

Blood of Angels

An Opera in Two Acts
Words and Music by
Richard Pearson Thomas

Time: The 1960's

Setting: Alabama, Wisconsin, Ohio, Florida, and Maryland

Characters

George C. Wallace	Baritone
a man with bottomless reserves of energy; wiry, electric, always moving, impatient, quick, sharp, compelling, powerful, hungry, ambitious	
Celia Wallace, his wife	Lyric mezzo-soprano
a country woman of simple dignity who is seduced by the trappings of power	
Jim Folsom	Bass Baritone
an opponent in the Democratic primary for governor	
Harry Agleton,	
a lawyer and political advisor	
The Advisors: shrewd, cynical, and brilliant political operatives	Tenor
Seymour Lyons, political strategist	
Herschel Booker, speechwriter	
Pastor Caleb Weans, God's man	
James Morris Bevel	Bass
Pastor of the 16 th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham	
Maxine McNair	Soprano
Mother of Denise	
The Girls	Child sopranos
Cynthia Wesley, 14	
Denise McNair, 11	
Carole Robertson, 14	
Addie Mae Collins, 14	
Arthur Bremer	Countertenor
A stalker and would-be assassin	
Chorus divided into two equal groups	SATB
The Blacks	
The Whites	
All other roles will be covered by members of the chorus	
The Blacks	
Charles Bailey, defendant in a civil court case	
James Johnson, his lawyer	
Servants	
Baptist Congregants and parents	
Protesters/ Hecklers	
Female TV reporter	
The Whites	
Bailiff of the Third Judicial Courtroom	
J. D. Cunningham	
plaintiff in a civil court case	
John Patterson	
winning opponent in the first Democratic primary for governor	
National Guardsman	

Policemen	non-singing
National News Reporters	SATB
“Wallace Girls”	SA
Campaign attendees	SATB
Protesters/ Hecklers	All voices

Although this libretto divides the action into individual scenes, the action will flow seamlessly from scene to scene. Sets should be minimal and suggestive.

***Blood of Angels** is based on people who lived and events that occurred. Times, locations, and personalities have been compressed; situations and dialogues imagined. It is neither intended to be an historically accurate reenactment of specific events nor a critical assessment of those persons involved. It is an opera.*

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Blood of Angels

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Act 1

Scene 1. A courtroom of the Third Judicial District, Barbour County, Alabama

(There is no curtain. As the audience enters, so too the stage gradually fills, characters wandering in and out, conversing softly, taking their seats. The stage is evenly divided. On stage right behind the defendant sit the BLACKS. Behind the plaintiff sit the WHITES. There is a gentle murmur of conversation, but never across the aisle. The bailiff enters. Two loud chords, like a gavel, signify the beginning. The house lights drop. The bailiff announces the entrance of the judge.)

BAILIFF

All rise for the Honorable George C. Wallace.

(The crowd rises. WALLACE enters briskly and takes his place.)

WALLACE

Please be seated.

(The crowd sits.)

Gentlemen, I wanna get this case closed and over with as fast as possible.

AGLETON

Last minute campaignin' to do, eh, Judge?

WALLACE

Let's stick to the matter at hand, Mr. Agleton. (motioning toward the defendant) Mr. Charles Bailey is accused of stealing and wrecking the tractor of Mr. J. D. Cunningham on the seventeenth of April ...

AGLETON (interrupting)

My client seeks compensation and damages of \$600, sir...

WALLACE

Stop interrupting, Mr. Agleton. I know what your client wants. And *I* want to get out of here. Closing arguments, please. (motioning to the defense attorney) Mr. Johnson.

(JOHNSON rises.)

JOHNSON

Thank you, your Honor. Charles Bailey was nowhere near the Cunningham property that night in April. As four of his friends and his wife have testified, he was at home that evening.

AGLETON (rises, interrupting again)

But wait just a minute ... we're asked to believe the testimony of five individuals who admitted under oath that they'd been drinking the night of the incident. (He turns to CUNNINGHAM sitting at the defense table.) Isn't Barbour County a dry county, J. D.?

CUNNINGHAM

Last I heard.

AGLETON

Who you gonna believe --- five liquored-up Negroes, or a pillar of the community?

(There are a few snickers in the crowd at that remark.)

JOHNSON
And a white man.

AGLETON (waving dismissively towards BAILEY)
Oh, come on, Jimmy, that boy got himself drunk and ...

(WALLACE gavels)

WALLACE
Counselor, in my courtroom, you will address the counsel for the defense as *Mister* Johnson.

AGLETON
Yes, your Honor. *Mister* Johnson seems to think the color of my client has some bearing on this case.

JOHNSON
How deftly you defer to matters of race when it suits you, *Mister* Agleton. But isn't it common knowledge that Mr. Cunningham's own nephew wrecked that tractor?

AGLETON
Objection, your Honor. Hearsay.

WALLACE
Sustained.

JOHNSON
My client was at home!

CHARLES BAILEY
I was home, sir.

AGLETON
Isn't it true that just last month, Mister Bailey's brother-in-law was convicted by a jury of his peers ...

JOHNSON
His white peers.

AGLETON
... of grand theft and larceny? My, that's a lot of activity in the courts for one family in one month. (to CUNNINGHAM) Wouldn't you say?

CUNNINGHAM
I would.

JOHNSON
Objection, your Honor. Relevance.

WALLACE

Sustained.

AGLETON

Have you seen how those people live -- in tarpaper shacks surrounded by junked vehicles?

JOHNSON

Objection, your Honor. Again. Relevance.

WALLACE

Sustained. What are you getting at, Counselor?

AGLETON

For the record, I'd like it noted that your Honor vacated the conviction of *Mister* Charles Bailey's brother-in-law ...

WALLACE

The details of that case are irrelevant here.

AGLETON

Yes, but ...

WALLACE

No buts! According to the Constitution of the United States of America ...

AGLETON

No lectures needed, sir ...

WALLACE

and the sovereign state of Alabama, all men are created equal and are subject to the same rights and obligations -- including Mr. Bailey.

AGLETON

Yes, in theory, of course ...

WALLACE

And in this courtroom, I adhere only to the law.

AGLETON (incredulous)

But aren't you running for governor?

WALLACE

Yes ...

AGLETON (incredulous)

And haven't you been endorsed by the NAACP? That's the National Association for the Advancement of *Colored People*.

WALLACE

What does that have to do with these proceedings?

AGLETON

Well ... its' just that everyone here knows you've been most accomodatin' to the Negro race in your speeches, and some of us question your impartiality. I'd just like it noted. For the record.

JOHNSON (exasperated)
Honestly, Judge ...

WALLACE
Counselor, you are not persuading a jury here.

JOHNSON
That's right, sir.

WALLACE
You're persuading me.

AGLETON
Must be mighty tough choosin' between a white man and a black man on the eve of an election in Alabama.

JOHNSON
For heaven's sake, do we have to listen to this sort of nonsense?

AGLETON
I have the right to speak too.

WALLACE
Let's remember politics and courtrooms do not mix.

JOHNSON
They shouldn't mix.

AGLETON
Like the races, if I may be so bold.

JOHNSON
This is not about Judge Wallace's candidacy. It's about false and malicious accusations cast at my client's expense.

AGLETON
I don't believe my client can get a fair trial here from a judge with such blatant prejudice.

WALLACE
Then argue the facts, not the politics.

AGLETON
The facts?? What facts?

JOHNSON
Even a poor black man in the Jim Crow South deserves the right to a fair trial.

WALLACE
Get on with it!

JOHNSON

You can't argue the facts, because the facts do not support the claims of your client.

AGLETON

All I know for sure is: there is more going on here than meets the eye.

AGLETON & JOHNSON

If justice is blind, it should be color blind too!

WALLACE

That's enough! I rule in favor of the defendant and order the plaintiff to cover all court costs. (He strikes his gavel.) Court adjourned.

BAILIFF

All rise.

(A pleased murmur rises from the BLACKS, a harsher murmur from the WHITES.)

CHARLES BAILEY

Thank you, your Honor.

JOHNSON

Thank you, sir.

(The crowd rises and slowly disperses, singing as they exit. The number of WHITE voices should be greater; louder and stronger.)

AGLETON (turns and calls to the White side of the room)

Be sure you vote next Tuesday!

CUNNINGHAM

I ain't votin' for no nigger-lovin' son-of-a-bitch!

WHITES

Come next Tuesday, we will vote for Patterson.

CHARLES BAILEY (calling to WALLACE as he moves away)

If I was allowed t, I'd vote for you.

BLACKS

He done the right thing.

WHITE MEN

Whose side is he on anyway?

WHITE WOMEN

If we can't lock these people up, how we gonna keep them in their place?

BLACKS

Everybody knows 'twas the white man's nephew wrecked the tractor.

WHITES

Patterson for governor!

BLACKS

If we could vote, we'd vote for you.

WHITES

He'll defend our sacred Southern way of life!

BLACKS

Everybody knows it was the white man's nephew.

CHARLES BAILEY

Thank you, your Honor.

WHITES

Patterson for governor! John Patterson for governor!

BLACKS

Wallace done the right thing. (offstage) He done the right thing. God bless George C. Wallace!

WHITES (offstage)

John Patterson!

(As the crowds have exited, WALLACE has removed his robe and watched them go. The scene transforms into:)

Scene 2. WALLACE's Campaign Headquarters, then PATTERSON's

(WALLACE's campaign headquarters, election night. There is a limp banner and a few balloons. CELIA appears, straightens WALLACE's tie, then takes his hand and stands beside him. She is dressed in a simple frock; no make-up. A small handful of supporters, BLACK and WHITE, look on.)

WALLACE

I just telephoned John Patterson and congratulated him on his victory.

(some groans and soft boos in the crowd. WALLACE holds up his hand.)

We fought the good fight and we came up short.

VOICES in the CROWD

We did what we could, sir.

Yes, indeed.

WALLACE

I don't believe I'm any better than anybody else, and the only way to move ahead is to better the lives of all of our citizens. We gotta work together for the greater good ...

(His speech is cut short by a bombastic blast of sound and the sudden blinding light from PATTERSON's campaign headquarters.)

PATTERSON

Over my dead body!

(PATTERSON speaks to a large rowdy crowd of cheering WHITES. Beside him stand AGLETON, JIM FOLSOM, SEYMOUR LYONS, HERSCHEL BOOKER, CALEB WEANS and J.D. CUNNINGHAM. As the scene continues, CELIA and WALLACE's supporters melt away, leaving WALLACE alone watching the victorious camp.)

Everything is in its place and everybody's doin' fine!

WHITES

Everything is in its place and everybody's doin' fine!

PATTERSON

Ain't no need to rock the boat. Change'll come when the time is right.

WHITES

Ain't no need to rock the boat. Change'll come when the time is right.

PATTERSON

Don't wanna go and rattle the cage. We just might let the monkeys loose.

WHITES

Don't wanna go and rattle the cage. We just might let the monkeys loose.

PATTERSON

Lordy! What a mess that'd be. We'd be livin' in a zoo.

WHITES

Lordy! What a mess that'd be. We'd be livin' in a zoo.
Things have gone way too far!

(AGLETON gradually separates himself from the group and makes his way to WALLACE.)

CUNNINGHAM (grabbing the microphone)

No nigger-lovin' son of a bitch gonna be governor long as I live and breathe!

PATTERSON (grabbing the mike back)

Succinctly put, my dear friend. Things are fine the way they are.

WHITES

Things are fine the way they are.

WALLACE (to AGLETON)

I might have won this election, exceptin' for you.

AGLETON

You were never gonna win this election.

WALLACE

Not after you turned my courtroom into a circus.

AGLETON

I did what I had to for my client.

WALLACE

That ol' farmer's a scoundrel and a liar.

AGLETON

Don't be so naive, George. Cunningham was never my client. John Patterson was my client, and I have delivered the governorship unto him.

WHITES

Everything is in its place and everybody's doin' fine!

PATTERSON

Ain't no need to rock the boat. Change'll come when the time is right.

WHITES

Ain't no need to rock the boat. Change'll come when the time is right.

PATTERSON (putting his arm around FOLSOM's shoulders)

Y'all know my good friend, Big Jim Folsom. When I step down, he'll be the man you'll be votin' for.

(FOLSOM beams.)

WHITES

Big Jim is the one we'll be votin' for!
Things are fine they way they are!
Let's not rock the boat no more!

AGLETON

You don't really believe that we're all equal, do you?

WALLACE

Well ... under the law.

AGLETON (with a chuckle)

Under the law.

WALLACE

But we're all in this together ...

AGLETON

C'mon, George! You're not the first to cling to such high ideals. It sure sounds nice to say we're equal, though we're not. You can preach "we're all in this together!" 'til the cows come home just like a Yankee liberal would, but it just ain't true.

WALLACE

When I was young we were all poor, thankful for the shirts on our backs and any small meal. We were there for one another.

AGLETON

Ah, come on, open your eyes! (suddenly deadly serious) We live on top and they are swarmin' at the bottom. Don't know about you, but I like it here on top. We are lookin' down from a bluff on a hill at a fetid swamp where men like you and me just don't go. They're lookin' up from their shantytowns all green with envy for what we have. And here on top, good men and women are terrified of what those folks'll do if they mount this hill. There go our jobs. There go our homes. There go our schools. There go our

neighborhoods. There go our daughters, and the only lives we've ever known. And our votes. Are you just gonna sit back and watch it all get dragged down where men like you and me just don't go?

(PATTERSON's rally is heard, now in the distance.)

WHITES

We ain't givin' nothin' up. Patterson will see to that.

(WALLACE stares intently at AGLETON; wavering, undecided.)

WALLACE

It won't be easy, will it?

AGLETON

Folsom'll be a formidable opponent.

WHITES

And Big Jim Folsom'll do the same when we elect him next time 'round.

(Unnoticed by them, CELIA enters in the shadows behind and listens.)

WALLACE

There's no guarantee that I'll win, is there?

AGLETON

You *won't* win, the way you're headin' now.

WALLACE

I'll need your help.

AGLETON

That's fine. But my services don't come cheap.

(They stare at one another a long moment. Finally, WALLACE puts out his hand and AGLETON shakes it.)

AGLETON

Retire your judgeship. Build your base. And never look back.

(AGLETON exits. CELIA comes forward.)

Scene 3. The WALLACES' tiny apartment

CELIA

No more campaigns, George. You're wearin' the both of us out. You're a good man. You don't need to wallow down there in the mud with them pigs. You're a *judge* already! There's honor in that. You can work your way up the judicial circuit, make a good living, enough for us to start a family, maybe end up in Washington or Atlanta. You can do good that way too. It's been a real nice dream, but maybe it's time to let it go.

WALLACE

All that matters is power, Celia, and power isn't a dream. Money, fame, youth, strength, beauty -- all mean nothing.

Power is real.
You get things done with it, pure and simple.
I've been patient. I've paid my dues.
I'm a fighter. I'll take my punches.
I'll play the game the same as everyone else.
I'll do whatever it takes,
But I will not lose again.
I want the power to change the world.
Are you with me, Celia? I cannot do this alone.

(She stares at him a long moment, wavering, then relents.)

CELIA

Just one more. That's all. And you have to promise me, if you win ... all I ask for is a house, just a little house, with a washer and a dryer, and a yard.

(He tenderly embraces her.)

WALLACE

I promise.

INTERLUDE

(The scene transitions into the first campaign stop 4 years later.)

Scene 4. The roads of Alabama: The Gubernatorial Campaign

(From upstage, AGLETON marches forward, accompanied by the ADVISORS: LYONS, BOOKER and WEANS.)

AGLETON

You ready to go, George?

WALLACE

I am.

AGLETON

I've assembled the best men I can for this campaign. This here's Seymour Lyons. He'll keep an eye on the opposition for us. This is Herschel Booker, a most gifted speech writer, and Pastor Caleb Weans of the Community Bible Church in Bay Minette, because we need a man of God on the team.

(WALLACE shakes hands with each.)

LYONS, BOOKER & WEANS,

How do you do, Mr. Wallace?

WALLACE,

Good to have you on board, gentlemen.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

We're gonna go county by county, rally by rally, door by door. You'll never meet a baby that you wouldn't kiss,

LYONS

never miss a chance to have your photo took,

AGLETON

never meet a man whose daddy didn't know your daddy,

WEANS

Maybe sung with him in the choir.

BOOKER

Every speech counts, no matter how short.

AGLETON & BOOKER

Every last word from this point on

ALL 4

gets scrutinized.

BOOKER

Let's start easy,

AGLETON

in your neck of the woods.

ALL 4

Show us what you got.

(WALLACE goes to the mike. AGLETON and the ADVISORS observe. A few stragglers listen, including a few BLACKS.)

WALLACE (with vigor)

Hello, Cairo! My name is George Corey Wallace and I'd like to be the next governor of Alabama. I'm just a country boy. When I was a kid, we all were poor, and did the most with what we had. My daddy taught me to respect everyone. "We're all in this together," he'd say, "all for the greater good." You never know when you might need a helping hand, or where that help might come from. I intend to be the hand that lifts us up to a better place. I've got big ambitions for our state: more schools, more teachers, more highways and especially, more jobs. Won't you take my hand and join me in building a better Alabama for all our citizens? Thank you and may God bless us all.

(He is interrupted by the FOLSOM WHITES who march across the stage right in front of him. Most of the onlookers follow them off.)

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom is the man with a plan.

LYONS

The opposition.

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom's gonna do what he can
To save Alabama and make her great,
Vote Big Jim Folsom for the sake of our state!

LYONS

Mister Wallace, the first lesson is: watch your opponent. Know everything he does, and by all means, steal from him what you can.

(They turn and watch a large WHITE crowd listen to FOLSOM.)

FOLSOM

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Jim Folsom.

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom!

FOLSOM

Ah, heck, y'all know me and that I'll be the next governor of this great state.

FOLSOM WHITES

Welcome back, Jim, good to see ya!

FOLSOM

Sure we need roads and bridges and schools, but let's be clear about a few things right up front: we are at a crossroads. Our precious Southern way of life is threatened at every quarter, and I believe it's time for the people of Alabama to stand up and say: We won't take any more!

FOLSOM WHITES

We won't take any more!

LYONS (nudging WALLACE)

You can steal that.

FOLSOM

Why does the high almighty Federal Government think it can come and do like it done in Mississippi and South Carolina and tell us where we can eat, where we can sleep, where we can go to school? It's the war of northern aggression all over again!

LYONS

Use that!

FOLSOM

By God, it's time to stand up say: We won't take any more!

FOLSOM WHITES

We won't take any more!

AGLETON & BOOKER

Do you hear how Big Jim Folsom is appealin' to a particular side?

LYONS & WEANS

To appear to be moderatin' is a form of political suicide.

LYONS, BOOKER & WEANS

There's only black and white!

AGLETON

So give 'em what they want, George!

(They push WALLACE on stage. Another rally; EUFALA. Once again, a curious handful of onlookers watch. WALLACE surveys the small crowd, then begins.)

WALLACE

Hello, Eufala! My name is George C. Wallace, and I'd like to be the next governor of Alabama.

AGLETON & LYONS

You *will* be the next governor.

WALLACE

I've got big ambitions for our state: more schools, more teachers, more highways, and especially more jobs ...

AGLETON & LYONS

Now change direction ...

WALLACE

... but make no mistake ...

AGLETON & LYONS

Yes ...

WALLACE

the Southern way of life we know and love is under attack ...

AGLETON & LYONS

Yes. And ..?

WALLACE

and I believe it's time for the people of Alabama to stand up and say: we've had enough ..

(Once again he is interrupted by the FOLSOM WHITES who march across the stage right in front of him, this time followed by FOLSOM himself. Once again, most of the onlookers follow them off.)

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom is the man with a plan.

FOLSOM

Yes, I am!

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom's gonna do what he can

FOLSOM

Yes, I will!

FOLSOM WHITES

To save Alabama and make her great,
Vote Big Jim Folsom for the sake of our state!

FOLSOM

God bless y'all!

LYONS

First one on message always gets to own it. You're just gonna have to steal it out from under him.

(Another FOLSOM rally.)

FOLSOM

Don't get me wrong, this is not about the Negro race.

FOLSOM WHITES

That's right.

FOLSOM

I don't hate them. I work with them. They clean our houses and till our fields and sweep our streets. Some of them are my best friends.

FOLSOM WHITES (nodding in agreement)

Mm-hmm.

FOLSOM

No, it's the federal government I hate with all its activist judges!

FOLSOM WHITES

We won't take it any more!

ADVISORS

That's what the people want to hear.

(BOOKER takes WALLACE aside.)

BOOKER

You are one hell of a speaker, Mr. Wallace. We just gotta put a few different words in your mouth. I'll feed you a line now and then. Let's go have a chat.

AGLETON (to LYONS, nodding towards CELIA who is standing to the side, trying not to be noticed)

You know what's missing from this campaign, Seymour ... the feminine touch.

LYONS

You're right. Every campaign needs a gal in a pretty dress.

(AGLETON moves to CELIA.)

AGLETON

Hey, Celia.

CELIA

Hey, Harry.

AGLETON

I laid out a dress for you back in the room.

CELIA
Oh, no, I can't accept any gifts.

AGLETON
It's not a gift. We gotta spruce you up a little. I need you to introduce George at the rallies from now on.

CELIA
Oh no, I don't want to!

AGLETON
You just say hey to everyone then step aside, real ladylike, always with a smile on your face.

(He removes a tube of lipstick from his pocket and paints her lips.)

No matter what the other side says, you smile. No matter what your husband says, you smile. If someone asks you something you don't know the answer to, just smile and send 'em over to me. You want them to *look* at you, not *listen* to you.

CELIA
Oh, no! Nobody's gonna be looking at me!

AGLETON
Oh, yes, they will.

(He gently turns her toward her room.)

Go check out that dress.

(She exits, reluctantly.)

LYONS (looking after her)
Every campaign needs a pretty gal in a pretty dress.

WEANS
God approves of that.

(CELIA re-enters in the new outfit.)

AGLETON
Now, it's your turn.

(A small group has gathered for another rally. AGLETON guides CELIA to the microphone, which she approaches uncomfortably. The crowd is dead quiet.)

CELIA (haltingly, nervous)
Hey Auburn, I want to introduce you to my ... (tapping the mike) can you hear me back there?

(A few "uh-huh"s from the back of the crowd.)

Okay then, I want to introduce my husband, your neighbor, your friend, and the next governor of Alabama: George C. Wallace.

(The ADVISORS applaud loudly and some of the crowd joins in. WALLACE comes bounding out. BOOKER stands behind him mouthing the words.)

WALLACE
Howdy, folks!

A FEW WALLACE WHITES
Hello, George!

WALLACE
I'm just a country boy like most of you, born poor as dirt and raised on less than little. I've got big ambitions for our state: more roads, more teachers, and more business ... but make no mistake about it, there's a storm brewin'. The South is threatened again, thanks to Yankee liberals who think they know better than the people who have lived here ...

(BOOKER leans forward and whispers in WALLACE's ear)

... and *died* here for centuries. It's time to say, we've had enough!

WALLACE WHITES (murmuring in assent)
Time to say we've had enough.

(FOLSOM's and WALLACE's rallies now intertwine with one another. As the scene progresses, FOLSOM becomes increasingly aware of WALLACE's presence. Gradually more and more WHITES drift from his campaign to WALLACE's.)

BOOKER (feeding lines to WALLACE)
No self-respectin' black man wants to sit at the same lunch counter as a white man. He knows it just isn't right.

WALLACE
No self-respectin' black man wants to sit at the same lunch counter as a white man. He knows it just isn't right.

FOLSOM (stealing their thunder)
When we're separate, all of us are happier!

FOLSOM WHITES
We're happier.

WALLACE WHITES
They're happier.

ALL WHITES
Everyone is happier!
Separate but equal is working for everyone. Who would want to change that?

A WHITE VOICE IN THE CROWD
If them people don't like it here, they can go back where they come from!

(The ADVISORS huddle with WALLACE.)

AGLETON

Mustn't be too harsh or we may scare the old ladies off.

LYONS

Don't wanna do that.

BOOKER

Gotta cloak the message in a mantle ...

AGLETON, LYONS & BOOKER

Of love.

WEANS

God is good in so many ways.

AGLETON, LYONS & BOOKER

God is good in so many ways.

WEANS

Don't be afraid to use Him when you can.

AGLETON, LYONS & BOOKER

Don't be afraid to use Him!

WALLACE

My friends, I believe in God. And I believe God wants what's best for Alabama: to choose how we live, and where we live, and who lives right next door.

AGLETON, LYONS & BOOKER (gleefully)

Game's on!

WALLACE WHITES

This guy Wallace just might get the job done.

WALLACE

Now, the Negro people are not necessarily inferior ... but they are less educated.

WALLACE WHITES

That's right.

WALLACE

Should people with less education be allowed to vote?

WALLACE WHITES

No, they shouldn't!

WALLACE

Shouldn't there be some standards?

WALLACE WHITES

Yes!

(AGLETON takes CELIA aside.)

AGLETON

I found another dress for you, Celia. I laid it out in your room.

CELIA

You tryin' to spoil me, Jim?

AGLETON

It should look real pretty at the rally tomorrow.

(The stage is now evenly divided between FOLSOM supporters and WALLACE supporters at opposing rallies.)

FOLSOM

Now there's talk of another boycott in Birmingham.

WALLACE

Now there's talk of another march in Birmingham.

FOLSOM

Alabama's law-abidin' Negro citizens don't want this!

WALLACE

Nobody wants this!

FOLSOM

These "demonstrations" are the work of professional agitators from out of state.

WALLACE

It's the work of professional agitators from out of state.

(Their speeches come together.)

WALLACE & FOLSOM

There's a storm brewing! Lawless is lawlessness!

ALL WHITES

Lawless is lawlessness!

WALLACE & FOLSOM

... even when disguised as peaceful demonstration. I will not tolerate lawlessness when I am governor. Any such acts will be met with the strong hand of the law. Alabama's a far sight safer place than New Jersey or Michigan, and I intend to keep it that way!

PASTOR WEANS

God is good. Use God.

(Fired up, WALLACE surges ahead. FOLSOM stops dead in his tracks.)

WALLACE

As it says in the Bible: "For if a trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare for battle?" (holding his hand to his heart) *This* trumpet sounds with certainty. Won't you take my hand and join me in the fight for the soul of Alabama? Thank you and may God bless us all!

FOLSOM

God bless y'all. Good night.

(Shaking his head, FOLSOM moves away from his crowd and takes a long swig from a flask. LYONS photographs him. CELIA enters in the new dress, more confident.)

CELIA

This suits me, doesn't it?

AGLETON

It sure does.

CELIA

The color is good for me.

AGLETON

You are the very model of southern style.

WALLACE WHITES

Wallace for governor! Wallace for governor!

WALLACE (chafing at the bit, he plunges into the crowd to shake hands)

I know I can give a speech, but I need to touch 'em hand to hand; gives me energy. I gotta get out in the crowd.

WALLACE WHITE VOICES (jockeying to get close enough to shake his hand)

Hey George! Here George! Here George! Hey George!

(WALLACE works the crowd.)

LYONS & BOOKER

That's right, George, pump the flesh, kiss the babies, work the crowd.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

Make 'em want you. Make 'em love you. Make 'em want to do you proud.

WALLACE WHITES

George Wallace ain't afraid to tell it like it is.

That's why we are promisin' our votes are his!

We want Wallace!

(AGLETON helps CELIA on to another dais at another rally.)

AGLETON

Remember to smile, Celia. The camera loves you.

CELIA (flashing a smile when she gets to the stage)

Hello Tuscaloosa!

WALLACE WHITES

We want Wallace!

CELIA

I wanna introduce you to my husband, your neighbor and friend,

WALLACE WHITES

We want Wallace!

CELIA

and the next governor of Alabama: George Wallace!

WALLACE WHITES

Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace!

WALLACE (taking a serious tone)

Our brothers and sisters in Mississippi and South Carolina are crumbling in the face of renewed Northern aggression. (motioning to the crowd) But the good people of Montgomery here remain defiant! And I stand with you!

FOLSOM

My opponent says he'll stand up to federal intervention. But he's been upholdin' federal law for years now on the bench.

WALLACE

My opponent claims I'd appease our values for Washington's, but y'all know I am a staunch defender of our Southern way of life.

FOLSOM

My opponent claims that he's a staunch defender of our Southern way of life. But look at his record. He's ruled in favor of the Negro race time after time after time.

WALLACE

My opponent doesn't see what's really going on here because he's got his nose buried in a bottle! I believe in God, and I believe that God has a plan for Alabama.

FOLSOM

I believe in God too!

WALLACE WHITES

Wallace ain't afraid to tell it like it is.
That's why we are promisin' our votes are his.

FOLSOM WHITES

Big Jim Folsom is the man with a plan.
Big Jim Folsom's gonna do what he can ...

LYONS (handing WALLACE a newspaper)

Whatever it takes, George, do whatever it takes.

WALLACE

And as a Baptist and a Christian, I will see that not a drop of alcohol is served in the mansion as long as I am governor.

(He holds up the newspaper with a photo of FOLSOM taking a hit from his flask.)

Not one red cent of taxpayer money will be spent on liquor!

(The crowd applauds.)

WHITE WOMEN

God bless you, George! That's what we wanna hear!

FOLSOM (unprepared for this tactic)

Well, yes, I take a little drink now and then ... but I still love God and aim to preserve our way of life ...

AGLETON & ADVISORS (to WALLACE)

You are ablaze with the glowing hot fire of the resurgent South.

WALLACE

I am ablaze with a glowing hot fire!

ADVISORS

It shines like a beacon to all!

WALLACE WHITES

We want Wallace!

FOLSOM WHITES

Folsom!

AGLETON

Give 'em what they want, George!

AGLETON & ADVISORS

You can't go too far!

WALLACE

And, like most of you folks, my great granddaddy didn't fight in the war 'tween the states to see uneducated Negroes sweep in and take our jobs and our daughters.

WALLACE WHITES

This has got to stop.

WALLACE

I will oppose integration with every fiber of my body! as I stand up and say: we've had enough, we've had enough!

WALLACE & WHITES

We'll stand up and say: we've had enough!

(Election Day. Lines form to vote from the FOLSOM and WALLACE camps. Voices overlap in a jumble of sound.)

CELIA (all smiles)

Hello, Mobile! Hello, Huntsville! ... the next governor of Alabama ... Hello, Dothan!
Hello, Jasper! Hello, Birmingham!

AGELTON & ADVISORS

Election day at last. The polls are mighty close. We're gonna win this! We are gonn awin this! Can't you see it in their eyes? Can't you hear it in their voices? They love you! Still, it's gonna be a squeaker. Be defiant! You are ablaze with the glowing hot fire of the resurgent South.

WALLACE

My great granddaddy didn't fight in the war 'tween the states to see uneducated Negroes sweep in and take our jobs and our daughters. There's a storm brewin' I will oppose integration with every fiber of my body!

FOLSOM

I am a staunch defender of our Southern way of life! I believe in God too!
(seeing supporters move to the WALLACE line) Wait a minute ... where're you goin'?
Wait a minute! I'm the man with a plan! Wait a minute ... wait a minute!

(FOLSOM throws up his arms in disgust.)

FOLSOM

Ah, what the heck!

(WALLACE exits. FOLSOM exits slowly, taking another long swig from his flask.
CELIA mounts the dais.)

WALLACE WHITES

Wallace! Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!

FOLSOM WHITES (joining the WALLACE camp)

God's will! It's God's will!

AGELTON & ADVISORS

You're gonna win this!

CELIA (all smiles, interrupting the chorus of voices)

Hello, Alabama! I've got great news! We just had a call from Jim Folsom who has conceded the election!

ALL WHITES

Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace!

CELIA

So let's welcome to the stage the next governor of this great state ...

(Before she can say his name, WALLACE appears, smiling, waving triumphantly. The crowd roars. He kisses CELIA and takes his place on the dais. The WHITES from FOLSOM's camp meld in with the others forming one large group.)

WALLACE

I'm just a country boy whose great granddaddy gave his life for the glory of the South!

WHITES

The glory of the South!

WALLACE

As long as one red drop of Confederate blood flows in my veins, I shall remain defiant in my defense of Anglo Saxon Dixie!

WHITES

Dixie!

(The scene transforms into the Inauguration. Two BLACK Servants enter with topcoats and hats for WALLACE and CELIA. The ADVISORS appear behind in topcoats as well. PASTOR WEANS offers a Bible that WALLACE swears upon.)

WALLACE

By taking this oath of office, I brandish a trumpet that sounds a call to arms. God has chosen you to answer the call, and in your name ... the greatest people that have ever lived, I draw a line in the sand and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny ... and I say ... segregation today ... segregation tomorrow ... segregation forever.

WHITES

Now and forever!

WALLACE

Won't you take my hand and fight for the soul of Alabama? This trumpet calls you to battle. Thank you and may God bless you all!

(The crowd waves a sea of Confederate flags and cheers. WALLACE & CELIA wave. The mood is electric, victorious.)

WHITES

Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace! Governor Wallace!

(The BLACK servants re-enter and take their coats. WALLACE takes CELIA's hand.)

WALLACE

Look, Celia, I got you your house.

(They enter the Governor's mansion triumphantly in a blinding explosion of light. On the final chord, the BLACKS are revealed in their church.)

Scene 5. The 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham

(Members of Birmingham's BLACK community are engaged in a chaotic debate. Their voices are heard in a jumble. MAXINE is in the group.)

BLACK VOICES (spoken ad lib., overlapping, indistinguishable from one another)

[The battle lines been drawn.

But we really gonna use our children on the front lines?

Why aren't *we* marching?

Risk's too great. I got my family. Someone else do it.

I got children to support. I can't put my life on the line.

If I'm in jail, no one will be there to feed the little ones.

If I march, I may lose my job.

These are real life and death issues.

Who has the courage?

Let's just burn the whole town down!

It's got to be nonviolent.

I'm so sick of that lily-livered crap.

Burn the place down! Tear it up!

We're the ones who suffer when things get tore down.

The National Guard's been called out to escort our children into school. Children!

Governor won't let 'em in any other way.

We asked the children what they wanna do and they stood up. They suggested it.

It's their battle too.
It's the *symbolism* of children marching in peace.
We can't deny them.
They shouldn't have to risk their lives.
But that's where we're at, sister.
But they too young for all this. They should wait awhile. It's our responsibility.
Why do they wait a lifetime for freedom? When does change happen? If they're old enough to know what's denied them, they're old enough to march.
When Mr. and Mrs. John C. Doe in Colorado or Illinois see children being arrested because they can't go to school, they will notice. America will finally notice.
The world'll be watching. The whole world.
Amen to that!]

(Rev. BEVEL comes to the pulpit. He stands silent while the chatter around the room gradually dies away. His words are met with responses from the BLACK crowd.)

BEVEL

The governor speaks of lofty ideals for the Southern people. But I'd like to know where we fit into that noble plan. There's a lot of chatter about sounding trumpets and God's will. Are we all praying to the same God, or are we not?

The governor and his friends speak with pride of their forefathers who fought in the War to Preserve Slavery, then they claim that segregation is better for all of us, and that *we* prefer it this way.

They say we are happy and obedient, cleaning their houses, tilling their fields, collecting their garbage. (dripping with irony) Yes, we love our jobs! We would never want a job that pays more, now would we? No, no! we prefer it this way.

They say we love our inferior hotels and restaurants. And going in by the back door saves us the trouble of going in by the front. The view is better from the back of the bus. We're closer to the exit, and the exhaust. Yes, Lord! we prefer it this way.

We love our second rate schools. We love our run-down segregated neighborhoods. We are so happy. No longer slaves, that's all that matters. They tell us: we should be happy being second-class, powerless, underpaid and dismissed. We prefer it this way, don't we. Don't we?

The answer is no!

BLACKS

No!

BEVEL

A ringing, resounding, clanging, clattering no!

BLACKS

No!

BEVEL

We do *not* prefer our inferior jobs and schools and back seats and back doors!

BLACKS

We do not!

BEVEL

We say, we are demeaned and degraded on a daily basis,

BLACKS

Yes, we are!!

BEVEL

... men and women free in name but not in deed!
Are we senators?

BLACKS

No, no!

BEVEL

Or judges?

BLACKS

No, no!

BEVEL

Or representatives?

BLACKS

No, no!

BEVEL

City councilors?

BLACKS

No, no! No we are not. We are not.
We are not allowed any say, and we do not prefer it this way.

BEVEL

Are we gonna just sit back and wait?

BLACKS

We do not prefer it this way!

BEVEL

... sit and wait 'til Judgment Day?

BLACKS

We do not prefer it this way! It has got to change.
It has got to!
Are you ready?
Yes, we're ready!
We are tired of waiting.
We're gonna stand up with a mighty roar!
We're gonna stand up together and fight for what is rightfully ours.
No more, no less. No, no the time is now.

BEVEL

If our children want to march to show the world they've got the right
to stand up for their place as equals,

BLACKS

We will let them.

BEVEL + A FEW MALE VOICES

If our children want to march to show the world they've got the right
to look ahead to a brighter future,

BLACKS

We will let them.

BEVEL + A FEW MALE & FEMALE VOICES

If our children want to march to show the world they've got the right
to opportunity and education,

ALL BLACKS

We will let them.

We prefer it this way!

We will stand aside and cheer them on.

The world will be watching as they bravely march along.

Praise God almighty! Our time has come!

BLACK MEN

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!

BLACK WOMEN

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!

ALL BLACKS

No longer waiting!

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!

(The light shifts to MAXINE who rises, uncomfortably.)

MAXINE

I want to believe but I'm not sure I've got that strong a faith.

BLACK WOMEN

Lord, I'm a-comin', Lord, I'm a-comin'!

MAXINE

Could I bear it if something happened to her?

I know this march is important -- I know, I know it, I know it,

But the risk is just so great.

BLACK MEN

Lord, I'm a-comin', Lord, I'm a-comin'!

MAXINE

Home, school, church. That's our trinity.

Home, school, and church. That's where we're safe.

We're safe there I know.

(She exits. The voices build in a steady crescendo.)

ALL BLACKS

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!

Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!
Lord, I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', oh Lord, I'm a-comin' on home to you!
No longer waiting!
We're gonna stand up with a mighty roar.
We're gonna stand up together and fight for what is rightfully ours.
Praise God almighty! Our time has come!

(AGLETON & the ADVISORS appear, cutting them off.)

AGLETON & ADVISORS

The governor has issued orders for the protection of all our citizens. This march is the work of Communists and professional agitators,

LYONS & WEANS

not Alabamians!

AGLETON & ADVISORS

The governor will not tolerate unrest in our streets.

LYONS & WEANS

State and local police have been called up to preserve and protect the peace of all our citizens.

BOOKER & AGLETON

Lawlessness is lawlessness even when disguised as peaceful demonstration.

LYONS & WEANS

For the safety of all our citizens!

Scene 6. The Children's March, Birmingham

Interlude

(The music suggests the melee of the scene: children set on by dogs and fire hoses, running to get away; sirens, panic, and the shrill whir of the police whistles.)

Scene 7. A motel room near the University of Alabama, and the entrance to the University

(On one side, WALLACE finishes putting on his tie. On the other, AGLETON & the ADVISORS murmur amongst themselves.)

WALLACE

I'm in control now. I am in charge. I am the one who makes the decisions.

WEANS

This cannot go on.

LYONS

This kind of violence has to be stopped.

AGELTON

We've got to stop it.

BOOKER

What sort of damn fool send his children into a war zone?

AGLETON

... sends his children into the streets?

LYONS & WEANS

What sort of people?

BOOKER

No one was killed. We should count our blessings.

WEANS

Amen.

AGLETON

Not so fast. We could use a few first class funerals to show everybody what's really at stake here.

ALL 4

We've got to send a message loud and clear ... show them who's really in charge.

WALLACE

I've got the power now. No one can change that.

LYONS

Now, this nonsense with the President sending the National Guard

AGLETON, LYONS & WEANS

to escort those Negro students into the University of Alabama.

BOOKER

My Alma Mater, for Chrissake!

LYONS & WEANS

What next?!

(WALLACE joins them.)

ALL 4

This is a golden opportunity to draw a line in the sand.

WALLACE

Every community in this country is afraid of their Negro populations rioting in the streets. I'll show them one man who has the backbone to stand up and stem the tide. People are scared, but not just of the Negroes. They're scared of the Federal government creeping in and taking over their lives, not just in the South, but from Maine to California. That's why I am going to stand in that doorway today. It has nothing to do with the color of their skin.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

Nothing to do with the color of their skin.

God is with you. He moves in mysterious ways.

You are the messenger! You're going to wake up America!

Governor, the world is watching.

(They exit the motel room and arrive at the entrance to the University of Alabama. WALLACE takes his place in front of the schoolhouse door. A huge crowd of WHITES is on one side, a smaller group of BLACKS led by BEVEL on the other. In the WHITE crowd are the 4 REPORTERS. The two BLACK students appear -- a young man and young woman -- escorted by several NATIONAL GUARDSMEN. The WHITES jeer and hoot at them.)

NATIONAL GUARDSMAN

Governor, it is my duty to ask you to stand aside under order from the President of the United States.

(WALLACE doesn't budge.)

WALLACE

I stand here representative of thousands of Alabamians who would be here if I were not. I stand, in fact, to preserve the peace, as their rage at this unconstitutional, unprovoked act of judicial arrogance is foisted upon our people. "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively."

AGLETON & ADVISORS

The 10th Amendment.

WALLACE

The people are not meant to serve the government. Government is meant to serve the people. We fear God, not Washington. I stand here for all Americans -- not just Alabamians -- against this unwarranted and unlawful intrusion by the Federal government on the sovereign territory of this state.

NATIONAL GUARDSMAN

Sir, it is my duty to ask you to step aside and allow these students to enter.

(A tense moment. No one moves.)

AGLETON (over WALLACE's shoulder)

Send 'em in by the back door. These people are used to that.

(Another tense moment, then WALLACE nods. The National Guardsmen retreat with the students. The crowd watches silently. 4 REPORTERS burst from the crowd.)

REPORTERS

Governor Wallace!

CBS NEWS REPORTER

Do you really think that you've accomplished anything by keeping Negro students out ...

WALLACE

I said I had no quarrel with the color of these students' skin. My quarrel is with the President and the judiciary.

REPORTERS

Mister Wallace!

WASHINGTON POST REPORTER

But isn't segregation reprehensible to most Americans?

WALLACE

Don't lay the sins of segregation at the feet of the South. It's alive and well in the North. Have you been to Cleveland or Newark lately?

NEW YORK TIMES REPORTER

Martin Luther King says you're playing with fire. Your words could inspire violence.

WALLACE

Dr. King says whatever he likes to make sure his name always stays in the papers.

REPORTERS

Governor Wallace!

NBC NEWS REPORTER

Weren't the Birmingham police a little heavy-handed in their response to the Children's March?

WALLACE

I'll tell you one thing: law and order must be maintained at all costs.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

Law and order!

REPORTERS (jockeying for WALLACE's attention)

Do you have ambitions on the national stage, Governor Wallace?

AGLETON & ADVISORS (gleeful)

(The national stage!)

WALLACE

That's enough for today.

(WALLACE, AGLETON and ADVISORS exit. The reporters rush off after them. The groups of BLACK and WHITE supporters disperse, leaving BEVEL alone.)

BEVEL

The world is watching. And the world recoils at the sight of innocents set upon by beasts.

(The scene transforms into the Church.)

Scene 8. The 16th Street Baptist Church

BEVEL

The wheels of change roll in our favor.

Slowly but surely, they're turning in our direction.

We won't relent.

We'll never give up as long as the Lord offers guidance and His protection.

Justice will be done.

If God be for us, we shall overcome!

(The BLACKs gradually become visible, putting on their coats and hats, moving towards the church. Two church members bring out BEVEL's robe and help him out it on.)

BEVEL & BLACKS

The wheels of change roll in our favor.
Slowly but surely, they're turning in our direction.
We won't relent.
We'll never give up as long as the Lord offers guidance and His protection.
Justice will be done.
If God be for us, we shall overcome!

(In a harsh light upstage, The WHITES are revealed in their churches.)

WHITES

Lord God, protect and defend us! Protect and defend us!
Protect and defend what is rightfully ours!

(The WHITES fade away. MAXINE and DENISE hurry in, late.)

MAXINE

Wait a minute, your slip is showing. (She fixes it.) Now hurry, you'll be late for Sunday School.

(Again, in a harsh light upstage, The WHITES are revealed in their churches.)

WHITES

Lord God, protect and defend us! Protect and defend us! Protect and defend us!

(The WHITES fade away. BEVEL bows his head.)

BEVEL

Let us pray.

(The BLACKS are now all assembled in the church. They pray.)

BLACKS

Thank you, O Lord, for leading our children safely home to us,
just as you once lead Your wandering children out of the wilderness.
Thank you for shielding their young and fragile lives,
and for giving them the courage to stand up to ignorance and hate.
Open our hearts to your message today, that we may follow your example.
We pray: open our hearts to love, the love that forgives,
the love that lives in every act of tenderness.
May we answer your call to be patient and kind,
freely forgiving one another,
Even as you, for Christ's sake, have forgiven us. Amen.

(The church basement. The BLACKS slowly fade and move offstage. The 4 GIRLS become visible, doing their Sunday School lessons.)

CYTNHIA

What would you say to an angel if he said he'd grant you one wish?

DENISE

I'd say, 'Mr. Angel would you please cure muscular dystrophy? And tell my mother not to worry so much!'

CYNTHIA

What would you say to an angel if you saw him sitting at your bus stop?

CAROLE

I'd say, 'Mr. Angel, you got wings. Why you waiting for the bus when you can fly anywhere you like? I would fly if I could.'

ADDIE MAE

I would if I could.

GIRLS

We would fly around
high above the church steeples
And sprinkle peace and laughter and joy
on the unhappy people.

CYNTHIA

What would you say to an angel ...

ADDIE MAE

Let's play something else. Let's play double dutch!

DENISE

This is part of our Sunday School lesson.

CAROLE (jumping in)

What would you say if an angel asked you to dance?

CYNTHIA

Angels don't dance!

CAROLE

They do so.

CYNTHIA

Do not.

CAROLE

Do so!

CYNTHIA

How do you know?

CAROLE

I read it in the Bible.

CYNTHIA

Did not.

CAROLE

Or somewhere.

CYNTHIA

Angels don't dance.

CAROLE
They're happy.

DENISE
Can you see him in a leotard?

CAROLE
Everyone who's happy *dances*.

CAROLE, ADDIE MAE & DENISE
Like us!

CYNTHIA
They fly.

DENISE
I would fly if I could.

ADDIE MAE
I would if I could.

CAROLE
I would too!

(CYNTHIA sulks.)

CAROLE, ADDIE MAE & DENISE
Angels can sing and dance and fly and sit on top of church steeples

(CYNTHIA joins in.)

GIRLS
Where they shower blessings and messages of comfort
On all the unsuspecting, unhappy people.

CYTNHIA (getting back to the lesson)
What would you say to an angel if he broke one of your dolls?

ADDIE MAE
I'd say ... 'Mr. Angel, that's okay. Sometimes things happen ...'

(A sudden blinding flash of light, then complete darkness.)

Scene 9. Outside the bombed church

(A brief musical interlude: a howl of sirens and grief. MAXINE rushes in.)

MAXINE
No, no, no, no!
No! No! No! No! No!
No breath! No smile!
No eyes! No lips!
No voice! No goodbye!

No hands! No feet!
No hair! No heart!
No more!
No more tenderness!
Just darkness, black, black, black, black, black like the color of my skin!
Now all the light is gone.
Just like my little girl, I no longer exist.
I become invisible.
No one cares about another colored woman wailing over a dead child.
Lord, I want to believe ... There must be a reason.
Are You testing me?
Is it meant to strengthen my faith? No.
No. There's no explanation.
There are no words, no solace. Nothing!
Ah God, have they no shame ... In a church? In a church?
My church.
They've taken that away from me too.
Ah! Just like my child, blown to bits, a sack of shattered bones and a broken heart.
There's not enough left of either of us for anyone to notice.
We disappear because we are the color of night.
Invisible.
The color of night.

(Light fades slowly on MAXINE.)

Scene 10. The Governor's Mansion

(WALLACE, seated at a desk, addresses the state in a television broadcast. Out of camera range, CELIA stands to one side; BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS to the other.)

WALLACE

A racist is one who despises someone because of his color and an Alabama segregationist is one who conscientiously believes that it is in the best interest of Negro and white to have separate education and social order.

CELIA

Four young girls ...
Mothers losin' children ...

ADVISORS

Everyone's watching. Everyone's listening.

WALLACE

I stand with a majority of white people for the separation of the schools. I don't expect people to forget my brash words or deeds. But I ask them to remember the actions I take are designed to help them.

CELIA

We can't ignore it.
We gotta' say *something*.

ADVISORS

They'll listen to you. You matter now.

WALLACE

I don't hate blacks. My vehemence is against the federal government. The President wants us to surrender this state to Martin Luther King and his group of Communists who are dedicated to the overthrow of our form of government and to the destruction of private property, and to destroying religion as the basis of moral and ethical values.

CELIA

We should go up to that church.
To the funerals. Show our support.

(AGLETON enters with a magazine and comes to CELIA.)

AGLETON (almost a whisper)
Celia, did you see? Your picture in Newsweek.

(She looks at it.)

Look at you, all smiles. You're gonna make one heck of a First Lady.

CELIA

First Lady?

(He moves away to join the ADVISORS.)

AGLETON & ADVISORS

He's got a message. He'll send 'em a message.

WALLACE

I will use the power and prestige of the governor's office to awaken the millions of Americans who believe just as we in this great region believe.

(A drum, the strains of a funeral march are heard in the distance.)

BLACK MEN

Once again the drums are calling us.
We respond with weary feet.
Swollen by the weight of centuries
of ceaseless, accumulating grief,
the drums beat their mournful song.

WALLACE

Being a Southerner is no longer geographic. It's a philosophy — one destined to be a national philosophy — embraced by millions of Americans — which shall assume the mantle of leadership and steady a government in these days of crises.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

America deserves a president like you!

(The cameras move away as the scene fades into the next. WALLACE rises. AGLETON & ADVISORS come behind him. The voices of the BLACKS grow louder as their funeral procession approaches.)

BLACK WOMEN

These are the voices of our fathers and mothers
Who beg that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.

BLACKS

They hang on our hearts with a raw and heavy weight,
Burdened by the legacy of chains.
Now one more handful of sorrow
Is tossed on the great communal grave,
Our burden is heavier still,
Yet we march steadily on.

WALLACE, AGLETON & ADVISORS

Alabama is America. George C Wallace is America!

Scene 11. The streets and a cemetery

(CELIA dutifully goes to WALLACE's side and takes his arm. A crowd of WHITE supporters enters, gradually growing in numbers.)

WHITES

Hail to Dixie's hero!
Hear him shout: "The South will rise again!"
As our hallowed soil answers:
"The Glorious Lost Cause can be won!"
God has sent a messenger
To spread the word all across the land.
All America rises from her slumber,
Strong, invincible,
Clear of purpose,
Silent and hidden no longer,
Awakened by the blinding light of
Alabama's favorite shining son!
George Corley Wallace!

WHITE MEN

Today begins the journey
From humiliation to redemption!

WALLACE

I announce my candidacy for President of these United States!

(The drums become audible beneath the WHITE'S song, and then the voices of the BLACKS.)

WHITES

Strong, invincible,
Clear of purpose,
Silent and hidden no longer,
Awakened by the blinding light of

Alabama's favorite shining son!
George Corley Wallace!

BLACKS

The drums beat their mournful song.

(The two groups, each moving steadily in their paths, pass through one another, unseeing, unaware of the other.)

WHITES

Hail to Dixie's hero!
Hear him shout: "The South will rise again!"
As our hallowed soil answers:
"The Glorious Lost Cause can be won!"
God has sent a messenger
To spread the word all across the land.
All America rises from her slumber!
George Wallace!
Today begins the journey
From humiliation to redemption!
President Wallace! President Wallace! President Wallace!
Strong, invincible,
Clear of purpose,
Silent and hidden no longer,
Awakened!

BLACKS

These are the voices of our fathers and mothers
Who beg that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.
They hang on our hearts with a raw and heavy weight,
Burdened by the legacy of chains.
Now one more handful of sorrow
Is tossed on the great communal grave,
Our burden is heavier still,
Yet we march steadily on.

(The two groups exit in opposite directions. The last of the BLACKS is Maxine in mourning black. She remains upstage, as though at the grave of her daughter. The last of the WHITES are CELIA, AGLETON and the ADVISORS. Sensing something, CELIA turns to look upstage towards MAXINE. AGLETON deftly takes her arm and guides her offstage. WALLACE remains downstage by himself.)

WALLACE (intoxicated with his power)

I am the future.
I am the past.
I am Washington.
I am Jackson.
I am Robert E. Lee.
I am George C. Wallace!
Proud son of the sun-kissed soil of Alabama!
I am incandescent!
Glowing with the burning hot fire of the resurgent South!
Transported!
Lifted up!
A beacon to all of America!

Supreme!
Radiant!
Blinding!
Bright!

MAXINE (bending over in grief)
Invisible.

(Slow dim to black.)

End, Act 1

Act 2

Scene 12. Arthur Bremer's tiny apartment, Milwaukee

(BREMER is “playing” with 2 guns, going back and forth between the two, lovingly caressing them like pets, suddenly crouching, feigning target practice, choosing which target to pursue, which gun to use.)

BREMER

Bang bang bang

Good thing I'm all alone, I could hurt somebody with one of these.

But I'm always alone, aren't I?

There's no harm in that – but also no fame or glory.

Just the drip drop drip drop drip drop drip of
days passing into nothing into nowhere into nobody.

I used to be nobody too.

bang bang bang

Look at little Arthur sitting in the corner.

When they aren't ignoring him, they're pointing
and laughing.

But guess what? Arthur is somebody now ... bang!

Once I pull the trigger, everyone will notice me.

I'm on the corner, at the school, in the parking lot.

Hard not to notice the guy with the gun!

Look at the stupid girl who turns her back on me ... big mistake!

She'll notice.

Here comes that fat ignoramus who rubbed my face in the mud.

Hello! Bang! Bang! Bang! You're dead!

Who's going to stop me?

Not mom or dad

He's on the bottle again. She doesn't care. Never did.

Look, mom and daddy, Arthur's somebody now!

Wait ... Let the ignorant people live their pathetic little lives.

I'm a proud man. I've got bigger targets.

I'm a man with a mission.

(He contemplates one of the guns.)

The President of the United States ...?

(He contemplates the other gun.)

or the Confederate governor ...

that Southern racist, George C. Wallace?

I come thundering down from the north!

Fame glory fame glory fame glory fame glory
but only singing to myself.

Sneaky, right?

Under the radar, unobtrusive, barely there.

Hidden, always smiling, ever present,
patient as a cat outside a gopher hole.

I know how to be invisible

until bang bang bang.

Fame glory!

Fame gloy!

Fame glory fame glory fame glory!
Bang bang bang bang bang!

Scene 13. A motel room in Cincinnati, Ohio, the night before the first presidential rally

(The ADVISORS huddle with WALLACE.)

BOOKER
We should start with a bang!

AGLETON
No. Start slow. Gain momentum.

LYONS & WEANS
Chart the course.

BOOKER
Keep your eye on the prize.

LYONS
Primaries: Ohio, Florida,

WEANS
Wisconsin, Maryland.

AGLETON & WEANS
We got a shot in all of 'em.

LYONS & BOOKER
Then it's on to California.

WALLACE
What about the segregation issue?

ADVISORS
Divert attention. Deflect.
Never address it head on.

BOOKER
Any mention of "race," you turn it into "law and order."

ALL 4
Never say "Negro." Never say "Black."
Say "hoodlum," "welfare cheat," "looter,"

LYONS
"rabble rouser,"

BOOKER
"arsonist,"

AGELTON
"Communist,"

WEANS
“agitator.”

ALL 4
It’s just code.

BOOKER
People will get it.

LYONS & BOOKER
People are nervous.

ALL 4
Go ahead, scare the hell out of 'em.

BOOKER
Take fear on a national scale.

WEANS
But do it with prayer.

LYONS
Inspire division,

LYONS & WEANS
but do it in the name of

ALL 4
unity, and love, and especially security.

AGLETON
Then blame the media for mangling the message.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
Always the mainstream media ... can’t get a fair shake, everything slanted,
hammer it over and over again.

AGLETON
But first we send in Celia ...

BOOKER & LYONS
Celia!

AGLETON
to show them the softer side. She can share the narrative, how George is the common
man, a regular guy, like everyone else.

ALL 4
Then we hit ‘em with a vision of America in chaos, inner cities in flames, spreading soon
into the lily white suburbs! (In code, of course.) Only you,

WALLACE
I am Washington. I am Jefferson.

AGLETON & ADVISORS

Only you can save them!

Once you have power, you can do anything. But first, we divide and conquer!

You give the speeches. Leave the machinery to us.

Scene 14. Another motel room in Cincinnati, the night before the first rally

(As it progresses, the scene gradually transforms into the rally where CELIA is delivering her introductory speech.)

CELIA (reading, rehearsing her speech)

Hello, Cincinnati! (Wait for response.)

I've never been to Ohio before, (Smile. Tip head.)

and I sure am thankful for your warm welcome. (Pause.)

You know, George is a simple man, born poor as dirt and raised on less than little, like most of you, I bet. Never had much. Still doesn't. Don't I know it! (Pause for laughter.)

When George looks out across this sea of friendly faces he's gonna see himself: union workers and waitresses, laborers and farmers -- workin' hard just to keep a roof above their heads and a four-square meal on the table. God bless America for *you*.

(Applause. Maybe?)

Did you know George nearly died of spinal meningitis when he was in the service? (Wait for that to sink in.) But he fought his way through that, just like he fought as a boxer in high school. And he fought in World War II for people like you and me: homeowners and parents and teachers. I know this man, and can tell you with an open heart, he understands you. He's one of us. (Pause.)

Won't you welcome to the stage the next president of the United States, George Wallace!

Scene 15. The Presidential Campaign

(The scene has transformed into the real rally. WALLACE enters, waving to the crowd, "remodeled" for the national campaign: tailored suit, new haircut, slick. He kisses CELIA who looks like a movie star in her tailored suit. He stands before the crowd.)

WALLACE (spotting some Confederate flags in the audience)

My, this northern crowd's looking mighty southern today!

WHITES

We want Wallace! Wallace! Wallace! Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!

WALLACE

So why on earth would you Yankees come out to hear the governor of a Southern state? (A few chuckles in the crowd.) I think I know. You're scared and upset and angry about the direction our country is headin'. You know things can't keep goin' the way they're goin', and nobody seems to be doin' anything about it. Well, I am angry and upset too! So upset, in fact, that I *am* gonna do something about it! I am a fighter. I fought through the Great Depression, fought my way to those Golden Gloves trophies. And like many of you, I fought in World War Two. I fought to preserve our precious American way of life. I fought for freedom!

WHITES

Wallace! Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!

LYONS & BOOKER

Ask 'em for money.

AGLETON

Ask 'em for money.

WEANS

Ask 'em!

WALLACE

My friends, you can see what we're up against. I'm gonna need your help.

ADVISORS

Today and every day until November.

WALLACE

I can't do this alone. Won't you help me out?

(The WALLACE GIRLS rush out in boaters and sashes, carrying plastic buckets for contributions.)

WALLACE GIRLS

What can you give us?

What can you offer?

Nothing is too small.

Give what you can, please.

Give what you can, please.

(People in the crowd fork it over.)

\$17? \$22 \$54 \$100?

ADVISORS

\$200!

WALLACE

Let's send this country a message!

LYONS, BOOKER & WEANS

Let's send 'em a message again and again, over and over.

ADVISORS and WHITES

Send 'em a message!

(The scene transforms into a rally in TOLEDO. BREMER is barely visible at the back of the crowd. Again, CELIA introduces WALLACE.)

CELIA

Hello, Toledo! God bless America for *you* ... and my husband!

WALLACE

You're fed up. So am I. Every day, seems the federal government creeps a little bit more into our lives. This isn't just a Southern problem. It's a national problem. Those Washington hypocrites think they have all of the answers. They don't know a thing! They should come to Ohio and ask a beautician or a factory worker. They'd get an earful: how

they're busing your children to kingdom come because some Washington liberal thinks he knows better what's best for your own child. Then they tax you some more to pay for it!

WHITES

We're fed up! We're fed up! We're fed up! We're fed up!

WALLACE

You're fed up ...

WHITES

We're fed up! We're fed up! We're fed up! We're fed up!

WALLACE

... with welfare cheats livin' on the dole while you're out breaking your backs trying to feed your families! The elites have looked down their noses at you and me for a long time. They call us rednecks. Well, we're gonna show them there are a lot of rednecks in this country!

WHITES

President Wallace! President Wallace!

BLACK PROTESTORS/HECKLERS

Prejudice Wallace! Prejudice Wallace!

WALLACE

Ignore those agitators on the sidelines ...

BLACK PROTESTORS/HECKLERS

Wallace the racist! Wallace the racist!

WALLACE

... exercising their right to free speech. (to the PROTESTORS) Just keep on. You get me a million votes every time you show up. I'll tell you that much. They mean free speech only if you let *them* speak. They don't want anybody else to speak, I tell you!

WHITES

President Wallace!

BLACK PROTESTORS/HECKLERS

Prejudice Wallace!

WHITES

President Wallace! President Wallace!

(CELIA appears with a local television reporter, charming, homespun but savvy, becoming professional.)

FEMALE TV REPORTER

So tell me, Mrs. Wallace, what is *your* opinion of the Civil Rights Act?

CELIA

You'd have to ask my husband about that. But I sure love the dogwood blossoms this time of year in Ohio. The colors remind me of the South.

FEMALE TV REPORTER

Well, speaking of color, it seems you've been responsible for remodeling, not just the mansion, but the governor himself.

CELIA

Oh, I figured I'd better couth him up a bit.

(Polite laughter.)

(A campaign stop in COLUMBUS)

WALLACE

The people are waking up,

WHITES

We're waking up.

WALLACE

the people of Birmingham, people of Baltimore, and the people right here in Columbus.

WHITES

We're waking up.

WALLACE

You might not hear it in the left-wing media, but we are here, and we're sending a message.

WHITES

We're sick and tired of the government telling us what to do!

ADVISORS

Let's get some money!

(WALLACE exits with a wave. The WALLACE GIRLS work the crowd again.)

WALLACE GIRLS

It's time to give, folks!
\$300 \$63 \$21?

WALLACE GIRL & ADVISORS

\$500!

(BREMER emerges from the crowd and stuffs a dollar in a bucket.)

BREMER

Send George this message.

(The scene transforms into a big rally in JACKSONVILLE.)

CELIA

Hey there, Jacksonville! Let's give a Sunshine State welcome to the next president of the United States, George Wallace!

WHITES

(with CELIA) George Wallace!

Welcome back to Dixie, George and Celia!

(WALLACE enters through the crowd. Much applause and hollering. He makes his way to the dais, shaking hands and slapping backs as he goes.)

WALLACE

My, it's nice to be back down south again!

WHITES

Thank you for your message, George!

WALLACE

Someone's gotta defend our way of life ...

A HIPPIE HECKLER

Peace! not Wallace!

(The crowd boos.)

WALLACE

Come up here after I've finished my speech and I'll autograph your sandals for you.

WHITES

We want Wallace!

BOOKER (whispering in his ear)

You have been chosen ...

LYONS & WEANS

You have been chosen.

(CELIA pushes forward.)

CELIA

George is too humble to say that he has been chosen by God ...

WEANS

God is good.

CELIA

... or that his message is divine. Only God can determine that.

WALLACE & CELIA

To God alone we pray. In God alone we trust ...

(REV. BEVEL and TWO BLACK CHURCHWOMEN appear, picketing the rally.)

REV. BEVEL & TWO CHURCHWOMEN

God is on our side.
He will lead us home.
God is on our side.

WHITES (drowning them) out
God is on our side! God is on our side! God is on our side!

(The full chorus of BLACKS enters from upstage, filled with rage and power.)

BLACKS
No more hosannas!
No more hallelujahs!
No more “God is on our side and He will lead us home”!
Enough of you preachers preaching sermons of restraint.
If they want a reason to hate us, we’ll give them one,
 since they didn’t need a reason before.
We’ll burn down the churches,
burn down the temples,
tear up the streets,
and smash all the windows,
loot all the stores,
and set them on fire.
Burn down the cities!
burn down the cities!
No more Amens!
No more “praise the Lord”s!
God has never answered us. Why should we call on Him?
No more talk!
No more prayers!
When their homes are in flames, they’ll get *our* message!

AGLETON & ADVISORS
Inner cities in flames, Newark. Los Angeles.
Bad for them. Good for us!

BLACKS
Burn down the cities!

(CELIA appears on “Good Morning, Jacksonville!”)

FEMALE TV ANCHOR
Weren’t you crowned Miss Peanut of Covington County when you were seventeen?

CELIA
My, you do your research! Yes. It was an honor.

FEMALE TV ANCHOR
Well, your sense of style has become an inspiration to millions of American women.

CELIA
Thank you. A Southern woman has to know how to put herself together, and to cook and garden too, and ...

(She pauses, puts her hand to her forehead. Something is wrong.)

FEMALE TV ANCHOR (concerned, leans forward, touches CELIA's arm)
Mrs. Wallace?

CELIA (regaining her composure)
And pray. Pray, of course.

(A campaign stop in RACINE. HECKLERS are chanting, beating on pots and pans, trying to drown out WALLACE. BREMER is near the front, smiling big.)

HECKLERS
Wallace tells lies! Another child dies!
Wallace tells lies! Another child dies!

WALLACE (trying to heard over the HECKLERS)
I know you folks in Racine are scared. *I'm* scared! Instead of calling out the National Guard to integrate schools, why don't they call it out to shoot some looters in the streets?!

(A huge roar of approval from the WHITES.)

HECKLERS (chanting)
We don't want Wallace! We don't want Wallace!

WHITES (chanting; trying to drown out the HECKLERS.)
President Wallace! President Wallace!

(Unable to go on, WALLACE waves, heads off. Following WALLACE, CELIA stumbles, nearly faints. A Secret Service agent supports her. The crowd stops, watching. She regains her composure and bravely waves to the crowd. BREMER approaches.)

AGLETON
Get her in the car. She can see a doctor in Milwaukee. Send in the girls to distract the crowd.

(The WALLACE GIRLS bound out, pushing BREMER aside.)

WALLACE GIRLS
Give us your pennies!
Give us your nickels!
Give us your dimes!
Give us your quarters!
Give us your dollars!

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
Give us your dollars!

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS + WALLACE GIRLS
Give us your money!
Give us your money!

(A rally in MILWAUKEE. The crowd awaits WALLACE.)

WHITES
He is right. He is strong.

He will never lead us wrong.
Wallace is America.
He is clear. He knows best.
He will put our fears to rest.
Wallace is America.
He is fair. He is just.
He is looking out for us.
Wallace is America.
He is good. He is great.
He has called, and we can't wait
to change America!

(WALLACE enters. Upstage, CELIA is seated next to a DOCTOR who is speaking to her. Her reaction is impassive.)

WALLACE

I know y'all heard my wife had a little spell over there in Racine, but I'm happy to tell you, she's just fine. I want to thank you personally for your thoughtfulness by shakin' a few of your hands before I go check up on her.

(He plunges into the crowd. Secret Service Agents try to hold him back. The crowd around him squeals and pushes closer. BREMER appears, gets close enough for a shot, reaches for his gun. Two adoring WHITE GIRLS shove themselves up front, blocking BREMER. He steps back.)

TWO WHITE GIRLS

Can we get your autograph, please Mister Wallace?

WALLACE (obliging them with a smile)
Why sure.

TWO WHITE GIRLS

We just love what you're doing for America!

BLACKS (offstage)
Burn down the cities!

(On the sidelines, a female REPORTER questions CELIA.)

FEMALE REPORTER

So ... any truth to the rumor that you're expecting?

CELIA (coyly)
No comment.

(A BLACK FEMALE REPORTER steps forward.)

BLACK FEMALE REPORTER

Wouldn't being a mother make you more sympathetic to the mothers of children who've been beaten by the police, or blown up in churches?

(Caught off guard, CELIA wobbles a moment.)

CELIA

It is so unfortunate ... (regaining her footing) that outsiders and professional agitators came to cause so much trouble in our state. Like most good Alabamians, I just went about my own business. And prayed about it, of course.

(REV. BEVEL & TWO CHURCHWOMEN appear again, picketing the rally.)

REV. BEVEL & TWO CHURCHWOMEN
God is on our side.

CELIA
God always sees that the right thing is done.

REV. BEVEL and TWO CHURCHWOMEN
He will lead us home ...

(The full company of BLACKS enter.)

BLACKS
No more concessions!
No more police!
Your justice doesn't apply to us.
Why should we bow to it?
No more laws! No more lies!
When your cities go up in smoke,
you'll get our message!

(BALTIMORE. Everyone is on stage except the HECKLERS and WALLACE GIRLS;
BLACKS on one side, WHITES on the other.)

CELIA & WALLACE
Hello, Baltimore!

WALLACE
Are you fed up?

WHITES (antiphonal from opposite sides)
We're fed up!

BLACKS
We're fed up!

BLACKS & WHITES
We're fed up!

WALLACE
Are you scared?

WHITES
Yes, we're scared!

BLACKS
Yes, we're scared!

BLACKS & WHITES

Yes, we're scared!

WALLACE
Are you mad?

WHITES
Yes, we're mad!

BLACKS
Yes, we're mad!

BLACKS & WHITES
Mad as hell!

WALLACE
Do you hate ...

WHITES
Yes, we hate!

BLACKS
Yes, we hate!

BLACKS & WHITES
Oh, we hate!

WALLACE
... hate what they're doing?

WHITES
Hate!

BLACKS
Hate!

WHITES
Hate!

BLACKS
Hate!

WHITES & BLACKS
Hate what they're doing!

ONE HECKLER
If you loved Hitler, you'll love Wallace!

HECKLERS
Wallace for Fuehrer! Wallace for Fuehrer!

WALLACE
Do you hear the hate in their voices?! Never in my life have I seen viciousness! You guys better have your day now because you're through later on, I tell you that much!

HECKLERS (unfurling a Nazi flag)
Sieg heil!

WHITES
Put those bastards into cages! Dump 'em at sea! Dump 'em at sea!

BLACKS
Slave driver Wallace! Slave driver Wallace!

(The stage becomes a swirl of chaotic activity as the two sides chant at one another over and over with mounting fury. WALLACE and CELIA, flanked by the ADVISORS and Secret Service agents work the WHITE side of the crowd, greeting and shaking hands. BREMER is invisible at first, but gradually makes his way closer and closer to WALLACE.)

WHITES
He is right. He is strong.
He will never lead us wrong.
Wallace is America.
He is clear. He knows best.
He will put our fears to rest.
Wallace is America.
He is fair. He is just.
He is looking out for us.
Wallace is America.
He is good. He is great.
He has called, and we can't wait
to change America!

BLACKS
Burn down the churches!
Burn down the temples!
Tear up the streets and
smash all the windows!
Loot all the stores and
set them on fire!
Burn down the cities!
No more concessions!
No more oppression!
No more of your laws!
No more of your lies!
No more police!
We've waited long enough!

ADVISORS
If we take Maryland, we're gonna win this!

BLACKS
We demand justice!

(The HECKLERS return, beating pots and pans.)

HECKLERS

We don't want Wallace!
Wallace the racist!
Wallace tells lies!
Another child dies!
Go back to Dixie!
Go to hell, Wallace!

(The WALLACE GIRLS come charging out.)

WALLACE GIRLS

What can you give us? What can you offer?
Nothing is too small. Give what you can please.
\$17? \$22? \$54?
\$100? \$200? \$300?
\$400? \$500? \$600 \$900? \$1000?

(BREMER comes face to face with WALLACE.)

BREMER

Hello, governor. I just want to shake your hand.

WHITES

President Wallace!

BLACKS

Burn down the cities!

(WALLACE extends his hand. BREMER quickly pulls a pistol from his pocket and fires five shots. WALLACE drops to the ground. The crowd screams. CELIA throws herself on top of him. Secret service agents surround him; others tackle BREMER and drag him away.)

CELIA

No ...!

BREMER (as he is being dragged away)

Fame glory fame glory fame glory ...!

(The crowd parts to reveal WALLACE lying in a pool of blood. He reaches up to CELIA who kneels beside him.)

CELIA

I'm taking you home, George. No more. No more.

(Pandemonium. The musical interlude suggests chaos, sirens, mayhem.)

Scene 16. The Governor's Mansion, a year later

(BOOKER, LYONS and WEANS are huddled speaking sotto voce; wearing overcoats, hats in hands.)

BOOKER

Why on earth would anyone want to shoot George C. Wallace?

WEANS
Eight operations.

LYONS
All that time in rehab.

BOOKER
In constant pain.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
I never seen a man so determined to walk again.

LYONS
And Celia with cancer on top of that.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
What are the odds?

BOOKER
And he's still determined to be president.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
But who wants a cripple?

BOOKER
People want somebody strong,

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
photogenic.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
Doesn't matter the message. It's the messenger that counts.
Wallace is finished.

(WALLACE wheels himself in slowly, clearly in pain.)

(trying to be upbeat) Governor, you look terrific! What a fighter!

BOOKER & LYONS
What a hero!

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS
You are astonishing!

BOOKER & LYONS
You're impressive!

LYONS & WEANS
So impressive!

BOOKER & LYONS
Unbelievable!

WEANS + LYONS

You put lesser men to shame!

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS

Your determination and your hard work have paid off ...

WALLACE (cutting them off)

I had nothing to do with it. God saved me. All those doctors and nurses ... yes, I am thankful, but it was the healing grace of the Lord kept me alive. And for a reason. I am supposed to be President.

LYONS

That'll be a long shot.

WEANS

Odds are against it.

BOOKER & LYONS

A man in a wheelchair doesn't seem fit.

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS

Doesn't sell in Maine or Indiana.

WALLACE

Did you hear how they cheered for me at the convention in Miami?! I'm not dead yet! I'm full of piss and vinegar! What's a little pain? George C. Wallace is not finished! He can still send 'em a message!

(He stops, wincing in pain.)

BOOKER

You are indeed full of piss and vinegar But campaignin' is hard.

LYONS

Especially without a wife.

(Another pause)

BOOKER, LYONS & WEANS

You gave it your best shot.

You had your moment in the sun.

You're still important.

History will reckon with you.

You shone like a beacon to all America!

Supreme! Radiant! Blinding! Bright!

(LYONS, BOOKER & WEANS back up, put on their hats.)

(to themselves) Finished.

(They each shake WALLACE's hand, then exit together. From the other side, CELIA enters with a small suitcase, dressed simply as she had been in the beginning, but with a turban on her head.)

Scene 17. The Governor's Mansion

CELIA

My ride is here. No ... don't turn, it's easier not to look at you.

(WALLACE wheels around anyway.)

WALLACE

Please don't go, Celia. After all we've been through ...

CELIA

Miss Peanut's gotta return to Covington County to regain her title. (indicating her turban)
The new crown is fetching, isn't it?

CELIA

I'm sick, George. I'm dying. There's no changing that.
I wanna go home now to die in peace.
I was there for you. I played my part. All those campaigns. All those days on the road.
The weeks in the hospital, months in rehab, bone-aching mornings and sleepless nights.
All the while hiding my own illness from you, the sweat, the vomit, the pain, the fear.
My hair's all gone now. Couldn't very well hide that forever, now could I?
Oh yes, I loved those tailored suits and airplane flights,
the interviews on TV and in magazines,
all those people waiting to hear *my* opinion.
Oh my opinion counted for a lot, and so did my smile.
All the while in the pit of my stomach this nagging little voice saying:
"You are riding the coattails of glory,
but with the blood of angels dripping from your hands."
When I heard about those four little girls and said that I should go to the families,
I let you talk me out of it ... with all that chatter about the "greater good."
I chose to ignore my doubt until it grew up inside me,
our child, taking its cancerous form, the fruit of our noble efforts.
All that hate! Every word uttered, ammunition.
You exploited our darker selves with your thinly veiled calls for death.
And when death nearly paid you a visit, I couldn't help asking myself,
is this God's will -- to stop this man once and for all?
But those bullets didn't even kill you, like they did JFK or Martin Luther King.
You'll never be a martyr to your Glorious Lost Cause,
floating in the firmament of high esteem.
No, you are bound to earth.
You'll be remembered as the man who turned his back
while children were blown to bits
to preserve a way of life that was already dead.

WALLACE

I'm gonna walk again, Celia. (bitterly) I guess you won't stick around to see that.

(He turns his back on her. She turns to go, but stops.)

CELIA (gently)

All I wanted was a house with a washer and a dryer and a yard.

(She stares at him a long moment, then exits slowly, leaving him alone.)

WALLACE
(barely audible) Go then ...
(a howl) Go! Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!
Never be a martyr? I've no intention of bein' a martyr!
I am flesh and blood! I am wide alive and ready to fight!
I'm a great man!

(Quietly, AGLETON enters upstage. With great determination, WALLACE tries to lift himself out of his wheelchair. He slumps back exhausted, unable to rise.)

AGLETON
Don't get yourself so worked up, George. You're never gonna walk again. Might as well accept it.

WALLACE
You're leavin' too, I suppose.

AGLETON
You are no longer an asset. In fact, you're something of a liability.

WALLACE
You'll be sorry when I'm president.

AGLETON
You are never gonna be president, just the crippled governor of a little Southern state ...

WALLACE
I will be remembered!

AGLETON
... who landed on the wrong side of history.

WALLACE
Thanks to you!

AGLETON
You embraced it lustily. It was fruitful and multiplied in you. All I had to do was crack the door and you came charging through.

WALLACE
More people know my name than any governor in our history. I've made life better for everyone!

AGLETON
You won't be remembered for your bridges and schools! You'll be remembered as the segregationist who stood in the schoolhouse door!

WALLACE
I did what I thought was right at the time.

AGLETON
And it got you the votes.

WALLACE

I can make up for all that.

AGLETON

Go ahead. Make your amends. Won't do any good.

WALLACE

This is America. Everyone gets a second chance.

AGLETON

It's too late.

WALLACE

People forgive. People forget.

AGLETON

People judge.

WALLACE

I can make it right. There's still time.

AGLETON

Oh, you've got time alright. That's all you got. Fifteen -- twenty years of pain. Sounds like hell to me. No matter to me. I got what I wanted out of all this. I am gonna become a wealthy man. (He turns to go, then stops and turns back.) And I can still walk.

(He exits, whistling Dixie.)

WALLACE

I did what I thought was right! I am a powerful man! I can make things happen!

Scene 18. The Baptist Church

(The voices of the BLACKS in their church are heard offstage.)

Proud defender of the Southern way of life! Who are you to judge me?

Anyone to judge me?! Anyone...

I've done more to help the Negroes than any governor in history.

(The full realization of what he's done, the heavy weight of it, hits him with sudden force.)

I've done more ...

(The scene transforms into the Baptist Church where the BLACKS sit on two sides of an aisle, facing upstage with backs to the audience. WALLACE ends up center stage, facing the congregation. The congregation is silent and immobile during his speech.)

WALLACE

I sit before you, a broken man; wounded, crippled, empty, in constant pain.

I was shot by a man who sought fame and glory, just as I myself sought fame and glory.

I am thankful for my adversity.

It has opened my eyes to the pain I brought to others. To you.

So I come here today to beg for your forgiveness.

I hope you might make room in your hearts to grant it.

I don't expect it. I don't deserve it, but I can ask.
God alone can judge what I have done,
but until that day arrives, I can only seek to atone.
I've been struggling with a raw and broken heart.
For years I've denied the guilt I lay before you.
My humble hope is to leave this world better than I found it, if it's not too late.
That is all. No more, no less. That is all.

(He finishes. No one moves. A long pause.)

I thank you for hearing me out. Good evening then.

(He begins to slowly wheel off in silence, stops in pain, catches his breath and moves again a short distance. The light changes. Softly, the 4 GIRLS appear exactly as they were before, in their Sunday School outfits. WALLACE stops. The two older ones come behind him and gently push him downstage. The two younger ones solemnly march along.)

GIRLS

We would fly around
and sit on top of church steeples,
and shower blessings and messages of comfort
on all the unsuspecting, unhappy people.

DENISE

Why are you so unhappy?

WALLACE

Because ... because ...

(He takes her hand and holds it to his cheek, barely able to sing.)

Forgive me. I'm so sorry ...

DENISE

Yes.

GIRLS

We know you are.

(They turn and wheel him back upstage. Halfway up the aisle, DENISE breaks away, seeing MAXINE, older now, grief having taken its toll. DENISE moves to her, gently lays her head on her mother's shoulder as though to say "don't worry." She pauses a moment then joins the other GIRLS. Quietly, they exit. WALLACE faces the congregation in the same position he'd been before the GIRLS had entered. After a moment, he turns to leave again. He is stopped by the sound of BEVEL's voice.)

BEVEL

Who are we to deny forgiveness when it is asked of us? Would we ask for any less on Judgment Day? (to the congregation) This is within our power. This is where our power lies, in forgiving, in spite of the enormous effort it takes. (with grace) Thank you for coming here today, Governor. (extending his hand) Please join us.

(WALLACE wheels down to BEVEL and takes his hand. There is a soft call of Amen. WALLACE starts down the aisle, a man extends his hand to the governor and nods. In turn, WALLACE thanks each member. Another hand is extended, then another. A chorus of Amens builds. As WALLACE slowly wheels downstage, the BLACKS turn to face the audience. Upstage, the WHITES appear. They listen, watch, slowly move down. MAXINE separates herself from the congregation. When WALLACE extends his hand to her, she shakes her head 'no,' turns away.)

MAXINE

No ... No, no.

(She and several others, unable to forgive, move upstage and exit. Several WHITES, unwilling to accept, move up as well, turning from upstage to gaze back on the others before they exit. The majority is left onstage. WALLACE acknowledges the congregation one last time.)

WALLACE

I've disrupted your service long enough now. Thank you and may God bless you all.

(He turns, slowly wheels himself upstage, and disappears. For the first time, WHITES intermingle with BLACKS, joining together in one chorus.)

ALL

When we long have turned to dust and blown away,
and our souls are scattered far beyond the stars,
no shred of solid matter will remain
of our triumphs and failures, dreams, and battle scars.
We will be remembered only by the world we've left behind.
That is all. No more, no less.
That is all.
We must join our voices together
in a splendid music, a song to be sung
now, tomorrow,
forever!

End