



**A STUDY OF SPEECH ACTS: REVEALING JAMES BROWN'S  
PERSONALITY BASED ON THE MOST DOMINANT TYPE  
OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS THAT APPEARS WITHIN  
HIS DIALOGUES IN *GET ON UP* MOVIE**

**THESIS**

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JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

**2016**



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**THESIS**

A Thesis Presented to the English Department,  
Faculty of Humanities, Jember University,  
As one of the Requirement to Obtain  
the Award of Sarjana Sastra Degree  
in English Studies

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

1. My beloved father, Tedjo Admono who always supports and gives me advices for my thesis.
2. My dearest mother Yanie who always prays for my succes during the writingof the thesis. I also thank you for your patience.
3. My big families, I thank you for your great support and give me happiness.
4. My Alma Mater

**MOTTO**

“The difference between a boss and a leader: a boss says, 'Go!' - a leader says, 'Let's go!'” (E.M. Kelly) \*



\*<http://www.quoteland.com/author/E-M-Kelly-Quotes/812/>

## DECLARATION

I hereby reveal that the thesis entitled *A Study of Speech Acts: Revealing James Brown's Personality Based on The Most Dominant Type of Illocutionary Acts that Appears within His Dialogues in Get On Up Movie* is an original piece of writing. I guarantee that the analysis and the research described in this thesis have not already been conducted for any other degree or any publications.

I guarantee to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, November 2016

The Candidate,

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## SUMMARY

**A Study of Speech Acts: Revealing James Brown's Personality Based on The Most Dominant Type of Illocutionary Acts that Appears within His Dialogues in *Get On Up* Movie;** Alexs Gunawan Ario Yudo, 090110101038; 2016: 101 pages; English Department Faculty of Humanities Jember University.

Speech acts studies can be applied in multiple cases, including revealing someone's personality. Someone's speech acts can be used to interpret personality because every single utterance shows the way someone thought and act. This study is found in *Get on Up* movie which features James Brown as the main character. This research is based on Austin's (1962) theory about speech acts, Searle's (1983) theory about five basic acts, Brown and Yule's (1983) theory about context, Yule's (1996) theory about felicity condition, and Wiggins's (1996) theory about five personality traits.

Based on that movie, the researcher uses the selected dialogues from James Brown and his audiences. Those dialogues are gained by purposive sampling method. The researcher focuses on dialogues of James Brown in earlier career until he died. Besides, those dialogues have 3 aspects: (i) locutionary acts, (ii) illocutionary acts, and (iii) perlocutionary acts. The main focus of analysis in this research is illocutionary acts since it contains intended meaning from someone's utterances. Illocutionary acts in James Brown's utterances are categorized in four type, i.e. directives, representatives, expressives and commissives. The most dominant type of illocutionary act appearing in James Brown's utterances is interpreted as his personality.

The goals of this study are (i) to find out the most dominant type of illocutionary acts that appears in James Brown's utterances within the movie. (ii) to interpret the most dominant type of illocutionary acts that appears in James Brown's utterances as his personality.



This study is qualitative research because it deals with describing rather than numerical (Mackey and Gass, 2005:162). The data in this research are documentary data which use movie as the data. The movie shows the entire life story of the main character. The analysis is focused on James Brown's earlier career until he reaches his successful career in music industry. The description contains the interpretation of his speech acts as his personality. The 50 selected utterances of James Brown are analyzed in order to find out the most dominant type of illocutionary act that appear within his utterance. The most dominant type of illocutionary act is interpreted as his personality through Wiggins's (1996) theory of five personality traits.

The result of this research shows that directive type of illocutionary acts is James Brown's dominant speech act. It shows that he has a tendency in showing a show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement (Wiggins: 1996). Based on the theory of five basic traits, those all James Brown's traits can be categorized as high conscientious personality.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of six sub-chapters i.e. background of the study, research problems, research questions, the goals of the study, the significances of the study, and the organization of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

One of so many human being needs is to be connected to each other. It can be said that people cannot live alone and do everything by themselves in their whole life. In order to fulfill their needs, human do communication. Littlejohn (1992:2) says that communication is intertwined with all of human life. And he also emphasizes, any study of human activity must touch on communication processes in one form or another. In other words communication takes a very important role for human being. Within that process, it involves the tool, it is language. The most powerful medium of communication in any speech community is language. A language is a system of categories and rules based on fundamental principles and assumptions about the world (Kress and Hodge, 1979:5 cited in Tarry, 1995:5). Thus, it has an important role in human being to transfer idea and/or message.

Language cannot be separated from linguistics. There is a strong relationship between them. According to Trask (1999:129), language is the central study in linguistics. Linguistics has several sub-disciplines, i.e. pragmatics, sociolinguistics, semantics, psycholinguistics etc.. The researcher in this thesis tends to focus on pragmatic study.

Yule (1996:3) said that“pragmatics concerns with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)”. In other words, pragmatics is the study of language in use.It means that pragmatics shows how language is being used in conversation of daily life.

The scope of pragmatics should be concerned solely with principles of language usage, and have nothing to do with the description of linguistics structure (Levinson, 1983:7). Further, he (1983:226) acknowledges that of all the

issues in the general theory of language usage—pragmatics—speech act theory has probably aroused the widest interest. In another explanation about pragmatics study, Austin (1962:5) says that there are some utterances which not regard as false or true, they also not describe or report something. He calls the utterances as *performatives utterances*. Referring to Austin's theory about speech acts, the speakers do not only speak when they use these *performative utterances*, but they involve the action to be in. When we speak, we can do all sort things, from aspirating a consonant, constructing a relative clause, insulting a guest, starting war (Sadock cited in Horn and Ward, 2004:53). According to Austin (cited in Horn and Ward, 2004:54), there are three categories of act within *speech acts*: *locutionary acts* are acts of speaking, *illocutionary acts* are acts done in speaking, and *perlocutionary acts* are acts performed by speaking. For example, the locution is the fact that I said I promised to go early to bed. The illocution is the fact that I promised to go early to bed. The perlocution is the fact that, by promising, I may have reassured my parents (Ambrose, 2010:4).

The object of this research is a biography movie entitled *Get On Up*. The movie shows the story of the most famous *soul* singer in that time. It is made based on a true story. This research tries to analyze *performative utterances* that are produced by the main character. It is a biography movie that takes James Brown as the main character. The movie shows the entire life of James Brown since he was a boy until he gets his success as the most famous and influencing artist in *soul* music. There are several interesting things about this movie. First, the linguistic aspects which appear in this movie. Those aspects in this case refer to the use of performative utterances by the main character that will bring some certain effects. The researcher regards that those performative utterances can be interpreted as the personality of the main character because someone's utterances tend to represent his or her personality. Second, there are some reviews that make *Get On Up* deserves to be conducted. Travers (2014)—a television journalist and film critic wrote an article about this movie. He wrote about how great the energy and dedication of Chadwick Boseman who plays as James Brown. He said that Mr. Boseman makes the movie become alive. Peter mentions that *Get On Up*

shows the spirit of James Brown in civil rights movement through his music. George (2014) also wrote an article about this movie. George is an African-American author, journalist, music and culture critic. Based on George's article, *Get On Up* shows James Brown's struggles in entire life. He claimed that the movie brings the reality how Mr. Brown reaches all of his achievement.

According to all explanation above, this research tends to focusing on applying speech acts theory on a movie entitled *Get On Up*. In this case, speech acts used as a tool to reveal the personality of the main character in the movie. Speech acts theory is used in this research because the aspect that will be analyzed is the performative utterances of the main character of the movie. The researcher considers that speech acts theory is the most appropriate theory for this research as the main problem within it is the main character's utterances that indicating his personality. This research will be focusing on finding out the most dominant one of five types of illocutionary acts, and those finding will be interpreted as the main character's personality.

### **1.2 Research Problems**

The problem of this research is James Brown's utterances that can indicate his personality. The most dominant type of speech acts that appear in this movie will be claimed as James Brown's personality.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

According to the research problem stated before, the researcher brings two questions:

1. What types of illocutionary acts appear in James Brown's dialogues?
2. What is the personality of James Brown based on his most dominant illocutionary acts within his utterances in the movie?

### **1.4 The Goals of the Study**

By giving a detailed analysis, this study has following two purposes:

1. To find out the types of illocutionary acts that appear in James Brown's dialogues in *Get On Up* movie are.
2. To reveal the personality of James Brown based on his most dominant type of illocutionary acts that appears in his utterances in the movie.

### **1.5 The Significances of the Study**

This thesis has several significances to some different components:

1. It is important for the institution, teachers, and students of English Department Faculty of Humanities Jember University to consider that speech acts are useful to reveal one's personality.
2. This thesis can be used as one of the references to enlarge the knowledge in term of speech act for the readers of English Department.

### **1.6 The Organization of the Study**

This thesis has five chapters as the organization of the study. The first chapter consists of the background of the study, research problems, research questions, the goals of the study, the significances of the study and the organization of the study. The second chapter provides the previous researches and theoretical frameworks. The research design and methodology in the third chapter consist of the type of the research, research strategies, type of data, data collection, data processing, and data analysis. The fourth chapter is about the result and discussion of James Brown's personality through speech acts analysis. The last chapter is the conclusion that wraps up the analysis of the study.

## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter provides two previous researches and some supporting theories that are used in this research. The previous researches are similar researches that have a similarity and some differences with this research. The theories that dealing with this research are *speech acts*, *five basic act*, *felicity conditions*, *context of situation* and *five personality traits*.

### 2.1 Previous Researches

There are two previous studies that researcher provides in this research. The first study is written by Isnawati (2009). In her study, she tries to find out what types of speech acts that occur in *Shrek* movie script which are produced by the main character. She analyzes which speech acts that are dominantly used by the main character. She also tries to find the purpose of *Shrek* who uses the speech acts. She applies several theories for her research, *speech act*, *felicity condition* and *context*. Another previous research that is provided in this research that also focuses on speech act analysis is an article written by Alattar (2014:12). The article is an attempt to find out how politicians can produce a certain effect on their audience by analyzing what specific types of speech acts they use when uttering their speeches. The purpose of his paper is to provide the evidence of the fact that socio-political events witnessed by the country have a great impact on the types of speech acts performed by the American President resulting in presidential speeches with different patterns. The article applies Austin's (1962) theory about speech acts. It is more likely concerned in illocutionary acts analysis.

From those previous researches above, it can be drawn a point of those that this research does not only have similarity but also some differences. The similarity of this research toward those previous researches is the speech acts theory as the tool in analysing the object. The differences about this research from Isnawati's research are the object and the goals. She tries to find out the types of illocutionary acts that are produced by the main character, how the main character attempt in affecting the people and the effect of the speech acts that the main



character has delivered. The difference from Alattar's article is the object of the research. The journal uses presidential speech as its object.

## 2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

### 2.2.1 Pragmatics

Communicating to each other is a need for human being. For that purpose, it must need a tool, which is language. People communicate to each other in every day as long as they live, therefore people cannot avoid to use language in their daily life. In other words, people also use pragmatics in their daily life. As Levinson (1983) argues that pragmatics is a study dealing with the use of language . The language usage is a daily life conversational situation. The situations happen in a real life. The language usage in this situation can be used to affect others depend on the purpose. A real life usage of language, of course, is not only purposed to address a structural language form, but also to convey an intended meaning. "There are utterances that do not describe or report, also not true or false and the uttering of sentences is the doing of an action and would not commonly be explained as saying something" (Austin,1962:5). Here is the example of speech act in a dialogue between teacher and student:

Teacher : What are you laughing at?

Student : Nothing

(Levinson, 1983: 279)

The dialogue above is a conversation between teacher and student. Through that dialogue, the teacher is not only uttering an interrogative sentence, but she is commanding the student not to laugh. It can be seen that it is not only an utterance, but it is an action by saying something.

Owen (2012:24) defines that "pragmatics is the study of language in context and concentrates on language as communication tool used to achieve social ends". It means that pragmatic focuses on the way language used in form of communication. Pragmatic is concerning on the study of the speaker's intended meaning. Owen (2012:22) says, the intended meaning that is uttered by the

speaker depends on the context. Levinson (1983:12) also acknowledges that the study of pragmatics is concerned in all of the aspects that not captured in a semantic theory.

The theory about pragmatics in this research is used to analyze the intended meaning of some selected utterances of James Brown in *Get On Up* movie according to the context. The context also provides some features supporting speech act to be understood in order to find out the types of illocutionary act in James Brown's dialogues. Finally, pragmatic addresses the relation between the language, meaning and context in the speech act analysis in the movie script and interpret the personality of James Brown.

### 2.2.2 Speech Acts

Speech act is a sub-diciplines of pragmatic study. Austin (1962) begins the modern study of speech acts with his monograph *How to Do Things With Words*. According to his argument in the book, "*performatives utterances* tend to do something rather than saysomething"(Austin,1962:11). In other words, the performatives utterance is an utterance that contain an effective aspect. The effective aspect in this study means that the utterance involves the action when it is uttered by the speaker or the writer. These are some examples of *performatives utterances*:

I bet you sixpence it will rain tommorow  
I hereby cristen this ship the H.M.S. flounder  
I declare war on Zanzibar  
I apologize  
I dub three Sir Walter  
I object  
I sentence you ten years of hard labour  
I bequeath you my Sansovino  
I give my word  
I warn you that trespassers will be prosecuted

(Levinson, 1983:228)

Those utterances that have provided above are the examples of *performatives utterances*. According to Austin's (1962) theory about speech acts, those utterances are not just used to say something. The utterances above are also not descriptive and true or false. They tend to do something. The words i.e. bet, hereby, give, apologize, warn etc. are containing the effective aspect, namely doing the action.

- a. *Performatives utterances* do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false';and
- b. The uttering of the sentences is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something

(Austin, 1962:5)

Levinson (1983:226) says that speech act theory probably aroused the widest interest. That argument about speech acts theory is an image that the theory can be found applying in so many other diciplines, i.e psychology, antropology, philosophy, semantics, and where else. The speech act theory is divided into three elements. They are locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. According to Austin (1962), these are the definitions of the three of them:

1. Locutionary act: the utterances of a sentence with determinate sense and reference.
2. Illocutionary act: the making of statement, offer, promise, etc. In uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conversational force associated with it (or with its explicit performative pharaprased).
3. Perlocutionary act: the bringing about of effect on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstance of utterance.

(Austin cited in Levinson, 1983:236)

- The Elements of Speech Acts

Austin (1962) started the study of speech acts trough his book *How to Do Thingswith Words*. He stated that there are three elements of speech acts e.g.

locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and the perlocutionary acts. Here is the discussion about the three elements fruitfully:

#### 1. Locutionary Act

According to Austin (1962:94) locutionary act is the act of saying something. Related to the Austin's statement, to perform locutionary act involves linguistic construction. It is such an uttering a sentence using certain word. This act is producing utterance in obvious meaning. The grammatical rules are also involved in this kind of acts. Yule (1996:48) says that "locutionary act is the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression". Related to Yule's argument, a fail in producing a meaningful linguistic expression can cause a fail to perform locutionary act.

#### 2. Illocutionary Act

Illocutionary act always follows the performance of locutionary act. It means that when locutionary act is being performed, it also performs an illocutionary act. Illocutionary act is the intended meaning of the speaker when they are uttering their utterances. According to Saddock (cited in Horn and Ward, 2004:54) "Illocutionary acts are acts done in speaking". As the researcher stated before, illocutionary is the speaker's intention in their utterances.

There are some acts considered as illocutionary act e.g. requesting, ordering, advising etc. It will be successful to perform when the hearer understands the speaker's intention. Below are the examples of illocutionary act :

(1) "Close the window!"

The speaker intends for the hearer to understand the utterance that the speaker said is an order. Furthermore, the speaker intends to the hearer to close the window.

(2) "Don't go inside"

The speaker intends for the hearer to understand the utterance that the speaker said is an advice. Later, the speaker intends for the hearer not to go inside to the old building.

Illocutionary act is the speakers's intention when they are uttering their utterances. There are some classifications of act that may the speakers implied in their utterances. Searle (cited in Levinson, 1983:240) argues that there are only five basic kinds of actions that one can perform in speaking i.e.

- 1) Representatives, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, etc.)
  - 2) Directives, which are attempted by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning, etc.)
  - 3) Commisives, which commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering)
  - 4) Expressives, which express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating)
  - 5) Declarations, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs in which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institution (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment)
3. Perlocutionary act

Levinson (1983:236) states that perlocutionary act is “the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance”. Uttering performative utterance will bring some effect to the hearer. This effect is called as perlocutionary act. The effect in this case is the hearer's thought or action after the speaker successfully performs locutionary and illocutionary act. According to Austin (1962:99) “the perlocutionary act is an act of utterance which produces certain consequential effect upon the

feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons". For example:

Shoot her! (Levinson,1983:236)

The speaker, according to the example above, may intends to ordering, urging, advising etc., the *perlocutionary act* of those may be frightening the target, shooting the target etc.

Those three elements of speech act are needed to be the tools for analyzing some selected utterances of James Brown's dialogues. The result will be interpreted as the characteristics of James Brown.

### 2.2.3 Felicity Conditions

In uttering speech acts, there is an aspect that become the conditions whether the speech act is appropriate or not. The conditions in speech acts study is called as *felicity condition*. Yule (1996:50) says that the performative will be infelicitious (inappropriate) if the speaker is not a specific person in a special context.

Yule (1996:50-51) classifies the conditions into five constructs that have to be considered in order to perform speech act successfully. Those five constructs are general conditions, content conditions, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions, and essential conditions. Below are the definitions about those five classifications of felicity conditions:

- 1) **General condition** is the conditions of the participants. It means that the participants should have trully understood about the language being used in conversation and they are being themself, they are not pretending or play-acting.
- 2) **Content condition** is concerned in the appropriateness of the content, for the examples promise and warning, it should be containing future matters.
- 3) **Preparatory condition** is about the preparation of the future event that will happen. For the promises, there are two preparatory conditions, the

speaker and the hearer know that the event will not happen by itself if the speaker does not make it real. Then furthermore, the event will have beneficial effect.

- 4) **Sincerity condition** is the conditions about what the speakers intend and believe in their utterances. In a warning, the speakers believe that it will not bring a beneficial effect. It also has each sincerity condition in the other performatives utterances.
- 5) **Essential condition** is the condition that combines a specification of what must be in utterance content, the context, and the speaker's intentions, in purpose to be appropriate to perform specific speech act.

#### 2.2.4 Context of Situation

Context has an important influence in pragmatic studies. Pragmatics is the study of language usage (Levinson,1983:5). Related to the Levinson's statement, the study of pragmatic always takes the use of language in any form either spoken or written. Those use of language should be understood by the speaker and the hearer. The understanding in this case, means that the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation are match. Thus, context takes role in this step. *Context* provides information about the perceived environment of utterance.

Brown and Yule (1983:36) set four features of context of situation. Those features that being involved in the circumstances of utterance, as follows:

- *Speaker*: the person that produces the utterance
- *Hearer* : the audience in the conversations
- *Place* : where the conversations takes place
- *Time* : when the conversations happens

For example : "I do think Adam's quick"

*Speaker* : a young mother,

*Hearer* : her mother-in-law,

*Place* : park, by a duckpond,

*Time* : sunny afternoon in September 1962 .

They are watching the young mother's two-year-old son chasing ducks and the mother-in-law has just remarked that her son, the child's father, was rather backward at this age (Brown and Yule, 1983:36).

The above example is the way how to apply the context of situation theory into a conversation. According to the sample above, researcher can try to interpret that the speaker indicates to compare "Adam" to his "father". The speaker means that on the same age, "Adam" is quicker than his "father".

#### 2.2.5 Five Personality Traits

According to Wiggins (1996) personality can be divided into five basic traits, namely:

- 1) Extroversion : high extraversion tends to have positive emotions, surgency, the tendency to seek out stimulation while low extraversion is characterized by lack of social exuberance and activity levels of extroverts.
- 2) Agreeableness: high agreeableness is dealing with the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others as in case of low agreeableness.
- 3) Conscientiousness: high conscientiousness is one of traits that tends to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement while low conscientiousness is the tendency to be careless and indifferent.
- 4) Neuroticism: high neuroticism is related to experience negative emotion, such as anger, anxiety, or depression. It is sometimes called emotional instability, or is reversed and referred to as emotional stability.
- 5) Openness: high openness is dealing with general appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination and curiosity while low openness is characterized by conservative people.

Those *five personality traits* is the theory that is used by the researcher to reveal the personality of James Brown after the most dominant type of illocutionary act is found.





## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses about some aspects that become the parts of research methodology. Those aspects are type of research, research strategy, type of data, data collection, data processing and data analysis. This chapter clearly shows the type of data, how the data are being collected and the way all of the data will be analyzed.

### 3.1 Type of Research

This research belongs to qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of research that tends to deal with descriptive analysis rather than numerical analysis. Mackey and Gass (2005:162) states that qualitative research is based on descriptive data that do not make (regular) use of statistical procedures. But it does not mean that quantification is not allowed. They (2005:182) also said, “although some qualitative researchers eschew the practice of quantification, others are interested in patterns of occurrence and do not exclude the use of the sorts of numbers and statistics that are usually found in quantitative”. This type of research is used to describe what kinds of speech acts that appear in the main character’s dialogues and the effect of those speech acts. The most frequently appeared speech acts in the main character utterances will be interpreted as his personality.

### 3.2 Research Strategy

This research uses qualitative method as the research strategy. Mackey and Gass (2005:162) argue that qualitative research is a research which is based on descriptive data and does not use statistical procedures. Referring to that statement, the researcher in this research will use the collected data to be described and interpreted instead of processed it into statistical form. The collected data are coming from document archives. In this case, the data are James Brown’s utterances in *Get On Up* Movie.

### 3.3 Type of Data

The researcher uses qualitative. Qualitative data are the data that tend to focus on meaning of a text or something that not deal with numbers. According to Denscombe (2007:285) qualitative data are the data in the forms of words (spoken or written) and visual images observed. Qualitative data in this research are taken from James Brown's utterances in *Get On Up* movie.

### 3.4 Data Collection

In this research, the researcher uses a written document as the data. "Documentary technique is used for collecting data by using documents or written materials as the basic resource of research" (Blaxter *et al*, 1996:141). The data in this research are the utterances of the main character that are captured from the movie. Thus, it can be said that data collecting method in this research is documentary technique. In addition, Denscombe (2007:230) states that "document can be obtained from the internet such as website pages, home pages, or email and they can be treated like online documents".

The data are taken from [www.gointothestory.blcklst.com](http://www.gointothestory.blcklst.com). The data are only utterances that are produced by James Brown in *Get On Up* movie script. Total amount of James Brown's utterances are 388 utterances. Purposive sampling is used in this research to choose the utterances of James Brown. Khotari (2004:59) said that "purposive sampling is that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample". The items of purposive sampling are chosen specifically. James Brown's utterances that will be chosen as the items of sampling are his utterances when he has reached 16 years old or above. The researcher considers this age as a mature age. In this study the researcher takes 50 James Brown's utterances from the movie.

### 3.5 Data Processing

After collecting the data, the researcher processes those data based on these steps:

1. Marking the utterances that only uttered by the main character.
2. Choosing 50 the main character's utterances in his age over 16 years old.
3. Grouping them together to be analysed based on Austin's theory about three aspects of *speech acts*, Searle's theory about *five basic kinds of actions* and Yule's theory about *context*.
4. Classifying the personality of James Brown based on the *five personality traits* theory.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The most important part of the research is the data analysis. Descriptive and interpretative techniques are used in this research as the data analysis. The descriptive technique is used to analyze the *speech acts* that are produced by the main character and the kinds of actions that the main character has produced in his speech acts. The descriptive analysis process in this research is based on *speech act* theory that is proposed by Austin. Furthermore, Searle's theory about *five basic kinds of action* also applied in this research. The interpretative technique in this research is used to interpret the personality of the main character. The researcher count the most frequently appeared speech acts, and those are interpreted as the personality of the main character.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides the final result of the analysis in the previous chapters. The analysis shows that James Brown produces four types of speech acts within his utterances. James uses *directives* to order the hearer to do something for him. James also uses *representatives* to assert the truth of his utterances to the hearer. *Expressives* is also used by James to deliver his psychological expressions. Finally, the last type i.e. *commissives* is used by James Brown to do some future action.

The first question in this research is about the most dominant type of illocutionary acts that appear in James Brown's utterances within *Get On Up* movie. To figure out the answer of this question, this research applies speech acts theory. Based on the analysis, this research finds that *directives* becomes the most appeared type of speech acts with 37 appearances of 50 utterances. This finding shows that James Brown produces *directives* as his most dominant utterances within the movie.

The second question of this research is about what James Brown's personality is. To reveal his personality, this research uses the finding in earlier analysis, i.e. *directives* speech. James uses his *directives* because he wants the hearer to do something for him. Therefore, James is categorized as a man that has high authority within the movie. Additionally, James delivers *directives* utterances mostly to make his career in music runs well. Using *five personality traits* theory from Wiggins (1996), it can be concluded that he has a self-disciplines, act dutifully and aim for achievement traits. Those three traits represent that James Brown has *high conscientious personality*.

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## APPENDICES

### A. Get On Up Movie' Synopsis

A man is walking through a darkened hall. From outside, an audience is chanting his name loudly. As he takes his walk, he hears voices of people he knew throughout his life. This man is James Brown (Chadwick Boseman).

1988 - Atlanta, Georgia - James, wearing a green tracksuit, goes to a strip mall that he owns, and learns that somebody had been using his bathroom without his consent. He returns to his truck and retrieves a shotgun, to the horror of those in attendance. He addresses the people about who can use the bathroom and when before he accidentally fires a round into the ceiling. James cries, "Good God!" A frightened woman, Shirley Buell (Cleta Ellington), confesses to having used the bathroom. James forgives her, saying she did right by herself. Sirens are heard, and James realizes he must leave.

During the 1960's, James and his band decide to travel to Vietnam to show support to the black troops. Their plane flies in the middle of warfare, with the right propeller getting hit. James addresses the corporal when they land, angry that someone would dare to try and kill him, and also annoyed with the corporal telling him how long he can play, but James disregards this because nobody tells him how long he can keep the funk going. He puts on a show for the troops, and they all love it.

1939 - Little James (Jordan and Jamarion Scott) is calling out for his mama in the woods. She emerges from the trees and runs out, with James chasing her. Her name is Susie (Viola Davis). They go back to their home, when James's father Joe (Lennie James) comes back. Susie chastises him for spending his money on gambling. Joe starts to harass her to get her to bed. She starts to run from him until she willingly jumps into his arms and kisses him, allowing him to take her to bed.



We see some of James's performances with his band, The Famous Flames, performing live before audiences. At one point, they precede The Rolling Stones. James's manager Ben Bart (Dan Aykroyd) tells him about this, and they both believe that The Stones will be has-beens within a year. The Stones watch James perform, admiring his dance moves and energy. Later, James watches The Stones perform on TV and seems to enjoy what he sees. On another occasion, James performs in front of a crowd of white kids, and then imagining himself performing in front of a black crowd where he appears more comfortable.

Shift back to James's childhood. Susie has packed her bags and is ready to leave Joe and her son behind. She walks away, only to return to get James. Joe tries to grab him away from her, but she fights him off. Susie is forced to leave James behind when Joe comes back with a gun. James lives with Joe, who abuses the boy for singing. Later, when Joe goes off to join the army, he leaves James with his Aunt Honey (Octavia Spencer), where she makes James work. Honey takes the boy to church, where he takes an interest in the dancing and singing of the choir.

At the age of 17, James breaks into a car and steals a suit. The police chase after him and he is arrested, receiving a 5-13 year sentence. In prison, James sees a group of singers performing, leading him to stand among the other inmates, clapping and singing along with them. One inmate gets up in James's face, and James punches him twice, inciting a riot. Afterwards, James meets one of the singers, Bobby Byrd (Nelsan Ellis), who was hit in the face with something that was thrown at him. James and Bobby become well-acquainted, and, following James being granted parole, Bobby convinces his mother to let James stay with them. Bobby's sister Sarah (Taura Cherne) takes a liking to James, and Bobby later catches them fornicating in her room. Years later, James joins Bobby's gospel group. They put on a show at a club as The Famous Flames, following a performance from Little Richard (Brandon Smith). Later, James goes the burger joint where Richard works. Richard goes on a rant about not wanting to make music for the "white devil". Another flashback from James's childhood shows him

and other children being painted with numbers on their bodies and having one hand tied behind their backs, being forced to fight each other blindfolded. James gets beaten easily, but he watches a funk band playing in the distance. It keeps his spirits up.

In the mid-to-late-50's, James and Bobby are at a diner. A man walks in and asks the waitress if she's seen them, as he is an agent from King Records. The boys go up to him and introduce themselves. Later on, James, Bobby, and the rest of the Flames record their first song, "Please Please Please" with King Records. The executive, Syd Nathan (Fred Melamed), isn't very interested in the repetitive nature of the song, but he changes his mind when he hears James singing. Soon, James brings Ben Bart on board as his manager. When the band receives their records, they aren't happy to see it labeled as "James Brown and His Famous Flames". Ben explicitly states that James is the true voice of the group. The others, except Bobby, admit they never liked James, and they quit.

James and Bobby form a new band, with instrument players Maceo Parker (Craig Robinson), Pee Wee Ellis (Tariq Trotter), Nafloyd Scott (Aloe Blacc), and Baby Roy (Keith Robinson). The band performs at the Apollo Theater to an excited audience. While the band relaxes in their dressing rooms, Bobby goes over to James and tells him that a lady claiming to be his mother is there. Susie walks into the room, smiling at James. We then see a flashback of Little James seeing his mother walking with a soldier. James runs up to her and calls for her. The soldier asks Susie if she knows him, but she shakes her head. James runs away, disappointed and angry. Aunt Honey tells James that his mother is a no-account fool, and that someday, he'll be a rich man, because he has the spirit (God) in him.

James has a child, Teddy, with his first wife Velma (Jacinte Blankenship), and then later divorces her. He gets married to a woman named DeeDee (Jill Scott). On one occasion, the couple hosts a Christmas event outside their house,

where James hands money to children. Afterwards, James hits DeeDee for wearing an outfit that allows men to stare at her.

James does his best to reach out to the black community. He gathers a group of children and records the song "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud". A performance at The Garden is nearly cancelled following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, out of fear that riots may break out, but James convinces the manager of The Garden to keep it going. During that show, several audience members try to get on stage and dance alongside James, but the security guards keep pulling them away. James stops the show to allow the people to dance with him. His music does end up appealing to the white community as well. While staying at a hotel, a couple (Allison Janney and John Benjamin Hickey) voice their complaints over the noise and abundance of black guests, but even they cannot resist dancing to James's music.

As his success grows, James's relationships with others turn sour. He treats his bandmates like his lackeys and doesn't allow creative input from the others. Maceo confronts James one day about the band not getting paid on time and having to spend their off days rehearsing. Eventually, they all quit and leave James. Ben dies after suffering a heart attack during a golf game. James buries his friend, tearing as he does so.

After another performance, Bobby sits onstage and muses about following in James's footsteps and taking the stage himself. James is not happy at this thought, thinking Bobby is trying to steal James's thunder. He argues with Bobby and berates him.

Move back to the Apollo, where James asks Susie why she came to see him. He tells her she was never a mother. Susie says she never wanted to be a mother, but she chose to carry him inside her and she did love him. James gives her \$100 and sends her away. Before leaving, she looks back at him and says "You so pretty. You so beautiful." When she's gone, James breaks down and

quietly cries. Bobby comes back in and sees him. James tells him to make sure that she is well taken care of. In 1973, James receives a phone call. Teddy has been killed in a car accident.

We go back to the scene at the strip mall. Prior to this, James smokes a joint laced with angel dust. Following the accidental discharge of the shotgun, James is pursued by the police in his truck. He drives through a barricade and has a police car driving next to him, in which he sees visions of both his mother and father. James is eventually cornered outside a factory and arrested.

In 1993, James visits Bobby at his home for the first time since Teddy's funeral. They are on better terms, and James gives Bobby two tickets to his next show for him and his wife.

The scene goes back to the very beginning of the film, with James walking through the darkened hall. He sees visions of everybody from his life chanting his name (from the pastor at church to Aunt Honey and her friends), and remembering how far he's come to get to this point. He gets up on stage and performs "Try Me". The performance moves Bobby and his wife to tears. The audience cheers James on.

The text at the end says that James Brown was and still is considered one of the greatest and most sampled musical artists of all time. He continued to perform into his 70's, at times with Bobby Byrd. He passed away on Christmas Day 2006.

## **B. Get On Up Movie Script**

GET ON UP

*Story by*

Steven Baigelman and Jez Butterworth & John-Henry Butterworth

*Screenplay by*

Jez Butterworth & John-Henry Butterworth

1 **EXT. ROAD. AUGUSTA. 1988.** 1

A hot muggy Georgia morning. A pickup truck comes around a corner and moves towards us. Inside, music plays on the radio. We can't quite see who's driving.

2 **INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/AUGUSTA STREETS. MOMENTS LATER** 2

The driver heads down the road. He beats his hand on the steering wheel to the rhythm of the music. The driver turns up the music. As the rhythm speeds, so does the truck.

3 **INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME** 3

A **WOMAN**, 40, sits on toilet within a stall using the bathroom. She's smoking a cigarette.

4 **EXT. PARKING LOT. MOMENTS LATER.** 4

Cars parked in rows. The pickup pulls into the lot and screech-stops.

5 **INT. ADJACENT OFFICE. INSURANCE SEMINAR. DAY.** 5

About 30 people are attending a seminar. Behind a **SEMINAR PRESENTER**, The truck can be seen outside a window, stereo thumping.

**SEMINAR PRESENTER**

Which brings us on to Dental Insurance. Generally speaking, when you receive care from a participating PDP dentist, your out-of-pocket expenses will typically be lower than if you were to accept care from a dentist outside the group. The law deems it illegal for dentists to charge any more than the network approves... But listen, in my three and a half years of experience in this business people mainly care about keeping their premiums low. So, each of you must be prepared to sell the network to your clients and always cater to their specific condition.

Annoyed, the presenter turns momentarily to the truck.

6 INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK / PARKING LOT 6

A fifty-five year, out of shape black man in mirror shades and a shell-suit. He's breathing heavily. Patting the dashboard, as the song ends. The man sits there a moment and exits.

JAMES BROWN hitches up his pants, and walks across the lot.

7 INT. NONDESCRIPT OFFICE 7

There's no one around. He's jumpy. His movements odd. Twitchy.

JAMES

(To himself)

Where's everybody?

Around a corner he comes face to face with a cleaner, **MAVIS**, who is wearing headphones as she vacuums.

Mavis screams and removes her headphones.

MAVIS

Mr. Brown. You scared me!

JAMES

Mavis. Where's everybody at? I got a meetin' this mornin'.

MAVIS

It's Sunday, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

No, it's Tuesday, Mavis.

James is caught flat-footed. SOMEWHERE OFF a toilet flushes.

He rounds the corner. No-one. Opens the bathroom door. Looks inside. Sniffs. Slams it and storms off down the corridor passing a sign outside his office that reads: **GET ON UP**.

8 INT./EXT. ADJACENT OFFICE/ PARKING LOT. DAY. 8

As the INSURANCE SEMINAR presenter continues, the woman who was on the toilet takes her seat.

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Now, understand that not all people have the same type of needs. When it comes to an insurance plan everyone is different.

(MORE)

SEMINAR PRESENTER (CONT'D)

You can't possibly sell the same monthly premium to just anyone who strolls through your door. If you learn one lesson this weekend, let it be this: We must accommodate the specific condition of the client. Bottom line! Their needs are-

The adjoining door flies opens as James enters, pissed.

JAMES

OK Stop. Sir. Stop. Who been in there?

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Excuse me?

JAMES

I own this building, someone has been in there used my commode. Now who was it?

SEMINAR PRESENTER Sorry.

We're actually renting this part of the building today, and we're in the middle of a seminar.

JAMES

I don't care if you're in the middle of a heart attack son. Someone been in there, I hear the chain flush, I can *smell* it. Now who it was?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

It is. It's fuckin' him.

**BACK AT THE FRONT** someone sniggers.

James spins round. SILENCE. Someone sniggers behind him.

James spins back round and approaches the salesman.

JAMES

Something funny?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

No, sir.

JAMES

Then why you cats laughing?

INSURANCE SALESMAN

I wasn't laughing. It wasn't me.



James stares at the man. Turns on his heel.

He storms out of the building and across the lot to his pickup truck

THE PAYBACK starts: insanely tight, deep funk.

INSURANCE SALESMAN (CONT'D)

I'm telling you that was James Brown.

Outside a window behind the seminar presenter, James can be seen rifling through the back of his pickup truck.

The woman who used his bathroom watches James' every move.

SEMINAR PRESENTER

Look, I suggest we just continue...  
OK. So. How does the program work?  
Initially, participating dentists undergo an extensive credentialing process which, if approved, allows customers to pay the minimum deductible allowed and the remainder is insured. But with non-participating dentists the cost per visit is much higher and comes completely out of pocket. So some people may want a high deductible because they have more to cover, but most common folks simply want the lowest possible plan... and remember our key takeaway!?

Entire seminar in UNISON.

We must accommodate the specific condition of-

The office door flies open. James comes back in with a SHOTGUN.

JAMES

OK listen up people.

The room goes still and completely silent.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Being it's Sunday and all I'm gone ask each of you to imagine you're sittin' in church right now. While today's sermon may be good they's something else on your mind. You realize you gotta take a shit.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Real bad. And you don't want to  
shit at the church house, naw  
sir. So you just sit there and  
think about getting home to your  
own toilet in your own master  
bath on Beech Island, South  
Carolina. I gotta a bidet in my  
master bath. Love my bidet. And a  
big pretty oval tub too.

James spins around to man.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You got a bidet, Sir?

He shakes his head. James looks to a woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You?

She shakes her head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well you gotta get you one. You all  
gotta get you a bidet. Are y'all  
sure its really Sunday today?

A woman nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What was just saying... Oh, that's  
right. Yes! You gotta take shit.  
So, after church, you speed back  
home and you run like hell to the  
house scared you ain't gonna make  
it. But you do. Now imagine  
unhitching your pants as your open  
your bathroom door. And then you  
see me. James Brown. Sittin' on  
your master toilet taking a break.  
What would you do?

More sniggers from all over the room. James raises his  
gun and KABLOOM!!!

James accidentally blasts an enormous hole in the ceiling.

SCREAMS AS EVERYONE HITS THE DECK. James looks up the  
the hole in the ceiling.

JAMES

(CONT'D) (sotto)

Good God. Tear up the devil. I'm  
gone have to get that fixed.

James looks to the gun unsure of how it went off.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now I'm a busy man, and I'm guessin' you cats are too. But someone has abused a personal convenience. Now I ask you nicely. I'm gone ask you again. Which one of you gentlefolk hung a number two in my commode?

James approaches the salesman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Was it you, Sir? Was it you?!

INSURANCE SALESMAN

Don't shoot.

JAMES

I ain't gone shoot nobody, son.

Then, as if told by God, James spins around and locks eyes with the woman who used his bathroom. He approaches her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ma'am, it was you wasn't it? You took a break in my bathroom, didn't you?

She shakes her head and begins to cry.

FEMALE SALESWOMAN

Yes sir, Mister Brown.

JAMES

Yes you did. Now, don't cry. It's gone be okay.

James lowers the gun to the floor. As he tries to console the woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You had to use the toilet. You saw an opportunity and you took it. Yeah, I got mad but, Lady, you did right by yourself. I've spent my whole life doing right by myself. I'm James Brown and I made a difference.

**JAMES LOOKS TO CAMERA AND TALKS DIRECTLY TO US:**

JAMES (CONT'D)

You cats may not own my records  
but you can bet every record you  
have got a piece of me in 'em.  
Ain't nobody singing today that  
ain't been touched by James Brown.

James turns back to the woman.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So, Lady, you did right by  
yourself. And there ain't no other  
way to live. You understand me?

The woman nods. **James turns back to us.**

JAMES (CONT'D)

You understand me?

Police sirens are heard in the distance. James turns to  
his truck outside the window.

9 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.** 9

SUDDENLY - a pickup truck passes at a hundred MPH. FOLLOWED  
A MOMENT LATER by two city cop cars.

10 **INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY.** 10

James rocks in his seat. Odd guttural sounds. In the  
rearview. The two cop cars close upon him. Hits the  
gas, hard.

11 **HELICOPTER SHOT: EXT. ON RAMP - I-20. DAY** 11

The pickup truck skids onto the interstate where two  
city cars are now joined by two Highway Patrol cars.

11A **EXT. STREET LEVEL** 11A

A police car pulls up next to him, the officer aiming  
a weapon and flagging the car down. James sees him  
and flinches.

JAMES

Don't hurt me. Don't stop me.  
Don't stop me.

He rams the cop car. It retreats.

12     **EXT. I-20. DAY**     12

Three prowlers and a highway patrol RV form a road block. A high engine note pierces the air. The police take up firing positions.

13     **INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY**     13

James sees the roadblock ahead.

JAMES

Don't stop me. Don't stop me.

He smashes through road block. The windshield is blown out with gunfire showering James with glass.

He glances in the mirror as wind whips around the truck:

Up ahead another police car sits in the middle of the road. A policeman steps out from the car firing his pistol at the pickup truck.

James makes a hard right down a dirt road.

14     **INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK. GRAVEL PITTS, DAY**     14

James's front tires are blown out. James struggles to control the skidding vehicle.

JAMES

C'mon. C'mon.

15     **EXT. GRAVEL PITTS, DAY**     15

The pickup truck rolls to a stop. Five various police cars from different jurisdictions enter the Pitts from five different entrances and take up positions blocking exit routes.

16     **INT. PICKUP TRUCK. DAY.**     16

James sits staring straight ahead. Breathing hard. A loud hailer off screen: "EXIT THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD." James opens the door scattering glass onto the ground.

Around the perimeter armed police tense. Safety's off. Keeping James in their sights. A young officer sweats nervously.

James stands next to the bullet riddled wreckage of his pickup, hands above his head. He leans back and sings to the sky.

JAMES

*"I Don't Feel Noways Tired".*

17      **EXT. AUGUSTA COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS**      17

A wide, opulent looking club has taken residence in a huge antebellum home with wrap around porches.

A crowd of Deep Southern white folk, in cocktail attire, fill both levels of the porches and spill out onto the lawn surrounding a BOXING RING.

**A GROUP OF SIX BLACK MUSICIANS FORM A DIXIELAND BAND.** Without inspiration they play methodically to the all white crowd.

**A FAT, SWEATING ANNOUNCER,** walks into the ring, grasps a dangling mic.

ANNOUNCER

Aaannd now folks, before the main event, the Augusta Country club is proud to present to y'all it's Annual Charity ex-travagaaanza..!

(Drum-roll)

Ladies and gentlemen..The *Battle... Royale!*

Music. HALF A DOZEN BLACK BOYS enter the ring. Hyped. A glove is pulled onto one hand. The other tied behind their backs. They are blind-folded.

A WHITE MAN with a BUCKET OF WHITE PAINT daubs a number onto each boy's chest.

DING! DING! The boys stagger out, blindly swinging. The crowd roars, bangs the tables as they stumble, lurch, in the baying din.

The smallest of the boys stands stiff. He struggles to throw much less land a punch. The number "One" is painted on his chest.

A much bigger boy, "Number Six" punches "One" in the gut. "One" goes down but then slowly rises.

The dixieland band watches the exploitation with both horror and intrigue as they can't help but wonder who will be left standing.

The band's sound begins to change. It becomes as energized as the match before them. They sink into the rhythm, and the effect is one of heightened energy.

The drummer begins to pull the beat and the bass player instantly follows suit finding the new pocket. The drummer and bass player share a glance.

This inspired pocket soars across the lawn and into the ears of boy "Number One".

We are now transported into the mind of "Number One". Complete silence except for the sound of the band. Then one by one all other instruments fade away leaving only the drum and bass.

James turns to the band and lowers his blindfold from over one eye. He catches eyes with the drummer and bass player. The drummer nods at James and smiles.

James nods back and closes his eye. The sound morphs again as "Number One" begins to arrange the music in his head to his own liking.

James opens his one eye and sees only the drummer and bass player on the stage. They are now playing what we and James are hearing in his head.

James covers his eye again with the blindfold and forms a slight smile. His stance becomes more relaxed. His body begins to swing and morph like rubber.

He throws a punch. IT LANDS.

ALL AT ONCE "Number One" dances forward, dips, swings and sweetly CONNECTS to "Number Four". As the vanquished head hits the canvas, the victor, "Number One", bloodied, panting in the waves of laughter and summer heat, stands alone.

As the boys hit the deck and are deemed "out" they are pulled off the mat and carried to the bed of a parked truck.

"Three" goes down. Then "Two" and "Five". A ringside punter THUMPS the canvas with a fistful of dollars, berating him. People screaming with laughter. Only "One" and "Six" remain. Panicky, jerky, they stalk one another. Listening.

"Number One" connects with lightning speed. "Six" removes his blindfold, jumps off the ring and runs across the lawn disappearing into the nearby woods.

"Number One" stands victorious. The crowd goes wild.  
 "Number One" absorbs the admiration as he slowly pushes up  
 the blindfold and looks toward the bandstand.

All the band members have returned to the stand as in  
 reality they always were. They clap wildly as the beat and  
 rhythm of this budding continues in his head.

**THE EIGHT YEAR OLD JAMES BROWN** LOOKS RIGHT AT US. A level  
 gaze. That million dollar smile, **teeth coated with blood.**

THE BEAT CONTINUES OVER...

18 **CLOSE UP ON:** 18

The June 1968 cover of *Look Magazine*: A silhouette portrait  
 of James: "IS THIS THE MOST IMPORTANT BLACK MAN IN AMERICA?"

19 **EXT. PLANE. VIETNAM. DUSK. 1968 JAMES 35YRS** 19

A rickety old twin prop army plane flies low over the jungle.  
 SUDDENLY below, tracer fire BURSTS out of the canopy.

20 **INT. PLANE. VIETNAM. IN THE BELLY** 20

Marva Whitney, Clyde Stubblefield, Jimmy Nolen, MACEO  
 PARKER, Waymond Reed and **BOBBY BYRD** sit in a line opposite  
 a line of soldiers. The soldiers hold rifles. The band hold  
 instruments.

**PING! PING! PING!**

BOBBY

What was that?

They glance at each other nervously. PING! PING! PING!

**OUTSIDE** - A rocket propelled grenade streaks up out of the  
 canopy and explodes near the plane, rocking it violently.

**BELOW** - The world explodes, as Napalm sears across a  
 football pitch size of jungle, a hundred feet below.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They're shooting at us.

MACEO

Please, Lord! Please!

They look at the soldiers, who are also nervous. Marva  
 looks out the window. Nothing but fire below.



MACEO (CONT'D)

(Shaking)

Oh. My. God.

Drummond taps the soldier opposite. Points out the window.  
A soldier looks out, turns white.

SOLDIER

Holy shit.

**IN THE COCKPIT** - The pilots wrestle to keep the craft upright. Between them, a completely unruffled James Brown is holding court.

JAMES

See Captain Jenkins, the James *Orchestra* is a 22 piece, but the Gov'ment or the Army, powers't be say I can only bring six fellas. Right now I got 16 pieces sittin' in a Bangkok hotel. If I'm paying my own money to be here, and I am, I oughtta bring as many cats as I want. Breaks my heart, son. 'cause I *know* they all wish they was here *right* now.

PILOT

Mr. Brown, it's probably best if you go back now.

JAMES

We gone be fine, Captain.

PILOT

We're under attack Mr. Brown.

JAMES

Settle down, Captain. James Brown was born dead but then I breathed. God didn't want me then and he sure ain't gonna call me back now.

The soldier from the back rushes in.

SOLDIER

The port engine's on fire.

The PILOT looks back.

PILOT

How far to Tan Son?

**IN THE BELLY** - Everyone is frozen. Saying prayers.  
Moaning. James appears.

JAMES

Marva, fellas, Listen up. We  
under attack.

MACEO

No shit, Mr. Brown.

James flashes five fingers at Maceo four times.

JAMES

Watch that mouth, Maceo. That's  
twenty dollars right there.

The plane suddenly lurches forty five degree and lets out  
an awful groan. Everyone screams. Except James who is  
still standing like rubber even though he wasn't holding  
onto anything. Bobby sees this.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Mr. Byrd, I've decided to  
open tonight's show with "I  
Got The Feeling".

James demeanor somehow gives comfort to Bobby. James nods  
at Bobby and smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How's that sound?

BOBBY

Sounds good, Mr. Brown.

Bobby smiles at James. The plane lurches again,  
Bobby screams.

21

**INT. HANGER - SAME TIME**

21

A very white female news journalist talks into a camera, as  
scores of rowdy troops rush toward a make shift stage. Next  
to her, a group of BLACK SOLDIERS wait to be interviewed.

NEWS JOURNALIST

Soul Brother Number One James  
Brown, the Hardest Working Man  
in Show business is embarking on  
a tour with a difference.

(MORE)

NEWS JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

In association with the USO, Mr. Brown is playing a series of shows for battle fatigued US troops across Vietnam-

A BLACK INFANTRYMAN grabs the mic and looks into the camera.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 1

80 percent of 9th Division is brothers. We been here 2 years. What do we get as thanks?

Another Infantryman leans in.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 2

Country music.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 1

Country and fuckin' Western. But James is ours, man. He's comin'. Bringin' some fuckin' soul, brother.

The other Infantryman grabs the mic.

BLACK INFANTRYMAN 2

Welcome to the shit, nigger!

The Infantrymen laugh and slap hands. As they walk toward stage...

NEWS JOURNALIST

(To Cameraman)

We can't use that.

22 **INT. PLANE. IN THE COCKPIT.**

22

PILOT

I'm losing her. We're going down.

SOLDIER

Oh mother of Christ!

The wounded beast judders in low over the canopy and starts sinking into it when the jungle suddenly clears.

23 **EXT. TAN SON NHUT AIRFIELD 9TH DIV INFANTRY CAMP OUTSIDE  
NOM PEI. JUNE 1968. SAME TIME**

23

The damaged plane breaks out over the field with both engines smoking. Barely regaining control, the pilots make a very hard landing.

**MUSIC: "There Was A Time" begins.**

Army personnel race toward the plane. Next to the runway an old hanger is teeming with soldiers.

24

**EXT. AIRFIELD. MOMENTS LATER**

24

Biblically pissed, James and Bobby walk from the flaming plane alongside CORPORAL DOOLEY.

Behind them, in deep shock, Maceo and the rest of the band, clutching instruments.

CORPORAL DOOLEY

Welcome to Bear Cat, Mr. Brown.  
Corporal Dooley. USO Liaison  
officer. Can I first say I'm a  
big, big fan of your mus-

JAMES

You in charge when Bob Hope  
was over Corporal?

CORPORAL

DOOLEY (proudly)

I was.

JAMES

(to Bobby)

Mr. Byrd, You think Bob  
Hope's plane got shot down?

BOBBY

No sir, Mr. Brown.

As they approach the hanger filled with troops, a chant begins inside.

TROOPS

James Brown! James Brown! James  
Brown!

CORPORAL

DOOLEY (Tightly)

Sorry about the plane trouble-

JAMES

*Plane trouble?* They tried to  
kill *James Brown* today. You  
wanna go down in history as the  
man who killed the funk?

James and crew near the rear stage entrance of the hanger.

CORPORAL DOOLEY.

About the show, if you could  
just keep it to 25, 30 min-

JAMES.

(Interrupting)  
Whoa, whoa, whoa.

BOBBY (under  
his breath)  
Oh no.

JAMES

Corporal, let me tell you the  
first thing about James Brown. The  
first thing is James Brown don't  
tell no man his business. He won't  
tell you how to take Pnom Ridge or  
how you screwed up the Tet  
offensive. I don't tell you how to  
fight your war Corporal. So don't  
tell me when, where or for how  
long I can be funky.

25

**INT. HANGAR. CONTINUOUS.**

25

HUNDREDS OF HOT, STEAMING TROOPS ROAR, like a thousand space  
rockets taking off at once. It's awesome, shaking the stage.

TROOPS

James Brown! James Brown! James  
Brown!

James and Bobby enter the hanger. We walk with them and  
strut up six steps and onto the stage.

Bobby stands back and watches as James grabs the mic  
and looks out over the sea of faces.

JAMES

Sorry we're late. Are you cats  
ready?

The troops roar even louder.

James turns straight to camera, flashes his smile and  
talks directly to us.

JAMES  
(CONT'D) (quietly)  
Are you cats ready?

26 **EXT. A PINE WOOD. 1941. DAY. JAMES 8 YRS**

26

A cold fog hangs in the fading sunlit trees.  
Eight year old James stands alone in a forest clearing.  
He looks all around him.

JAMES  
Momma?  
He scans the trees. He's alone.  
SUDDENLY in the trees he glimpses someone. A woman. 30.  
Red dress. She giggles as she scampers from behind one  
tree to another. She peeps round. He beams.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Momma!  
He chases her. She's laughing.  
SUSIE  
You can't catch me!  
Each time he loses her she peers from behind a tree he  
squeals in delight but she disappears. He is suddenly alone.

JAMES  
(Scared)  
Momma?  
She jumps out from behind a tree and scoops him up.

SUSIE  
I gotcha!  
He squeals and laughs in her arms.

27 **EXT. WOODED PATH. DAY. 1941**

27

Susie and James walk hand in hand.

JAMES  
Momma, I'm hungry.

SUSIE  
You ain't hungry baby. That  
feeling in yo tummy?  
(MORE)

SUSIE (CONT'D)

That feelin' is the spirit inside  
you. He's in there tickling your  
belly right now cause he knows you  
such a good boy. You ain't hungry.  
He's just trying to make you laugh.

Susie begins tickling James. James starts to laugh.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Are you a good boy?

He tries to speak but can't from laughing.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I can't hear you.

Susie continues to tickle James.

JAMES

(through laughter)

I'm a good boy!

28

**EXT. SHACK. BROWN FAMILY HOME. DEEP WOODS. SOUTH CAROLINA. 28**

Cold. James sits on the porch with a stick. He continually  
beats the stick on the porch post forming a beat.

He suddenly stops as a man in a thick worn work coat and  
heavy boots, is approaching singing the blues to himself.

The man puts his pack down, ruffles the kid's hair,  
says nothing and walks inside.

SUSIE

Where you been? I been sittin' here  
for nine days with your child. You  
nine days late Joe. Where you been?

JOE

Working turpentine, baby.  
Chippin' trees.

James peers around the opened door and watches.

SUSIE

Where you been? Gamblin? You  
spent the money again?

JOE

No.

SUSIE

DON'T LIE TO ME JOE! Give me  
some money.

JOE BROWN

I ain't lyin'!

SUSIE

Give me some money!

Susie tries to put her hands in Joe's pocket. He shoves  
her hand to his side.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I'm here all alone here for four  
weeks. And we got nothing. Nothing!

JOE

Susie. Shut your sweet mouth  
get those panties off baby.

Joe grabs Susie and carries her into the cabin.

28A

**INT. CABIN. CONTINUOUS.**

28A

Joe and Susie kiss and begin tearing at each others  
clothes. Joe's been gone A LONG TIME.

As they lower to the bed, we see James watching through  
the opened door.

James soon turns his head and walks off into the woods.

28A

**EXT. FOREST. BARNWELL. DAY. LATER THAT DAY**

28A

James walks down a worn path deep in the woods singing a  
song to himself. He suddenly stops.

There, about ten feet up in the air, hanging in a tree is  
a black man. Aged about eighteen.

The child stares up at the lynched man who is dressed in nice  
clothes. Then to his feet within beautiful leather shoes.

Silence. He looks at him carefully.

James reaches his small hand up to touch the suspended  
foot of the man. Pulls on his laces. His shoe comes off.



James drops the shoe and removes the other.

CUT TO:

29 **OMITTED** 29

30 **INT. DARK CORRIDOR. DAY. TAMI SHOW 1964** 30

**BEN BART**, 50's, running along the corridor backstage. He reaches the door with JAMES BROWN written on it. Outside sits an enormous, middle aged black woman, knitting.

BEN BART

I need to speak to James.

GERTRUDE

He resting, Pop.

BEN BART

Gertrude, it's important.

GERTRUDE

He resting. Nobody allowed in.

Ben offers Gertrude some money. It's a twenty. She takes it.

Gertrude kisses Bart on the cheek. She opens the door.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Mr. Brown will see you now, Mr.  
Bart.

We go inside with Ben. Sitting slumped, back to us, on a burnished throne in front of a lit mirror, James Brown.

HENRY STALLINGS attends to the towering bouffant on James' head. Bobby Byrd sits in a chair next to James going over a play list.

James stares at Ben in the mirror.

JAMES

Gertrude!

Gertrude walks in.

GERTRUDE

Yes, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

I said I didn't want to  
be disturbed.

(holds out his hand)

That'll be twenty dollars.

Gertrude walks over and hands James the same twenty spot  
Ben gave her. Ben winks at Gertrude as she exits.

BEN BART

James, I just spoke to the  
producers. They've requested the  
Rolling Stones close the show.

James looks confused.

JAMES

Huh?

BEN BART

Rolling Stones, James. You'll go  
on right before them. It'll be  
you, then the Rolling Stones top  
of the bill.

JAMES

The Rolling Stones, huh?

James to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Then why we here, Bobby?

BOBBY

We here to play, James.

BEN BART

You're here because they want you  
here, James. You're James Brown! I  
want you here. Because this isn't  
the chitlin' circuit man. We're  
done with that shit. This is an  
audience full of white faces and  
you're gonna make them love you.  
You're just not closing the show.

His eyes focus.

BEN BART (CONT'D)

James. Now don't start. Let it go.

BOBBY

This don't matter, James.

**THE DOOR FLIES OPEN. JAMES BROWN STRUTS DOWN THE CORRIDOR AS BEN BART FOLLOWS.**

JAMES

The Rolling Stones ain't even had  
a hit record here.

They pass several dressing rooms along the way.

JAMES (CONT'D)

They ain't even ever played in  
America. Have they?

James passes a dressing room where a group is rehearsing.

BEN BART

They're just kids. In a year  
from now we won't even know who  
they are. It's business, James.

JAMES

And it's my business to hear  
what they got to say about this.

He passes another dressing room with a group of  
guys harmonizing.

James stops, glances at the VERY WHITE CALIFORNIA GROUP  
and then to Ben.

BEN BART

James, don't...

James is off again. He rounds the corner walks straight up  
to the Stones dressing room. On the door it says THE  
ROLLING STONES.

A guy on the door stands but knows he can't stop James Brown  
who walks straight in. Ben stops at the door and watches.

JAMES BROWN

Fellas, how ya doin'. Mr.  
Jagger. Mr. Richard. Hear you  
boys are closing the show. Did  
you know that?

MICK JAGGER

Uh..That's what they're saying.  
Yeah. They just told us.

Mick looks over to Keith and the rest of the Rolling Stones.

JAMES BROWN Uh-  
hmm. Well, I was told I'm  
closing the show. That's why I  
flew out here.

Mick leads James to a couch. They sit.

MICK JAGGER  
Listen man. We're filming a movie  
here today. This isn't live.

JAMES  
I know that.

MICK JAGGER  
What I mean is, the order in which  
we play makes no difference.  
They're going to edit and arrange  
the show any way they want later.

James raises and shakes Mick's hands. James shakes a  
couple of the other guys hands.

JAMES BROWN  
Y'all have a great show, fellas.

We march out with James. He turns to Ben.

JAMES  
I'll be on stage in five. They  
better be ready. And the white  
people.

BEN BART  
Yes Sir, Mr. Brown.

JAMES struts to the side of the stage. On a  
television backstage we see a live feed of:

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: THE SUPREMES FINISHING THEIR PERFORMANCE.

James waits in the wings. On the other side of the stage,  
the Rolling Stones watch. James flashes his trademark  
smile. They all wave back.

Archival Footage:

**JAN AND DEAN** approach the microphone and introduce  
the flames.

ZAP -a white follow spot burns into James as he stands head  
bowed. Check jacket, waistcoat, black pipes and mirror boots.

He throws his head back, steps forward and the groove starts. The screams rise to a deafening pitch-  
He's already on the move, in a snake hipped side slide, mash potatoes, up on one leg, level with the mike, spin and BAM!

JAMES

*You got your high-heel sneakers on-*

The teens in the audience lose it. Bobby Byrd and the Flames in immaculate tuxedos snap and step in time.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*You know you out of sight-*

**IN THE WINGS** - The Stones and Ben Bart watch a television being fed the show in real time.

A big smile crosses Ben's face.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION/INSERT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

INTERCUT FILMED STAGE AND ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF JAMES AND THE FLAMES ON TELEVISION.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say I...I...I...I love you *so!*

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: Teenagers shake their heads completely in the thrall of the minutely controlled and manipulated frustration and reward.

**BACK STAGE** - James stalks off past the Stones and Ben.

Keith Richards is slack jawed. Ben swallows a laugh. James continues on. We go with him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Welcome to America.

James looks right at us. Sweating. Focused. Wide awake.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION/INSERT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

The Rolling Stones begin their first song. TIME IS ON MY SIDE  
The crowd goes wild. A sea of white faces screaming for Mick.

James is watching the monitor. His face registers a realization. James stays on the Stone's as he talks to us.

CLOSE ON JAMES MOUTH IN PROFILE SURROUNDED BY BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN

JAMES (CONT'D)

The British Invasion make a man strong. Make him stand up. You ain't never been down how ya gonna get on up?

James turns to us with an even deeper intensity.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't never quit cause it get hard. You quit, you going backwards. You going backwards, you dead. So, I take it. But I take it and flip it. I go forward. And I live.

31 INT. SHACK. WOODS. DAY. 1941. JAMES 8 YRS

31

Fall day. Under the eaves, James climbs round the side of the house. He reaches the corner to see HIS MOTHER STANDING ON THE PORCH of the cabin, a suitcase packed. Her eye is swollen.

JOE BROWN

You leavin' you take your child, girl. You his momma. I don't need no hungry child.

Confused, James approaches. Looks up at his mother.

SUSIE

You keep him. You can feed him. I can't.

(She holds him, kisses him) Bye, baby. You be good. She leaves. Joe calls after her.

JOE BROWN

That's right. Why don't you go try to sell your ass on Twigg Street. That's right. Buy yourself a dress. Maybe I pay you a visit.

Alone with his son, Joe stares at him. The boy stares back.

CUT TO:

- 32      **INT/EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941**      32
- A MORNING IN THE CABIN. James watches his father silently pack a few meager belongings into a sack.
- JOE
- Be back in a week or so. Mind you don't makes no mess.
- James runs over to the glassless window to watch his father lead a mule, barrels on its back, away into the woods.
- CUT TO:
- 33      **INT. SHACK. NIGHT. 1941**      33
- Wind howls and blows the door open. Shivering, Young James pulls a chair across the door of the shack and makes a nest of blankets under the bed. He crawls in.
- 34      **TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY OF NIGHT**      34
- CUT TO:
- 35      **EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941**      35
- Morning. James tries to fetch water from a stream. He pulls a bucket via a rope. The bucket tips over and spills the water.
- CUT TO:
- 36      **EXT. PRODUCE STAND. 1941**      36
- James approaches a woman who's selling produce. Annoyed, she picks up a over-ripened tomato and throws it to James' feet. James picks up the tomato and walks away.
- CUT TO:
- 37      **EXT. WOODS. DILAPIDATED CABIN. MOMENTS LATER**      37
- James approaches a dilapidated cabin that has been flattened by a fallen tree. He raises his stick and begins tapping it on the cabins rusted tin roof.

Slowly he begins to work out a simple, familiar tune.  
He begins to stomp his feet, move his hips.

CUT TO:

38 **TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY HERE - LEAVES BEGIN TO CHANGE** 38

39 **INT. SHACK. DAY - 10 WEEKS LATER. 1941** 39

Joe's back. Fully bearded. He unpacks his sack onto the bed.  
In the doorway appears the boy. Half naked. Covered in mud.  
Its clearly been weeks rather than days he's been alone.

JOE  
(Chuckling)  
Look at you boy. You go clean  
yourself up 'fore you come in here.

CUT TO:

**Int. SHACK. KITCHEN TABLE.  
DAY. 1941**

James sits opposite his father at the table. Joe eats  
and hums and sings a blues tune, *No More My Lord*.

James beats his stick on the leg of the table perhaps to  
join in and impress his dad.

Joe acknowledges the beat that James is creating. For a  
brief moment, father and son are making music together.

Joe quits singing but James continues beating the stick  
on the table.

JOE BROWN  
Quit that. Driving me crazy.

LITTLE  
JAMES Keep singin'.  
(James taps the stick quieter.  
(Staring at his father.)  
"No more my Lord"

JOE BROWN  
I said stop!

Joe gets up. Takes the stick and snaps it in two.  
James stares hard at his father's face.

JOE BROWN(CONT'D)  
You gawkin' at me?



James stays on Joe. Joe quickly rises and yanks James out of his chair.

CUT TO:

41 INT./EXT. SHACK. DAY. 1941

41

From outside the shack, we hear the sounds of abuse.

JOE BROWN (O.C.)

Stop crying. I said stop crying.

Suddenly the shack door opens, and James runs out.

He sprints full pelt through the woods. He comes to a clearing. He slows, approaches us and suddenly stops, breathing heavily, he stops and looks straight at us. Levelly.

BLACKOUT. A THUMPING RHYTHM BEGINS.

Beneath his tears a smile emerges...

CUT TO:

42 INT. HOLLYWOOD SOUND STAGE - DAY - 1964 JAMES 31YRS

42

CLOSE ON: An argyle sweater. The intro to I GOT YOU (I FEEL GOOD) ramps up.

We widen to see James Brown singing.

JAMES

*I feel good! And I knew that  
I would now...*

Even wider to reveal **BOBBY BYRD** and the rest of the flames dancing in sound stage dressed to resemble a Ski Lodge.

FRANKIE AVALON and THIRTY VERY WHITE EXTRAS dance around James and the flames. Everyone is in argyle and bright colors.

To the side, FILM CREW MEMBERS AND A DIRECTOR do their best to keep up with the rhythm. James is killing it. His legendary moves in full force.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*I feel nice. Like sugar and spice.*

**SLOW MOTION PHOTOGRAPHY**

Music stops. (Tom Newman theme here) James watches the cast, crew and Flames doing their thing for camera.

James turns to us and speaks.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Take it and flip it.

END SLOW MOTION. END TOM NEWMAN THEME.

James removes his sweater and begins dancing and singing again but now to a faster version of "I GOT YOU". He smiles at us, looks into our eyes. We push in tight.

We pull back to reveal James now singing this song in the future at The Olympia show. He's sporting a "natural". Beautiful girls dancing behind him.

Flash- We are back to "Ski Party". Now the boring extras are up on their feet. They dance with precision the way Mr. Brown would prefer. Just for us, James has transformed the "Ski Party" into something way cooler.

James' feet slide and move him back toward the door of the ski lodge set.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*I feel good and I knew that I  
would now. So good. So good. Cause  
I got you.*

James moves outside the door and does a split in the pile of fake snow.

We are now back to reality. James is again wearing the sweater. The extras are now seated and clapping in a corny fashion.

The stage bell rings. Over a loudspeaker-

VOICE

That was great James.

Frankie Avalon runs up to James. James remains in his split.

FRANKIE

Wow, James. You've got some groovy  
moves my friend.

JAMES

Thank you, Mr. Avalon. And please  
call me, Mr. Brown

As Frankie nods and walks away, James catches eyes with **BOBBY BYRD, 30**. Bobby stares quizzically at James as he remains on the floor in his split.

BOBBY

Get up, James.

JAMES

How many times have I done this split Bobby?

BOBBY

A thousand, maybe five thousand.

JAMES

Exactly, and now the first and only time I rip my pants has to be in front of all those white people.

Bobby cracks up.

BOBBY

In white boy sweater.

JAMES

My trumpet, bass, and drums are spread out all over this cold floor.

James begins to laugh.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Go get my towel!

BOBBY

You got it boss.

43 **OMITTED** 43

44 **INT. CAR. 1949 DAY. JAMES 16 YRS** 44

A **man's three piece suit** hangs in the rear of a sedan.

SMASH. An elbow shatters the back door glass. A hand comes inside and pulls the suit out of the car.

44AA **EXT. RURAL ROAD. MOMENTS LATER.** 44AA

A picturesque country road flanked by high, earthen embankments lined with trees.

James sudden bolts out of the trees with the stolen suit and runs down the embankment.

Just then a police car speeds down the road towards him. James drops the suit and runs to the opposite embankment.

As James tries to climb the embankment, the police car stops, two officers get out.

James can't get a footing on the steep embankment. We now see that James is wearing the lynched man's shoes.

CLOSE ON SHOES:

Digging deeper and deeper in the soil embankment. BLAM! A gun fires.

James stops climbing and turns to see two guns pointed at him. He slides back down the embankment and raises his hands.

CUT TO:

FLASH! James gets his mug shot. Front and side.

JAMES (O.S.)

*I'm seventeen...*

45

**EXT. RICHMOND COUNTY JAIL - THAT NIGHT**

45

CLOSE ON: James speaking through bars.

JAMES

Know what that means, Big Junior?  
Means they can try me in Superior  
Court. Means they can send my  
juvenile ass down for a man's  
term. 3 maybe 4 years.

Reveal a young man, **BIG JUNIOR, 25**, standing on the lawn by the jail house holding a lantern. He looking up to James on the second floor speaking out of the window.

BIG

For robbing a *suit*?

JAMES

You reach my daddy?

BIG

He's in the Army, James.

JAMES

I know he's in the Army. So  
you gotta go find him.

Big Junior looks to the ground and nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What'd Aunt Honey say?

BIG

Aunt Honey say she can't help  
you right now. Not this week.

JAMES

Go find my daddy, Big. Please!  
Okay?

Big Junior sighs, really uncomfortable.

BIG

Aunt Honey already talked to  
him, James. Your daddy say it's  
a bad time too.

James fills with panic.

JAMES

So, he knows I'm here?

Big looks all around, everywhere except at James.

BIG

He say ain't nothing he can do.  
Got money problems. Sorry.

He shrugs and walks away.

46

**INT. CELL. NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

46

James turns from the window. He goes to the sink of his  
tiny cell, heaving for breath. He looks at himself in the  
tiny cracked mirror.

JAMES

Don't cry Junior. Don't cry now.

James begins expertly tapping his sliding his feet on the  
floor. A more developed version of the tune he arranged in  
his head during the boxing match is heard. James stares at  
us in the mirror. He smiles.

WARDEN (O.S.)

*And you were thinking of this as  
a profession...*

47 INT. PAROLE REVIEW BOARD, ALTO REFORM SCHOOL. 1952. DAY 47

James, 19 years old, sits on a bare wooden chair. James' aunt, **HONEY, 40**, is in attendance. Next to her sit **two young black women** dressed very sexy.

WARDEN

So you want to be a singer?

JAMES

Oh no Sir. Truth is I ain't really into all that so much. Not no more.

Five white adults sit behind a long table, studying him.

WARDEN

But the other boys, they call you Music-box.

JAMES

It's just a old nickname is all. I'm looking for something stable. Steady. I want to be a Mechanic.

WARDEN

So first a singer and now a Mechanic?

JAMES

Yes Sir. There's a fella I know back in Augusta, he owns a garage, he said he could find me a job if-

WARDEN

You can't go back to Augusta. In the event of parole, the Court in Augusta ruled you not be allowed to set foot in Richmond County til the full term of your sentence.

James is silent. Aunt Honey locks eyes with the Warden and smiles.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Do you know anyone outside Augusta who could act as your parole sponsor? Any family? Associates? Is there anywhere else you could go?

Aunt Honey and the girls raise their skirts up there legs ever so slightly with subtle sexual gestures.

The Warden gives Aunt Honey and the girls a disapproving stare.

STAMP! A red stamp hammers down - REFUSED.

48      **INT. HALL. ALTO. DAY. JAMES 19 YRS**

48

A **BAND, The Starlighters** "entertains" the inmates. A tall black kid in a white tux, flanked by four other boys.

BOBBY BYRD

We the Gospel Starlighters, from  
right here in Toccoa. Three Four..

The vocal group rip into a juiced up **"Mary Don't You Weep"**. And its good. James watches intently. The music plays over...

James begins to sing along and dance. Two rows back, a huge, badass looking kid is staring. James turns and stares straight back.

The big kid walks up to James.

BIG KID

You eyeballin' me, Music-Box?

The big kid punches James in the gut. James struggles to his feet and punches the BIG KID and fights back fearlessly.

All hell breaks loose. Two rough factions break out and the melee spreads. James picks up a chair and throws it at the big kid. He ducks.

CUT TO:

49      **INT. INFIRMARY, ALTO. LATER THAT DAY**

49

Bobby sits in a chair outside the infirmary. He holds a cold press to his nose.

James, bruised and torn but apparently victorious is led by a warden into the infirmary to cheers from his friends. He's seated next to Bobby and cuffed to the chair.

JAMES

What happened to you?

BOBBY

Someone threw something.

JAMES

Gee, that's too bad.

They sit there. James shrugs.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Walk in the jungle sometimes  
you get bit by a snake.

BOBBY

(Deadpan)

I'll try an' remember that.

They sit there.

JAMES

Say. What's that song you done?

BOBBY

We only done half of it. "Mary  
Don't You Weep" is an old gospel,  
man. You ain't heard that before?  
Everybody be doin' it.

JAMES BROWN

I ain't heard nothing since my  
radio got busted. That's a cool  
song bro'. You sung it great.  
That sounded real sweet.

BOBBY BYRD

Crowd sure went crazy.  
(James smiles.  
Then:) You like music?

JAMES

Only thing keeps me sane in here.

BOBBY

How long you in for?

JAMES

Five to thirteen years.

Bobby moves his chair an inch or two away.

BOBBY

What did you do?

JAMES

Robbed a suit.

A nurse leads Bobby inside the exam room.



BOBBY

They give you five to  
thirteen for...

(Shakes his head)

That's time man.

James turns to the doorway and continues talking to Bobby  
as the nurse tends to his nose.

JAMES

Tell me about it.

BOBBY

You get parole?

JAMES

Board say I need a permanent  
family address and a job. But see  
I don't know no folks here.

BOBBY

Where yo' folks at?

JAMES

My Daddy's in the army. And  
my momma... well, she left.

BOBBY

Sorry to hear that.

They sit there.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Seriously. You think I sung  
it good?

James looks at Bobby. He moves his seat a bit closer to  
the door.

JAMES

You got that swing feel. Hittin'  
it late. Buh, dum, Bop. That's  
what a song need.

James rises up, pulling the chair with him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

See without that feel, song  
just sit there. Don't move. You  
gotta fill it with something.  
You know what I'm sayin'?

Suddenly James breathes in deep, and sings "Mary Don't You Weep". It's sweet, hard, deep, raw all at the same time. James holds the chair and begins to dance.

The nurse shuts the door. Bobby and James stay on each other through glass.

James' talent hits Bobby like a ten pound hammer between the eyes. A warden forces James to his chair. We hear one unforgettable line of the song before we...

50           **ESTABLISHING. TOCCOA STREET. THE BYRD HOUSE. 1952. DAY.**           50

BOBBY (O.S.)

*He can do Roy Brown and The  
Dominoes and Louis Jordan  
and and...*

51           **INT. BYRD HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY**           51

Bobby, panting, petitions his impassively busy mother.

BOBBY

-you should hear'm *holler* momma!  
You ain't heard nothing *LIKE IT*.  
He sings every day in chapel. He's  
a very, very religious boy Momma.  
He could sing in St. Stephens!

MRS. BYRD

Bobby. We got us enough mouths to  
feed an' enough butts to clothe.  
(Yelling out the door)  
Daryl! Sarah! Get down here!

BOBBY

He sings every day in chapel. He's  
a very, very religious boy Momma.  
He could sing in St. Stephens!  
Since Old Henry passed you been  
shy a baritone...he a showstopper.  
Momma? This is it. It's like a  
miracle. This is what *Jesus wants!*

He knows he's over-done it.

MRS. BYRD

Jesus speak to Bobby Byrd now.  
He tell you that himself?

BOBBY

Momma, he could be in there  
another ten year just 'cause he  
got no folks. He got no-one.

MRS. BYRD

Bobby. The answer is NO. Now, go  
on outta here and get cleaned up.

Crestfallen, he plays his final card.

BOBBY

What's that thing you always told  
me, since I was real small. About  
Mercy. What's that saying momma?  
That thing you always say?

She glares at her son.

52

**INT. BYRD HOUSE. DAY JAMES 19 YRS**

52

Dinner at the Byrds. Mom, Pop, and Grandpa, sister SARAH,  
ten year old brother DARYL, BOBBY.... and James. He's  
clearly uncomfortable.

James' eyes dart around the well-appointed dining room with  
its beautiful wallpaper and curtains hanging from a window.

James traces the lines of the curtain noticing its lace  
and perfect pleats.

MRS. BYRD

Like I always say.  
(Sighs)  
"Its a sin to stand in  
Mercy's way".

JAMES

Thank you, Mrs Byrd.

Grandpa stares hard and James for a moment. Then...

GRANDPA BYRD

So what you in the pokey for?

BOBBY

Grandpa-

GRANDPA

(to Bobby)  
You know how would have felt you  
bringing this boy over here?

BOBBY

Big momma married you and you  
were in the pokey before.

Bobby gets a look from his mom.

MRS. BYRD

Bobby Byrd!

GRANDPA BYRD

(to Bobby)

If I'm going to be forced to have a  
jailbird in my house I at least  
like to know what I'm dealing with.

BOBBY

Grandpa-

James looks to Bobby.

JAMES

No. He got a right to ask. I am a  
jailbird. I've done wrong and I  
gotta own up to that.

James turns to Bobby's grandfather.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I stole a man's three piece suit.  
You want to know me? I tell ya. My  
daddy is in the army. My momma  
left when I was five. I'm skinny  
but I'm strong. I can read a  
little bit and I like to sing.  
That's who's sittin' here.

James becomes emotional and sincere.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And I think God knew that when I  
took that suit that I might end  
up with you. I ain't never sat at  
a table with such a fine group of  
people in my life.

Sarah looks admiringly at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I used to wish I could put that suit back, but now I'm here with y'all. Fried chicken. Green beans. Corn bread. Those nice curtains.

Grandpa Byrd turns to the curtains.

JAMES (CONT'D)

A house smells good. I'm happy I stole that suit. And I thank you for having me here.

GRANDPA

Boy, pass them beans before you get your bullshit all over them.

MRS. BYRD

(Changing subject)

James is going to sing with us in church this Sunday Sarah.

SARAH BYRD

Really. Well maybe we could work up a little harmony together.

Sarah turns to James and gives a tiny wink. James stops chewing.

52A

**INT. BYRD HOUSE. NEXT MORNING.**

52A

Bobby Byrd sleeps in his bed. James sleeps in a cot that has been brought into Bobby's room.

Grandpa Byrd enters the room holding a suit. He approaches the sleeping James.

GRANDPA BYRD

Jailbird!

Startled, James and Bobby rise up from their pillows.

GRANDPA BYRD

(CONT'D) (to James)

This out to fit ya.

Grandpa Byrd throws the suit on top of James and exits. James smiles at his new suit.

53 INT. BYRD HOUSE. NEXT MORNING.

53

Bobby comes in with NAFLOYD and BABY ROY who are all dressed for church

BOBBY

There's coffee in the kitchen,  
Nafloyd. Make yourselves at home.

(Calls)

James!

Bobby vaults upstairs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

James. Come meet the band.

Opens a door. INSIDE James has Sarah pressed up against the wall. They are having vigorous sex. James' pants are around his ankles. Sarah's church dress is pushed up her body.

Sarah has her hand over James' mouth trying to keep him quiet.

Bobby throws it into reverse, shutting the door. Did he just see that? A full gamut of emotions cross his face.

Mrs. Byrd starts up the stairs.

MRS. BYRD

Sarah! I ain't tellin' you again.  
Get down here.

Bobby panics. He crosses and meets his mother at the top of the stairs.

BOBBY

She's coming, Momma. She's coming.

MRS. BYRD

Sarah!

BOBBY

Go fix Nafloyd and the boys some  
coffee. We got guests, Momma.

Mrs Byrd nods and heads down the stairs.

MRS. BYRD

Nafloyd?! Where you boys at?

54 INT. ST. STEPHENS CHURCH. DAY.

54

A congregation watches as BOBBY, NAFLOYD, BABY ROY, SARAH AND JAMES sing righteous gospel. "Steal Away To Jesus".

Above their heads a HOME-MADE SHEET-BANNER: "The Gospel Starlighters"

Bobby looks to Sarah and James with a searing gaze. Sarah innocent, James *really* giving it up.

James steps out front. His voice soars sweetly over the congregation. Bobby's gaze softens.

MRS. BYRD and GRANDPA watch on. Mrs. Byrd leans forward and catches Bobby's eye. Gives a small nod of approval. Bobby's smile is...more equivocal.

56 FLASHBACK: INT. SHACK. BARNWELL. DAY. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS 56

James is asleep in his bed. Alone. It's been a year after his momma left.

Suddenly, Joe approaches and throws a burlap sack at James.

JOE BROWN

Pack up. We leaving.

James wakes and sits up in bed. Joe is clean shaven and wears his nicest shirt and neck tie.

JOE BROWN (CONT'D)

Hurry up.

James waits a beat to make sure his father is gone.

James gets out of bed and crawls deep underneath. **He backs out holding the dead man's pair of shoes and places them in the burlap sack.**

57 EXT. AUNT HONEY'S HOUSE. LATER THAT DAY.

57

Joe and James walk down Twigg street. Joe pulls his donkey along with them.

JOE BROWN

You miss your momma, boy?

James nods.

JOE BROWN (CONT'D)

We gone fix that.

James flashes a hopeful smile.

58      **EXT. TWIGG STREET, THE TERRY. DAY. 1942    JAMES 9 YRS**      58

Red dirt street. Shacks. Joe and James walk around to the back of "AUNT HONEY'S" house. The donkey has been tied to Aunt Honey's fence.

**BACKYARD**

We find Aunt Honey sitting a chair. She holds a small dog in her arms.

**SEVEN PROSTITUTES** wash clothes in tubs and hang them on a line to dry.

Aunt Honey clearly runs the house. She rises from her chair. Clearly she takes no shit.

JOE

..S'much appreciated Honey. Sure is mighty kind..

AUNT HONEY

What the hell am I supposed to do with that donkey, Joe?

JOE BROWN

Thought you could sell it.

AUNT HONEY

I don't sell donkey, Joe. And Jumpin' in the Army ain't gone make this boy go away.

Joe looks away from Honey.

JOE

(to James)

Look after yourself Junior.

Aunt Honey and James watch Joe cross the street and disappear.

AUNT HONEY

Everybody gotta be somewhere. What's your name, sugar?

JAMES

Junior.

AUNT HONEY

Guess you Little Junior now.



Honey turns to a small two story building in the rear of the yard.

AUNT HONEY (CONT'D)

Big Junior!

**A huge 15 year old boy** comes out of the building and begins walking down the stairs. *This is the younger version of Big Junior who we met outside the jail.*

AUNT HONEY (TO JAMES) (CONT'D)

You show me you can bring it in  
you an me ain't got no problem.

(as Junior approaches)

Junior'll show y'how to do.

59 **EXT. THE TERRY. STREET. DAY.**

59

Big Junior leads James away from Aunt Honey's. Big Junior turns to James.

BIG

JUNIOR I do this...

(BJ touches his hat)

You say 'Pretty girls',  
unnerstand? So when they come, you  
be ready, alright? I'll say-  
Yessir, yessir, come on down the  
street-we got sweet whiskey, we  
got music-

(*touches his hat*)

JAMES

Pretty girls.

BIG JUNIOR

We got cards, we got dice, dancing-  
(*touches his hat again*)

JAMES

Pretty girls.

CUT TO:

60 **EXT. BUS STOP. THE TERRY. AUGUSTA. DAY. JAMES 9 YRS**

60

Soldiers disembark from a troop Bus. Big Junior and James stand on the platform playing and dancing in bare feet. The soldiers ignore James.

We again begin to hear "James' Theme" in James' head. He dances faster, sharper. The soldiers stop and take notice of his ever sharpening skill.

61 **INT. AUNT HONEY'S PARLOR. LATER THAT NIGHT.**

61

The Brothel is in full swing. Girls. Soldiers. Drunks. Hustlers. Music. Ten soldiers scramble over only five prostitutes.

James hands over money to Aunt Honey. She bundles him up and kisses him. He holds onto her tightly. She sets him down.

AUNT HONEY

You done good Little Junior.  
You the sweetest little boy in  
the world. Hear me?

James nods as two soldiers begin fighting over one of the prostitutes. Each pulling her in a different direction. Honey rises.

AUNT HONEY

(CONT'D) (to James)

Go on in the kitchen. Find you  
a scrap to eat.

Aunt Honey pulls out a knife that has been nuzzled inside her bra. James watches as she fixes the situation.

62 **INT. BARBERSHOP. THE NEXT DAY. JAMES 19 YRS 1952**

62

The band has just gotten their hair-cut like Louis Jordan (and James Brown).

Bobby Byrd looks at his hair in the mirror.

BOBBY

I don't know, James. This don't  
look too gospel.

JAMES

What you talkin' about? Your hair  
is rising up to the Lord right?  
Like a flame.

Nayfloyd looks deep into the mirror in front of him.

NAYFLOYD

The flames of hell. We're the  
Gospel Starlighters. We a gospel  
group. This is R & B hair.

JAMES

What you think "Caldonia" is,  
Nafloyd.

NAFLOYD

(Ruffled)

We just playin' around with  
"Caldonia" when we practicing.  
That don't make us R & B. We still  
Gospel.

63

**INT. BIG BILL'S RENDEZVOUS. TOCCOA, 1954. NIGHT.**

63

The place is packed. On stage the 22 year old Little Richard  
is all over the piano, singing the hell out of *Tutti Frutti*.

**AT THE BACK** -- Bobby and the band stand in shock and awe.

NAFLOYD

I swear he's gonna *break*  
that piano.

James is transfixed. Motionless. Soaking it up.

**ON STAGE** -- The song ends. The crowd explode.

LITTLE RICHARD

We'll be back in ten to flip  
you again! Whoooo! Yeah!

Bobby scans the crowd.

BOBBY BYRD

(Frustrated)

Look at these people James. Man!  
I'm ready. You know'm saying?  
When it gone be us up there?

James hasn't moved. He's still staring at the stage.

JAMES BROWN

Now.

BOBBY BYRD

What?

James turns to Bobby.

JAMES BROWN

There's a piano. And a stage.  
And right now.

(Looks at it)

Ain't no one on it.

NAFLOYD

What you talking about? We can't go up there.

JAMES BROWN

Why not? Like you said, Nafloyd, "We just playin' around with "Caldonia". So let's go play around.

Bobby nods, and James strides towards the stage and gets up. The others look at each other: *HOLY SHIT!* and scramble after him. James gestures to them to pick up instruments.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Ladies 'n Gentlemen. Hope you're enjoying the show.

Nafloyd speaks into his mic.

NAYFLOYD

We're the Star-

James quickly interrupts.

JAMES

We're the Famous Flames.

Nafloyd looks at Bobby.

NAFLOYDS

Flames?

BABY ROY

Famous?

James hollers. The Flames hit their queue, bang on, and they *TEAR INTO* Caldonia. James loosens with every bar. Unhooks the mic. Throws a move. As he hits the hook again the audience is drawn to his energy like a magnet.

**BACKSTAGE DOOR** - Leaning against a wall backstage, Little Richard looks up from his pocket mirror. Frowns.

LITTLE RICHARD

What is that?

**IN THE WINGS** - the club manager watches on unsure what to do.

**ON STAGE** - James and Bobby, hollering into the same mic are ripping the place up.

**IN THE WINGS** - Little Richard appears at his side, fuming.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

Get those bitches off my stage!

Power to the stage is cut off. The performance is over but the crowd go batshit. NAFLOYD, BABY ROY are shaking.

NAFLOYD

We the Flames.

BOBBY looks at JAMES. A new, knowing look. They bow as one, turn, and walk offstage, CLEAN PAST a furious Little Richard. James returns his glare with an even straighter one.

JAMES

BROWN (Deadpan)

Just keepin' it warm for ya.

He walks past.

LITTLE RICHARD

Hey. What's your name?

JAMES

The Famous Flames.

James looks back levelly.

LITTLE RICHARD

No. What's your name?

They look at each other. Neither blinks.

64

**EXT. MALT SHOP. NIGHT.**

64

2AM. James sits alone at a table off to the side of the order window.

Little Richard dressed as a chef comes out of the kitchen and drops two burgers in front of them. James and Richard, cigarette in a long holder, holds forth.

LITTLE RICHARD

I play a show in Lafayette last week twenty thirty girls pass clean out. Need oxygen. I'm killing 'em James. They should lock me away. I cut loose it's like a spaceship land. Did I say I got a record out? They drop it five times a day on WIBB. Five times a day.

(He looks at James)

And I'm flippin' burgers. You know why?

(MORE)

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

Cause WIBB antenna reach 60 mile.  
60 mile. This country is 5000  
miles top to toe and 7000 coast to  
coast. You catch the wind, get a  
hit, a real hit, every inch of  
that is yours.

JAMES BROWN

So how we catch the wind?

Richard smiles. Stops the waitress. All charm.

LITTLE RICHARD

Sugar, may I borrow your pencil?

He takes a napkin. Starts writing on it. All business.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

You got a hundred bucks?

JAMES BROWN

No.

LITTLE RICHARD

Rob a liquor store. You take a  
hundred bucks to WIBB in Macon. Ask  
for Big Sauk. Say Richard sent you.  
You make an acetate. Ten copies.  
You send them to these people.

He writes them down. James watches.

JAMES BROWN

It's that easy why don' you do it?

LITTLE RICHARD

I already did. Baby, this is the  
last time you're gone see my  
beautiful ass 'cep on TV. Six  
months the whole world gone know  
me. I gone be bigger than  
Cleopatra. It's written in the  
stars James. Yes Sir. I'm gone  
have the world on a string.

(Then)

And that's when the trouble start.

JAMES BROWN

And why that.

He fixes James. The air turns cold.

LITTLE RICHARD

That when the Devil come. And he  
ain't gonna be red with no fiery  
tail. He gone be white. In a fancy  
suit. And he gone look you in the  
eye and he gonna ask what you  
want. And you best not shake, nor  
tremble. You best not blink one  
eye.

Swats a fly on the table. James doesn't blink.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

You gone be ready for him James?  
You got it inside?

JAMES BROWN

You tell me Richard. You tell  
me what you see.

James stares at Richard, who stares the same stare back.

LITTLE RICHARD

What happen to you?

He looks real hard.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)

I know what happened to me. What  
happen to you?

James looks away.

65 **OMITTED** 65

66 **OMITTED** 66

67 **INT. UPSTAIRS AT TWIGG STREET. DAWN. 1942 JAMES 9 YRS** 67

James lies awake in a bed with four or five other sleeping  
bodies. He looks out of the window. Dawn is breaking  
through a cracked pane.

Way off in the distance he hears music and singing. He  
gets out of bed.

He passes a room, **TWO SOLDIERS** wait their turn with one  
of Aunt Honey's PROSTITUTES.

James reaches the front of the house. He looks to Honey,  
out cold in a chair. A needle protrudes from her harm.

He walks out of the house passing several people asleep in the yard.

68      **EXT. CHURCH/ DIRT ROAD. DAY**      68

Early morning. James continue his walk towards the music.

69      **INT. UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE. DAY**      69

A evangelical congregation lit up by the spirit.

SWEET DADDY GRACE: a suavely coiffed but ferocious southern firebrand preacher wearing a suit made of dollar bills screams and berates the congregation into a frenzy.

DADDY GRACE

Do you love him?!

People are having fits on the floor, beating themselves. Shrieking and weeping hallelujah.

DADDY GRACE (CONT'D)

(even higher pitched)

Say you love him!

Daddy raises his voice even louder ending in a shrilling falsetto.

DADDY GRACE (CONT'D)

Say it louder for Jesus! Say it louder!

Daddy Grace falls to the floor and is attended by alter boys who drape a cape around his shoulders which he flings aside.

James looks around the room at the people. Then at the preacher.

70      **EXT. TWIGG STREET BUS STOP. NIGHT. 1942**      70

James stands silhouetted against the high beams of the approaching troop Bus. James begins to dance to the theme in his head. He's dancing differently now. Mimicking the moves of Sweet Daddy Grace. James does a spilt in the beams of light.



- 71 **OMITTED** 71
- 71A **INT. BYRD HOUSE.** 71A  
Mr. and Mrs. Byrd listen to *Please Please Please* on the radio. They aren't pleased.
- 71B **INT. AUNT HONEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT** 71B  
Aunt Honey has just injected herself with Morphine. She opens a drawer and places a needle and vial inside.  
She crosses to her bed and lays down. *Please Please Please* plays on a radio. Aunt Honey sings along and closes her eyes.
- 71C **INT. CAR - NIGHT** 71C  
RALPH BASS drives and hears *Please Please Please*. A smile crosses his face.
- 71D **EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT. 1954** 71D  
Establishing of exterior boarding house with the crappy station wagon parked out front.
- 72-73 **OMITTED** 72-73
- 74 **INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT.** 74  
All the flames asleep laying across as single bed in one motel room.
- CUT TO:
- 75 **INT. BOARDING HOUSE. NIGHT.** 75  
James and Bobby sleep next to each other. James whispers to Bobby:
- JAMES  
Bobby. I can't make practice Thursday. I gotta get married.

BOBBY

(Whispers)

What are you talkin' about? Who you marryin'?

JAMES

That chick I met after the Stone Mountain Show. Velma.

A silence falls.

BOBBY

What about my sister?

James flashes a devilish smile.

JAMES

Oh, I'll still harmonize with Sarah from time to time.

BOBBY

I ain't playin', James. How you gone do all this?

JAMES

Do all what?

BOBBY

Practice. The road. Makin' records. Startin' a family.

JAMES

I ain't startin' nothin', Bobby. Except what we doin'.

James reaches under the bed and pulls out the acetate they just recorded.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That us. We in there Bobby.

James holds the record close and studies it with Bobby.

BOBBY

That's all the money we got. And some we don't.

JAMES

But, it is beautiful. All those little grooves. That's us. It's been written.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now, men gone lay with women.  
That's nature. But a woman ain't  
never gone stop a real man from  
what he's supposed to do. That's  
God. Husband? Daddy? That gives a  
man purpose. Man gotta have  
purpose. But purpose don't stop  
me neither, Bobby. Ain't nothin'  
gone stop us. Nothin'. And that's  
God too.

CUT TO:

76

**INT. KITCHENETTE. 1955. DAY. JAMES 22 YRS**

76

James Brown stares back at his infant son with the same  
wary look.

JAMES

You gone smile for me, Teddy Brown?  
He bounces him on his knee once.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Come on, boy.  
Twice. The kid smiles. James suddenly becomes moved.  
He leans over and kisses his son.

VELMA

We out of greens. You want me to  
go pick some up?  
Velma, a cute nineteen year old girl is fixing dinner.

JAMES

No baby.  
A car horn outside. He looks out the window.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Baby. I gotta go.

VELMA

But I got your supper.  
He hands her the baby, kisses her passionately. She melts.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Wake me up.  
James pretends to look shocked, covers Teddy's ears.

77 **EXT. JAMES AND VELMA'S KITCHENETTE**

77

James bounds off the porch towards the station wagon.  
Velma steps onto the porch with the baby. She suddenly looks very young.  
James turns to his family and pats his hand over his heart.

JAMES  
(shouts out)  
I got you right in here,  
Teddy Brown.

Velma raises Teddy's hand and waves it at James.  
James begins to serenade "Lost Someone" to his family...

78 **EXT. CRAPPY STATION WAGON. RURAL ROAD - SUNSET. 1955**

78

CLOSE ON:

James continues to sing. Only now he's humming as if working out a new way into "Lost Someone".  
We widen to see The Flames, Baby Roy, Nafloyd, Bobby and James pushing an old crappy Chevy station wagon down the road. Nafloyd has the easy job of keeping the steering wheel straight.  
Nafloyd is clearly annoyed by James' humming.

JAMES BROWN  
Nafloyd, you know in "Let's Make It" when it goes (he hums). If you go up there and hold it, like. (hums). It's gone be sweet. Make it like you got a harmonica stuck in your throat.

Nafloyd looks back at Bobby Byrd.

NAFLOYD SCOTT  
You know what? Why don't you sing it, James?

JAMES BROWN  
What? I can't sing it. It's your song man.

NAFLOYD SCOTT  
But I ain't singing it right James. I just ain't.  
(MORE)

NAFLOYD SCOTT (CONT'D)

I ain't got a harmonica in my throat. But you do. We all know you do.

James continues with his humming. Nafloyd stops pushing and walks alongside with a finger on the wheel.

NAFLOYD SCOTT (CONT'D)

You know how it be done. You got it all worked out. Don't you?

BOBBY BYRD

James ain't saying that 'floyd. He's just hearing something. Get back to pushing the car.

NAYFLOYD

Let's all take a break for a minute.

Everyone stops pushing. Bobby turns to Nafloyd. Fuming.

BOBBY BYRD

What I say in Peterstown? Huh?

NAFLOYD SCOTT

I know what you said.

BOBBY BYRD

What I say?

NAFLOYD SCOTT

You said 'Fill her up Floyd.

BABY ROY

That's right. That's what he said.

NAFLOYD SCOTT

I know you he said fill her up, Baby Roy! Problem is we don't got the dough to fill it.

(to Bobby)

We don't got the dough because Bobby here let James spend all our money on some fake record which is right now sittin' in trash cans outside King, outside RCA, outside Chess.

(to James)

You took all our money, James. Where my money at?

They are about to throw down.

BABY ROY

Cool it Floyd!

NAFLOYD SCOTT

Where my money, James?!

JAMES

I'm taking you to the  
money, Nafloyd.

(James tap his  
head) Right now.

This lands hard on Bobby's ears. He smiles

BOBBY BYRD

So, push the Wagon, Nafloyd.

Nafloyd resumes pushing the wagon.

79

**INT. PEACHES DINER. 1955. EARLY MORNING.**

79

James stands in the rear of an African American diner talking on a pay phone. He's a sweaty mess having walked through the night.

His face drops. It registers sudden concern.

JAMES

Are you sure, Baby?

80

**INT. PEACHES DINER. MOMENTS LATER**

80

James joins Bobby at a booth of the diner. Bobby is also a sweaty mess.

BOBBY

The Tuxedo Room already cancelled  
tonight's show. Said if we  
couldn't show up last night then  
why we gonna show up tonight.

James shrugs.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Now we got twenty four hours to get  
to Prestonville. Hundred and forty  
miles West. We got no gas. No  
bread. No show. I miss anything?

JAMES

Velma's pregnant again.

Bobby looks at him. Deadpan.

BOBBY

Congratulations.

James nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

So now, we gotta make us a  
business decision.

He reaches in his pocket. Puts a few coins on the table.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Thirty cents. The question is, do  
I call the Two Spot, find out we  
got any messages. Or do I get me a  
coffee. Or do I skip the coffee,  
and get me a donut.

James considers this. Reaches in his pocket. Puts some  
coins on the table.

JAMES

Knock yourself out.

A black waitress comes over. Bobby acts as if he's a  
high roller. Living the life. Perusing the menu.

BOBBY

Hey honey. Can I get me a coffee...

Looks at James. Now for the ultimate luxury.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

..and...let's see...a donut?

WAITRESS

You boys from outta town?

JAMES

We're Musicians. We the Famous  
Flames.

WAITRESS

Flames?

(noting their disheveled  
look) More like a flicker.

James reaches over and grabs the waitress' hand.

JAMES

All we need is a spark, baby. So  
we can turn the lamp down low till  
this sun rise up on us in the  
morning.

The waitress pulls her hand back.

WAITRESS

Y'all's broke ass is splittin'  
that donut, ain't you?

Bobby starts to laugh.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

I'll bring it with a knife.

James winks before the waitress walks away.

BOBBY

I gone call the Two Spot.

James expression instantly changes.

JAMES

Oh no.

BOBBY

What?

Over at the door, A white guy. Obviously a cop. He waves  
our waitress over.

WHITE GUY

Excuse me ma'am, I just came from  
a place called the Tuxedo Room.  
I'm looking for the boys who were  
supposed to be playing there  
tonight?

JAMES

(whispering)

I ain't supposed to leave Bibb  
County without telling my  
parole officer.

BOBBY

Shit James! What we do?

Bobby looks around and James has disappeared under the  
table. Bobby drops like a stone under the table as well.

Bobby peers around the booth for a peek.



BOBBY (CONT'D)

He's coming this way. Oh shit.

JAMES

I can't go back to prison Bobby.

The waitress sits the man down at a nearby table.

WHITE GUY

I've been driving across over two states looking for these boys. They have to be here in Macon. Tell ya what, I'll make it worth your while if you can tell me where they are.

The man hands the waitress ten bucks and a business card. The woman shrugs as she reads the card.

WAITRESS

King Records? What did they do?

WHITE GUY

Everything right.

Bobby and James look at each other.

JAMES BROWN

(pole-axed)

King records?

Bobby crawls out from under the table suddenly all business.

BOBBY

Evening, Sir. I'm Bobby Byrd this is my associate James Brown.

James crawls out and stands before **RALPH BASS**.

JAMES

Hi.

BOBBY

I understand you're looking for the Famous Flames.

**LATER AT THE DINER** - Bobby and James sit with Ralph Bass. The breakfast crowd has cleared out.

RALPH BASS

I'm Ralph Bass from Federal records in Cincinnati. An imprint of King Records. I heard your acetate. I want you to come to Cincinnati. I want you to make a record for King.

Bobby looks back at him. Nods.

BOBBY

King records. As in King Records.  
The King records.

The waitress arrives with a donut and a plate of steak and eggs. She places the steak and eggs in front of James and winks.

RALPH BASS

You sure put a lot into that cut. The main vocal. You got some soul right there.

BOBBY

Uh.. That's not me. That's uh.  
That's James.

RALPH BASS

That you singing?

James looks BACK TO US.

JAMES

Yeah. That's me.

81      **EXT. FEDERAL/KING RECORDS, CINCINNATI. DAY. 1956**      81

James stands alone looking up at the towering building.

CUT TO:

82      **INT. RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. JAMES 23**      82

JAMES BROWN

*Please, Please, Please.....!*

They put everything they've got into "*Please, Please, Please*".

James leans into a chrome studio mic and sings: Please

...

please.....please.....He leans out and the Flames lean in to the same mic. "Please please don't go"..

IN THE BOOTH --

Gene Redd mans the desk. Ralph stands nervously while SYD NATHAN, the impressively fat 60-year-old owner of King sits in jamjar spectacles and Bakelite Headphones, listening.

JAMES

Wait...wait a second here-  
Raggedly they all come to a halt. Nafloyd seems annoyed.

NAFLOYD

What we stop for? That was cookin'.  
Everyone looks pissed at James who seems agitated.  
Byrd's nervous they're wasting time.

BOBBY

It's OK sir we OK. We can  
just start right at the top.

JAMES

It ain't right. It's too slow. We  
gotta pick up the pace fellas.  
James begins to pace. Bobby grows concerned.

BOBBY

What are you doing, James? These  
men been doing this for a long  
time. We need to listen to them.

JAMES

I need to come in early..push it.  
Drive it. Early. Before the beat.  
Then speed it up, man.  
Ralph Bass speaks to James from the booth.

RALPH

James, this is a ballad. The  
pace we've set is perfect.

JAMES

I know it's a ballad, Mr. Bass. But  
a ballad is supposed to get her in  
the mood, not put her to sleep.  
The Flames all look at Bobby who looks at the impatient  
faces waiting on the other side of the glass.

BOBBY

Let's just get it done OK?

JAMES

But it ain't right.  
THEY LAUNCH INTO PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE. JAMES NAILS HIS  
LEAD but the pace remains the same.

**IN THE RECORDING BOOTH**

Syd Nathan, takes off his headphones, and turns to Ralph, pissed as hell.

SYD NATHAN (Takes  
off cans. Yells)  
What the hell is this Ralph?!  
Where's the rest of the song?

RALPH BASS

Syd-

SYD NATHAN  
He just keeps hollering that one  
word over and over. "Please".  
"Please" what, Ralph?! Please jerk  
my dick? What the hell does he  
want? If he doesn't tell me,  
you're fired.

**IN THE STUDIO**

Bobby and Nafloyd can see something is wrong. James oblivious still singing, lost in the moment.

**IN THE BOOTH**

RALPH  
Listen, Mr. Nathan. This song-

SYD NATHAN  
I don't hear a song Ralph. A song  
has verses. A snappy chorus. It's  
not just some unfortunate nigger  
pleading. Who needs that? Give me  
the fucking song Ralph. The song.

RALPH  
*It's not about the song.*

Nathan stops. This is sacrilege.

SYD NATHAN  
What?

RALPH  
*It's not the song.*

Nathan turns to and looks again. His eyes narrow UPON James Brown, his heart and soul pouring out onto the tape.

CUT TO:

82A

**INT. BIG BILLS RENDEZVOUS. 1954. NIGHT.**

82A

THE FAMOUS FLAMES are back on stage at Big Bills only now THEY OWN THE ROOM. A packed standing room only house is going wild for James and the flames.

Side doors to the club have been opened. People pour outside and dance.

James sings *PLEASE!* at a much faster pace than at King. Aunt Honey and her girls bump and grind to the music.

JAMES

Please! Please! Please.

James lowers to the floor and belts his heart out as the song concludes.

James walks off stage and just outside Big Bills. A bath towel is put over James' back and head to absorb his sweat.

James is breathing hard, completely exhausted. The crowd is not wanting the show to end. The band is vamps amid cheers.

CROWD

James Brown, James Brown, James Brown.

James slowly rises his head from under his towel and looks right at us. He begins to smile.

He then looks over to Bobby and nods. The band resumes *Please, Please, Please*.

Suddenly James throws the towel off of himself and runs to the stage. The cape act is born.

JAMES

Please! Please! Please!

James jumps onto the floor singing as if for his life. He soon disappears into a sea of women pulling at his clothes.

83

**INT. KING RECORD. MEETING ROOM. DAY JAMES 23**

83

James Brown sits on a couch next to Ralph Bass.

RALPH

James. I want you to meet somebody.

Ralph Bass gets up and opens the door. On the chairs outside the meeting room a friendly looking man looks up from a magazine.

RALPH (CONT'D)

James, this is Ben Bart. Ben is President of Universal Attractions. New York's biggest booking agency.

BART

That was a great show last week over in Jersey.

JAMES

Well thank you Sir, we worked real hard to-

BART

Not we James. Not the Famous Flames. You. James Brown.

James looks from one to the other.

RALPH

What Bart is saying James is-

JAMES

I know what Mr. Bart is saying. I heard him. Loud and clear.

He looks at them both.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I see where we goin'. Saw it this morning when your secretary called ask me to come here an hour early. Alone. I knew it six months ago. Hell, I knew it the day I was born.

James looks back. He doesn't blink. He looks to us.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There's some things I'm gonna want.

83A INT. KING RECORDS. CONFERENCE ROOM. LATER THAT MORNING. 83A

A receptionist shows the rest of the band in. The Flames join Ralph, Syd Nathan, Ben Bart, and James.

BEN BART

Come in Boys. Come in.

There's no chairs. They stand.

BEN BART (CONT'D)

Boys, I have something to show you.

He hands them each a record sleeve. They look down.

BOBBY

I don't understand. Is this  
some sort of mistake?

NAFLOYD

(Reads)

*His Famous Flames?*

The sleeve has clearly printed on it "James Brown and  
*his Famous Flames.*"

BABY ROY

Sir, this ain't right.

BEN BART

We agree. See I believe it should  
say simply James Brown. The fact is  
Gentlemen, James Brown doesn't need  
the Famous Flames. King records and  
Universal don't need the Famous  
Flames. But James has requested  
that the name remain in some form.  
Now if you want to stay, stay, but  
from now on you work for James  
Brown, on James Brown's records.  
Should you find this disagreeable  
in part or whole, you can go home.

NAFLOYD

(Stunned)

James?

James stares straight ahead. Nafloyd throws the record at  
the wall. Bobby stands there, stunned.

Slowly, James looks at Bobby and then crosses to him.

JAMES

Bobby. It's just a name. Ain't  
nothing different between us.  
This for all us not just me. It's  
gone be good.

Bobby stares back. Nafloyd steps up to James.

NAFLOYD

James Brown. I never liked you.  
Come on. Let's get outta here..

He turns and walks away with the band. Bobby rises and follows out the door.

PUSH IN

On James. Bart sits down opposite him.

BART

So. Do you know what you want James?

84 **EXT. WOODS. DILAPIDATED CABIN. 1941.**

84

**FLASHBACK** - JAMES, **aged eight**, outside the shack in Barnwell, beating his stick against the shack.

YOUNG JAMES

(Incredulous)

*I know exactly what I want.*

85 **INT. KING RECORDS. CINCINNATI. DAY. 1962 JAMES 29 YRS**

85

SYD NATHAN

Forget it. King doesn't make live albums. They're too expensive.

JAMES

I think a live album-

SYD NATHAN

James, your audience is Negro. Negroes don't buy albums. They don't have the resources. Especially not for a bunch a songs they already got.

James turns to Ben Bart.

BEN BART

James, Recording live is five, six times as expensive as the studio. And that's for some violin concerto at the Met. No one jumps up and shouts "Blow it fucker!" in the middle of *The Magic Flute*.

JAMES

But, Pop, you know my show.

James turns to Syd.



JAMES (CONT'D)

Mr. Nathan, you ain't ever  
even seen the show. My show.

SYD

Don't need to.

Syd rises and begins to dance. He attempts the  
"Mashed Potato".

JAMES

Mr. Nathan-

JAMES (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SYD

The "Mashed Potato".

JAMES

That ain't the "Mashed Potato".

SYD

Exactly.

SYD (CONT'D)

I can't do the "Mashed Potato".  
That's your job. That's the show.  
But what I can do is *the business*.

Syd goes back to his desk and sits.

SYD NATHAN

So *I* stick to what I know. You  
stick to what *you* know. And  
that's the showbusiness.

86

**INT. ELITE RESTAURANT. 1962. DAY.**

86

Ben Bart and James, in a booth. James silent, tense.

JAMES

Book the Apollo. I'm gonna spend  
my own money on this. Syd Nathan's  
wrong.

BEN BART

I'm not going to let you do that,  
Jimmy.

JAMES

Book it out next week for the whole week, go in, we drill it, we drill it, we drill it, then we drop it.

BEN BART

Forget it, Jimmy. It's too big of a risk. Let's order something to eat.

Ben signals for a waitress to come over. James grows intense.

JAMES

I don't understand risk?

James stiffens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I don't understand cos I'm just the "show"? Is that all I am to you, Pop? The show? The money?

BEN BART

Of course not, Jimmy.

JAMES

Sure it is. That's all me and my black brothers are to the "White Devil". We the show and you the money. And that's how the White Devil keeps it all.

BEN BART

I'm not the "White Devil". I'm trying to protect you. I'm doing my job.

James becomes intense. A waitress walks over.

JAMES

Pop, look me in the eye.

Ben stays on his menu.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Pop.

Ben looks up. The waitress scurries away.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm the show. But, if I'm spendin' my own money on the show, then I'm gone be the business too.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

And after we kill The Apollo, I'll kick over a few bucks to the white devil. Whatever I think he deserves. And If I'm payin' you, Pop, you gone show me how to do it.

Ben takes this in.

BEN BART

I'll call Nola Sound. They got these new three track stereo recorders from Ampex.

JAMES

And I want the best engineer in town. I don't care what it takes. I don't care what it cost. I want everyone in uniform, the ushers, front of house, the peanut peddlers.

BEN BART

We'll need the band in New York immediately.

JAMES

And I want 'em in Sapphire blue suits. Pop. Sapphire.

BEN BART

Sapphire Blue. Underwear too. How does that sound?

Pop smiles as does James.

87 **INT./EXT. CAR/ APOLLO THEATER. 1962. NIGHT.**

87

Ben Bart drives a sedan. James rides in the front seat.

JAMES

It's cold. It's cold. It's too cold man. It's too cold. Cold. Cold.

They round the corner.

JAMES (CONT'D)

C'mon. C'mon. C'mon. C'mon. C'mon.

SUDDENLY and for the first time, we hear the classic James grunt, guttural.

A THUMPING RHYTHM BEGINS. James, stock still, no longer looking out of the window. Head completely still.

Out of the window: a line of people. On and on. We round the corner. More people. Another corner. More.

The doors of the theatre open as we pass. People rush forward as THE CAR PULLS UP. James gets out outside by the stage entrance. Ben follows.

GERTRUDE

Evening, Mr. Brown. Cold out tonight.

JAMES

Gertrude. See if you can get some coffee for the folks in line.

James walks into the stage door entrance of the Apollo. Ben follows with a big smile. It's happening.

88

**INT. APOLLO THEATER. STAGE. NIGHT. 1962**

88

ONE BY ONE TWELVE PAIRS OF PATENT LEATHER SHOES HIT THE STAGE.

THE NEW JAMES BROWN REVUE file in with instrument cases like some ultra hip sect.

In the dimly lit back stage we see the motions of opening their cases and begin setting up their stations, A beautiful black girl pulls up her mini to reveal even more leg.

James enters looking amazing in a cobalt sharkskin. He approaches the all new band.

A member of the band, whose back is to us, peers out of the scarlet curtains towards the packed house.

JAMES

You ready Mr. Byrd?

Bobby Byrd turns from the curtains. *THE ONLY SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE STARLIGHTERS*. His profile lighted by a powerful spot.

BOBBY

BYRD (Ice cool)

Ready Mr. Brown.

Gertrude rushes to James with his jacket. He smooths his hair.

FATS V/O

Are you ready for *star time*? Thank you and thank you very kindly-

89

INT. APOLLO. STAGE. NIGHT.

89

Syd Nathan and Ben Bart stand in the wings. Syd shouts in Ben's ear.

SYD

We got the level on his main mic  
way up to drown out the crowd. You  
gotta get him to hold back a  
little in the first number!

CLOSE UP: Big two inch tape magnacorders turn on  
brushed aluminium spindles. Recording live.

Ben Bart looks over at James at the curtain edge. A  
man possessed.

BEN BART

I think its too late for that.  
You ain't got a breeze, Syd. You  
got a hurricane.

James looks at Bobby. Bobby nods. James nods back. The  
band vamp.

JAMES

Watch me.

The curtain opens. BANG! James Brown & the New Revue are  
in perfect timing **looking impeccable in their new sapphire  
blue suits**. The crowd goes wild with excitement.

Mr. Dynamite steps on stage-- and floats and dances across  
bare planks like they were polished ice. He reaches the mike.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know I feel alright.  
(Yeah!)  
You know I feel alright  
children. (Yeah!)  
I feel aaaaaaallllriiiiiight.

Les Buie whacks the guitar strings and the world ceases to  
spin. A rising 6/8 blues riff pulses up like adrenaline.

As he sings the song, a shock wave blasts out from the stage  
of the theatre on 125th street and into the Universe.

Bobby might as well be sitting on the moon. He never  
misses a beat.

CUT TO:

James Brown and the New Revue are tearing up their second number, "Think."

SYD NATHAN now sits in the audience surrounded by a SEA OF BLACK FACES. We gather that Syd has never really experienced "The Show". He smiles and nods to the beat.

Just then a female seated behind him shouts as the horns kick in.

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE

Blow it fuckers!!!

James stares into the darkness. He's already begun to sweat. The drums stop a six punch combination from the horns dead. He reaches for the mic without looking. Leans in and locks eyes with Syd.

JAMES

*Think...Think...Think...About  
your bad self...*

James drops to his knees. The crowd goes wild.

A few rows behind Syd, we find Susie Brown sitting in the audience. James' mother has come to the show.

90

**INT. APOLLO DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT.**

90

After. The cheers still ringing out. People packed into his dressing room. Champagne corks pop. Congratulations from all.

JAMES

Thank you. That's very kind of you.

Bobby, at the door. Can't get to him. Turns to Gertrude.

BOBBY

Gertrude. Get everybody out.

GERTRUDE

What?

ACROSS THE ROOM

JAMES

We gone celebrate tonight. And then tomorrow we gone Wilmington and do it to it all over again.

BOBBY

Mr. Brown. Excuse me. Mr.  
Brown. (Then)  
...James.

James stops. Turns to face Bobby's grave expression.  
Bobby whispers in James' ear.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

There's a woman here, Mr. Brown.  
She says she's your mother.

James stops dead. COMPLETELY STILL. We push in. He  
doesn't blink.

91

**FLASHBACK - EXT. STREET. NIGHT. 1942. JAMES 9 YRS**

91

Little Junior walks Twigg street at night. Passing dives  
and joints.

Suddenly he stops, across the street, he sees a woman  
coming out of a bar arm in arm with a **BLACK SOLDIER**.

He follows her up the street. She's weaving and laughing  
with the drunk soldier.

JAMES

Momma?

SUSIE and the soldier walk into a side yard where a party  
is in full swing.

James approaches her from behind.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Momma it's me. It's me.

She turns. Focuses blearily.

SOLDIER

You know this little nigger?

For a moment it looks as if there is a flicker of  
recognition. Then swivels her head to look at the  
soldier. She shakes her head.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Beat it.

YOUNG JAMES

But Momma!

The soldier picks up a rock a throws it.

SOLDIER

Get the fuck out of here.

92           **INT. AUNT HONEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 1942**

92

Aunt Honey and James lie in bed together. James has been crying.

AUNT HONEY

Don't cry, Little Junior. Don't cry. Now, child, I want you to listen to me. You gone be okay. You hear me? Little Junior, you were born dead. Did you know that?

James shakes his head.

AUNT HONEY (CONT'D)

When your great Aunt pulled you into this world you were dead. You had gone cold. She slapped your ass hard too but you never drew a breath. Your momma and daddy had to say goodbye to you. But then your Great Aunt breathed in you one last time. And then you turned warm and then you screamed. So loud we heard it all the way here in Augusta. You're special, boy. Cause you got the spirit in you. And that spirit told me you gone be a rich man, Little Junior. And Everybody gone know your name. Ain't nothin' can touch you. You hear me? Nothin'.

James nods.

92A           **INT. TOUR BUS. DAY. 1964**

92A

The band on the bus. Bobby Bennet frowns and turns to Bobby Byrd. A new girl, **YVONNE FAIR**, gets on.

DOWN THE BUS -- The others watch.

MACEO

Who's this?

BOBBY

BENNET (quietly)

James gone wear that seat out.

MACEO

Which seat. Her's or the bus?



Having overheard, Yvonne spends around.

YVONNE

I'm Yvonne! I'm a singer. Let me worry about my seat.

Bennet and Maceo snicker.

93 **EXT. STREET/FISH HOUSE. DAY. 1965**

93

James and Ben Bart walk up a street. They turn a corner to see a gleaming new Cadillac parked next to the Fish House. We see a DRIVER inside. The driver exits.

BART

Compliments of Universal Attractions.

JAMES

This for me? Looky this! We got us a chauffeur.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to the chauffeur)

Gimme the keys. What they payin' you?

James takes the keys and then pulls out a roll of bills and counts out six hundreds. He hands them to chauffeur.

JAMES (CONT'D)

This here's a month's pay, help you get yourself another job. I gone drive myself.

The chauffeur smiles, hands Bart his hat and walks off down the street.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't mention it.

(turns to Ben Bart)

That's six a month goin' somewhere else.

94 **EXT. FISH HOUSE - DAY**

94

James and Pop sit at a small dining table outside the Fish House.

JAMES

Pop, see there's something I  
been meaning to ask you.

BART

What's that Jimmy.

JAMES

I got a seventh grade education  
Pop, so you'll have to excuse me.  
I was looking over those figures  
you sent me, and something occur  
to me: we don't pay the promoter,  
the promoter pay us.

BART

Just standard Jimmy. Guarantee  
against fluctuating ticket  
sales. Lets plan a-

JAMES

-sure we planning, see I ask  
myself, what if we don't got  
fluctuating sales. What if you  
knocking the tar out of every show.

Ben Bart watches James with a new outlook on his partner  
and friend.

BART

Well let me explain the way it  
works. When you book a show.  
Take Chicago. Now our promoter  
in Chicago is-

BART (CONT'D)

Lenny J Frank. Lenny's the  
number one promoter in Chicago  
has been for twenty years.

JAMES

I don't doubt it.

BART

Now when Lenny pays us a flat  
rate, we can account. You know,  
number one, you're getting top  
rate and number two-

JAMES

What if we took the gate?  
(Bart stops JAMES looks over)  
What if we took it ourself.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

And still got the show promoted, but better.

BEN BART

Better than Lenny Franks?

JAMES

Lenny Franks a James Brown fan? How old he, sixty? Why's he gone try harder for James Brown than for Sam Cooke? Or Ray Charles. Or Tom Jones. See Pop. We go to the radio stations.

BART

Jimmy, I understand your frustration but you gotta realize you're entering a game where the rules are set out. If you were a ball player you can't walk in and change how many innings they're gonna play just because...

As Bart drones on, James loses interest and starts addressing us directly.

JAMES

You see my point right? OK. Listen up. We go to the radio station. We go to the young cats. The hungry cats. The late night cat.

95

**INT. RADIO STATION.**

95

James talks to us as he stands next to a DEEJAY, **ALAN LEEDS**, *The deejay doesn't hear James talking to us.*

JAMES

The twenty year old white deejay in Richmond Virginia who's getting paid nothing and is only doin' it because he loves music. We go to him we ask him if he want to be the sole James Brown promoter for the Richmond show. For a percentage. He gone say:

The deejay suddenly looks up to James.

YOUNG RICHMOND DEEJAY

Are you fucking kidding me? Do you know how much they pay me?

**JAMES WALKS PAST THROUGH THE STATION TALKING TO US.**

JAMES

Between nothing and fifty bucks  
a week. But he love my music.  
He digs James Brown. And he got  
a microphone and a turn-table  
and four hours airtime to kill.

YOUNG RICHMOND DEEJAY

Screw Payola.

**LATER - THE RADIO STATION.**

He spins it. MUSIC starts: "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag."

JAMES BEGINS TO GROOVE.

JAMES

And at the end he gone say..

95A      **ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE. VOICE-OVER OF DEEJAYS ANNOUNCING THE**      95A  
**UPCOMING SHOWS OVER.. "MAKE SURE YOU CATCH JAMES AT THE ARENA**  
**IN RICHMOND THIS TUESDAY!!! " ETC.**

96      **INT. FISH HOUSE. DAY.**      96  
BACK AT THE FISH HUT, JAMES IS TALKING TO US AS HE ORDERS A  
PLATE OF FISH.

JAMES

Now because he's twenty he's got  
strong legs. And he knows everyone.

97      **EXT. THE STREETS. 1965.**      97  
**THE VARIOUS DEEJAYS** -- riding around town on bikes, on  
skates, diving out of cars, pasting up posters everywhere.

JAMES (V.O.)

He know the guy in the barber shop  
knows the guy at the pool hall,  
the guy at the garage.

98           **INSIDE JAMES PAYS FOR A LARGE PLATE OF FISH.**

98

JAMES

(to us)

That way we get our record played  
outside Payola, we get our show  
promoted better, harder, cheaper,  
and we keep the gate.

99           **EXT. FISH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

99

James exits the fish house and sits down at a rickety  
card table with Bart.

JAMES

(to Bart)

And the best part is, you can  
put it all through the books.  
Item. Promoter.

(He turns to Bart)

What'd you think Pop?

BART

Its beautiful Jimmy. I can't do it.

Bart picks up a piece of fish and eats it.

JAMES

Why not?

BART

Universal Attractions promotes  
many acts. I can't piss off the 60  
or 70 promoters in this country to  
skim a little extra on the James  
Brown Show.

JAMES

It's not a little. If the show  
sells, and it's sellin', we  
talking thousands of dollars a  
night. Difference per year between  
2 and 3 million dollars.

BART

And I'm out of a job. Think  
you're forgetting I don't just  
work for James Brown.

JAMES

And there's my next point Pop.  
Why not?

(Bart stops)

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can do something for you, and  
you can do something for me, and  
it ain't buy me no Cadillac. Did  
you buy Wilson Pickett a Cadillac?  
Did you buy Jackie Wilson a  
Cadillac? You know which way this  
thing is going Pop. I got people  
around me who don't see it.

Bart looks at him for some time as a black 1965  
limousine pulls up to the fish house.

James looks straight back to us. Smiles. Ben Bart rises  
and grabs a piece of fish.

BEN BART

(to James)

I thank you for the fish. And I'm  
gonna need some benefits, boss.

Bart crosses to the limo and leaves.

BLACKOUT. SCREAMS. HORNS VAMPING.

100

**INT. THEATER. NIGHT. 1965 JAMES 32**

100

The whole band on stage looking sharp. Knocking the shit  
out of MAN'S WORLD. James falls to his knees

James turns to backup singer, **YVONNE** and winks. She  
winks back.

James scans the front row and sees a very beautiful  
black woman, **DEDE**, dancing in the audience.

James and Dede lock eyes. The attraction immediate.

Man's World continues over the next three scenes.

CUT TO:

101

**INT. SECURE ROOM**

101

Ben Bart counts bundles of cash. He shuts a case full  
of money. Hands it to 300lb MINDER. An ASSISTANT tries  
to handcuff it to his wrist. It won't close.

BART

Po-lice have the same problem.

Bart looks at the three hundred pound minder. Tacitly  
decides it's probably safe.

102 **EXT. STREET IN CINCINNATI. 1965. DAY.** 102

Two shiny cars pull up to the bank. The 300lb MINDER, and a couple of his fellas, head into the bank each carrying several suitcases full of money.

103 **INT. BANK. DAY.** 103

They form a queue as the good folk of Cincinnati stare agog. The carriers hand over BUNDLES AND BUNDLES OF CASH. BEHIND THE COUNTER The manager spots how many suitcases they have.

103A **INT. THEATER. NIGHT. LATER THAT SAME NIGHT.** 103A

James is concluding his show with *Please, Please, Please*. He is at the tail end of his cape routine. The cape is brilliant blue with rhinestones.

He glances at Dede one last time from under the cape.

104 **INT. BACKSTAGE. POST SHOW. NIGHT. 1965** 104

James walks down the corridor backstage. Stops. Sniffs. Opens an equipment room door. NEW BAND MEMBER is inside smoking reefer.

JAMES

Who you play Sax with son?

NEW BAND MEMBER

James Brown Orchestra, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

What's the rule?

NEW BAND MEMBER

No hopheads. No reefer heads.  
No junkies.

JAMES

Not on the bus. Not backstage. You a talented horn player, son. You gotta keep your game tight. Now you wanna smoke a little groove on your own time, that's yo' business. But we out here to work hard and we gone do just that you dig? Fifty.

Puts out his hand. NEW BAND MEMBER counts off bills and walks down the corridor.

James turns around to find a beautiful black woman staring back at him. She holds a notebook and pen.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hello pretty thing. You want an autograph?

She nods.

James approaches and tries to grab the notebook. She pulls it back from his grasp with a smile

JAMES (CONT'D)

You want to come with me? So I can sign it somewhere private?

James flashes that million dollar smile. They walk away together.

105

**INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. BEDROOM. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA.** 105

James walks into the bedroom of his home. Dede is sitting at the end of their bed looking beautiful in a sexy negligee.

JAMES

I called you yesterday, you ain't home.

DEDE

I was home all day.

JAMES

You were home all day. So why you didn't pick up the phone?

DEDE

I don't know. What time you call?

JAMES

I call you at one and quarter past one, then I call you at two. And I call again at three.

DEDE

You must've wanted to talk to me pretty bad.

JAMES

Where were you?



DEDE

Yesterday. I don't know..in  
the bath?

JAMES

For two hours?

DEDE

You want me to take shorter baths?  
You don't have a phone in the  
bathroom, James. What you gonna  
do? Fine me?

He looks at her levelly as he walks past and grabs a  
phone from the bedside table.

He yanks it out of the wall. Dede turns, James races  
towards her but passes and heads into the bathroom.

106

**INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

106

James walks in with the phone. James throws the phone at  
a bathroom mirror. It shatters.

**BACK IN THE BEDROOM**

Dede is still as stone. James looks to Dede and then  
begins to smile.

JAMES

I ain't gone fine you, baby. You  
fine enough already.

Dede smiles.

DEDE

Then get over here, Mr. Dynamite.

James approaches Dede and begins taking off his clothes.

JAMES

Got you a phone in the  
bathroom now.

James and Dede begin making love.

**MUSIC. MONEY WON'T CHANGE YOU. Over.**

107

EXT. CADILLAC. 1965. DAY.

107

James, Dede and Bobby are standing outside James' Cadillac. Dede has her hands over Bobby's eyes. Dede has a huge diamond ring on her finger.

DEDE

Keep your eyes closed Bobby.  
Keep 'em closed.

BOBBY BYRD

They're closed, Dede.

JAMES

You peekin' brother? OK. OK.  
(James stops the car.)  
You ready. You ready? OK. Open  
'em. (Bobby does. )  
Check it Bobby. Is that something?

Bobby opens his eyes and sees a Lear Jet stands on a runway. "**James Brown**" on the side.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That something Bobby? Is  
that *something*?

BOBBY

Yeah brother. That's something.

Velma pulls up in another car. It's full of James kids. Teddy plus four more. He picks them all up and hugs them. As he does, Bobby sheepishly greets Velma.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Hey Velma.

VELMA

Hey Bobby.

James and Dede come over. Bobby takes a step back.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Teddy got impetigo.

JAMES

Impetigo?

DEDE

It's a skin infection.

VELMA

All that mess round his mouth. That's impetigo. It's highly infectious.

Velma turns to Dede.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I'm just sayin' Mrs. Brown, I wouldn't go too near Teddy. Not unless you wanna catch impetigo.

DEDE

Thank you, Velma. I'll consider myself warned.

VELMA

Warned? Oh, that's a whole other conversation. Welcome to the family.

Dede and Velma smile at each other.

James looks at the two women then to Teddy. He pulls Teddy in close. James turns to his other kids.

JAMES

Listen up. Which one of you cats want to fly to Reno on daddy's airplane?

The kids all say "me!... me!" The kids, Bobby and Dede walk up the steps onto the plane as Velma gets in her car. James lingers.

JAMES

(CONT'D) (to Velma)

You need anything?

VELMA

I'll let you know. I'm putting a big list together right now.

Velma smiles and cranks her car.

108 **EXT. RENO PRIVATE AIRPORT. ESTABLISHING. DAY. 1965** 108

109 **INT. PRIVATE AIRPORT TERMINAL. LATER THAT DAY. JAMES** 109

James is giving a press conference to a group of journalists.

Bobby, Teddy and Dede stand next to James.

INTERVIEWER

Welcome to Reno, Mr. Brown. What exactly do you call your style of music?

JAMES BROWN

I call it James Brown music. What I mean is, it's so far ahead of it's time that they ain't got a name for it yet. Take another record, any record from your stack at home. I don't care if it's from Motown or Stax or whatever...and put it on your box. None of them are gonna sound like mine. Not even my own old records. Just like the title says, it's a "new bag". See the funk is in the bass. The bass never changes. It's a groove, lady. Soon as you hear that groove, I know I got you.

INTERVIEWER

And what exactly is the groove?

JAMES BROWN

The groove is something you feel. The groove is solid. Bam Bap. It don't move. It's like a heartbeat. It's inside you, driving everything. Hard. Flat. A groove.

INTERVIEWER

But how exactly do you define it?

JAMES

BROWN I just did.

(Then)

See Miss. See there's some things, they're just too big to fit in a magazine. But we all feel it. Even little Teddy here know it when he feel it.

James groans "Um booga chooca. Um". Teddy is lit up; thrilled. He sings.

TEDDY

"Um Booga Choooca"

JAMES BROWN

See. Right there. We all feel it together. And that's the groove. Understand?

INTERVIEWER

(Checks her questions)

So what's your favorite food?

James catches Dede's eye. She and James share a knowing look with Bobby. Bobby takes the mic as James walks away to a side room where Ben Bart is waiting.

CUT TO:

110

**INT. AIRPORT MEETING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

110

BART, James study at a map. BOBBY sits across the aisle.

BART

Then we got a day between Raleigh, Carolina and Columbia two days after.

JAMES

Day off?

BART

Sure. Regroup. Rest the horses.

JAMES

We ain't payin' the horses to rest 'em. Besides, we got a day off in two weeks in New Orleans. The boys can get their wives, girlfriends along, kick back. What's between Raleigh and Columbia? Spartanburg?

**BACK THE PRESS CONFERENCE:**

BOBBY BYRD

Well see, James started out in Augusta. Then his family moved to Toccoa. That's where we met.

JOURNALIST

And tell me about James' first band, the Famous Flames.

BOBBY BYRD

Well there was five of us to start with. Nafloyd Scott, Baby Roy Scott, Sylvester Keels..

JOURNALIST

And they left...

BOBBY BYRD

Yeah. They left.

James walks into the interview area.

JAMES

(interrupting)

Bobby? What's the name of the theater in Spartanburg...

BOBBY

Uh.. The Viceroy. The..

JAMES

The Regal!

BOBBY

Yeah. That's it. The Regal.

JAMES

(to Bart)

On Howard Street and main. Hold about 750 people. Guy named Bennett used to own it. Yeah, Spartanburg. Yeah, we'll play there and I can bring in my masseuse from Anderson.

James disappears again.

JAMES (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Call 'em up, Pop.

The journalists laugh.

JOURNALIST

Wow. He's got an amazing memory.

Bobby nods to himself.

BOBBY

Yeah. James remembers everything.

111 **EXT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. 1967. CHRISTMAS. 111**

On the lawn of James' and Dede's new home a Christmas spectacular is staged. The Brown's Colonial is smack dab in the middle of Augusta's most elite, white neighborhood.

Fake snow is being sprayed on the lawn by Teddy. Kids of all races play in the white stuff.

We widen to see a huge line of people waiting to meet James who is dressed as Santa Clause.

Dede is dressed as a sexy Mrs. Clause. Dede wears sexy fish net hose which rise up her legs, disappearing into a short red skirt. Dede holds an infant girl.

One by one, kids and their parents approach James. He hands each Kid a five dollar bill.

A little white boy approaches.

JAMES

Hey little man, you been good this year.

LITTLE BOY

Yes, Mister Brown.

James hands him a five spot. Dede hands the little boy a candy apple.

Another little white boy and his father approach. James as James speaks to the little boy.

JAMES

Merry Christmas, Little Man.

James then notices the boy's father checking out Dede.

The little boy moves on to Dede. She leans over and picks up an apple from a tray.

The boy's father takes full notice of Dede's ass. James takes full notice of the entire thing.

112 **INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA. LATER THAT DAY. 112**

James and Dede enter the Brown home, passing a huge life size portrait of James hanging in the foyer.

DEDE

Great crowd today, Baby.

James passes Dede without a word and heads to the back of the house.

Dede follows James through the living room and into the kitchen.

James disappears around a corner.

DEDE (CONT'D)

You want some dinner?

Dede follows James around the corner and disappears.

JAMES (O.C.)

You stand up in James Brown's yard dressed like that? So every man can see you?

Then suddenly, A **SMACK** is heard. Dede's Body falls back into frame and collapses on the kitchen floor.

A towel flies into frame and lands next to Dede.

JAMES (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Cover yourself up.

113 **INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. WALTON WAY. AUGUSTA. CONTINUOUS** 113

We are now with James in the room off the kitchen. Behind James we see Dede starting to get up off the floor.

The camera is on James' face. We get the sense that James wants to look at us and talk directly to us but he won't. Out of Shame, James leaves the room and goes to Dede's aid.

CUT TO:

114 **EXT. HOTEL POOL. NEW ORLEANS. 1967. DAY** 114

The long awaited day off. The James revue kicks back by the pool in the sunshine, wives, girls, and kids.

An idyllic scene. Kids playing with fathers. Kids towelled down by mothers.

115 **EXT. HOTEL POOL. CHECK IN STAND. CONTINUOUS** 115

A WHITE FEMALE TOURIST in swimming kit has been complaining to a HOTEL MANAGER. Her HUSBAND, tries to make peace.



HUSBAND

(regarding the manager)  
Honey, his hands are tied. The pool area has been reserved for a private function.

WIFE

We're good people and we've paid good money. We didn't come all the way to New Orleans to swim in a pool full of-

WIFE (CONT'D)

HUSBAND

Niggers.

Entertainers.

Just then a band member's kid does a cannonball in the pool.

**BACK AT THE POOL**

Bobby, poolside, messes about with the new singer, Vicki **ANDERSON**.

VICKI ANDERSON

You a bad man Bobby Byrd.

Suddenly he pulls her to him. They NEARLY share a kiss. But laugh instead.

Bobby turns his head to a hotel balcony. Vicki grabs Bobby's face and turns it back toward her.

VICKI ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Quit lookin' for James Brown and keep your eyes on me, Bobby Byrd.

She sexily rises and goes and sits on a lounge.

Bobby watches her all the way. She catches his eye. Looks at him, raises an eyebrow like "what you looking at?" He feigns innocence, turns, and smiles.

116 **EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - SAME TIME**

116

James discreetly watches from behind a blind on his balcony high above.

117 **EXT. HOTEL POOL. CONTINUOUS.**

117

Pee Wee, in jams, walks with a new band member, **FRED WESLEY**, who is still wearing a suit.

PEE WEE

Fella's this is Fred. I thought  
we'd show him how things work?

Pee Wee pulls out a cheap wig from his pocket and puts it on.

Everyone around the pool begins to laugh as Pee Wee begins  
demonstrating how things work to Wesley. Pee Wee is full  
on imitating James Brown

PEE WEE ELLIS

So when I do this..  
(Turns head, stamps foot)  
Means you give it some punch.  
See. When I dip like this.  
(Dips hip and slides)

BOBBY

Means less sharp. Bring it down.

Fred nods.

PEE WEE

ELLIS When I do this.  
(Juts chin back and forth)

MACEO

Mean I give it some heat.

PEE WEE ELLIS

Right. Now when I do this.  
(Stamps foot and moves  
elbow.) And you stab..

ALL

On the one.

PEE WEE ELLIS

See? And when I pop his head  
like this, it mean.

ALL

Take it to the bridge.

MACEO

What about when he do this..?

Maceo crunches his shoulder blades together.

PEE WEE ELLIS

I ain't ready to tell you that one  
yet. I'm in control Mr. Parker. Got  
it. Don't ask about that again.

Pee Wee flashes his hand at Maceo.

PEE WEE

That'll be ten thousand dollars.

The band loses their shit at this one. Laughs all around.

An hotel employee walks out with a note and hands it to Pee Wee. Pee Wee reads. Pee Wee removes the wig.

PEE WEE (CONT'D)

He's called a rehearsal.

BOBBY

When?

PEE WEE

Now. We gotta go get dressed.

MACEO

You're kidding. Tell me  
you kidding.

118 **EXT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY / POOL.**

118

Hiding behind a partition, James raises a cigarette to his mouth.

119 **INT. NEW ORLEANS HOTEL REHEARSAL ROOM. 1967 JAMES 34 YRS** 119

The band, all in their suits, with their instruments. All glaring. One more pissed off than the next. Vicki stands in the corner.

James is in the middle of an extended anecdote.

JAMES

See My great grandmother on my  
momma's side, she Asian. She  
got Asian blood. See Asians are  
a flexible race.  
You get with an Asian chick? That  
a whole other story. No spank but  
they got it baby they got it.  
Anyway what was I talkin 'bout?

MACEO

Your Chinese knees Mr. Brown.

JAMES

That's right. That it. I got  
these Chinese knees.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

That's how come I can dance the way  
I do. Anyway. One. Two. Three.  
Four. Hit it.

The band starts up. During the introduction to COLD SWEAT, MACEO comes in late on the Sax. Everything stops.

JAMES

(CONT'D) Stop. Maceo.

(Laughs)

What you doing man? You coming in  
maybe a little too late. What's the  
matter son. You lost your feeling?

MACEO

(Flatly)

No Sir. I ain't lost no feeling.

SILENCE. James tunes into the vibe for the first  
time. SOMETHING's wrong.

JAMES

(Innocently)

Something wrong, Maceo?

(SILENCE. Directly)

Is something wrong, Maceo?

BOBBY BYRD

James-

James rounds on Bobby.

JAMES

You got something to say Mr.

Byrd? (Silence. Smiling)

Because a man got something to say  
he should say it. You got  
something to say?

SILENCE. Vicki looks away. All at once James loses it.

JAMES

(CONT'D) (Shouting)

Well then you just HOLDING UP  
THE REHEARSAL Mr. Byrd.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't have people HOLDING UP THE  
REHEARSAL. If I can't do it right  
I ain't gone do it at all. We got  
to GET ON. GET AHEAD. Now you know  
the rule.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

You late, you off or you hold  
us up, it's *no good*, Mr. Byrd.  
Its gonna cost you 50 dollars.

Bobby's jaw tightens. Everyone holds their breath.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now are you ready Mr. Byrd. Are  
you ready Mr. Byrd?

Pause.

BOBBY BYRD

Yes, Mr. Brown.

James glances to Vicki and winks.

JAMES

Good. I ain't fattening frogs for  
snakes. From the top. One Two...

**COLD SWEAT resumes.** Bobby sings his backing part.

James stands in the middle of the floor. Its good but-

JAMES BROWN

Quit it.

(They all stop)

Clyde man. Lets get that POP! Dee..  
app..POP! Unnerstand? It drop  
before you reach the beat. Dig?

Jimmy Nolen looks worriedly at Pee Wee.

MACEO

(Whispers to Waymon)

Does he mean top of the bar?

PEE WEE

(To Maceo)

He means the down beat.

JAMES

It goin' wrong there Pee Wee,  
when it rise up.

MACEO

But Mr. Brown.

Maceo pauses and waits to be acknowledged by James.  
James turns and glares at Maceo.

MACEO (CONT'D)

We rehearsed it like you told us. We got it like you like it. Jimmy can't do that with the part he's playing. We can change the part if you want.

JAMES BROWN

(Suddenly angry)

Did I say change the part? Don't change the part. How many records you got?

James sarcastically responds to Maceo's silence.

JAMES

Thank you! I like the part he playin' now. I just want it in a different place.

Blank stares from the band. James walks over to Clyde's snare and points.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's this, Maceo.

MACEO.

It's a snare, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

A snare what?

MACEO.

Drum.

JAMES

Correct.

James moves over to Jimmy. Points to his guitar.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's this, Maceo?

MACEO

Guitar, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

No it's not.

James goes back to Clyde and points to Maceo's sax

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's that, Pee Wee?

PEE WEE.

A drum, Mr. Brown?

JAMES

Now you're getting it.

James crosses to Pinckney and points to Odum's guitar

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's that he's holding.

PEE WEE

A drum?

James points to the horn section.

JAMES

You Fellas. What are those shiny things you holding.

EVERYBODY IN THE ROOM

Drums.

JAMES

Now we all got our drums. Now when you're playing the drum it don't matter what key you're in, what bar your in or what planet you on. Dig?

MACEO

(With trepidation)

But Mr. Brown.

Maceo pauses and waits for JB to acknowledge him.

MACEO (CONT'D)

Clyde'll be in a different time to the rest of the band. That doesn't work musically.

They all know it.

JAMES BROWN

But does it sound good?

The band nods.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Does it feel good?

More nods.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Then it's musical. So play it like  
I say. From the top.

The groove of *COLD SWEAT* comes to life. The beat heavier, almost irregular but actually in the pocket, the horns and Bass clipped, drum-like, the off rhythm of Jimmy's guitar bringing the whole room together.

119A **EXT. POOL AREA BAR. SAME TIME.** 119A

Our racist couple has now bellied up to an outside bar. *Cold Sweat* leaks out into the bar area.

Unable to help themselves, the couple rises and begins to dance.

119B **BACK INSIDE THE REHEARSAL:** 119B

The band is really hitting it hard. Vicky, Bobby...everyone feelin' it.

JAMES BROWN

Mmmn! Huh! Now that a groove.

By God it is. James starts singing the cut.

120 **INT. HOTEL BAR. NIGHT. 1967** 120

The recording session is over. James has long since gone. Maceo and Bobby relax at the bar.

MACEO

Bobby, James Brown's my meal ticket. So I just shut my ears and chomp down his bullshit. But why you soak it up man? You his best friend. You know him *for time* brother. And he *treat* you like that. I was you I'd bust him in his damn mouth.

Bobby Byrd nods his head.

BOBBY BYRD

I hang in there cause I remember the day that I knew. Knew I was never gonna be in front.

He looks at Maceo with a calm, measured sense of reality.



BOBBY BYRD (CONT'D)

You work so hard at this one thing and then one day you realize it ain't supposed to be you. You can get mad. Try to fight it but if it's God's truth. It's God's truth. James is supposed to be in front. I saw it happen. And the man in front has to *BE the man in front*. It ain't always pretty but that's the man's responsibility if he wanna stay there. And you and me can't know what that is. We ain't supposed to. So, don't lie to yourself Maceo.

Every man in this band walks taller because he with James Brown. Every man in this band believe in himself a little more because he's with James Brown.

MACEO

You sure you just ain't too scared to be in the front?

BOBBY BYRD

No. But my ears a' open. Open your ears, Maceo. He's a genius. And he's takin' us with him.

CUT TO:

121

**INT. KING RECORDING STUDIO. DAY. 1968 JAMES 35 YRS**

121

Boiling studio. James drenched in sweat howls at the microphone.

JAMES

*Mother, she got to have. Say, you got to have a mother for me. Yeah, popcorn!*

The band sit right into the groove of **MOTHER POPCORN** and sweet thunder rolls onto another master tape. Everyone's eyes are glued to James standing in the centre: directing them with body movements and gestures, playing the whole band like a single instrument.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Quit it.

(They stop.)

We missing something.

(They look at each other. It was perfect.)

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Pee Wee, get over here by the microphone. And bring that horn box. That's where you keep the wig, right?

They all stop. Oh. Shit.

PEE WEE

Mr. Brown?

CUT TO:

Now Pee Wee stands at the Microphone, uncomfortable, with the wig on, singing the song.

James is in with the horns, who are all crying with laughter, enjoying the hell out of this rare moment of levity. James, deadpan, eggs him on. Pee Wee calls for a horn solo from him.

SUDDENLY there's a commotion in the mixing booth. James brings them to a stop.

JAMES

What is it? Why we stop Henry?

The engineers hands go to their faces. Shaking heads.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What? What is it?

Bobby enters the room.

BOBBY BYRD

It's King. They shot Dr. King.

121A **BLACKOUT: SFX: BURNING. SIRENS. GUNFIRE.**

121A

***TELEVISION FOOTAGE. Riots all over America. Police beating back groups of rioting youths.***

122 **INT. KING RECORDS - SYD NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT.**

122

James sits watching the carnage unfold. Ben Bart knocks and enters

BART

Jimmy, Mayor of Boston's office called. Wanted you to know they've cancelled tomorrow's show at the Garden. For reasons of public safety. He's worried about rioting.

James doesn't look away from the screen.

JAMES BROWN

Tell the Mayor, I sold 30 million records and ninety five percent of them are to the black community.

They listen to me. They won't riot

BART

We have virtual race war looming across the South, Jimmy. Politics, 101? Don't put 10,000 angry blacks together in one place in the middle of a city, and broadcast it live to the world.

JAMES

Get the Mayor on the phone.

CUT TO:

123     **INT. KING RECORDS. SYD NATHAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT.**     123

James is on the phone with the mayor

JAMES

Mr. Mayor, the way I see it, you already lost your next election. You lost it at 7:05 PM Memphis time.

CUT TO:

124     **INT. BOSTON MAYOR OFFICE - NIGHT.**     124

The mayor listens intently with the phone pressed to his ear.

JAMES

Now tomorrow night, you either got 10,000 angry folks in the Boston Garden, or you got 10,000 angry folks on your front lawn. Take your pick son. Which one you want?

125     **INT. BOSTON GARDENS. NIGHT. 1968 JAMES 35 YRS**     125

Tension in the air. Police on every exit. Dogs. On stage, **MAYOR WHITE** speaks to a restless audience.

MAYOR

All of us are here to night to listen to a great talent. James Brown. But we're also here to pay tribute to one of the greatest Americans, Dr. Martin Luther King. So, let us look at each other and pledge that whatever else any other community might do we in Boston will honour Dr. King in peace.

James steps forward.

JAMES

Brother before I get to this next thing I wanna say. He's a young man you dig. He's a young man so he's thinking together. The man is together. Give him another round of applause.

James watches the restless, shouting, crowd. He looks at the cameramen. The tension is unbearable. He lets it build.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hit it.

*A fast, rhythmic drum solo. Building. Faces in the crowd. The police. Tense promoters and politicians to the beating rhythms.*

The band whipcrack into **I GOT THE FEELING**. James pulsates. Spins. Pushes the stand away. Zip! It's back.

A kid at the front gets onto the stage and sprints for James only to be tackled by James' security. Another clambers up but is kicked back by a police officer. The audience react badly.

Another kid gets on stage and cops harshly push him to the floor and throw him back into the audience. Police come out onto the right side of the stage and shine torches down into the audience. They shove people back down.

A kid in a white jacket leaps on stage right in front of James. For a moment everyone stops. A white cop appears from nowhere and viciously bodychecks the kid back into the front row in full view of the cameras.

The mayor stands in the wings flanked by policemen. Dede stands behind them watching nervously.

MAYOR

Oh no.

On stage James stops the band.

JAMES

Wait a minute. Step off. Move off.  
I'll be a'ight here. I be fine.

James waves the police off the stage on either side to cheers and whistles from the audience.

Suddenly a ten year old kid appears next to James from out of the audience. He seems amazed to find himself there.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Do you wanna dance son? You dance.

No longer held back by police more kids invade the stage. James respects them all, shaking hands and looking at them eye to eye. Kids throng around him on stage. He's losing control.

JAMES (CONT'D)

C'mon. C'mon now. Y'all go down. Go back down. Don't nobody else come up. Wait a minute. Wait. Ladies and gentleman. This is no way. This is. We are black. We are black.

(Cheers.)

Wait a minute go back. Can't y'all go back down and lets do the show together. We're black don't make us all look bad. Let me finish the show. Step down there. Be a gentleman. Lets represent our own selves. Lets represent our own selves.

One by one they step back down into the crowd.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now I ask the police to step back because I figure I could get some respect from my own people. Now we together ain't we.

(Cheers! Screams!)

Hit that thing man.

The band strike back up and James kicks back into "**I Can't Stand Myself**" The stage clear. The crowd calmed. The panic over.

MAYOR

(to a policeman)  
Holy shit. He did it.

DEDE  
 (sotto)  
 Of course he did.

Dede smiles proudly.

**I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing kicks in over  
 intercut Archival footage of Newscasters discussing the  
 last minute decision for the concert to go ahead.**

126

**INT. ARCHIVAL NEWS REPORT.**

126

HEADLINE, under a picture of James: *RACIAL PEACE RESTORED  
 IN CAPITOL AFTER RIOTING.*

ARCHIVAL NEWS REPORT  
 City officials in Washington DC  
 have praised James Brown. Order  
 has returned to the city hit by  
 rioting largely because of radio  
 and television appeals from the  
 soul singer over the weekend.

**OVER JAMES' PERFORMANCE AT THE GARDEN AS YOUNG BLACK  
 GUYS DANCE.**

JAMES (V.O.)  
 In America today you've either  
 got to be an entertainer or a  
 ball player or what? If you poor,  
 young and black, what is there?  
 And you ask me why they on the  
 street? It ain't politics we  
 watchin'. It's economics.

127

**INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS LEAR JET. NIGHT.**

127

James is on the plane with Ben Bart.

JAMES  
 You got kids out there that can't  
 eat, robbing and stealing and doing  
 what they have to do to make it.  
 And if you don't do something about  
 it we gonna lose the country. I go  
 to Harlem, talk to Rap Brown, talk  
 to the Nation they call me a  
 separatist. Here we're on our way  
 to the White House, Pop, and they  
 already calling me an Uncle Tom. So  
 what I supposed to do?

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Write a check for Rap so he buy  
rifles, machine guns, rally on  
125th and take it south? What  
it say to you, a street kid  
from Augusta, Georgia in the  
White House?

BART

It says you kissin' up to the Man  
James.

James is taken aback. No-one else in the world could  
say this.

JAMES

You asking me to turn this plane  
around and stand up the President?

BART

No. I'm saying who gives a shit.  
You're already screwed, James.  
Think about it. If you stand up  
Lyndon Johnson to go kiss up to  
the Panthers, you ain't gone be  
playin' Vegas anytime soon because  
if they think you can stop a riot,  
they sure as hell will expect you  
to start one.

JAMES

So here I am. Just a sorry soul  
brother whining inside his  
private jet, huh?

They both laugh. But James is troubled. Bart tone changes.

BART

Don't be scared my friend.  
Because if you're scared, it  
doesn't end well for the black  
man. Do your thing, James.  
(He looks at him hard)  
It's worked for you so far.

128

**INT. WHITE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING - 1968**

128

**CLOSE ON JAMES WITH HIS HEAD TILTED BACK TALKING UPWARD:**

JAMES

I want to go to Vietnam. I want  
to show unity for the boys out  
there. The beleaguered, the tired  
and in the dark.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

And we need to bring awareness,  
and Mr. President, we need to  
bring the super heavy funk.

We widen to see 5'7" James looking up to the 6'4"  
Lyndon Johnson. President Johnson shakes James' hand.

128A **INT. HANGER. VIETNAM.**

128A

We are now back in Vietnam at the hanger concert.  
James looks right at us.

JAMES

Take it and flip it.

129 **EXT. GOLF COURSE - MORNING.**

129

Ben Bart is playing golf with several friends. Bart drives  
the ball straight and hard. We watch as the ball land  
three hundred yards down the runway.

Back on the tee box. Ben Bart lays face down dead in  
the turf. His friends race to his side in shock.

CLOSE ON:

Ben's face is pressed sideways on the grass. His  
opened, dead eyes stare right at us.

130 **EXT. CEMETERY - DAY**

130

A casket lays at the bottom of a grave that has been dug.  
TEN MALE FUNERAL ATTENDEES IN SUITS AND YAMMAKAS take  
turns shoveling dirt onto Ben Bart's casket.

Dede and James stand to the side. Completely distraught.  
James starts to panic and lowers to the ground. Dede  
catches him under the arm.

One of the men approach James with the shovel. James  
can't bring himself to put dirt on the casket.

131 **INT. RECORDING STUDIO. LOS ANGELES. NIGHT.**

131

**BAND MEMBERS FITTED WITH THEIR AFRICAN DASHIKIS** are rolling a  
funky vamp together into a groove. Clyde hits a fat 'pop pop'  
beat. Sweet Charles locks the bass line in to the beat.  
Country finds a chunky B-flat-9 rhythm on the guitar and  
the groove takes shape.



The door opens. James and Teddy walk in. James and Teddy's hair is cut into a short natural. Everyone looks at each other.

JAMES

Hit it.

The band starts. James makes a few adjustments. Jimmy Nolen strikes up a womp-womp sound on a single string. The horns do the James trademark ladiadidat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Quit it.

(he pushes the intercom to the booth) Bring 'em in.

The door opens. 32 children enter the room. Most kids are black, except for a few Mexican children. Dede and Teddy are there, along with some of James' other kids.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How we all doin'. Hope this ain't too late for you folks.

James and Teddy stand before the group. James puts his arms around Teddy as he addresses the kids.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I brought you all here today so I could tell you something very important.

I want you all to know that you can do or be anything you want in this world. Don't let anybody tell you anything different. You understand? When I was a boy I used to shine shoes in front of radio station. Now I own that radio station. You got to build it. And then you gotta learn it... and that's when you earn it.

James gets all the kids around one mic. He puts Dede and Teddy to the side of the kids.

CUT TO:

Later everyone is cued. Maceo whispers to Pee Wee Ellis.

MACEO

You think they fuck up he gone take they pocket money.

Pee Wee laughs and nods his head.

JAMES

We ready fellas?

The groove starts again. James flies into I'm Black and I'm Proud.

**WHICH PLAYS OVER ADDRESSING US DIRECTLY**

JAMES (CONT'D)

I think about a lot of things.  
About problems. About solutions.  
You know one way of solving a lot  
of problems that we've got in  
this country...is letting a  
person *feel* that they important.  
*Feel* that they somebody. It's it.  
Man can't get hisself together...  
...until he know *who* he *is* and  
be proud of *what* and *who* he *is*  
and where he come *from*! WHERE WE  
ALL COME FROM!

James leaves us and continues with the song. He looks to  
the children

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say it loud!

They scream into the mic.

CHILDREN

I'm Black and I'm Proud!

James catches eyes with Teddy. He nods proudly. Teddy smiles.

JAMES BROWN - GHETTO REALITY BEGINS TO PLAY AND  
CONTINUES OVER THE NEXT FEW SCENES

131A **EXT. AUNT HONEY'S 1968 HOUSE IN THE LATTER YEARS - DAY** 131A

James and Teddy pull up in front of a small shotgun house in  
the Terry. They exit and walk up to the house.

131B **INT. 1968 AUNT HONEY'S 1968 HOUSE IN THE LATTER YEARS-** 131B  
**DAY**

Aunt Honey, now 70, sits in a chair in front of a small  
TV. We soon gather that she has "retired" and is at the  
end of her colorful life.

James has brought Teddy to meet Aunt Honey for the  
first time.

Teddy extends his hand toward Aunt Honey. Aunt Honey shakes his hand and then brings him in close for an embrace.

132-134 **OMITTED**

132-134

135 **INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. JAMES BROWN'S OFFICE. NIGHT** 135

James is standing in his office bathroom smoking a joint. He lights it and has four or five epic pulls as he scans the walls admiring his framed accolades and gold records.

**END GHETTO REALITY:**

135AA **INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. NEXT MORNING.**

135AA

James Brown enters his recording booth to find Teddy at the controls. Gertie sits in a chair behind Teddy.

JAMES

You the man, Teddy Brown?

TEDDY

I'm the man, Mr. Brown.

James notices the band sitting idle on the other side of the glass.

JAMES

Gertie. The band ready?

GERTRUDE

They're ready Mr. Brown.

JAMES BROWN

Don't look like it.

James grabs Teddy.

JAMES BROWN (CONT'D)

Come watch how Poppa don't take no mess.

He and Teddy walk straight into the-

135A **INT. JAMES BROWN PRODUCTIONS. STUDIO. DAY.**

135A

The band is there.

JAMES BROWN

Y'all act like y'all don't know  
what time it is. What you doin'?

Nothing happens. James looks Maceo in the eye.  
Maceo approaches.

MACEO

I've been elected spokesman to  
speak on behalf of the band.

JAMES

Spokesman? Elected?

MACEO

We asked to get paid on time. We  
haven't been paid in weeks. We  
asked for scheduled days off.  
Every day off we get you make us  
rehearse.. We asked to get paid  
for recording but you included it  
in our salary.

James turns to Teddy. The two stare at each other.

JAMES BROWN

Teddy, go on and wait outside.

TEDDY

Yes, Sir.

Teddy exits.

JAMES

Fellas. I hear ya. I really do.  
And I appreciate the honesty. That  
can't be easy. No Sir. You got  
grievances. You got your own  
selves to think about. Hell,  
you're men. I dig it.

PEE WEE

I don't think you understand.

James looks to Bobby.

MACEO

We know you owe the government  
back taxes.  
Your restaurant, radio stations,  
recording studios, labels, all  
different businesses, Unaccounted  
cash passing between them.

(MORE)

MACEO (CONT'D)

It's a mess, Mr. Brown and if you want us to be a part of it, we gonna need our cash too. Right now.

James looks at them all for a very long time hiding his shame.

MACEO (CONT'D)

And most of all none of us ever want to be fined for anything ever again.

James nods. Studying them.

JAMES BROWN

I'll tell ya what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna think about it. That's all.

They look at each other and file out. Waymon, Pee Wee, Maceo, Kush and Jimmy Nolen file out. Leaving Bobby and James alone.

SILENCE.

He looks at the empty room. Smiling. Unable to show any pain.

JAMES

(He shakes his head.)

It's like I always say Bobby. You gotta know who you are. You got to know where you are in this world. Five minutes ago, those boys were the best band on the planet. Now they nothing. Now they a bunch of sidemen with their hearts beatin' fast. Maceo comin' in here talking about my taxes. All I've done for this country and they comin' after James Brown? How you gone keep everybody happy? Huh? And stay on top? You along for the ride while everything is groovy and now they gone kick me when I'm down? People either on the bus or they off it.

James crosses to the door and opens it for Bobby to exit

JAMES BROWN

(He turns to Bobby.)

Well go on. Get out of here. Y'might catch 'em they gone need a singer.

Bobby rises and walks past James into the foyer. He turns.

BOBBY

Negro, what makes you think I'm leaving? I been here all the time, Mr. Brown. I'm still here.

James looks at Bobby.

JAMES

See that's the thing about the funk. The funk don't quit.

BOBBY

Last time I checked.

JAMES

Cause if the funk gone up'n'quit that's it.

BOBBY

That's why the funk don't quit.

JAMES

Are we done here Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY

I'm afraid we ain't Mr. Brown.

JAMES

Are we done?

BOBBY

I think we got more funk in the trunk.

James laughs.

JAMES

That's right. Two Musketeers.

Bobby looks at James. Remembers. Beams. James beams back. Then, James is all business.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's those kids from Cincinnati. The New Dapps...Blackenizers? Who that kid play bass?

BOBBY

(Smiles)

Bootsy.

135B INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE

135B

A pre-show theater in action with stagehands and riggers busy setting up. The new kids are now all in suits and bow ties.

CATFISH

Fancy suit bro'.

BOOTSY

Backatcha slick. How you doin,  
Chicken?

CHICKEN

Just shit my pants.

BOOTSY

Easy now. Don't forget. Don't ever  
call him James or nothin'. He  
ain't no-one but Mr. Brown.

CATFISH

Check.

CHICKEN

Gotcha.

James Brown walks in from the wings. They all  
stand straighter. He looks at them.

BOOTSY (CONT'D)

Good evening Mr. Brown.

CHICKEN

Mr. Brown.

CATFISH

Mr. Brown.

JAMES

Do that button up son.

(Chicken does)

You know *Kansas City*?

(Blank faces)

You know *Cold Sweat*? Do you know  
*Please Please*?

BOOTSY

Can I stop you Mr. Brown. We been  
learning off yo' records since we  
was nine years old. You *already*  
taught us the songs. So with  
respect. We ready. Mr. Brown.

JAMES

They say they ready Mr. Byrd.  
What you think?

CATFISH

We been waiting for this moment  
our entire lives, Mr. Brown.

JAMES

How old are you son?

CATFISH

Twenty.  
(Then)  
Mr. Brown.

JAMES

Cats know *Super Bad*?

Bootsy lays down a mammoth bass line on his plugged in bass.

135C **INT. PARIS HOTEL ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON.**

135C

The backup singer, Yvonne, nude, carries two glasses of champagne from a wet bar to a very sweaty James who is lying in bed.

YVONNE

Why won't you say it? I said it.  
Why won't you say it back?

JAMES

Baby, I gotta get to my show. I  
can't be playin' around right now

YVONNE

I love you.

Yvonne rests the cold glass on James' stomach. He squirms.

JAMES

You know I don't drink.

Yvonne pours a little champagne onto James' stomach.  
She then begins licking it with her tongue.

YVONNE

Say it, Mr. Brown. Say you love me.

In a flash James rolls over and pins Yvonne down on her back. She screams with delight.

He whispers in her ear.

JAMES

Happy now?



She kisses him.

YVONNE

I'm pregnant.

James stares back at her without expression.

135D **FLASH FORWARD - ADULT JAMES, IMMACULATE, LOOKING AT US. 135D**  
**THE SKYLINE OF PARIS IS BEHIND HIM. 1971**

James walks along the outside of Olympia Theatre in Paris in full costume.

JAMES

Now it's true, we work hard. A man gotta work hard if he wanna break ground. And we breaking new ground everyday...

James enter the theatre front door.

135E **INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE. LOBBY. CONTINUOUS. 135E**

James begins walking toward us.

JAMES

My record *Live at the Apollo* is the first R&B album in the history of the world to go top ten. Stayed up in there for 66 weeks..

James walks into the rear of the packed house.

GIRLS AND GUYS SCREAMING, DANCING. JAMES IS INVISIBLE TO THEM.

**From the rear of the house, James watches himself and the band performing on stage. He and his band are IN MID-GROOVE. A BEAUTIFUL BLACK DANCER DANCES ON A RISER BEHIND THE BAND.**

Vicki Anderson, sings backup.

JAMES (CONT'D)

That record come across. I mean it hit hard!!! Uhn!

135F **INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE. STAGE. CONTINUOUS. 135F**

James walks among his performing band members. He watches himself on stage at the microphone driving the crowd crazy.

JAMES

And slowly, the whole World  
knew who we were.

James walks to each band member and places a twenty dollar bill in each of their pockets. They don't see the James who is talking directly to us.

He straightens a band members tie. James turns to stage left and sees his son, Teddy Brown, dancing. He then gives Yvonne a wink who's also standing in the wings looking HOT.

JAMES (CONT'D)

See in showbusiness, you got two parts. You got the show and you got the business. And brother.

(Deadly serious)

You better believe. You looking at both.

He spins around and runs up to the microphone. He replaces himself and begins to sing.

SCREAMS. HORNS VAMPING. James performs out of his skin. A medley of three songs, "Soul Power," into "Sex Machine," into "Super Bad".

Backup dancers and singers are tearing it up!

On James' signal the rag tag band of kids behind the godfather of soul take off like a rocket ship into one of the above songs. It sounds nothing like the old version. Its raw urgent, stripped down. The Bootsy's bass rumbles like trouble brewing and Catfish's over driven guitar slicing clean through the hook.

Before them a standing room crown dance and sing from the stage to all the way back to entrance

James and Bobby look at each other. Holy shit.

James drops into the splits, flips up again.

The crowd is seeing something for the first time on European soil. They erupt with joy and begin dancing in their seats.

CUT TO:

139

INT. OLYMPIA STAGE. SAME NIGHT.

139

The crowd has left. A custodian roams the isles picking up trash. James and Bobby sit on the edge of an empty stage, laughing.

BOBBY

You know what I think? After we put out my next solo album, I bet I could play Paris or the Apollo.

James TUNES IN

JAMES BROWN

How's that?

BOBBY

I was just saying when me and you put out my new record, I bet I could fill this place all myself. No problem.

James stiffens at this comment.

JAMES BROWN

What the hell you talking about? "Fill this place all myself"? "No problem?" You sayin' I'm slippin'?

BOBBY BYRD

No I don't think you slippin'. You James Brown. You ain't never slippin'. I was just...

JAMES BROWN

People copy me, Mr. Byrd. People gonna copy my moves till the earth goes dark. You understand? You think people are gonna buy that record like they buy my record? That what you sayin'?

BOBBY

No.

JAMES BROWN

Who you been tellin' this too? You been telling that to the Apollo?

Bobby gets mad.

BOBBY

No, James! I haven't told nobody but you. We were just talking.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I thought you be cool with that.  
You always been talking about...  
About... About... standin' on  
my own feet.

JAMES BROWN

Bobby, how you gone stand on your  
own feet? You just spent twenty  
years gettin' fat on a man's  
dollar. I produce a record for you  
and now it's gone to your head.  
You go talking big behind my back.  
You go sneaking round, raising  
heat off another man's name. We  
here, we doing something and you  
making plans sucker?

Bobby gets more upset. He's using a tone with James  
we've never heard before.

BOBBY

(Shouting)

I ain't told nobody or made any  
plans. We just talkin' about  
it. Now. That's it.

JAMES

I'm ashamed of you, Bobby. And you  
should be ashamed of you. Now you  
tryin' to run around with Vicki.  
Don't jive yourself bro'. Now,  
Vicki, she could fill this place.

BOBBY

Well, Vicki ain't yours. So,  
Vicki and me ain't none of your  
damn business.

James smiles.

JAMES

But she's been my business before.

Bobby walks up close to James and stares him in the eye.  
He balls his fist.

BOBBY

I can't do this no more, James.

JAMES BROWN

Damn right you can't do this  
no more.

BOBBY

I said I can't do this no more.

James looks absolutely poleaxed. THEN. He laughs. And looks at Bobby, almost affectionately.

JAMES BROWN

See, the funny part. You say that like it's a *big* thing. Like "*oh my God, Bobby Byrd gone leave James Brown on his own.*"

Bobby fights to control himself. To find anything left to give.

BOBBY

I ain't leaving you on your own, Mr. Brown. You *already* on your own. Always were.

He shakes his head and walks across the stage. He turns.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Is that God too?

Bobby turns and leaves James ALONE.

140      **INT. OLYMPIA. NIGHT. 1970**      140

Bobby walks across the big empty stage and **for a split second looks right at us**. He continues past us and away.

CROSSFADE TO:

141      **INT. APOLLO CORRIDOR / DRESSING ROOM.**      141

**FLASHBACK** - Corridor in 1962. The Night of *Live At The Apollo*.

MUSIC: *Wonder When You're Coming Home* plays over:

A woman in a flower print dress and a cheap hat sits on a bench with a coat over her arm. A young Bobby comes out of the dressing room. She stands.

142      **INT. APOLLO DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT.**      142

*BOOM!* A flashbulb goes off.

James sits next to his mother, on a couch, SMILING Happily, having the moment documented. She is smiling too. Bobby and other guests in the room watch the photographers.

The photographer is ushered out of the room by Bobby Byrd.

JAMES

Bobby? Get everybody out of here and wait outside.

Bobby ushers the guests outside.

James sits opposite his mother. She is very, very uncomfortable but trying to appear relaxed.

SUSIE

I was on the Subway last week, and the two kids next to me was arguing who was the best, James Brown or Little Willy John. And this one boy, he was saying "James Brown the best" "There ain't no one better than James Brown", he got so mad I thought he was gonna whup this other boy. And then-

James holds up his hand. She falls silent.

JAMES

Why tonight?

(She stops, her face falls.) Why you come here?

She starts to flap.

SUSIE

Well. Sugar, I live over in Brooklyn... and you my baby and you here playin' the Apollo.

JAMES

I don't want you to feel proud. I ain't your sugar. I ain't your baby. Not then. Not now. And I don't want you to tell anyone you my momma, because you and me know that ain't true.

SUSIE

Your daddy beat me. Beat you. I stayed because I loved you. I didn't know nothin' about being a wife. Nothin' about being a mother. I did the best I could. I did that.

(MORE)

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I left because I loved you. I ain't had nothing to make no other choice. I was shamed. I was.

He holds up his hand.

JAMES

See I thought about this. I know it weren't personal and that's why this ain't neither. It turned out fine. I didn't need you. I looked after James Brown. Made sure he was OK. No-one else. No-one help me.

She starts to cry.

SUSIE

I never wanted to be a momma. But I carried you, boy. I didn't know nothin' about being a wife or being a momma. But I carried you and I loved you when you were in me. I chose you. I chose you.

JAMES

Don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.

He stiffly offers her a handkerchief.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Clean yourself up. That's it.

James softens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm James Brown. And James Brown don't need nothing. Don't need no-body.

Susie looks back a James. She doesn't move.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Why are you really here? What do you want?

She shakes her head, searching his face. James looks back unmoved. James reaches in is pocket and pulls out some money. He hands it to her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Here. That's a hundred dollars. I'm sorry but I'm gonna ask you to leave now.

He sits perfectly still as she gets up. She walks to the door and turns to James.

SUSIE

You're so beautiful. You're so pretty.

Susie exits into the party outside and shuts the door.

143 **EXT. CABIN - BARNWELL S.C. 1941. JAMES 8 YRS** 143

We return to the day that Susie left. We stay on her face as she leaves her family behind. Tears stream down her cheek.

James tries to chase after his mother but Joe restrains him.

Joe pulls a pistol from his belt. He fires.

Bark explodes from a tree a few feet from where Susie is walking.

Susie flinches but never turns.

144 **INT. CORRIDOR.** 144

Bobby waits. The door opens, and Susie comes out, tears in her eyes. She looks wildly into Bobby's face who has clearly heard everything. She runs off down the corridor.

Bobby looks through the open door. Devastated, James sits staring at the floor. He looks up at Bobby.

JAMES

Tell Pop to make sure she's taken care of. Whatever she needs.

As Bobby nods, James gets up, walks over to the door, and slowly closes it.

145 **INT. JAMES BROWN'S HOME. 1988. 18 YEARS LATER. JAMES 55 YRS** 145

**CLOSE ON** - Numerous framed pictures of Teddy span all ages of his life now fill the top of James' dresser.

We widen to find James Brown sitting very alone in his bedroom staring at the pictures of his son.

He wears a bathrobe. His hair is up in rollers. He's twitchy and sweating.



He raises a glass pipe to his mouth, lites the PCP within and inhales it.

146 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. LATER THAT DAY. 1988** 146

A peaceful road. SUDDENLY - a pickup truck passes at a hundred MPH. FOLLOWED.. A MOMENT LATER - by nine cop cars.

A cop car pulls up next to James' truck. James looks to the car.

**SLOW MOTION SEQUENCE:**

In the front a cop drives but James' father, Joe, rides in the back next to his mother, Susie. They stare blankly at James.

Glass shatters in the truck.

**SLOW MOTION ENDS.**

James turns back to the cop car next to him. The vision of his parents is gone.

Two cops ride together. The cop in the front seat aims his revolver directly at James. It's clear he intends to kill him.

James speeds up as the cop fires. The bullet strikes the truck just behind him.

147 **EXT. GRAVEL PITTS. 1988. DAY.** 147

The pickup truck rolls to a stop. Police cars from different jurisdictions take up positions blocking exit routes.

148 **INT./ EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/ GRAVEL PITTS. DAY.** 148

James sits staring straight ahead. Breathing hard.

JAMES

I'm OK. I'm OK. I'm OK.

LOUD HAILER

*EXIT THE VEHICLE WITH YOUR HANDS  
ABOVE YOUR HEAD. DO NOT RUN. DO NOT  
ATTEMPT TO START THE VEHICLE.*

James opens the door scattering glass onto the tarmac.

Around the perimeter armed police tense. Keeping James in their sights.

**ONLY NOW, YOUNG JAMES STANDS IN PLACE OF HIS ADULT SELF.** He stands next to the bullet riddled wreckage of his pickup, hands above his head. He leans back and sings to the sky.

YOUNG JAMES

*"I Don't Feel Noways Tired"*

149     **INT. PRISON WING. DAY. 1988**     149

A warden walks a dishevelled James along the corridor. They stop. The cell door buzzes open. They put him in the cell.

150     **INT. CELL. DAY.**     150

The doors slide close. CLANK. James leans on the tiny sink. He looks up into the mirror and faces what's he's become. His face is bloated, his eyes wild, hair unkempt. We feel James wanting to turn to us but shame won't allow it.

151     **FLASHBACK - INT. ST. STEPHENS CHURCH. DAY. 1952**     151

BOBBY, NAFLOYD, BABY ROY SARAH AND JAMES sing righteous gospel that first time together in St. Stephens Church. James is Really giving it up singing Send it on Down. His voice soars sweetly over the congregation.

MRS. BYRD and GRANDPA watch on. Mrs. Byrd leans forward and catches Bobby's eye. Gives a small nod of approval for James.

Bobby looks to James. They catch eyes. In awe of James' talent, Bobby unconsciously, stops singing. He just stands their watching and listening to his friend.

152     **END FLASHBACK - BACK AT THE MIRROR**     152

James pulls back from the mirror and splashes some water on his face and begins to press his hair down with his hands. He breathes harder and harder as he assesses his life.

He stands straight and proud. Still looking in the mirror, he begins to chant quietly to himself.

JAMES

James Brown, James Brown. James Brown, James brown.

153 **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. ATLANTA. MORNING. 1993 JAMES 60 YRS** 153

A pool cleaning truck pulls up outside a suburban home. A thirty something white guy gets out with a satchel. He rings on the door.

Bobby Byrd, aged sixty, comes out of his house in a robe and slippers.

POOL CLEANER

Morning Mr. Byrd. Come to open up the pool.

BOBBY

Got a real algae problem.

POOL CLEANER

I'll take a look.

BOBBY

Sure. You need anything, I be inside.

As the Pool Cleaner walks around to the back yard, Bobby walks towards the pool cleaning truck parked on the street.

153A **EXT. STREET. BEHIND TRUCK. MOMENTS LATER.**

153A

Bobby pulls out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket as he walks behind the truck. He pulls out a smoke and lights up.

Bobby soon notices a Limo parked on the other side of the street. He stares at it for a while. The door opens. James Browns gets out of the Limo and waves.

Bobby watches as James approaches. He's clean and sober in a suit looking sharp. James' appearance and presence throws Bobby.

BOBBY

Mr. Brown.

They shake hands.

JAMES

What you doing out here in your robe, Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY

What? Oh. See, I snuck out for a smoke. I s'posed to quit. Vicki don't know.

He laughs. They both do.

JAMES

Well I ain't gone tell.

They laugh a little. When they stop, there's a long lull.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well I was just passing. Playing a show tonight at the Omni.

BOBBY

Right.

JAMES

Say. Maybe you and Vicki could come along. We got a great new horn section. Tight. We getting there.

BOBBY

We got plans tonight. Vicki got family coming over.

JAMES

Well you think about it. See what Vicki say.

Bobby laughs. Rumbled.

BOBBY

Yeah. She still in charge.

They both chuckle at this. A nod of understanding. But then:

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You look well.. Man. I ain't seen you since-

JAMES

Teddy's funeral.

Bobby pauses, grows uncomfortable. Bobby throws his cigarette to the ground and stomps it out.

BOBBY

Right. Teddy's funeral. Damn. You look well. You shoulda called-

JAMES

You know, Bobby, they still don't know what happened to Teddy and that boy. Those boys weren't drinkin' or doin' drugs.

BOBBY

I know, James.

JAMES

No sir. Nothin' like that. He was a good boy. The car just hit that bridge head on. We ain't ever gone know how or why. They say he didn't feel a thing.

Bobby nods.

BOBBY

That's good, James.

JAMES

But we brought him back to Augusta didn't we? Got him home then sent him on to the Lord.

BOBBY

We did, Mr. Brown. We did.

James stands there, fixedly. The Pool cleaner comes from around the truck, breaks the tension.

POOL CLEANER

OK. Mr. Byrd. I fixed your problem. I'll be back in the Spring to open her up.

BOBBY

I'm much obliged. Do I have to-

POOL CLEANER

No no. We'll send the bill on. Well that's that. Good day Gentlemen.

He gets in his truck and pulls away leaving Bobby and James standing in an awkward silence.

JAMES

Look at that. We got white folk cleaning our pool. Come a long way huh, Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY

Yeah. We come a long way.

Suddenly this is awkward. For both of them. Bobby defuses it:

JAMES

You still makin' the steps, Mr. Byrd?

BOBBY

Here and there.

JAMES

You hurtin' a little in the hips?

BOBBY

A little. You?

JAMES

Not me. I just get stronger ever day. Gettin' better every day.

James pulls out two concert tickets from his jacket and hands them to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Maybe you and Vicki got some friends who could come tonight. Good seats, too.

James turns sharply and walks back to the Limo. He sings to himself.

JAMES

(CONT'D) (Sings)

*Oh, Mary Don't You Weep...*

Bobby listens. And remembers.

JAMES

(CONT'D) (Sings)

*Tell Martha Not to Moan.*

He stops and turns to Bobby.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What's the next line?

Bobby looks at James.

BOBBY

I can't seem to recall. Was a long time ago.

James nods. After a moment Bobby nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

See you around Mr. Brown.

Bobby turns. James watches as he walks back to his house.

JAMES

See you around Mr. Byrd.

James walks towards his Limo.

**SFX: Audience noise, cheering, whistles, clapping.  
Louder. Louder.**

154 **INT. DRESSING ROOM. 1993. NIGHT.**

154

Show time. James sits in front of the mirror, putting on greasepaint with the assistance of a make-up artists.

A much older Gertrude comes in.

JAMES BROWN

How we doin, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE

To the rafters Mr. Brown. To rafters.

JAMES BROWN

That's good. You two gimme a minute here.

Gertrude and the make-up artist look at each other. They leave him.

Alone, he looks around the dressing room. At the walls. The ceiling fan. Finally at his reflection. He holds his own gaze. We push in, as he fights it. And fights it.

Slowly, inevitably the sound from the auditorium grows. Thousands of people shouting his name: "*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*".

155 **FLASHBACK - INT. JAIL CELL. 1949. DAY.**

155

JAMES AGED SIXTEEN, SITS ALONE, staring at the wall. Incanting his name, quietly. Intently.

JAMES

(Quietly)

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN,  
JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN...*

156 INT. AUDITORIUM. 156

The crowd are going wild.

CROWD

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

157 EXT. CHURCH/ DIRT ROAD. DAY. 1941. 157

Young James, 8, walking through the forest alone,  
hollering his name.

YOUNG JAMES

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

158 INT. AUDITORIUM - EVERYONE CHANTING 158

CROWD

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

159 EXT. BARREN PATH. DAY. 1942. 159

YOUNG JAMES, nine, battered, bruised and shirtless walks  
toward us with the number "One" painted on his chest. He  
says his name to himself over and over.

YOUNG

JAMES (quietly)

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN,  
JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

We soon realize this is the same path where he discovered  
the body of the lynched young man.

160 INT. AUDITORIUM - EVERYONE CHANTING. 160

*We see Bobby and Vicki in the crowd.*

Slowly Bobby begins to whisper..

BOBBY BYRD

(To himself)

James Brown. James Brown...

CROWD

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*



161 **EXT. RIVER. DAY. 1942.** 161

Bloodied 9 year old James begins walking by the side of a river.

YOUNG

JAMES (quietly)

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN,  
JAMES BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

162 **INT. DRESSING ROOM.** 162

SLOWLY James stands, buttons his jacket and opens the dressing room door.

JAMES

James Brown. James Brown. James Brown.

163 **INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR.** 163

James marches out of the room into the corridor..

CROWD

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

...two assistants fall into step and we follow on his shoulder as he struts his way past the dressing rooms, to the wings, where the band stand.

164 **INT. STAGE WINGS.** 164

Alone, JAMES closes his eyes. Bows his head.

ANNOUNCER V/O

...the Hardest Working Man in show business, Mr. Dynamite...

165 **EXT. RIVER. DAY.** 165

Over announcer's introduction we watch Young James reach the river's edge,

ANNOUNCER V/O

Mr. Please, Please himself..

His head and body proud, overlooking the mighty river.

DANNY RAY V/O

..ladies and gentlemen its  
showtime...the one and  
only JAAAAAAMES BROWN!!!

YOUNG JAMES, eyes closed saying his name over and over.

YOUNG JAMES

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

YOUNG JAMES suddenly opens his swollen eyes and looks  
right at us.

YOUNG JAMES (CONT'D)

*I paid the cost to be the boss.*

James leans back, widens his arms and looks to the sky.

166

**INT. THE STAGE.**

166

James steps forward and strides across the stage to the  
mic stand.

CROWD

*JAMES BROWN JAMES BROWN, JAMES  
BROWN, JAMES BROWN.*

He looks out over the crowd. Then... He begins to sing  
a *capella*. He stares right us.

JAMES

*Try me. Try me. Darlin tell me.  
I need you. Try me. Try me.  
And your love will always be true*

The crowd goes silent. All we hear is Mr. Brown's  
soulful voice.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*Oh I need you (I need you)  
Hold me. Hold me. I want you right  
here by my side. Hold me. Hold me.  
And your love we won't hide*

Slowly Bobby smiles. Tears in his eyes.

**THE END.**