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# LBJ

By Joey Hartstone

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.  
This is Bob Walker  
speaking from Dallas Love Field...  
...where a large crowd has gathered  
to await the appearance...  
...of President and Mrs.  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy...  
...who have arrived from  
Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth.  
Lyndon, stop looking at that. Honestly.  
Mr. Vice President,  
we'll be in the third car, the gray Lincoln.  
What's the word on Yarborough?  
The president told the senator  
he rides with you...  
...or he could walk through downtown Dallas.  
Oh, isn't that sweet? Thank you, honey.  
- Yes. Yes, it is the first lady.  
- Jackie!  
The youthful Mrs. Kennedy  
looking beautiful in her pillbox hat...  
...and matching pink outfit.  
Mrs. Kennedy is followed by the president...  
- Hello. You look lovely.  
- ... of the United States.  
Thank you so much.  
- Hi, Jackie.  
- Hi, Lady Bird. It's good to see you.  
- Mr. President.  
- Lyndon.  
- How are you?  
- Good.  
Mrs. Johnson. Lovely as always.  
- Lyndon.  
- Hi, Nellie.  
Followed by Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough.  
Good morning to you.  
This will be your vehicle, Mr. President.  
The crowd is jockeying  
for a better look at the president.  
Wait, no. The president has  
walked past the motorcade...  
...and he's making his way towards the crowd.  
- How are you?

- Hello.
- Shaking hands with people.
- Thanks for coming out.
- Thank you.
- Some have cameras...
- ... to capture this historic moment.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you very much.
- Real pleasure.

They didn't expect to be shaking hands with the president of the United States.

This is quite a thrill for the people who have waited here all morning.

And once the motorcade departs, it will head through the city...

...where crowds are waiting for a view of their president and his wife.

- Thank you.
- Thousands will be on hand...

...for that motorcade, which will move through downtown Dallas.

Don't you just love Texas?

Is there anywhere else you'd rather be?

This is regarding the Farm Bill.

We wanna vote in less than an hour.

Get back to the leader.

Tell him people are still undecided.

We wanna push this through in the next half hour.

Because I'm not General Custer, and this ain't Little fucking Bighorn.

So if you have any objections...

...tell me now before I head to the floor of the United States Senate.

We got Cannon. Senator Yarborough.

- I'll be right with you.
- Senator Mansfield, sir.
- Mike. What's the number?
- About 48.

"About 48" is not a number.

Closest approximation I could get.

Mike, I want you to imagine...

...putting your little 2-inch pecker on the edge of this table.

Now, I grab a hatchet, and I tell you...

...that I'm gonna swing it down

about 2 inches from the edge.

- Would you be nervous?

- Mm-hm.

Well, that's how I feel when you tell me

that the count is "about 48."

Now, what good is a whip

that doesn't know how to count?

Go back out there

and get me an actual number!

Juanita, dear?

- Yes, sir?

- Call Dirksen's office...

...and tell him I'd like to speak

to the senator at his earliest convenience.

- Yes, sir.

- George, get my tailor on the phone.

Who is Mike Taylor?

Who...? No, not "Mike Taylor." My tailor.

The guy who makes my fucking clothes.

Get him on the phone now.

- Senator Yarborough.

- Mr. Leader...

- ...I still don't take a drink.

- No?

Now if you've called me in here to ask me  
about my vote on the Farm Bill...

...I should tell you I have not changed  
my position in the slightest.

No problem. No problem at all.

But, listen, while I got you here,  
there is one question...

...I've been meaning to ask you.

Have you got shit for brains?

What the hell is your problem  
with this Farm Bill?

We should be doing a heck of a lot more  
for the people who have less.

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

The senator is here.

- Bring him in.

- What my constituents want is...

Your constituents are my constituents...  
...and just because after three failed  
attempts at the governor's mansion...  
...you finally managed to win an election...  
...hardly makes you an expert  
on Texas voters.

- Sir?

- Don't tell me what they want.  
Senator Dirksen is on the phone.  
I've got your tailor as well.

You realize that Juanita managed to get  
the minority leader of the Senate...

...quicker than you could locate  
a man who sews for a living?

Hello, Everett, this is Lyndon.

We wanna bring this thing to the floor,  
but can we do it without our two parties...

...nipping at each other  
like a pack of rabid dogs?

Uh-huh.

Well, much appreciated, as always, senator.

- Juanita?

- Yes, sir?

Send Dirksen a box of Havanas.

Walter, get ready to move on it.

You know, this could be your lucky day.

You might be able to vote  
your conscience on the Farm Bill.

I like to think that is the only way  
that I ever vote.

Spoken like a true one-term senator.

Means why haven't you  
endorsed me for president?

You haven't announced.

Beside the point.

- I like to hope that...

- You like Kennedy.

Senator Kennedy and I,  
we share many principles.

You know, you got your show horses  
and your workhorses.

Now, Kennedy's a show horse:

Easy on the eyes...

...but when you need your field plowed,

he won't leave the barn.  
I hear you, but what is most important...  
- ...to me...  
- Hold that thought.  
Hello there, this is Lyndon Johnson.  
Now, you all made me  
some real lightweight slacks...  
...about three, four months ago.  
Kind of a light brown and light green.  
Rather, soft green and soft brown.  
Like powder on a lady's...  
...face, and now,  
I'm what they call "well-endowed"...  
...so you give me the average man's pants...  
...I get all bunched up,  
you know, like riding a wire fence.  
So give me another couple of inches  
from where my nuts hang down...  
...round to the back of my bunghole.  
All right. Thank you very much.  
- You were saying?  
- What is important to me...  
- Sir, that just put us over the top.  
- Call for unanimous consent.  
Show horses, workhorses.  
You only get one.  
Go vote your conscience.  
Nice of you to join us.  
Well, I heard there was a seat available.  
And as the motorcade makes its departure...  
...the presidential car is followed  
by the Secret Service vehicle...  
...which is followed by Vice President  
and Mrs. Johnson.  
Oh. Heh.  
No, I'm... I'm perfectly fine.  
Guessing you Kennedys don't do  
a lot of deer hunting.  
Well, when Kennedys fire weapons,  
it's usually at Nazis.  
Lot of Nazis in Hyannis Port?  
We need to know if you're running.  
Quite comfortable in my post  
as majority leader.

Then perhaps you'd consider endorsing my brother?

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

And there's no chance that'll be you, correct?

How many different ways you want me to answer that?

One would suffice.

I have zero intention of running for president.

I wanna know why you're putting these signs up.

For starters, Johnson has not said that he's running for president.

The reason I know is because I'm fucking him!

No, I'm not fucking him, I am him!

His victory today was bolstered, in part...

...by the large Catholic presence in Wisconsin.

- Up next, will be Illinois, New Jersey...

- What?

Sir, I think it's time you announce.

The next real test for Mr. Kennedy will be in West Virginia...

I haven't made up my mind yet.

Then tell me why I came all the way...

...from Texas to run a campaign that doesn't have a candidate?

Well, John, I imagine, to bask in the pleasure of my company.

Sir, I have been on the phone all evening with delegates.

Every one of whom is for Kennedy today and would be yours tomorrow...

- ...if you just announce you were running.

- A Catholic won in a Catholic state.

Big fucking deal. You think he could do that in West Virginia?

This country is not gonna elect a Catholic president.

He's starting to run away from the pack.

Nominations are not won on the campaign trail.

They are won on the convention floor.

Bird, get me a drink, will you?

All right.

He better decide if he wants this.

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

- He'll run.

- It'd be too late.

He's the best Senate majority leader  
this country's ever had.

He works harder  
than the other 99 senators combined.

He doesn't understand  
why he's not the party's favorite.

He doesn't understand  
why they don't just hand it to him.

Nobody gets handed the presidency.

Why won't he commit?

- That's complicated.

- He's afraid.

Of what?

Hell, every politician's afraid  
people won't vote for him.

He's afraid people won't love him.

All eyes are on West Virginia today...

...as voters cast their votes  
in the state's primary election.

In a surprising upset...

...Senator John Kennedy has won  
the West Virginia primary.

Many believed the issue  
of his religion was insurmountable...

...but here is what Senator Kennedy  
had to say about it:

I appreciate that question,  
and I'll tell you when any man...

...stands on the steps of the Capitol  
and takes the oath of office of president...

...he puts one hand on the Bible  
and raises the other hand to God...

...as he takes his oath.

Now, if he... If he breaks his oath...

I've never seen

a politician look that good on TV.



Oh, angel, he's not that handsome.  
- I, John Fitzgerald Kennedy...  
- I've never seen a movie star...  
- ...look that good on TV.  
- Heh, heh.  
...the office of president  
of the United States...  
...and will, to the best of my ability,  
preserve, protect and defend...  
...the Constitution of the United States,  
so help me, God.  
Jesus, he just swore himself in.  
What's Jack got the rest haven't got?  
The "matinee" face? The Kennedy name?  
The Kennedy fortune...  
Lyndon, honey.  
Do you want this?  
Do you know why I married you?  
I had other offers, but I chose you.  
- Do you know why?  
- I have no earthly idea.  
Because you asked.  
On our first date, when other boys...  
...would be thinking about  
how to steal a kiss...  
...you asked me to marry you.  
You didn't answer right away, though.  
Well, it hit me like a whammy.  
I'd only known you for about 20 minutes.  
Ample time to fall in love with me.  
Mmm.  
When father first met you, he said:  
"Daughter, you brought home a lot of boys.  
This time, you brought home a man."  
At least he liked me right away.  
Angel, my point is...  
...you knew what you wanted...  
...and you got it.  
And I couldn't have said "yes"  
if you hadn't asked.  
Convention fever grips Los Angeles...  
...where the Democrats convene.  
Partisans of Senator Kennedy radiate  
the cheer and confidence...

...of the powerful front-runner,  
who is clearly the man to beat.  
The only major threat to Kennedy's hopes  
among the declared candidates...  
...is Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson.  
The convention of the Democratic  
Party of the United States...  
...is now called in session.  
You need to go see the Wyoming delegates.  
Why the hell are we still fighting  
over Western states?  
Their delegates are meeting  
with Kennedy right now.  
Jack or Bobby?  
Teddy, sir.  
Christ, this place is infested.  
"I have zero intention  
of running for president"?  
I had a change of heart.  
Can't believe you'd look another man  
in the eye and lie.  
Next one of you who says  
a disparaging thing about Jack's health...  
...I'll personally knock his teeth out.  
You said he's never felt better.  
That wouldn't be a lie now, would it?  
Balloting starts in two hours.  
You don't take me down  
in the first two rounds...  
- ...I'm gonna beat you.  
- There won't be a second round.  
You seem awful confident.  
I can count.  
They will receive the call  
of the roll of state, of voting...  
...for the nomination of president  
of the United States.  
Mr. Chairman, Wyoming's vote will make...  
...a majority for Senator Kennedy.  
Can we get the vote from Wyoming?  
First-round knockout, boys.  
Just like Rocky Marciano.  
The Times wants a comment.  
Tell them there's a new heavyweight

champion. His name is Kennedy.

- How's the acceptance speech coming?

- Easiest speech I've ever had to write.

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

First, we have to pick a name.

Hello?

Lyndon.

Lyndon, honey, wake up.

- Wake up.

- What's the matter, Bird?

It's John Kennedy.

This is Lyndon Johnson.

Walter, order a fresh pot of coffee, please. I have to get dressed.

Yes, ma'am.

Oh, yes. Yes, honey, the red tie is so much better.

Thanks, sweetheart.

- Love... Yeah, just fix it now a little.

- Yep.

- Okay?

- Yep.

- Lyndon.

- Hi, Jack. Come on in.

Thank you.

Make sure Symington, Humphrey and Stevenson are all near their phones.

We'll make our choice today.

What's wrong?

You're not gonna believe where your brother is.

Lyndon, you have more experience and more talent, more wisdom.

Unfortunately, this is politics, and none of that matters.

The better man won.

I'm not better.

Better-looking, maybe.

Yeah, if I had some of those Kennedy genes...

...I might've got some of the Kennedy delegates.

I think the press was too hard on you.

Well, I could walk

on the Potomac River, and next day...  
...the headlines would read:  
"Johnson can't swim."  
You mind if I ask you a question, Lyndon?  
You're out of your mind, Jack!  
You couldn't have made a worse choice  
if you tried.  
- I spoke with Dad. He agreed.  
- Spoke with Dad?  
- If we wanna win, we need Johnson.  
- Why didn't you consult with me?  
We also agreed we'd never  
convince you it was a good idea.  
Maybe because it isn't.  
Johnson and his men spent  
the last 72 hours...  
...trying to convince the entire delegation  
you have Addison's disease.  
I do have Addison's disease.  
- That's not the point.  
- Labor hates him.  
Civil rights leaders hate him.  
Liberals hate him.  
Kenny, we will win the liberal vote anyway.  
We need Southerners. We need Texas.  
The only person Johnson will  
ever be loyal to is Johnson.  
Bobby, I'd rather him serve  
under me as vice president...  
...than fight for control of the government  
as leader of the Senate.  
We can't be the only ones  
who think this is a bad idea.  
Well, as it turns out, you might not be  
because he hasn't accepted it yet.  
George, look into this, will you?  
Yes, sir.  
Yeah. Hello there. Is majority leader here?  
- Sir?  
- Gentlemen...  
...can you give us a minute?  
Listen, I...  
I think you should decline the offer.  
Say it was an honor to be considered,

but your duty is to the Senate.

I think we could have a much more effective partnership with you...

...in your role as majority leader.

Is this what your brother thinks?

Do you really want this job?

It's too small for you.

Did Senator Kennedy ask you to relay this message?

No, sir, I am here on my own.

Okay, well,

I will take that tidbit of wisdom...

...under advisement.

Thank you, Bobby.

- What'd he want?

- What do you think he wanted?

He may be right.

If you run with Kennedy and lose, you're giving up your Senate seat too.

- No, he won't.

- What do you mean?

He can run for both offices.

Not at the same time.

- We changed the law.

- When?

- When I asked them to.

- I have that number for you, sir.

- What'd you find out?

- Ten of 36.

Okay, talk to me.

It's a thankless job.

Yeah, well, so is being school teacher in Blanco County, Texas.

Ten of 36?

Of the 36 men who have been vice president...

...10 have gone on to become president.

Kennedy loses, the majority leader will be the most powerful Democrat in the country.

Kennedy wins,

the majority leader will still be...

...the most powerful Democrat in Congress.

There's just no power in the vice presidency.

Walter, how long you been with me?

Twenty-one years.

And in 21 years, can you think of a time  
that I have taken over a new office...

...and not made it 100 times  
more powerful than when I got there?

No, sir.

Power is where power goes.

Should be at the Trade Mart in 15.

Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

- Yes, sir.

- They love him.

They believe in him.

They know the president's civil rights law...

...is gonna change everything.

The president doesn't have

a civil rights law.

He has a civil rights bill.

I have faith in my heart.

And shit for brains.

Kennedy has been elected president...

...by one of the smallest margins

in electoral history...

...with nearly 70 million votes cast.

The president-elect defeated Richard Nixon...

...by approximately 112,000 votes.

The new vice president, Lyndon Johnson...

...fought hard in his home state of Texas

to deliver the White House...

...for the 35th president

of the United States:

John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

And from earlier today,

here is President John F. Kennedy...

...delivering his inaugural address.

All this will not be finished

in the first 100 days.

Nor will it be finished

in the first 1000 days.

- After we unpack...

- Nor in the life...

- ...what is first on the agenda?

- ... of this administration.

Nor even perhaps in our lifetime

on this planet.

But let us begin.

- Juanita, dear?

- Yes, sir?

I wanna write a letter.

"I hereby request

that the State Department...

...the Defense Department

and the Central Intelligence Agency...

...cooperate fully with the vice president."

Lyndon did not write that.

- That's his signature right there.

- Ha, ha, ha.

Oh, what, NASA too? He even requested

oversight of the space program?

Wants control of everything

from here to the moon.

I say we send it

to The Washington Post, right?

Publish it. Humiliate the bastard.

Last month, Johnson was the most

powerful Democrat in all of Washington.

Now he answers to my kid brother

and his Harvard roommate.

Nobody's gonna do anything

to embarrass my vice president.

- He embarrasses himself.

- Started calling himself LBJ...

...after FDR was elected.

Thought it sounded more presidential.

Well, he's no FDR, and he's no JFK.

He's Lyndon "I'll never be president

in a million years" Johnson.

I'm aware of your feelings. That's why

I'm putting Kenny in charge of him.

What?

Congratulations, Kenny. You're

my new liaison to the vice president.

I'm sorry, am I being punished for something?

He's a sensitive man with an enormous ego.

Your job is to placate him.

Now, I don't care if you have to kiss

his ass all over town in order to do it.

I can't have him causing problems for me.

I'm sure we can find something

to keep him occupied.

What the fuck is the PCEEEO?  
It's the "President's Committee  
on Equal Employment Opportunity."  
The president wants to ensure  
all government agencies...  
...and contractors exercise  
fair hiring practices with regards to race.  
It's his first major initiative  
in civil rights.  
Our Southern Democrats are gonna hate this.  
No shit, and when this  
trumped-up committee inevitably...  
...fails to address  
this country's civil rights problems...  
...well, the rest of the Democrats  
are gonna hate that.  
So why the fuck am I busy alienating...  
...every son of a bitch in my party when...  
...if I'm gonna make a run in '68...  
...well, I'm gonna need people  
to fucking like me!  
Shut the door.  
- How could anybody not like him?  
- Heh, heh, heh.  
I had an idea.  
Yeah, you know, when I was 13 years old...  
...I was driving home with my daddy,  
and I made some smart-ass comment...  
...pissed him off,  
he slammed on the brakes...  
...tossed me out the truck,  
told me I was walking home.  
Well, it was hot as Hades,  
six, seven miles to go...  
...so I was feeling real bad for myself...  
...when I look up, and I see  
this old Chevy kicking up dust.  
Pulls to a stop in front of me,  
and this beautiful woman...  
...with curly red hair, leans out  
the window, smiles and says:  
"Need a ride, son?"  
Oh, yeah.  
She had the biggest titties I ever saw...



...and I stared at them the whole ride home.  
And I never would have seen them  
if my daddy hadn't...  
...punished me to begin with.  
So, what are you saying?  
When life gives you lemons,  
you make lemonade?  
No, George, I'm saying, sometimes,  
you think the Lord is giving you lemons...  
...and, in fact, he's giving you  
big, beautiful titties.  
So there's an upside to you being  
appointed chairman to this committee?  
Well, this damn civil rights issue is  
gonna tear the Democrats in two.  
We got rival camps  
that are never gonna see eye to eye.  
But as long as they're sitting  
at the table...  
...they're gonna need an interpreter.  
And Kennedys don't speak Southern.  
Southerners don't speak Kennedy.  
I'm the only man who's fluent  
in both languages.  
Which side are you on?  
You're missing the point.  
As long as neither side declares  
all-out war, both sides need me.  
The best thing that can happen for me is  
this civil rights debate goes on forever.  
And how do we make that happen, sir?  
Compromise, boys.  
Endless compromise.  
So chairman of the Equal  
Employment Opportunities Committee.  
Boy, those Kennedys must really hate you.  
- Ha-ha-ha.  
- Yeah, yeah.  
- I drew the short straw on this one.  
- I wouldn't worry about it.  
I don't imagine that committee's  
gonna be around very long.  
Don't be so sure.  
Never underestimate Southern delegation.

My army may be small,  
but our cause is mighty.  
Am I talking to Senator Richard Russell  
or General Stonewall Jackson?  
No, you're talking to the man  
who defeated three presidents on this.  
I'll defeat a fourth.  
What did Abe Lincoln say  
after he woke up from a three-day drunk?  
- I don't know.  
- "I freed the what?"  
- Thank you, Eddie.  
- Yeah, thank you, Eddie.  
Now...  
...government has a \$1 billion contract  
to build a new plane.  
I know exactly where that contract should go.  
I bet you do, and I want nothing more...  
...than to see that Lockheed plant  
in Georgia get this contract.  
Glad to hear it. You convince that  
committee of yours to go along with it.  
I will. I will.  
After you convince Lockheed  
to make some changes at the plant.  
Not making any changes.  
Why don't those Kennedys  
just leave these niggers alone?  
- They were happy.  
- Come on, Dick.  
I can't have signs all over the plant  
saying "colored" this and "white" that.  
Now you don't like  
separate drinking fountains?  
Oh, Lord. All right, fine.  
I'll bring in paper cups.  
I'm not saying  
that you're not right about this...  
...but you need to do  
a little bit more on this one.  
You're gonna have to hire some nigras.  
Well, who do you think mops the floors?  
I'm not talking about janitors.  
I'm talking about engineers, skilled labor.

Show me a skilled one first.  
Government's got no business  
telling employers who they should hire.  
It's the government's billion dollars.  
I'm guessing we got some right.  
Forced hiring's a stone's throw away  
from forced labor.  
- Last I heard, we were against that here.  
- You don't have to convince me.  
I'm the one going 15 rounds  
with the Kennedys on this.  
Those Harvard boys not gonna tell us...  
- ...how to run the state of Georgia.  
- Of course not.  
But the Kennedy did get elected  
by appealing to the colored man.  
Now, if we play this right,  
we're gonna have those nigras...  
...voting Democrat the next 200 years.  
You want me to surrender? What are you doing?  
No. I am asking you... I'm begging you...  
...to give these Kennedys  
a little something just to quiet them down.  
It ain't gonna make any difference,  
but if we don't move at all...  
...their allies are gonna line up  
against us...  
...and there's gonna be no way to put  
the brake on all sorts of wild legislation.  
- It'll be Reconstruction all over again.  
- Well, let them try. Just let them try.  
I'll use every means at my disposal  
to defend this cause...  
...till the last breath of air  
escapes my lungs.  
Keep the air in your lungs, Dick.  
I'm... I'm gonna get you what you want...  
...but just help me out a little bit here.  
Since the 1954 Supreme Court Ruling...  
...in Brown v. the Board of Education...  
...the issue of civil rights has  
taken hold throughout the nation.  
Last year, in Greensboro, North Carolina...  
...four negro college students staged

a sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter...  
...sparking a wave of similar  
demonstrations in other states.  
And earlier this spring...  
...a group known as the Freedom Riders...  
...began their voyage throughout the South.  
They have been met by cameras  
and, at times, by mobs.  
This week in Jackson, Mississippi...  
...highway patrol officers  
and national guardsmen kept the peace.  
But this much is clear:  
The cause of integration is a national issue.  
- Sir.  
- Sir.  
Please take your seats.  
By presidential order, this committee  
on equal-employment opportunity...  
...is to be comprised of:  
"Four members of the cabinet...  
...four heads of agencies and secretaries...  
...the Army, Navy and Air Force."  
Out of curiosity, who the hell are all you?  
We got the undersecretary of state,  
the undersecretary of defense.  
We got Nick Katzenbach. What's the matter?  
Bobby Kennedy too busy to join us today?  
Sir, the attorney general had a previous...  
Despite the fact that none  
of your bosses are here...  
...there is one person on this long list  
that did, in fact, show up.  
And it is the vice president.  
So let's get this thing started.  
First order of business,  
\$1 billion contract...  
...to build a new transport airplane.  
Senator Russell seems to think  
the contract is going to Georgia.  
That's because it is.  
That Lockheed plant's record  
on civil rights is disgraceful.  
How old are you?  
- Thirty-two. Sir.

- Mm.

Richard Russell is the leader  
of the Southern Democratic Caucus...

...and chairman  
of the Armed Services Committee.

We are gonna work  
with Senator Russell on this.

Better to have him inside the tent  
pissing out than outside pissing in.

Sir, I know I speak for my boss when I say...

...that this is a fight  
in which we should not give an inch.

The secretary of labor's drafted a list of  
demands that he would like addressed...

...before we award the contract to any plant.

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

...of this committee.

If your boss wants to make demands,  
tell him to deliver them to me in person.

And, son,  
if this committee had any real power...

...the man you work for would be sitting  
at this table instead of you.

This meeting is adjourned.

Mr. President, over here!

Get down. Get down! Go, go, go!

I'm switching to Charlie frequency.

Stay with him.

Stay down, stay down! Go, go, go!

- Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln.

- Good morning, Mr. Kennedy.

- Mr. Bobby.

- Hi, Caroline. How are you?

Here you go.

- Hi, Caroline.

- Come on, hon.

Good morning, Lyndon.

- Oh, hello, Mr. President.

- Sorry to keep you waiting.

- How you getting along?

- Busy morning.

How are we doing on this committee?

Fine, Mr. President.

Need to make sure  
that this Lockheed contract conforms...  
- ...to the committee's purpose.  
- Well, ahem...  
...Senator Russell has assured me that...  
...we can expect to see  
some significant changes in that plant.  
That's not what I hear.  
If you're concerned,  
you should come to one of our meetings.  
If you'd like me  
to express my dissatisfaction...  
...in front of the entire committee,  
that could be arranged.  
Lyndon, we're not awarding  
a government contract...  
...to a plant that violates civil rights.  
And you might remind Senator Russell  
that we don't need his help on this.  
We've got a Lockheed plant  
in California happy to build planes.  
With all due respect,  
if you take that contract from Russell...  
...all it will show is  
that you can't make him do...  
...one damn thing that he doesn't wanna do.  
Now, you have to understand his thinking.  
It's straight out of the last century.  
He's never gonna be a progressive like us.  
Why should we be working  
with him on this, then?  
Because you don't wanna make  
an enemy of Richard Russell.  
He'll put the brakes on every legislation  
we're trying to move through Congress.  
We're not gonna let  
one senator hold us hostage.  
I suggest you don't wanna find out  
how powerful that one senator can be.  
I need this committee to show  
a strong record right from the start.  
Something that demonstrates  
concrete changes on civil rights.  
We can't do that if we're giving

a huge contract to a discriminatory plant.  
On the contrary, I think we can, sir.  
If we send that contract to Georgia...  
...then I can get Russell to make  
that plant hire a number of negros.  
And then, we can have  
white men and black men...  
...working side by side in the deep South...  
...building America's newest airplane.  
This can be one hell of a victory  
for this administration.  
All right, Lyndon, but...  
...you're gonna have to move Russell.  
Thank you, Mr. President.  
Oh, and if I may, there's just  
one other item I'd like to discuss.  
What's happening with Sarah Hughes?  
The judge from Dallas?  
You haven't responded  
to my recommendation to nominate her.  
It's not your place  
to make that recommendation.  
She'd make a damn fine judge.  
- She's too old.  
- To you, everybody's too old.  
Senators make those recommendations.  
You know that.  
I promised Sarah Hughes that appointment.  
It's Ralph Yarborough's  
recommendation to make.  
How's it gonna look to my state  
if I can't get a federal judge appointed?  
I understand your frustration, Lyndon,  
but this is how it's gotta be done.  
We'll give Sarah Hughes a look  
next time. Thanks for stopping by.  
She'll be ready to take off this summer.  
Record time.  
Are you sure that big bitch will fly?  
She'll fly all right.  
Built by Georgia's finest.  
Half of them, anyway.  
Thanks to you.  
Jesus, Lyndon. God, put that thing away.

Look at that. Number-two man in Washington.  
Attorney generals don't become president.  
There's a lot of things these Kennedy  
boys do that no one else has done.  
He is a nice-looking boy.

You know, I've been...  
...hearing disturbing news about  
some goddamn civil rights bill.

Yeah.

Yeah, I'm afraid  
I've been hearing the same thing.  
I hope you're impressing on the president  
the severity of the moment.

Well, I have, but, unfortunately,  
he doesn't answer to me or you.

Mmm.

So Kennedy won the presidency  
by a fraction of a percent.  
Do you recall my margin of victory  
that very same year? Ha-ha-ha.

Mmm. Hang on, Dick.

- Yeah, I believe you were unopposed.

- That's right. I was. Unopposed.

Six years before that too.

And six years before that. And you know what?

Six years before that.

Are you plodding toward a point?

I may not be president, but neither  
am I ever in jeopardy of losing my job.

So if the president sends  
a civil rights bill to Congress...

...it'll be my distinct pleasure  
to see it die a painful death.

And I'll kill every other bill along the way.

I don't care

if it costs my party the White House.

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

It seems like every time we do that,

I'm the only one giving something up.

And I'm about running out of things  
that I can live without.

Dick, you didn't have to give up  
your billion-dollar airplane, did you?



I'm not saying lay down and die,  
but this train is leaving the station.

So you can stand there  
and watch it roll on by...

...or you can hop on it with me  
and try to slow the damn thing down.

Yeah.

Move, move, move!

Stay back! Stay back.

We're not stopping for anything, understand?

- You bet, partner. You ready, Bird?

- Here we go.

- Let's move.

- Everybody back!

Everyone back.

Keep that area clear.

Keep the area clear!

- What's going on?

- Move!

We're going right through  
this door right here, sir. Here we go.

Copy that.

Get them out of here.

- Back in the corner. Here we go.

- Sorry?

Here you go.

Nobody comes in unless he's got  
a damn good reason to be here.

- He wants you to call Washington.

- I'm not leaving this man.

The president and Governor Connally  
suffered gunshot wounds.

I don't know the governor's condition,  
but the president...

It's bad.

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

I'm not leaving here.

Mr. Vice President, safest place  
for you is the White House.

It would be unthinkable for me  
to leave President Kennedy...

...while he fights for his life.

Gentlemen...

...this is a time for prayer  
if ever there was one.  
In another current trouble spot:  
Plaquemine, Louisiana.  
Mounted state troopers and police...  
...used tear gas  
and high-pressure water hoses...  
...in Plaquemine last night to break up  
a civil rights demonstration...  
...that almost erupted into a race riot.  
How many more demonstrations do we  
have to look at with hoses and dogs?  
I'm running out of ways  
to explain to the press corps...  
...why the civil rights bill  
isn't being sent to Congress.  
I'm running out of ways  
to explain it to Congress.  
You take legislative action now,  
all you'll do is fan the flames.  
We made promises during the campaign.  
We sit on this bill,  
our supporters will never forgive us.  
It is also the right thing to do.  
- It's the wrong time to do it.  
- The wrong time?  
We've got kids in the street  
getting their heads busted open.  
And how does sending what will surely be...  
...a failed bill to Congress help kids?  
Well, burying our head in the sand  
is not a solution.  
Neither is getting your ass handed  
to you by Richard Russell.  
- I am so tired...  
- Forget about the demise of the bill.  
What do you think he'll do to your budget?  
Do you believe  
they'll hold the budget bill hostage?  
To block civil rights,  
they'll hold everything hostage.  
- To hell with Russell. We'll go around him.  
- You can't.  
Then we'll go through him.

We've got Martin Luther King writing letters from jail. It's an embarrassment.

- What are we waiting for?!

- Mr. President...

...I may not be the smartest man in this room.

Hell, I may not be as smart as any man in this room.

But I know the Congress of the United States.

And if you submit

this civil rights bill now...

...it will never become law.

Thank you, gentlemen.

- What do you think?

- The time for negotiation is over.

- What about Southern Democrats?

- You never had their support.

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

We could get to them through Lyndon.

Send a message.

They might listen to a Southerner who's on our side.

What makes you think he's on our side?

Kenny...

...can we get this bill passed?

I don't know, sir.

It's not gonna be easy.

Well, we don't do these things because they're easy.

We do them because they're hard.

What do you want me to tell Lyndon?

He's no longer a part of this discussion.

The Kennedys attended private schools their entire lives.

Now they wanna talk about equality.

Voluntary integration is one thing, but don't you think that I...

...as an American citizen, shouldn't be forced to eat a hamburger...

...next to someone in a restaurant

I don't wanna bump elbows with?

Dick, I think it is unconscionable...

...that you, as an American citizen,

should ever...

...be forced to eat a hamburger.

Don't be a wisea... Lyndon.

I don't find this topic amusing.

Well, here's where I get confused.

A baby calf is born.

It grows into a cow,

lives on a farm, gets slaughtered...

...butchered, packaged, shipped, cooked...

...and finally served to you.

Most, if not all, those steps required  
the hands of black men.

Why is it that

when it comes time to eat it...

...you can't stomach the notion of sitting  
next to a black man while you chew?

- If those...

- May I clear your plate?

Oh, yes, Zephyr. Delicious.

"If the law can compel me to hire a negro...

...it can compel a negro to work for me.

And such a law would do nothing more  
than enslave a minority."

And that's what one senator had to say  
about civil rights legislation. Thank you.

That's probably Strom Thurmond.

He's an asshole and a moron.

No, it was you.

1949, your first speech

on the Senate floor. Ha.

You spoke for over an hour in opposition  
to a civil rights bill just like this one.

I remember watching you speak,  
thinking to myself:

"This young man's the future of the South."

The best leaders of the time...

...from both our states, voted for secession.

And they were great men

who nearly destroyed America.

I don't ever want a history book  
to say that about me.

Mmm.

Let me ask you something.

When was the last time

you had a meal with her?  
She's an employee...  
...but if you think  
that I would have any objection...  
...of breaking bread with her,  
then you are a fool.  
So you're telling me she's your equal?  
That woman spends more time in  
this house than anyone except Lady Bird.  
She is family.  
I don't know how I missed the resemblance.  
Look, what I'm talking about here is freedom.  
I'm talking about the preservation  
of a way of life.  
A way of life  
that you and I both grew up with.  
There's nothing wrong with that.  
Then why are we whispering?  
One hundred years of delay have passed...  
...since President Lincoln freed the slaves.  
Yet their heirs, their grandsons,  
are not fully free.  
They are not yet freed  
from the bonds of injustice.  
They are not yet freed from social  
and economic oppression.  
And this nation...  
...for all its hopes and all its boasts...  
...will not be fully free  
until all its citizens are free.  
Next week, I shall ask the Congress  
of the United States to act...  
...to make a commitment  
it has not fully made in this century...  
...to the proposition that race...  
...has no place in American life or law.  
Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln.  
I'd like a moment with the president.  
Sir, Vice President Johnson is here.  
What shall I tell him?  
You can go in.  
Thank you.  
Good morning, Mr. President.  
- How you getting along?

- You're up early, Lyndon.  
No, the president hasn't arrived yet,  
but what do you need?  
It can wait.  
What's on your mind?  
I wanna know  
the president's intentions for '64.  
Does he wanna keep me on the ticket?  
Dropping you from the ticket  
would be more trouble than it's worth.  
Now, if you'll excuse me, I was on my way.  
Bobby.  
Why don't you like me?  
Your brother likes me.  
Your father likes me.  
What is it makes you hate me so much?  
I don't hate you. I just... I...  
We see the world in very different ways.  
Then why do you keep me around?  
I was in Congress 24 years...  
...but you never asked for my help  
in legislative issues.  
I'm from the South...  
...but when you need help down there,  
you go to other Southerners.  
Why don't you just...  
...put me out to pasture?  
You've worked overtime  
making sure I'm politically through.  
I can never run for elected office again.  
Hell, I don't even know  
if I can help the president out in '64.  
This isn't about '64, is it?  
It's about '68.  
You don't wanna bring in someone new.  
You keep me here precisely because...  
...you've made me politically irrelevant.  
That way, in '68...  
...the vice president isn't  
the presumptive nominee.  
You are.  
You think I'd be that calculating?  
I know I would be.  
If either of you get a better job offer,

I suggest you take it.

My future is behind me.

He's gone.

Mr. President?

Sir, I need to announce  
the death of President Kennedy.

Ahem. I want you to hold off  
on that, Malcolm.

Rufus, get some cars set up and let  
the drivers know we're ready to move.

Emery, have your people  
locate Luci and Lynda Bird.

I want my daughters to meet us  
when we arrive in Washington.

Also, have McNamara, Rusk and the rest  
of the cabinet on the ground at Andrews.

Rusk and five cabinet members  
are on a plane to Japan.

Turn it around.

I need you to tell Mrs. Kennedy  
it's time to go.

Mrs. Kennedy won't leave without the body.

Well, we won't leave here  
without Mrs. Kennedy.

- Sir, we need to get you in the air.
- Not without Jackie.
- Then let's wait for her at the plane.
- Fine.

Cliff, I need people I know close by.

Congressmen, I want you  
flying back to Washington with me.

- Yes, sir.
- Sir...

...the American people need to know  
that President Kennedy has died.

On April 14th, 1865...

...two men attempted to kill  
Secretary of State William Seward...

...stabbing him in his home.

At the same time,  
another assassin was on his way...

...to take the life  
of Vice President Andrew Johnson.

This was the same night...

...that John Wilkes Booth  
shot Abraham Lincoln.  
We don't know the extent  
of this conspiracy or who's behind it.  
Malcolm, you're to announce  
President Kennedy's death...  
...only after the rest of us  
are safely onboard that plane.  
Otherwise, you're gonna make  
these boys' jobs...  
- ...a whole hell of a lot harder.  
- Sir.  
It was only on October the 24th...  
...that our ambassador  
to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson...  
...was assaulted in Dallas,  
leaving a dinner meeting there.  
From Dallas, Texas,  
the flash, apparently official...  
...President Kennedy died  
at 1 p.m. Central Standard Time...  
...2 o'clock Eastern Standard Time...  
...some 38 minutes ago.  
Vice President Lyndon Johnson  
has left the hospital in Dallas...  
...but we do not know  
to where he has proceeded.  
Presumably, he will be taking  
the oath of office shortly...  
...and become the 36th president  
of the United States.  
I wanna thank everybody  
for getting here so quickly.  
And I'm gonna need your help  
back in Washington.  
- Marie, can you join me in the next room?  
- Yes, sir.  
- Excuse me.  
- At Dallas Airport...  
...was cheerful, waving...  
This is Lyndon Johnson.  
Yeah.  
I need you to take notes.  
Sir, I got Lyndon Johnson on the phone.



Hello, Lyndon.  
Bobby, I am...  
...so sorry for your loss.  
Words cannot express...  
The whole country mourns with you.  
- Thank you.  
- Listen, Bobby...  
...I need your opinion about something.  
People down here are saying that I...  
I should take the oath of office  
as soon as possible...  
...before we depart.  
What do you think about that?  
Well, I think it would be nice  
for President Kennedy...  
...to return to Washington as president.  
Well, I understand that. I do.  
But we got confusion down here,  
and it's liable to turn into panic.  
I think it would put  
a lot of people at ease...  
...if I was to take the oath right now.  
What's the matter?  
You afraid you'll arrive...  
...and the White House won't be here?  
I think it's important  
that the world knows...  
...that the American government is  
functioning and someone's in charge.  
Well, I don't know what the hurry is...  
...but if you're so insistent  
on taking the oath, take the oath.  
Okay, Bobby, then I'll take the oath.  
Fine, Lyndon.  
Now, we have to be absolutely certain that...  
...we do this the right way.  
So I need you to get me the precise wording.  
- Is that all?  
- One last thing.  
Who do we need to administer it?  
Any judge can do it.  
Okay, well, thank you, Bobby.  
God bless.  
Get me Sarah Hughes.

I do solemnly swear...  
That I will faithfully execute...  
The office of president  
of the United States...  
The office of president  
of the United States...  
And will, to the best of my ability...  
- Preserve, protect...  
- Preserve, protect...  
- And defend...  
- And defend...  
The Constitution of the United States.  
- The Constitution of the United States.  
- So help me God.  
So help me God.

**At 3:**

of our government...  
...conferred the unique powers  
and awesome responsibilities...  
...of the presidency  
upon Lyndon Baines Johnson.  
There is, in the urgent necessity  
of this continuity of presidential power...  
...a reassurance  
that the government will function...  
...the nation endure,  
no matter how great the tragedy...  
...no matter how grievous the shock.  
Welcome back, sir.  
- Mrs. Johnson.  
- Glad you're safe, sir.  
Early reports said you'd been shot  
or that you'd had a heart attack.  
Agent Youngblood took excellent care of us.  
- Bird?  
- Yes?  
Can you get your good stationery? I'd like  
to write letters to Caroline and John.  
- Juanita.  
- Yes, sir?  
- Come with me. I need to make calls.  
- Yes, sir.  
Yes, it has been a shocking day.

Well, I...  
You know, I feel inadequate to the task.  
And I'm gonna be relying  
on your good, sound judgment.  
And...  
I'll be calling on you...  
...to get your advice.  
You know how much  
I've admired you over the years.  
Well, please give my love to Mrs. Eisenhower.  
No, no, no.  
Anything Harry Truman has to say,  
I'm all ears.  
I'm gonna be calling on you real soon.  
J. Edgar, you are not just  
the head of the Federal Bureau...  
...you're as close as "close" can be to me.  
Now, let's just try to put  
our country at close ranks...  
...and pull ourselves out of this  
terrible situation we find ourselves in.  
Nellie, how's our boy?  
Is he in a lot of pain?  
Well, tell John I'm praying for him...  
...and Bird and I are sending you both  
a big hug and a kiss.  
Pierre, it makes no sense  
to be jumping ship now...  
...when we're all on the same fucking ocean.  
I'm going to bed, dear.  
Okay, baby.  
Now, I need you now more than he ever did.  
Lady Bird and I will remain  
at the Elms for the foreseeable future.  
And Jackie can stay at the White House  
for as long as she likes.  
Bundy said you and your staff should  
move to the Oval Office tomorrow.  
Fine.  
Ted Sorensen?  
It's Lyndon Johnson.  
Hello, Mr. President.  
I'm glad I tracked you down.  
Sir, Senator Russell's

pulled up to the house.

Listen, I know how much

you loved President Kennedy.

And he loved you too.

You were a trusted servant, loyal to the end.

Ted, I need you now more than he ever did.

How many senators did Russell bring with him?

Looks like the entire Southern delegation.

Any idea what they want?

Russell said they just wanted

to wish you well.

No. They could've done that over the phone.

Mr. President.

Mr. President.

In this dark hour of our nation's history...

...we must remember

to give thanks for our blessings.

Because out of the despicable ashes

of a presidential assassination...

...a new leader has emerged.

And we're all here to offer our support.

Yes, sir.

After a century of persecution,

a century of being treated as inferior...

...after 100 long years...

...we finally have one of our own

leading this nation.

America has a Southern president.

And we could think

of no finer representative for our people.

Dear Lord...

...continue to watch over our president...

...and fill him with the strength...

...and wisdom as he works to do

the same for all your children.

- Amen.

- Amen.

Thank you, Dick. Gentlemen.

Good morning, gentlemen.

- Mr. President.

- Mr. President.

I'm pleased to see you back at work already.

The Constitution put me in the White House...

...but there's no law

to make you stay here with me.  
Now, I know you loved President Kennedy...  
...but I need you now more than he ever did.  
Not that I loved Caesar less...  
...but that I loved Rome more.  
- I can't believe he quoted Shakespeare.  
- Can't believe he quoted Brutus.  
Good morning, Mrs. Lincoln.  
Good morning.  
Now, I have an 11:30 appointment.  
Can I get my girls in the office by then?  
I'll do the best I can.  
I know you will.  
Mrs. Kennedy had the new carpet installed...  
...when everybody went to Texas.  
Oh. Strange choice.  
What's going on?  
Mr. Johnson told me  
to clear everything out immediately.  
You don't waste any time, do you, Lyndon?  
- Excuse me?  
- It's going to take some doing to get...  
...all of President Kennedy's  
belongings packed and relocated.  
I was told to use this office.  
Just like you were told  
to take the oath in Dallas?  
Bobby...  
...I'm not trying to shove myself anywhere.  
In fact, I told Jackie she could stay  
in the East Wing as long as she needs.  
Well, that's not really the part of the  
building that you're interested in, is it?  
I'm just trying to do my job.  
My brother's coffin is down the hall.  
This is not where our attention should be.  
We all mourn for your brother.  
But somebody has to tend  
to the business of the country.  
Mourning for my brother is  
the business of the country.  
We can come back later  
after my cabinet meeting.  
Your cabinet...

Bobby...

...I know you've got a lot on your mind.

But I want you to stand with me  
as attorney general.

You've already got one photograph  
with a grieving Kennedy at your side.

Do you really need another?

I'd appreciate it if you kept me  
apprised of any...

...change in plans you might have.

Okay.

Yeah, I know where to find you.

People gathered outside the grounds  
of the White House today...

...watching the dignitaries  
and government officials...

...and representatives  
of foreign governments...

...come through the gates  
and go to pay last respects...

...to President Kennedy, lying in  
the East Room of the White House.

Our reporter, David Schumacher,  
was outside the White House...

...and talked to some of those people.

Let's look at that film now.

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

It just seems empty.

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

Sir, we need to discuss  
your address to Congress.

It's unreal. This can't  
happen in our country.

I feel the profound grief that...

I'm not ready for that yet.

Well, with all due respect,  
you better get ready.

President Kennedy's burial  
has been set for Monday.

Thursday being Thanksgiving,  
we don't have much of a window.

Thinking that, possibly,

the only thing we could do is to...  
...pray that Lyndon Johnson can carry on.  
Johnson gave Pierre the "I need  
you more than he needed you" speech.  
What did you tell him?  
I told him I'd stay as press secretary  
as long as he needed me.  
Till Tuesday.  
Johnson's not gonna be satisfied till  
every one of us promises to serve him.  
So, what are we doing here?  
In his inaugural address...  
...President Kennedy declared that...  
...the torch had been passed  
to a new generation of Americans.  
The question before us now is:  
Who should be the custodian of that torch?  
The Constitution may say  
that the vice president...  
...is the next in the line of succession,  
but does anyone here believe...  
...that Lyndon Johnson is  
the man to carry that torch?  
So, what are you suggesting?  
I didn't come to Washington  
just to work for John Kennedy.  
I came here to work  
for what John Kennedy believed in.  
There is unfinished business.  
Right now our only hope of completing it  
is by serving his successor.  
That's not true. There are other ways.  
We've come too far to put everything on hold.  
So you think that Johnson will continue  
the work of President Kennedy?  
This is a man who has fought against  
every piece of civil rights legislation...  
...for the last 20 years.  
How do you honor Kennedy  
by working for Johnson?  
You're looking at it wrong.  
Even if Johnson believed in what  
we believe in, and that is up for debate...  
...how much do you think

he'd accomplish in one year?

Good point.

Could we mount a campaign by then?

Bobby is more powerful and more popular than any other Democrat...

...including Lyndon Johnson.

The men in this room all want to see a president, a President Kennedy...

...deliver this world to a better place.

So do the people of this country.

Hear, hear.

What are you asking us to do? Quit?

- Betray Lyndon Johnson?

- No.

No, no, no. No one is being asked to sabotage anything.

No one is calling for a mass exodus, and this certainly is not a coup d'tat.

Johnson needs to make his case to the American people.

He needs to prove that he's worthy of this job.

And if he stumbles...

...if he should fall...

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

And it will be Bobby's time.

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

Yes. He has to make some progress on civil rights.

- Some. We need to be realistic.

- Howdy, Zephyr.

- Evening, sir.

- Good evening, sir.

Hear anything back from the Kennedy men?

Well, two nights ago, they had a meeting...

...and I... I think we're gonna hear something soon.

How they going in there?

It's going.

We can't just keep doing the same thing.

The best thing we can do is show some progress in civil rights.

"Some progress" is not enough.



The civil rights bill was the cornerstone  
of Kennedy's presidency.  
Even Kennedy was gonna have to compromise.  
Exactly.  
And nobody expects Johnson  
to be John Kennedy.  
Do our daughters know I love them?  
Of course they do, Lyndon. Why?  
I didn't always know.  
Rebekah loved you.  
Some days, she...  
...made me feel like a prince, but...  
...some days...  
Lyndon.  
Honey?  
You're not supposed to have that.  
Now, what's this all about?  
From the time I was a boy, I...  
I had this dream...  
I'd rather not have it than have it this way.  
Oh, my poor darling.  
They don't... They want...  
They want Jack. They love Jack.  
They love Bobby. They...  
They don't even like me.  
Lyndon...  
...your mother didn't turn her back on you  
because she didn't love you.  
She just couldn't stand to see you  
when you weren't at your best.  
She wouldn't wanna see me now.  
You're gonna be all right.  
You're a good man in a tight spot.  
President Kennedy did  
wonderful things for America.  
Not the least of which was choosing you  
to be his successor.  
He was a man of great ideas.  
Now the country needs a man...  
...who can deliver.  
If we don't do anything about civil rights...  
...we'll face a challenge at the convention.  
- From Bobby?  
- From someone.

**The question is:**

What's the minimum we need  
to accomplish in order to win reelection?  
Which provisions in Kennedy's bill  
can we live without?  
Are you saying weaken the bill  
right out of the gate?  
We can't risk everything  
chasing ambitious goals.  
Then what the hell's the presidency for?  
Sit.  
It can't be about a shiny airplane  
or a room with no corners.  
Surely, we can aspire to something greater.  
You wanna back Kennedy's civil rights bill?  
The entire goddamn thing.  
Are you even in favor of it?  
You know, about a...  
...year ago...  
...my private cook Mrs. Wright,  
who you know...  
...was driving from here  
down to the ranch in Texas.  
So I asked her if she would mind...  
...bringing my dog,  
Little Beagle Johnson, with her...  
...in order that he could be there  
when I got home.  
Mrs. Wright respectfully declined.  
She said it is hard enough...  
...for a black woman driving  
through the South...  
...without having a dog to worry about.  
Finding a place to eat,  
to sleep, to use the restroom.  
The personal cook of the vice president  
of the United States...  
...has to drive through towns  
without stopping...  
...then squat to pee by the side of the road.  
Hundred years ago, she would've been a slave.  
Hundred years from now, hell,  
she might be president.

But today...  
...we live in a time of too much uncertainty.  
Where can she eat? Where can she sleep?  
Can she vote?  
And if she does, will she be harassed  
for casting that vote?  
Can she attend school? If so, which school?  
Can she travel the cities  
and towns of this land...  
...without fearing for her safety?  
What rights that belong  
to the men in this room...  
...should not be afforded to her?  
Sir, you're gonna lose the support of  
the people who've always had your back.  
And if you aren't successful, you're never  
gonna earn the support of anyone else.  
Four other presidents have fought  
Congress on this and failed.  
There will be no compromise.  
There will be no negotiation.  
And there will be no failure.  
This time,  
Congress is not fighting a president.  
It's fighting two.  
Never underestimate  
the intensity of a martyr's cause...  
...or the size of a Texan's balls.  
Good morning, Mr. President.  
Good morning, Juanita.  
Ted, we have scheduled a speech before  
a joint session of Congress tomorrow.  
I've heard.  
I'd like you to write it.  
Mr. President...  
...I don't know  
that I'll be coming back to work.  
Ted...  
...the voice of John Kennedy rings  
throughout our land.  
You gave words to that voice.  
I need those words now.  
Mr. President, I...  
We are moving ahead full tilt

with his civil rights bill.

His entire agenda.

This is about making

President Kennedy's vision...

...a reality.

Just checking to see if you need anything.

I don't understand what you want this to be.

Is it supposed to be a speech...

- ...or a eulogy...?

- Both.

A country's final goodbye

to President Kennedy...

...and its first introduction

to President Johnson.

It's a eulogy, it's an opening statement...

...it's a State of the Union,

it's an inaugural address.

And you have less than 21 hours to write it.

Do you really believe

he can accomplish all this?

I do.

How can he?

The same way he always has.

You are as worthless as porkless pig.

Now get me the goddamn list!

Senator Dirksen's office said he can stop by.

- I'll go to him.

- Mr. President...

...I need to know your thinking on Vietnam.

My thinking on Vietnam is that

I don't wanna think about Vietnam.

You stayed on the line to wait for me

to hang up on you?

- Rusk needs 10 minutes.

- He can have them in 20.

- There's gonna be a Southern filibuster.

- What's the count on cloture?

- About 56.

- You can leave about now.

Trust me, Bob.

I am not gonna be the president to let

Southeast Asia fall to the communists.

When I ask for a number,

I need a goddamn number.

Senator Dirksen,  
this civil rights bill will have its day.  
Oh, it's gonna have more than its day, sir.  
There's going to be all-out war,  
and I need men.  
Men with principle.  
Because the Southerners in my party,  
most of them anyway...  
...are gonna rise up against us.  
Now, Senator Yarborough, are you up for that?  
It is my sincere hope that the Republicans...  
...the party of Lincoln...  
...fire the final shot.  
Sir, I serve at your pleasure.  
Good.  
This is your fucking mess I'm cleaning up.  
Good to see you, Dick.  
How you getting along?  
Why don't we have a drink?  
No.  
No, I... I think I'm done drinking with you.  
You hurt the very people  
who made you who you are.  
And for what?  
Civil rights is an idea whose time has come.  
This will define your presidency.  
I can only hope.  
You're willing to hitch your wagon  
to the outcome of this bill?  
We've been talking about this forever,  
and we never say a damn thing.  
Well... What...? What do you wanna say?  
That you're gonna turn your back on me?  
That you don't care about  
everything I've done for you?  
- That you're willing to betray me?  
- That you're a racist.  
All your talk about the Southern way of  
life and loving the negra as your brother...  
...and all the while, you plot against him  
like he is a sworn enemy.  
I don't care where we're standing.  
No man is gonna talk to me like that.  
You are a good man, Dick.

World-class.  
I admire you more than any man alive.  
But you are wrong on this.  
You are just plain wrong.  
I'm gonna fight you  
with everything that I have.  
Fine. Fight me.  
But not in here.  
And not in backrooms in hushed conversation.  
Fight me on the floor  
of the United States Senate...  
...in front of the entire world.  
And on that battlefield...  
...let each man write his own legacy.  
Time to go.  
Try not to look at the Southern Caucus  
when talking about civil rights.  
How will he know where they're sitting?  
Don't worry. I'll spot them.  
They'll be the ones not clapping.  
Are you ready, sir?  
Yes.  
Mr. Speaker.  
The president of the United States.  
Mr. President.  
Good, Mr. President.  
Mr. President.  
Mr. Speaker.  
Mr. President.  
Members of the House,  
Members of the Senate...  
...my fellow Americans.  
All I have...  
...I would have given gladly  
not to be standing here today.  
The greatest leader of our time...  
...has been struck down...  
...by the foulest deed of our time.  
Today...  
...John Fitzgerald Kennedy lives on.  
He lives on in the mind  
and memories of mankind.  
He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen.  
No words are sad enough...

...to express our sense of loss.  
No words are strong enough...  
...to express our determination...  
...to continue...  
...the forward thrust...  
...of America that he began.  
An assassin's bullet has thrust upon me...  
...the awesome burden of the presidency.  
And in this critical moment...  
...it is our duty...  
...yours and mine...  
...as the government of the United States...  
...to do away with uncertainty  
and doubt and delay...  
...and to show that we are capable  
of decisive action.  
That from the brutal loss of our leader...  
...we will derive not weakness...  
...but strength.  
John Kennedy's death commands  
what his life conveyed:  
That America must move forward.  
The time has come...  
...for Americans of all races and creeds...  
...and political beliefs...  
...to understand...  
...and to respect one another.  
So let us put an end to the teaching...  
...and the preaching of hate and evil...  
...and violence.  
I profoundly hope...  
...that the tragedy and the torment  
of these terrible days...  
...will bind us together in new fellowship...  
...making us one people  
in our hour of sorrow.  
So let us, here, highly resolve...  
...that John Fitzgerald Kennedy  
did not live...  
...or die in vain.  
No memorial oration or eulogy  
could more eloquently honor...  
...President Kennedy's memory...  
...than the earliest possible passage

of the civil rights bill...  
...for which he fought so long.  
We have talked long enough  
in this country about equal rights.  
We have talked for 100 years or more.  
It is time now to write the next chapter...  
...and to write it in the books of law.  
On the 20th day of January, in 19 and 61...  
...John F. Kennedy told his countrymen...  
...that our national work...  
...would not be finished  
in the first thousand days...  
...nor in the life of this administration.  
Nor even perhaps  
in our lifetime on this planet.

**But he said:**

"Let us begin."  
Today...  
...in this moment of new resolve...  
...I would say to all my fellow Americans:  
Let us continue.  
Sir, we need to move beyond  
civil rights and start thinking about...  
...whatever else it is that we aim to do.  
Well, if we've learned anything  
from President Kennedy...  
...it's that life is precious  
and time is fleeting.  
And I don't intend to waste either.  
Mistakes will be made,  
but inaction won't be one of them.  
John Kennedy gave people hope.  
Now we are gonna give them results.  
Let's get to work.  
- Thank you, Mr. President.  
- Thank you.  
Sir, I have the request from McNamara.  
Can I get your signature right there?  
Excuse me, Mr. President.  
This is the brief...