two other guards. Banks of hot lights focus on him.

INTERCUT -- CONTROL ROOM AND CELL

RAY (V.O.)
 Eight months. They never turned
 out the lights. Day or night. One
 of the guards, he had a nervous
 breakdown. I thought it was going
 to kill me...

INTERCUT Ray suffering in jail cell, 1968; and on the monitor.

RAY (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 One day, this big-shot lawyer came
 in. He was so full of himself, he
 could strut sittin' down.

INT. RAY'S CELL - - 1968

PERCY FOREMAN, the famous Texas defense lawyer, talks to Ray.

FOREMAN
 You know me?

RAY
 No.

FOREMAN
 I'm Percy Foreman. Without doubt
 the best and most famous damn
 criminal lawyer in the whole USA.
 And I'm here to tell you those free
 lawyers you got... They're selling
 you out, son.

RAY
 I hear what you say. Don't mean I
 believe it.

FOREMAN

I can save you, boy. I have so much money, I don't need you to pay me nothing. I have defended seven hundred capital cases and every one of them is still walking around, and I mean outside, free. Well, except one, but he was a fool and didn't follow my advice.

RAY

What's your advice?

ON MONITOR

FOREMAN

You fire those clowns and I guarantee you'll walk out of here a free man.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. RAY'S CELL -- THE PRESENT

Shadows of bars fall across Ray, Lawson and Jeff.

RAY

After I told the judge that Foreman was my lawyer, he warned me that I couldn't ever change lawyers again. I said, "Fine. I got the best lawyer in America." Then Foreman came into my cell --

FLASHBACK:

INT. RAY'S CELL -- 1968 -- AND ON THE MONITOR

FOREMAN

If you don't plead guilty, you're going to the Tennessee dance hall, boy, and that's the electric chair. They'll fry you.

RAY

I didn't do nothing. Just bought a gun for a friend. That's why my prints were on it.

FOREMAN

What's that got to do with the price of beer?

RAY
I want a trial. My old lawyers
said I could win at trial.

FOREMAN
I didn't want to have to do this, but
there's someone here to see you.

The Guards watch the scene on the monitor as an FBI AGENT
enters.

FOREMAN
(continuing)
This here is an FBI man. Show him
your I.D. The Agent does.

AGENT
Your father's a real old man, isn't
he?

RAY
Yes, sir.

AGENT
And he escaped from the
penitentiary in Fort Madison, Iowa,
in 1921, didn't he?

Ray freezes. The Agent pulls out documents. Foreman lights
a cigar.

AGENT
(continuing)
We found out where he's hiding. You
don't cooperate with your attorney -
- we're going to send your daddy
back to prison -- and let him die
behind bars. Here's the warrant.
Read it.

Foreman spits on the floor. Ray's head drops.

FOREMAN
If you say you didn't kill King,
you're going to get a jolt a'
Edison medicine. And your Daddy
will rot in the process. You let
me plead the case, and they'll let
you live.

Ray is exhausted. He rubs his eyes in the blinding light.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. RAY'S CELL -- THE PRESENT

LAWSON

So, you pleaded guilty?

RAY

I was confused from no sleep, bein' in that white cell for months, so yeah, I confessed. That night they put me in a regular cell. I got my first night's sleep in eight months. I woke up and knew I'd made a mistake. Asked for a new trial. And that was eight years ago.

Silence, except for dim PRISON SOUNDS and a far-off bell.

LAWSON

Why were you in Memphis on April

RAY

I had broke out from the penitentiary in Jefferson City, Missouri, so I needed money. I never had been convicted of any crime of violence, I never even hit anyone in my whole life.

FLASHBACK:

MONTAGE: RAY'S SAGA -- 1968

Country and Western MUSIC over entire sequence.

RAY (V.O)

I knew I would have to engage in some criminal stuff to survive, but I wasn't going to do nothing violent.

INT. BAR

A man ("RAOUL") approaches Ray at the bar.

MAN

How about a drink -- James?

Ray jumps -- how does this stranger know his name? Ray is white with fear. (We have seen this stranger before: in the Grace Walden memory sequence.)

RAY (V.O.)
Like it was a miracle, "Raoul"
showed up.

JEFF (V.O.)
Who was he? What was his last
name?

RAY (V.O.)
I don't even know his first name,
he just said "Raoul." He said he
had a job for me.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - - DAY

RAY (V.O.)
I went with Raoul to a car
dealership. He bought me a car.
Everything was cash money.

Raoul peels off bills, he and Ray buy a new white Mustang.

EXT. GUN STORE - - DAY

Raoul and Ray drive up in the white Mustang.

RAY (V.O.)
He had a deal to sell rifles to
some guy in Latin America. He
needed a sample gun to show. But I
got the wrong gun. He made me go
back.

Raoul shouts at Ray behind closed car windows. They get out
of the car. Raoul stalks away and gets into another car.

INT. GUN STORE - - DAY

RAY
(to CLERK)
Yes sir, my boss said this is the
wrong kind. Shoulda asked for...
(reads from a scrap of
paper)
Uh, a 30.06 caliber, Remington
Model 760.

The Clerk suspiciously eyes an insecure Ray.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Ray drives alone toward Memphis in his white Mustang.

RAY (V.O.)
 I gave Raoul the gun. He then told
 me to rent a room in Memphis. Gave
 me the name of the flophouse.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE -- APRIL 4, 1968 -- 5:00 P.M.

Raoul passes Charlie Stephens (drunk) on the stairs of the
 rooming house, and heads into

INT. RAY'S ROOM

Ray sits reading a newspaper. The gun is on the bed. He
 looks up at Raoul. (SOUND of Charlie YELLING at Grace, o.s.)

RAOUL
 The buyer'll be here in an hour. Go
 take a walk. Be back at six. Leave
 the car and the rifle here.

Ray is worried. Something is wrong. He leaves.

EXT. GAS STATION

Ray fills the Mustang. He is jumpy, smelling trouble.

RAY (V.O.)
 I started to take a walk but then I
 remembered that there wasn't hardly
 any gas in the car. I knew that
 when Raoul finished the gun deal
 he'd want to drive right out.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE

RAY (V.O.)
 But when I got back...

The Mustang approaches, Ray at the wheel. He suddenly reacts
 to something.

RAY'S P.O.V.

SIRENS, pandemonium, police.

BACK TO RAY

He spins the car around and speeds away.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. RAY'S CELL -- THE PRESENT

JEFF

Did you ever think what would've happened if you had just gone for a walk?

RAY

I thought about it a lot. I would've walked back into the rooming house right after the shot was fired -- Raoul and the car would've been gone and they'd've arrested me on the spot.

JEFF

If you didn't do anything -- why did you run?

RAY

I was a fugitive -- I owed time to Missouri. If they even got me for a parking ticket, I'd probably spend the rest of my life in jail.

LAWSON

You remember what Raoul looked like?

RAY

That man is cut in my memory. Ain't never gonna forget him.

JEFF

Was he about fifty - short, wiry - pointed chin and a pointed nose?

RAY

(taken aback)

Now, how did you know all that?

JEFF

Did he look anything like any of these three men?

Jeff reaches into his briefcase and pulls out three IDENTIKIT DRAWINGS. He hands them to Ray. Ray looks at all three and pushes two of them aside. He picks one and studies it.

RAY

I think this is him. At least, it sure favors him. Where'd you get it?

JEFF
From a woman -- named Grace Walden.

RAY
(beat)
Who's Grace Walden?

INT. CHURCH RECTORY - - AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON Grace, animated, talking on the telephone.

GRACE
Well, she won't let me stop eating.
(beat)
Alright then. Goodbye now.

Grace hangs up, smiles. WIDEN TO REVEAL Sister Ione and Willy having lunch with Grace. One of the sanitation workers stands in the b.g.

GRACE
(continuing; to Ione)
That was Jeff, checking on me and hoping we'd save him some pecan pie.

Ione smiles, proud.

INT. LAWSON'S OFFICE - - AFTERNOON

Jeff hangs up the phone. Lawson and Jeff are working. The bulletin board is now covered with notes and cards.

JEFF
We got plenty of witnesses, but we need more hard evidence.

LAWSON
Either way, we gotta go with what we got... Sprague's not going to wait around forever.

The door opens and Katy appears. Both men sit in silence looking at her. She is holding a file.

JEFF
Katy...

LAWSON
Come in, sit down.

KATY

I've been thinking about what you said, Reverend... and you're right. I want to apologize.

LAWSON

There's no need.

KATY

I realized that the more things I wanted, the more things I was willing to compromise.

(a beat)

I located the police records on the Assassination. The entire file is stored in the Municipal Building on Maple.

JEFF

We can get Sprague to subpoena those files. They'll corroborate everything that Redditt and Newsum told us. Those files are a gold mine.

LAWSON

Are we looking at a new recruit here?

KATY

You're looking at temporary help. It seems I'm between jobs at the moment.

EXT. CHURCH - - AFTERNOON

Choir practice is over. The CHILDREN are walking into the parking lot. Jeff and Katy exit the church and begin walking toward their cars.

KATY

So, how's Grace?

JEFF

Happy and putting on weight. Speaking of which... I'm starving. You eaten?

They move across the street. The children are milling around and we see a TRUCK in the B.G. moving slowly.

BEGIN SLOW MOTION SEQUENCE - DAY

Everything cranks painfully slow... The TRUCK moves toward them. We see the children laughing, walking. The truck is even with Jeff and Katy when a GRENADE flies out of the window and lands on the pavement.

ANGLE - JEFF AND KATY - SLO MO

He spots the grenade. Jeff throws Katy down and dives on top of her.

TICK - TICK - TICK -

Play the tension. Several long beats.

INTERCUT - GRENADE AND CHILDREN

Then Jeff gets to his feet.

RESUME - REGULAR SPEED

He moves to the grenade and kicks it with his toe. Then reaches down and picks it up.

JEFF'S POV - THE GRENADE

It says: G.I. JOE

MOVE IN - ON JEFF

JEFF
(continuing)
A damn toy.

Jeff hurls it to the ground.

INT. JENKINS ESTATE - NIGHT

The door BANGS open and Jeff strides into the house and upstairs to his old bedroom. Harold is at the far end of the foyer, dusting. He looks up, alarmed.

INT. JENKINS ESTATE - DEN

Lucas is reading. He hears the commotion and gets up.

INT. JENKINS ESTATE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Close on a drawer as Jeff rummages through it. He grabs an old pistol and slams a clip into the revolver. Widen to reveal the environs of his old room. He exits the room.

INT. JENKINS ESTATE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeff heads down the hall but stops suddenly. He sees his father approaching. Lucas stares at the gun in Jeff's hand.

LUCAS
What the devil are you doing?

Jeff starts down the stairs and Lucas follows.

LUCAS
(continuing)
Stop. I need to speak to you.
Whatta' you doing?

Jeff has reached the downstairs landing.

JEFF
Non-violence ~~(MORE)~~ a great concept,
but I'm not signing up for it yet.

Jeff starts to leave.

LUCAS
Stop. We need to talk.

JEFF
Why now? Branson lean on you?

LUCAS
That's crazy.

JEFF
Why did you and your friends offer
the money to bribe Charlie Stephens
-- to lie? And why did you bury
Grace in that hell hole?

LUCAS
I didn't.

JEFF
You were part of it!... Why?!

LUCAS
I didn't know!

JEFF
You didn't want to know!

LUCAS
I loved Martin King. He's a page
in a history book to you.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I was his lawyer here, his friend.
I was his friend when it could cost
you your life to even walk down the
street with him.

JEFF

You know that the government killed
your "friend". And that you helped
to cover it up. And you're still
doing it! You and Branson and the
Judge --

LUCAS

When Martin died that night, the
city went up in flames. The whole
country was burning... President
Johnson asked me to personally
reassure Mrs. King that the
Department of Justice would "leave
no stone unturned".

JEFF

(sarcastic)

They sure did a helluva job.

LUCAS

We couldn't bring him back. All we
had left was the memory. And they
made it plain that could be taken
away, too. They had evidence
against him. The FBI showed it to
me! Those sons-of- bitches!

JEFF

Showed you what?

Lucas shakes his head and turns away.

JEFF

(continuing)

They played a dirty tape for you.
Didn't they?

Lucas looks up at Jeff, amazed.

LUCAS

It was different ten years ago.
Jeff... You can't imagine how
powerful Hoover was. He was the
secret police -- for fifty years!
No one could stand up to Hoover. No
one.

(drops his voice)

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I tried to tell Martin, I begged him not to mix the politics of Vietnam with Civil Rights. But he wouldn't listen. And when he tried to change the economic system - it was all over.

Jeff leans in; they are face-to-face, eye-to-eye.

JEFF

No. You wouldn't listen. King had already decided to go public on the question of his "marital infidelity."

LUCAS

You know that?

JEFF

I've heard the FBI tape.

(MORE)

Lucas's head drops. Jeff moves in for the moment of truth, his voice hoarse and charged, his breathing short.

JEFF

(continuing)

Don't you see what you've done? You covered up Hoover's crimes -- not King's!

Jeff moves down the stairs, where Harold opens the door for him. He has heard the entire thing. The two men lock eyes.

HAROLD

You be real careful out there, Mr. Jeff. Real careful.

INT. JEFF'S LAW OFFICE - - DAY

Jeff is filling a briefcase with files. The SOUND of the door opening. Jeff turns to see Branson in the doorway.

BRANSON

There's a rumor that there'll be an announcement from Washington, that Congress will form a Select Committee to investigate the Kennedy and King murders.

JEFF

I'm aware of that.

BRANSON

We understand that Miz Walden may be called as a witness.

BRANSON (CONT'D)

Our firm takes the position that any information you have gathered from Miz Walden belongs to us. It is privileged.

JEFF

The privilege runs to the client. It's really up to Grace.

BRANSON

That old lady'll do what you tell her!

Jeff starts to leave.

BRANSON

(continuing)

Have you thought this out? I can destroy you. I own you.

JEFF

You see, that's where you're wrong, Bill. You don't own me. You gotta bring some ass to kick some ass.

Jeff walks out. He walks down the corridor, past Clay Morgan, who has heard it all.

JEFF

(continuing)

He shoots. He scores.

INT. BRANSON'S OFFICE - - DAY

He moves into the room and picks up the phone and dials.

BRANSON

Lemme talk to him.

INTERCUT - N.D. OFFICE -- DAY

The Backlit Man picks up the phone.

BACKLIT MAN

Yes.

BRANSON

He wouldn't listen.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE LORRAINE MOTEL - - DAY

Jeff is moving along the lower sidewalk in front of the Motel.

LAWSON'S VOICE

Up here...

Jeff looks up and sees Lawson and Katy. He hurries up the stairs and stops in front of the room where King was shot.

JEFF

This was King's room, wasn't it?

LAWSON

Yes.

(points across the street)
And there's the rooming house. And the embankment. And the fire station. It all happened right here...

FLASHBACK:

BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE

A tightly edited, chronological reprise details everything that has been discovered about the events.

LAWSON

...It started when the FBI forced King out of the Rivermont, got him to move to the Lorraine.

JEFF (V.O.)

Then the unknown man gets the room changed from the ground floor...

LAWSON (V.O.)

The black cops and the black firemen were ordered out of the area.

JEFF (V.O.)

Ray says he got in the Mustang and left the area.

LAWSON (V.O.)

Charlie Stephens, the government's eyewitness, was outside taking a leak and saw nothing.

BACK TO:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - DUSK - PRESENT

Katy looks at Jeff and Lawson. A car door SLAMS shut. Jeff and Lawson look down.

THEIR POV

A fifty year old black man, SOLOMON JONES, stands by an old black town car.

JEFF
 (to Lawson)
 Who's that?

LAWSON
 You remember Caldwell's story...
 The black sedan that was driving
 back and forth. That's Solomon
 Jones.
 (calling out)
 Brother Solomon. Thanks for
 coming.

(MORE)
 JEFF
 (to Lawson)
 Jim, how'd you find him?

LAWSON
 I've known Solomon for years. He
 was Martin's driver.
 (to Solomon)
 Brother Solomon, could you stand
 where you were that afternoon.

Solomon walks to a spot about twenty yards away.

LAWSON
 (continuing)
 So, Dr. King was standing right
 about here, where I am?

SOLOMON
 That's right. And I was standing
 by the car, waiting to take him to
 dinner at Reverend Kyle's.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - DAY - APRIL 4, 1968

Jones is leaning against the black sedan.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
 Dr. King, he leaned over the
 railing and asked Ben Branch if
 later on, he would play his
 favorite hymn.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

(starts to sing)

Precious Lord, take my hand...

The HYMN CONTINUES OVER. King is only seen in silhouette as he comes out of the door of his Lorraine Motel room. Solomon Jones looks up and sees him. Starts to get into the car.

SOLOMON V.O.

(continuing)

I went to get into the car so I could pull it up.

ANGLE up to the MINISTERS on the Balcony, talking.

SOLOMON V.O.

(continuing)

And that's when I heard the shot.

In black and white, King turns and a shot rings out. The body passes through the frame.

TIGHT ON KING'S HAND

Bloody. It lands on the deck, convulses once and lies still.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - PRESENT

Jeff checks his notes, standing there, lost in the moment.

LAWSON

OK, Jeff, run it down from there.

JEFF

The Reporter from the New York Times looked out and saw a white man dressed in coveralls, in the hedges beside the Rooming House.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - DAY - APRIL 4, 1968

A WHITE MAN IN COVERALLS is crouched in the bushes.

JEFF (V.O.)

Caldwell saw a puff of smoke. Then a man in coveralls jumped over the wall.

The Man in coveralls jumps over the wall, starts to flee. The black sedan swerves back and forth trying to pursue.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
 I saw him too. I tried to follow
 him, I really did. I really tried.
 I was hemmed in.

BACK TO:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - PRESENT

LAWSON
 Is that what you told the FBI?

SOLOMON
 That's just it, they never talked
 to me. Reverend Orange, he saw the
 same thing and they never talked to
 him either. Seemed they already
 had their eyewitness.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - BLACK AND WHITE - APRIL 4, 1968

The chaos just after the shooting. In the parking lot a cop
 runs toward the balcony. He looks up, seems to know one of
 the men standing over King.

COP
 The shot! Where did it come from?

SOLOMON (V.O.)
 The guy on the end of the balcony,
 he points. But not to the
 embankment. He points to the
 rooming house. Abernathy and the
 others see him, and then they do
 the same thing. McCollough points
 to the Rooming House above the
 hedge. The other Reverends point
 there also.

ANGLE ON SOLOMON

He is panicked. He sees the white Man in the coveralls jump
 over the wall below - clearly not where they're pointing.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 I saw the man jump off the
 embankment. I jumped in my car. I
 tried...

Solomon jumps into his car and tries to drive after the Man but can't get the car turned around.

BACK TO:

EXT. LORRAINE MOTEL - PRESENT

Lawson, Jeff and Katy are looking at Solomon, who has tears in his eyes.

LAWSON

Solomon, that guy on the balcony, his name was Marrell McCollough. He was an undercover cop.

KATY

The key witness was on the government's payroll?

JEFF

Still is.

(checks his notes)

Meanwhile, Grace was in her room across the street.

FLASHBACK:

INT./EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - APRIL 4, 1968

Grace sees a MAN run past the door of her room carrying something. The man heads outside, drops the gun. Flees.

JEFF (V.O.)

A man flees down the hall and out of the building. A few minutes later the cops conveniently find a rifle with Ray's fingerprints left in broad daylight.

A COP reaches down and picks up the bundle.

LAWSON (V.O.)

The weapon is never linked to the death slug.

Reprise images of the autopsy photo and the bullet in pieces.

JEFF (V.O.)

The next morning, the City purposely alters the crime scene.

Reprise images of the trees being cut down.

KATY (V.O.)
 And, later on that summer, they
 came back for Grace.

Reprise images of Grace being taken from her room.

JEFF (V.O.)
 They kicked down the door to her
 room and dragged her away. Locked
 her up for eight years.
 (a beat)
 And that's where this whole thing
 began for me.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SPRAGUE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

TIGHT on Sprague. He is just finishing going through the
 files. Jeff, Lawson and Katy wait as he looks up.

SPRAGUE
 Pretty damn impressive. You can
 officially tell Fauntroy, the
 Committee has a Special Counsel.

Lawson exhales. It's been a long road.

JEFF
 Okay. What about Grace Walden?

SPRAGUE
 You can tell her she's a free
 woman. She doesn't have to hide
 from anyone. You have my word.

LAWSON
 What about the Memphis PD files
 that Katy found?

SPRAGUE
 I'm going to file a subpoena for
 those. You pick 'em up, bring 'em
 with you to D.C. I'm also going to
 file a subpoena demanding the
 production of all relevant
 documents from the FBI, the CIA and
 Army Intelligence.
 (a smile)
 We're going to war.

Jeff and Lawson brace. This is it.

EXT. CITY POLICE BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A brick building in Memphis.

INT. UPSTAIRS RECORD DESK - DAY

A mild looking man named BART appears flustered. Lawson, Jeff and Katy stand across from him. Jeff waves a subpoena.

JEFF

Look, I've got a court subpoena. We want to see all King files.

KATY

We were told we could pick them up from you at nine A.M. It's ten o'clock.

The phone RINGS. Bart picks it up. Listens:

BART

Okay... Okay...
(hangs up)

We been cleared. They're in the old section. Follow me.

He leads them down the hall.

INT. FILE ROOM - DAY

TRACKING to a File Case. Bart kneels down. Three file drawers are missing from the cabinet.

BART

Son of a bitch.

LAWSON

What?

BART

The King stuff... It's all missing.

Then we HEAR a commotion outside and someone yells.

VOICE (O.S.)

FIRE! We gotta a fire out back!

Lawson moves to the window and looks out.

LAWSON'S POV - THE ALLEY

Two stories below. Two COPS are stoking a dumpster fire.

LAWSON

My lord!

He turns and runs. Jeff and Katy do the same.

CLOSE SHOT - STAIRCASE

Jeff runs down the hall, grabs a fire extinguisher off the wall. Lawson and Katy are close behind.

EXT HALLWAY - DAY

Jeff explodes out into the alley. The Cops grab him and keep him at bay as the trash bin blazes away. Lawson and Katy arrive. They stop. PUSH IN ON LAWSON through the flames as he watches the records burn.

PANNING UP TO - ANOTHER BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET

PUSH IN to a WINDOW with venetian blinds. The Backlit Man is standing there, the reflection of the fire flickering in the lenses of his glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH RECTORY - DAY

Jeff and Katy are with Grace. Katy smiles as Grace gratefully hugs Jeff.

GRACE

My, my... a lawyer who keeps his word.

(wiping her eyes)

Better not let anything happen to you in Washington.

KATY

(to Grace)

I'll be here if there's anything you need.

GRACE

Jeff... if you want me to come there... to testify... I can. I'll tell the truth.

JEFF

You always told the truth, Grace, when everybody lied -- everybody. You were the conscience of this country.

GRACE

You talk like that -- they're going to call you crazy, too.

Jeff doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. He hugs Grace in a mighty embrace. The SOUND of jet engines can be heard.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A 737 approaches the runway and touches down.

EXT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING -- WASHINGTON - - DAY

Lawson and Jeff run up the steps, carrying two large folders of evidence. A GUARD follows them, then ANOTHER GUARD trots up to help the first, (~~MORE~~) a THIRD GUARD dogs their heels.

INT. BUILDING

Jeff and Lawson walk down a hallway. They are lost in the maze of corridors. Lawson approaches a black SECURITY GUARD.

LAWSON

Brother, could you point us to Mr. Sprague's office?

The Guard indicates the way.

ANOTHER HALLWAY

Jeff and Lawson round a corner and head for Sprague's office. They get to the door marked: RICHARD SPRAGUE.

SPRAGUE (V.O.)

Get your hands off of me.

Lawson looks to Jeff with concern. They enter.

INT. SPRAGUE'S DC OFFICE

Lawson and Jeff enter to see Sprague being forcibly ejected from his office by two AGENTS. One Agent is CLARK NELSON.

SPRAGUE

You have absolutely no right to invade my office, damn it.

AGENT NELSON

It's the government's office. My orders are to seal the office.

AGENT NELSON (CONT'D)

You have a problem with that, take it to the Attorney General.

SPRAGUE

(to Nelson)

Am I free to go?

AGENT NELSON

As far as I'm concerned, you're already gone.

INT. MARBLE CORRIDORS - DAY

Jeff and Lawson walk with a furious Sprague.

SPRAGUE

Guess you don't read the big city papers. The New York Times and the Washington Post ran editorials demanding that I be fired. Then Congress refused to fund the investigation.

JEFF

On what grounds?

SPRAGUE

The FBI demanded the right to screen my staff.

LAWSON

And you said no?

SPRAGUE

I said hell no! I also mentioned that the FBI was a suspect in the cover-up.

JEFF

But you have subpoena powers.

SPRAGUE

So I was told. But someone forgot to tell the FBI.

They pause. Every passerby suddenly seems to be suspicious.

JEFF

Is it over?

SPRAGUE

Not quite. My last official act was to arrange for a key witness to testify on Monday, at the first public session.

LAWSON

They can stop it or change it.

SPRAGUE

No, they can't -- because the witness's name has already been published.

JEFF

Who is it?

SPRAGUE

You.

(Jeff reacts)

Under the circumstances, I don't recommend you show up.

EXT. REFLECTING POOL, WASHINGTON D.C. - - AFTERNOON

Lawson and Jeff stroll along the site of MLK's famous demonstration.

LAWSON

I'm sorry. I was wrong. The times haven't changed. Hoover died, but his ghost is still here.

JEFF

You didn't say it'd be easy.

LAWSON

If they can kick Sprague out, if they can burn files and turn down subpoenas... the whole thing will just be a puppet show. The FBI will be investigating the FBI.

(a beat)

Jeff, I asked Martin to come to Memphis. I often wonder what it would be like if he were still with us. I don't want to wonder that about you...

JEFF

If the truth doesn't come out, the tragedy's just going to be repeated.

Lawson is moved by Jeff's transformation.

LAWSON

I pray I've done the right thing.

JEFF

You did the only thing. What's that part -- from Genesis you had me read? You know -- "And when they, uh, came, uh --"

Lawson turns away, not wanting to recall the prophetic images of the story of Joseph.

JEFF

(continuing)

You know it.

LAWSON

"And when they saw him far off, even before he came near, they conspired to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer. Come now and let us slay him, and cast him into the pit and we will say, some evil beast has devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Jeff looks at Lawson who gazes off at the empty steps leading to the Lincoln Monument. Light glints of the reflecting pool.

TIGHT ON LAWSON

Deep in thought, back with Martin again.

MARTIN LUTHER KING (V.O)

I have a dream...

SUBLIMINAL CUT:

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE - BLACK AND WHITE - AUGUST 28, 1963

King is speaking on the steps of the Lincoln Monument.

MARTIN LUTHER KING

...that my four 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!

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. REFLECTING POOL - SUNSET

Lawson and Jeff are lost in thought. The cacophonous SOUND of reporters yelling questions begins to rise under.

EXT. STEPS OF THE HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - - DAY

The next day, scores of REPORTERS are assembled up and down the steps. There are Television Crews, a number of Radio Reporters with tape recorders and a number of Print Media Reporters. They SHOUT and CACKLE as if it were a hanging.

JEFF AND LAWSON

approach the steps and begin to climb. They are surrounded by the reporters, who question them belligerently. Lawson and Jeff struggle up the steps without responding to the questions and taunts. Their path is blocked by the turmoil of Reporters who jostle for position, overlapping each other.

1ST REPORTER

(to Lawson)

Dr. King was your close friend. Is this just a vendetta? Do you still believe in non-violence?

2ND REPORTER

(overlapping; to Jeff)

Who's paying you? Ray pled guilty. What's there to argue?

Jeff is pushed and pulled -- he shoves back. Lawson simply absorbs the blows.

1ST REPORTER

(to Lawson)

Are you helping James Earl Ray?

3RD REPORTER

(to Jeff)

Are you gonna write a book? Why were you fired by your firm?

1ST REPORTER
Why's your father here? Is he
going to testify against you?

Jeff freezes. So does Lawson. Jeff slowly turns to face the mob. As he does he is staggered to see a solitary figure at the top of the steps, staring down.

JEFF'S P.O.V.

Lucas Jenkins stands solemnly at the top of the steps.

ON JEFF

Reacting. Then he and Lawson climb up the steps.

LUCAS'S P.O.V.

Jeff's eyes are riveted on his father. Has he come to testify against him?

Step by step, Jeff and Lawson keep climbing -- the Reporters parting before him -- until they stand only one step below Lucas.

REPORTER #3
The Special Counsel has already
been dismissed. What can you
possibly have to offer?

LUCAS
(to the Press)
Address your questions to me.

REPORTER
(to Lucas)
Who're you?

LUCAS
(a long pause)
I'm Mr. Jeffrey Jenkins' attorney.

JEFF
I don't need you to defend me.

LUCAS
No defense. We're going to press
for the truth.

LAWSON
Good to see you, Lucas.

LUCAS
Good to be seen.

Lawson, Jeff and Lucas make eye contact.

JEFF
(breaking the moment)
Gentlemen -- we have some work that
needs to be done.

Leaving the media circus behind, Lucas, Jeff, and Reverend
Lawson turn, mount the final steps, and enter the House
Office Building.

THEME RISING -- BEGIN CRAWL

**The House Select Committee on Assassinations met from January
to June of 1978, and interviewed 4,924 witnesses.**

**The Committee found that "There was no evidence of complicity
of the FBI, CIA or any Government Agency in the assassination
of Dr. King."**

**The Committee then sealed, for fifty years, all the
investigative files.**

**The Congress called upon the Department of Justice to conduct
a thorough investigation into the crime and to inform the
American people of its findings.**

The Department of Justice has, to this date, done nothing.

CRAWL ENDS - SCREEN IS BLACK

From out of the BLACK SCREEN, a voice emerges, then a face.
It is Martin Luther King, delivering the now famous
Montgomery, Alabama speech (STOCK):

MARTIN LUTHER KING
"How long? Not long! Because no
lie can live forever! How long?
Not long! Because truth crushed to
earth will rise again!"

The image FREEZES and slowly dissolves.

THE END