

NAACP headquarters in Tampa. A meeting room.
CLARENCE FORT speaks with REVEREND A.
LEON LOWRY)

CLARENCE

I don't understand why you're opposing me on this. Look at those college students in Greensboro. That could be us! That could be Walgreens and Maas Brothers and Kress – I'd do the organizing! I'm sure I could get 50 or 60 bodies downtown by tomorrow afternoon! By tomorrow morning!

LOWRY

I'm watching Greensboro as closely as you are. I pray every day for those fine young men and women. I think they are heroes every one of them.

CLARENCE

Then send a group of us out to Franklin Street! We got just as much reason to demonstrate as anyone in Carolina –

LOWRY

Our board of governors says "no." Those very wise men in Baltimore take the position that our chances are better in the courtrooms than in anything we might hope for at a lunch counter, there or here.

CLARENCE

I don't trust a white courtroom! I'm 22 years old, do I have to wait till I'm 40 before some white men in limousines decide I have a right to eat a sandwich at a dime store like a human being –

Side 2 - Clarence

ROBERTA

That old man's not gonna help us?

CLARENCE

Maybe not. Or maybe if we take things in our own hands, he'll have to come around. You know the problem here? How they do at the lunch counters?

ROBERTA

Yeah. I found out just the other day at Woolworth's.

CLARENCE

That's just one of 'em. Same with Kress and W. T. Grant and Walgreens. Your parents working here already?

ROBERTA

My dad just got started as a longshoreman in Port Tampa. My mama found housemaid work for a white family in Davis Islands.

CLARENCE

Well, we gotta worry that if we do this, the whites'll take it out on our people, get 'em fired in revenge. So don't say I didn't warn you.

ROBERTA

Aren't you concerned about your own job?

CLARENCE

I'm a barber on Central Avenue. Whites can't fire me from a Negro barber shop.

ROBERTA

Well, I'm just out of the community college in Atlanta, and no-one's tryin' to hire me. So am I on the Youth Council?

CLARENCE

Council's just me and a few friends from church – never could make it grow more. We don't got a colored college here, so if we want troops, we'll have to find 'em at the Negro high schools, that's Blake and Middleton. I figure the kids there are as fed up as I am.

ROBERTA

Where else these crackers won't let us in?

CLARENCE

Just about anywhere you want to go. Movie theatres, restaurants, their zoo at Lowry Park. They won't let you on the public beaches, and there are some places like Plant City, you can't even come near 'em if you don't want to get lynched. At the Hillsborough River State Park, they got picnic areas for Negroes and whites. Last time a Negro wandered into the white area, they closed the whole park down. Can you imagine that? Everyone had to leave.

LANE

Did they ever get the food they ordered?

BROWN

Apparently not, no they didn't.

LANE

What if this occurs against tomorrow? How are you gonna have your men deal with it?

BROWN

Give the colored ten minutes to vacate, and if they don't, put 'em all in handcuffs and take 'em away. As I understand it, the law is, no proprietor can be forced to serve anyone he doesn't want to. Make an example of the first group and it'll stop all the others.

LANE

Neil, I have to disagree with you. Just look at Greensboro, the protests tripled after the first day. And these copycats in Tallahassee: after the police made arrests, the crowd of demonstrators mushroomed.

BROWN

They're sure to expand if we don't close 'em down fast.

LANE

Maybe that's not good thinking. Tell me, what do you feel personally about these Negroes wanting to be served? You think the owners are right in turning them down?

BROWN

If a white woman doesn't want some big old colored man breathing down her neck, I think that's her privilege. I wouldn't want my daughter having to sit next to some of these bucks. They've got their own restaurants on Central Avenue. Let 'em go there if they're hungry.

LANE

So you think we should jail a man for wanting a grilled cheese sandwich?

BROWN

I don't know what you're saying, Julian. It sounds like you're defending 'em.

LANE

I'm defending my city – which has a nice reputation now, not at all like Little Rock or Montgomery. And I have an idea how I'm gonna protect that reputation. I'm giving you and your men just enough leeway to arrest anyone who uses violence, whether they're white or they're colored. Beyond that, I want you to stand by and if necessary, protect all the demonstrators.

BROWN

Protect them?

LANE

Keep 'em from harm. Keep 'em from getting beat up. Don't let this city become another byword for race hatred.

(GLEN's kitchen. Reporting to him
are VIRGIL and LOUIS)

GLEN

So old Greensboro's contagious. Tallahassee and now Tampa.

VIRGIL

Louis here said you'd know what to do next.

LOUIS

I gotta lot of respect for you, sir. I've heard a lot of people say you're up high in the organization, if you know what I mean.

GLEN

Well, maybe I am and maybe not, maybe that's a subject I'm not at liberty to talk about. But you said there was a large group of them.

LOUIS

I'd guess thirty or forty.

GLEN

And one of them mentioned they'd be comin' back tomorrow?

VIRGIL

Yeah, it was the girl. A real proud type, if you understand me. Like she was queen and we was all supposed to mind her even though she was colored.

GLEN

Can't say I'm surprised. With a nigger-lover like Julian Lane running this city, it's a miracle we're not already bowin' down and kissin' the feet of the Reds and the Jews.

VIRGIL

You got to do somethin' soon. Your organization, I mean.

GLEN

Oh, we'll do something, don't you worry. But first let's talk about you two. You really want to join up?

LOUIS

Yes sir.

VIRGIL

Yes we do.

GLEN

Well, then, you should know we're men of action. We look at each situation real hard and long, and then we *pounce*. And our justice is *swift*.

LOUIS

That's what I understood, sir. And we want to be part of it.

GLEN

These here sit-in demonstrations: they're gonna deserve a little extra study before we decide how to come down on 'em. But they won't last. Not for long. Now what else can you tell me? What did you observe the whole time you were givin' them hell?

LOUIS

It was odd: they were real quiet-like. No matter what names we called 'em, they just kinda stared straight like they didn't hear it.

GLEN

Yeah, that's one famous nigger tactic: make it look like they're so polite, it's gotta be *us* that's the trouble-makers. What else did you observe?

VIRGIL

There was one older coon, all dressed up in a suit. He was watchin' 'em like a mother hen. And sometimes they'd look his way, like to make sure he was still there for 'em.

GLEN

Now that's a fine piece of information. I wouldn't be surprised if that old nigger was what they call a "ringleader." We'll give him special attention. Anything else? What made them leave finally?

VIRGIL

When it was time the store was closin', they all got up and walked out together. I kind of spat on them as they did. Right in their colored faces. Then they were gone.

GLEN

You did real good, both of you, real good. And maybe you can do even better. Either 'a you got a police record?

LOUIS

No sir.

VIRGIL

No.

GLEN

You ever been in the newspaper, maybe in the *Tribune* or on TV?

(VIRGIL and LOUIS appear)

VIRGIL

Hey, look what we got here, some jigaboos want to eat with us –

LOUIS

Well, ain't this a crazy day –

QUILLER

All right, no trouble at my counter, they're gonna go, move on now, hurry on home –

VIRGIL

I guess it's a pickaninny carnival here today, I guess the Florida State Fair's back already –

VIRGIL

I guess it ain't bad enough these spooks gotta stink up all West Tampa, now they want us to smell 'em right here in downtown –

LOUIS

Hey jigaboos, any of you want to step outside with me? I'll turn your face into chocolate pudding –

VIRGIL

You listening to us, jungle shit?

CLARENCE(to ROBERTA)

Stay cool.

(to KIMBERLY)

I'm ready for a Coca-Cola and a doughnut.

QUILLER

(entering with posts and rope)

All right, this counter is closed and everyone's required to stay outside these ropes, I've called the police.

Side 6 - Dasher

DASHER

My name's Joseph Dasher and here's today's plan: we're gonna start at Liggett Rexall, we're gonna go on to McCrory's and Maas Brothers, and if we can get enough cars, we're going to Britton Plaza and Northgate! I'm Joseph Dasher, I ain't no polite Negro, and we ain't gonna be disrespected anymore. Follow me and we'll finally get us some justice!

(He exits)

(After a few moments, the door opens and
JOSEPH DASHER is standing in the doorway)

HEATH

Joseph Dasher?

DASHER

Yeah? What do you want?

HEATH

You're a hard boy to find, you know that? I got reports about you from West Tampa to Ybor to Forest Hills. Whatcha afraid of that you keep movin' around so much?

DASHER

I ain't afraid. What do you want with me?

HEATH

Who says I want anything with you?

DASHER

(starting to turn away)

Then good, I don't got to talk to you –

HEATH

It's just that my partner and me, we did some diggin' on our account, and we found out you've been in juvy for grand theft auto. You were only paroled a few months ago.

DASHER

I ain't broken my parole agreement –

HEATH

Oh no? We think you have. We've got all sorts of eyewitnesses to you creating a public disturbance. Leading a raucous crowd of Negroes downtown in disturbing the peace. I'd be smart to arrest you right now.

DASHER

All right. So do it.