

81 Days

by

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Based on a true story

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81 DAYS

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ON A BLACK SCREEN

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and the world will be blind and toothless." - Mohandas Gandhi

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL COUNTRY ROAD - EARLY SPRING AFTERNOON

LEGEND: March 24th, 1944 - Day #1

There is a long dirt road that looks barely used by any cars. Dogwood trees line the road. It is flat and nearly empty of any elevation changes. On the sides of the road, the seeds of cotton plants have begun poking their tips out of the freshly tilled ground. Behind the cotton plants sits a huge, dense forest.

In the distance, looking down on the road, lays the small Southern town of Alcolu, South Carolina. It is the time just after lunch and a few people have begun walking down the road. There is a sign on the road: "Welcome to Alcolu." It is hand painted, not professionally done, but has a feeling of warmth to it due to its bright, active colors and the painting of the town on the sign.

As people walk down the street, from one of the houses on the side of the road, two young girls leave their house. They are dressed in Sunday, "going to church clothes." They look like little porcelain dolls in their clothing and their hair styles.

EXT. HOUSE FRONTYARD

The house is a small frame house, built high off the ground and with a veranda in the manner of Southern cottages of its day. The yard is a large one, filled with dogwood trees. There is a rusty, but functioning swing set and slide under a large oak tree, as well as a hanging tire on a rope used as a swing.

Two two girls giggle and laugh as they run towards the garage from the veranda. Immediately from the house, a middle aged woman of near 40 years old with another little girl hugging her legs comes out and looks around. This is BETTY'S MOTHER and one of Betty's sisters.

BETTY'S MOTHER
 (southern accent)
 Betty June Binnicker! Come here this
 minute.

The two girls come walking up to the veranda. The taller girl, BETTY JUNE BINNICKER (aged 11), walks her bicycle. Next to her, rubbing her nose with her hand stands MARY EMMA THAMES (aged 8). They are giggling and laughing like the school children they are.

BETTY JUNE
 Yes, Momma?

BETTY'S MOTHER
 You take care of Mary Emma. Don't do
 nothing foolish and come home when it's
 dark.

BETTY JUNE
 Yes, Momma.

Betty turns and walks toward the road. Mary looks at Betty's mother and smiles.

MARY EMMA
 Thank you for lunch, Miss Binnicker!

Betty's mother smiles. Mary laughs and chases after Betty.

The little girl wrapped around Betty's mother's legs looks up at her. This is LORRAINE BINNICKER (aged 6).

LORRAINE
 Momma, why can't I go picking maypops?

BETTY'S MOTHER
 Because you ain't old enough yet.

Lorraine scowls.

LORRAINE
 Aww, Momma.

Betty's mother turns and walks into the house, shooping Lorraine in with her.

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN CENTER

Betty and Mary walk down to the Square, Betty walking her bike. They look at the stores, offices and businesses which compromise Alcolu.

This is an extremely small town, almost as insignificant as the fact that nothing happens here.

People pass by, look at the two girls and smile. Surprisingly, they are all white, but everyone knows everyone else. The feeling of Alcolu being a small knit town cannot be understated.

Each time the girls pass someone, the two girls smile as though they know the person. In Alcolu, there are no strangers. The people nod and smile back at the girls.

The girls continue down the road as two old men in overalls watch the girls walk down the road.

OLD MAN #1

Binnicker's raising himself a good looking girl.

The second man pulls out a cigarette and lights it. He pulls out a newspaper out of his pocket, opens it and sits down to read in front of the drug store.

OLD MAN #2

Looks like Hitler killed more people. Children this time.

Old Man #1 sits and takes a cigarette from his friend.

OLD MAN #1

People who kill children should burn in Hell.

Old man #2 nods his head and flips the page, then take a drag on his cigarette.

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN

The two girls continue down the road and then turn down a dirt road to the left. Almost immediately, the houses and building change in quality and appearance. In the white part of town, the houses, while poor, were maintained, well put together and adorned with planned landscaping.

EXT. ROAD IN BLACK PART OF TOWN

Now, the houses are ramshackle shanties or old, near collapsing houses with peeling paint.

Even the people on the streets are different. Now, instead of white faces, Alcolu has turned into the black part of town. With the exception of Mary and Betty, everyone is black.

However, no one pays the two white girls the slightest interest. The residents of the black part of Alcolu have seen white people in their part of town before and will see them again. Two white girls walking together isn't new.

However, the mothers on the street keep an extra watchful on the two girls, as the mother's instinct of protecting the children takes over. Two little girls alone on a road is enough for the mothers to stop what they are doing, watch the girls pass to make sure they are safe, and then return to their work.

MARY EMMA

Are you sure there are maypops around here?

NEGRO WOMAN

(shouting)

You girls need to be careful!

Mary and Betty look over to see a rather frumpy, heavy set middle aged NEGRO WOMAN watching the two girls walk down the street.

BETTY JUNE

Yes'm. Do you know where we can find maypops?

NEGRO WOMAN

Sorry, children. I don't know.

With that, Mary and Betty continue walking down the road as the Negro Woman turns to continue her work.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS

The girls turn off the road and walk on a small dirt path near the railroad tracks. There is no one around them.

Mary walks the bicycle and touches Betty.

MARY EMMA

You're it!

Mary lets go of the bike and begins running away from Betty. Betty gives chase and the girls laugh as they play tag.

Betta tags Mary.

BETTY JUNE

You're it!

MARY EMMA

(almost immediately)

Not it!

Mary runs away again and Betty gives chase. As Betty tags Mary again, they see a very slim, bald headed black child of 14 years old walking towards them. He is wearing dirty jeans, a white T-shirt and is barefoot. He is very short, extremely slim and could be mistaken for someone younger than 14 years old. This is GEORGE STINNEY.

Betty runs up to George and tags him on the arm.

BETTY JUNE

You're it, George!

Betty runs away from George. George smiles and gives chase. The two girls run in opposite direction. George gives chase to Betty.

GEORGE

I don't wanna be it!

BETTY JUNE

You're always it!

As the children play, any sense of the racial divide that dominate life in Alcolu disappear.

George gets close to Betty but trips over his own feet and falls face first onto the dirt path, messing up his shirt and cutting himself with scrapes and small cuts from pebbles and the ground.

George grimaces, but stands up and dusts himself off.

GEORGE

(whining)

Aww. Now Momma's going whip me for getting my shirt dirty.

Mary runs up to Betty and giggles at the dirty shirt.

MARY EMMA

Where'ya going, George?

George dusts himself off and looks at the bleeding cut on his arms. He shakes his head.

GEORGE

Going swimmin'. Momma is cleaning the house and I don't want to help. I sneaked out!

BETTY JUNE

You know where we can find maypops?

George looks over his shoulder and points in a direction away from where the three stand.

GEORGE

I think I saw some down by the ditch over there.

WHITE MAN (O.S.)

You girls be careful. Niggers be dangerous.

The three look over and see a rather young WHITE MAN in his early 20s pointing at them.

Mary and Betty recognize the man and wave. White Man returns the wave. George looks to the ground, his demeanor instantly changes.

GEORGE

(quiet)

I better be gettin' home. Momma may be worried.

George starts to walk towards the White Man. Betty and Mary watch, upset.

BETTY JUNE

George. Daddy says he ain't got no brains anyway.

But George doesn't turn or look back. Mary picks up the bicycle and climbs on to ride slowly as Betty walks.

GEORGE AND WHITE MAN

George walks past the White Man, his head down, eyes to the ground. White Man stands looking at George with a look of pure hatred.

As George continues, White Man grabs George by his arm and squeezes it. George doesn't flinch and continues to look to the ground.

WHITE MAN

(evil)

You need to stick with your own nigger kind, boy!

George doesn't respond. White Man pulls George close to him, making George's head whip back and forth at the neck. Still, George doesn't look at the man.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

Look at me when I talk to you, boy!

Slowly, George looks up at the White Man's face. George looks as though he will tear up a little, and struggles to not give this man that satisfaction.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

I know you. You're Stinney's little brat. Your daddy works at the lumber mill.

George nods his head slowly. White Man lets go of George's arm. From the tight grip, a bruise has formed on George's arm.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

Get the Hell out of here, boy. Don't let me catch you with white girls again.

GEORGE

(quickly)

Yes, sir.

George turns and walks quickly away from the White Man. White Man watches, then turns and looks in the direction of Mary and Betty, both of whom are off in the distance.

EXT. SMALL WATER FILLED DITCH

In a ditch overrun by weeds and crabgrass, Mary and Betty have picked a few maypops from the ground. They walk through the shallow muddy water of the ditch looking for more flowers. In Betty's hand are scissors. She finds another maypop, puts the scissor on the stem and cuts the flower. She then adds the maypop to her collection.

Behind them, a low bridge for the railroad crosses the creek and ditch.

MARY EMMA

How many do we need?

BETTY JUNE

I don't know. Enough for your ma and mine.

The girls continue to look together, finding maypops, cutting them with the scissors and putting them in their hands.

As they pick another one, Mary looks up and smiles.

MARY EMMA

(jovial)

Oh. Hello again.

To whomever Mary is speaking remains unseen. Mary covers her eyes from the blinding sun and looks at whomever is looking at her.

MARY EMMA (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Betty June?

Betty walks over and looks up to see the person Mary is also looking at. Betty smiles and holds up a maypop.

BETTY JUNE

(innocent)

Hi. Do you want one?

EXT. FRONTYARD - EVENING

The sun begins to dip under the western hills. The road is empty of people, but standing on the veranda is Betty's mother, arms crossed with a worried look on her face.

BETTY'S MOTHER

(scared)

Where is that girl?

Lorraine comes out onto the veranda and looks at her mother. She tugs at her mother's leg.

LORRAINE

Momma. Are you okay?

Betty's mother picks up Lorraine and kisses her. She hugs her tightly and closes her eyes.

BETTY'S FATHER (O.S.)

(non angry shouting)

I'm home. I'm tired. I hope dinner's ready.

Betty's mother looks up and sees BINNICKER walk up to the house. He is a sturdy man in his early 40s, balding, thin but solid. He is dressed in overalls and a white T-shirt, covered in sawdust and sweaty dirt. He has a thermos and a lunch pail in his hand.

Binnicker looks up to see his wife holding Lorraine.

BINNICKER
Where's Betty June?

EXT. LUMBER MILL - NIGHT

A huge crowd of close to eighty people stand in the parking lot of Alderman Lumber Mill. Most of Alcolu's male population, both white and black stand with flash lights in their hands. There is no racial animosity present.

From the parking lot, the sign "ALDERMAN LUMBER COMPANY" can be seen by all.

From inside the main office building of Alderman Lumber Company, four men walk out. One is dressed in a policeman's uniform. This is the SHERIFF H.S. NEWMAN. Two more are young white men. One is the White Man that berated George earlier in the day.

The last is an older man dressed in clothing that show him to be a wealthy man. This is B.G. ALDERMAN, the owner of the lumber company.

Alderman holds black and white photographs in his hand.

ALDERMAN
(commanding)
Okay, everyone. Come in closer.

The men in the crowd listen and move in tighter around Alderman and the three other men.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)
Again, I want to thank you all for coming out. Here are photos of the two missing girls.

People begin handing out the photographs of Mary and Betty.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)
Mr. Binnicker told us the two girls always played in the woods around here.
(MORE)

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

So, I want you all to break into groups of five and spread out. Remember, their names are Mary and Betty.

Alderman turns to the black men looking at the photographs.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

You boys search the area around your homes.

A middle aged black man looks around and at Alderman. This is GEORGE STINNEY, SR, George's father.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

Stinney. You take the lead. You know the area best.

George nods and looks down at his son, George, who holds a lantern in his hand.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

Scott Lowden?

A young white man, SCOTT LOWDEN, raises his hand.

LOWDEN

Yeah?

ALDERMAN

Take four people and check near the railroad tracks. The rest of you come with me and my son to search the woods.

The people start fanning out.

Stinney looks at his father.

GEORGE

I told you I saw them earlier today, Daddy down by the railroad tracks.

Alderman cocks his head and turns to look at Stinney.

From inside the main office, Betty's mother and father come out, holding their three other children (two girls and a boy). Behind them are Mary's parents. Both mothers show worry lines and the tracks of tears.

Everyone stops fanning out and looks at the two sets of parents. They turn on their flashlights and turn to walk where they have been assigned.

Alderman turns around and looks at the two families. He puts his hand on Binnicker's shoulder.

ALDERMAN

(calm)

Don't worry, Binnicker. We'll find them.
Trust me.

Binnicker nods his head and embraces his wife.

Alderman taps White Man, his son, on the shoulder and motions for him to follow.

NEWMAN

Be careful and report to me as soon as you find the girls. Be back here at midnight!

The crowd spread out on foot and walks into the darkness.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- 1) Black men searching the area around their homes, looking in ditches, wells. They call out the girls' names.
- 2) A group of white men spread out through the woods search in rotten logs, slag pits, caves. They call out the girls' names.
- 3) Stinney and his party search the empty cotton fields near their homes. They look any place a child might crawl into if they were lost. They call out the girls' names.
- 4) Lowden and his party walk on each side of the railroad tracks. They check every bridge abutment, slag pit and area where the girls might sleep or have gotten hurt. They call out the girls' names.

INT. LUMBER COMPANY MAIN BUILDING

At the Lumber Company, the two sets of parents sit at the table, drinking coffee, as their children sleep on the floor. The Sheriff looks out the window and sees flashlights coming up to the parking lot. He looks at the clock on the wall: 12:10.

NEWMAN

They're back.

Binnicker stands up and walks to the window as the Sheriff opens the door.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)

Stay here. When I know something, I'll let you know.

Binnicker walks to the window as Sheriff closes the door behind him.

From the window, Binnicker sees more lights coming into the parking lot. He sees the Sheriff talking to Alderman.

Then Sheriff turns to look at the window. He closes his eyes and shakes his head.

BINNICKER

(quietly)

She's gone.

EXT. PARKING LOT

All the search parties have returned empty handed. There is general nervousness and dissatisfaction in the air. Alderman raises his hands.

ALDERMAN

(raised voice)

Gentlemen! Go home. Get some sleep. Come back here at 7:00 AM. We'll continue this search at daylight.

Binnicker comes out from the building. He walks up to Alderman and puts his hand on Alderman's shoulder.

BINNICKER

(sincere)

My family, and the Thameses, cannot express how thankful we are that our neighbors care so much about us. Thank you for doing this.

LOWDEN

Those little girls are part of this town.

STINNEY

We work together, Binnicker! We're in this until we find them.

Binnicker is almost moved to tears.

BINNICKER
I need to get my family home.

ALDERMAN
I'll drive you all home.

The crowd begins to disperse. Alderman walks with Binnicker into the main building with his son.

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN - MORNING

Legend: March 25th, 1944 - Day #2

The town is quiet. There is no one on the streets and all the businesses are closed down, dark and empty.

There are only a couple of cars parked on the street as the sun rises over the eastern sky.

EXT. FOREST

The search has resumed. Now, black and white men walk side by side, spaced about 100 feet apart, calling the girls' names and looking in places the girls could be.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS

Lowden and his group of men continue walking down each side of the railroad tracks. They call the girls' names as they continue to search.

One of the men stops and bend down. He motions his hands that he is pushing something out of the way. He stands up.

MAN #1
(shouting)
I found footprints!

All the men come running over to where the man stands. They look down and see small footprints in the mud. Lowden points to the west.

LOWDEN
Towards the bridge!

The men walk in a group south, in the direction Lowden pointed. Within no time, another man bends down.

MAN #2
Found a pair of scissors!

The men look at the scissors. Lowden nods.

LOWDEN
Keep following the footsteps.

EXT. EDGE OF WATER FILLED DITCH

The men walk up towards a ditch filled with muddy, brown water. They look at the ground and see indentations in the ground. Lowden kneels down and sees imprints on the ground that look like feet being dragged along the ground by the heels.

Another man looks and sees thick, thorn covered bushes that look crushed and positioned in a certain way surrounding the ditch. He walks over to the bushes, looks into the water and sees the faint outline of a small bicycle.

MAN #3
There's the girls!

Instantly, Lowden jumps into the muddy ditch where the man stands and throws the bicycle to the side. The rest of men walk over and look down.

Lowden stands up and looks at the men.

LOWDEN
Call the sheriff.

Everyone looks down to see the dead bodies of Mary and Betty float to the top of the water face down, cuts in their heads, dead.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

The door opens quickly and two gurneys with body bags enter the room. Two elderly white men, DR. R.F. BAKER and DR. A.C. BOZARD stand up as the EMTs move the bodies onto the examination table. They begin to unzip the bags.

BAKER
Are these the two girls?

The EMT nods. Bozard looks out the window and sees half the town standing outside the building.

BOZARD
Officer!

A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY walks into the office. Bozard starts putting on gloves. He does not look at the policeman.

BOZARD (CONT'D)

Please get those people out of here so we can do our work in peace.

The officer turns and walks out the door.

The EMTs remove the body bags and expose the clothed, wet bodies of the two dead girls. Their eyes are wide open.

BAKER

That is all.

The EMTs take their equipment in hand and walk out of the office as Bozard and Baker begin their examination.

BOZARD

Time?

INT. TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

In a Spartan meeting room with only a few photos of President Franklin Roosevelt and furniture of a worn wood, a group of six people, all white men, sit looking over papers. One of men in Alderman, another is Newman.

There is a feeling of emptiness in the room. On the table are papers and cups of coffee.

No one moves. No one does anything.

Alderman shifts in his seat. He picks up a piece of paper.

ALDERMAN

Are we going to start this inquest?

Newman looks at the other four men and opens a file folder.

NEWMAN

(reading)

Victim #1. Betty June Binnicker. Age 11. Numerous fractures in the back of the skull. Cause of death: blunt force trauma.

The others shake their heads and look at the ground.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)

Victim #2. Mary Emma Thames. Age 8.
Five compound fractures to the back of
the skull. Cause of death: severe blunt
force trauma.

INQUEST MEMBER #1

So the murderer was more vicious on the
younger girl than the older?

NEWMAN

(nods)

Until the medical examiner's report
comes, I wouldn't know. But it appears
that way with my initial observation of
the bodies.

One of the inquest members throws a pen on the table and
stands up, disgusted.

INQUEST MEMBER #2

Who would. . .who would want to kill two
innocent little girls?

Alderman looks up. He shakes his head.

ALDERMAN

Sheriff, do we have any idea who the
girls were with?

Newman shakes his head no. Alderman stands up and walks
to the window.

INQUEST MEMBER #3

(angry)

Dammit, they didn't just kill themselves.

NEWMAN

I know that. Don't you think I know
that?

Alderman stares out the window to see people in the town
walking like zombies, as though the life has been taken
out of them. He sighs.

ALDERMAN

My son told me he saw someone with the
girls early yesterday afternoon.

Everyone turns towards Alderman, amazed. Newman stands
up.

NEWMAN

And you were going to give me this information when?

Alderman turns around and looks at Newman.

ALDERMAN

As soon as the girls were found. I assumed they were dead.

NEWMAN

So. . .who was it?

Alderman looks at everyone and shakes his head, then curls his lip in complete disdain.

ALDERMAN

A worthless nigger boy that said he saw the girls the day they went missing.

EXT. STINNEY HOUSE

The Stinney house is a rundown share cropper's house. The paint is peeling, the wood on the porch and around the door and the windows is rotting.

The lawn is a disgrace: areas of brown emptiness where grass should be, erosion due to lack of upkeep and crab grass growing everywhere.

In the yard, the Stinney's daughter, KATHERINE STINNEY, plays with her dolls while MOTHER STINNEY, a rather portly black woman watches, knitting in a rocking chair.

A ratty looking garage sits in the back.

Katherine runs toward the porch where Mother Stinney sits.

KATHERINE

Momma! Momma! Mr. Charlie's here.

Mother Stinney stands up and looks at the path leading to her front door. She sees Newman getting out of his squad car and walking towards her, wearing sunglasses and his sheriff's hat.

NEWMAN

Sorry to bother ma'am, but is George in the house?

MOTHER STINNEY

Old George or young George?

Newman laughs a little.

NEWMAN
The boy, ma'am.

MOTHER STINNEY
(suspicious)
Is my son in trouble?

Newman takes off his sunglasses.

NEWMAN
Ma'am, we don't know that yet.

Mother Stinney looks at Katherine holding onto her mother's legs.

MOTHER STINNEY
Katey, honey. . .you go inside and get out them dishes for lunch. Your father will be home soon.

Katherine looks at Mother Stinney and then at Newman, then walks into the house. Mother Stinney looks at Newman and then walks down the steps to the ground.

MOTHER STINNEY (CONT'D)
(more suspicious)
My son is not here right now. He's out with his friends. I think at the pond swimming.

NEWMAN
Well ma'am. I'll head on down to the pond to see if the boy is there. If you see him before I do, you call the sheriff's office.

Newman looks up to see a window drape move and close. He smiles.

MOTHER STINNEY
I will.

NEWMAN
Ma'am, are you sure the boy ain't here?

MOTHER STINNEY
I said he wasn't here.

Newman nods.

NEWMAN

Why don't you call him down from the second floor, unless there's another small boy that lives in this house.

Stinney's Mother looks at Newman's impatient face and sighs.

MOTHER STINNEY

Amie?

Another little girl, AMIE STINNEY, comes out to the porch. She has her head in pigtails and is around twelve years old.

AMIE

Yes Momma.

Stinney's Mother looks at Newman, never blinking.

MOTHER STINNEY

Go upstairs and tell your brother to come outside.

Amie nods and runs in the house.

Stinney's mother looks at Newman. Newman looks at Stinney's Mother. There is a very prolonged uneasy and unnerving silence.

From inside the house, George walks outside to his mother's side. Next to him is his younger brother CHARLES.

NEWMAN

George, I need you to come with me.

George looks at his mother. Amie and Katherine come out from the house.

MOTHER STINNEY

Just go with the man, son.

STINNEY

But momma. . .

Newman grabs Stinney by the shoulder. George walks along side Newman towards the squad car. As they turn to walk towards the car, Stinney looks at his mother, confused and scared.

She looks on helpless.

George is pushed into the back of the police car. They drive away.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM INTERIOR

George sits at a wooden table in a room with only one light. He looks nervous. Two extra empty seats are all that is in the room other than the table and the chair in which George sits.

George look at a mirror and then puts his head down.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM EXTERIOR

Newman looks at George through the glass. He shakes his head.

Someone knocks on the closed door behind Newman. Newman turns and opens the door. Entering the room is a man in a three piece suit and a suitcase. This is OFFICER S.J. PRATT. He walks in, puts his suitcase down, and shakes Newman's hand.

PRATT
Sheriff Newman?

Newman nods his head while shaking Pratt's hand.

PRATT (CONT'D)
Officer Samuel Pratt from the Governor's office. Is that the kid?

Newman nods and picks up a pad and a pen.

NEWMAN
I was waiting for you. Let's get this nigger to admit what he did.

Pratt and Newman open the door to the interrogation room and walk in.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM INTERIOR

Newman and Pratt enter the room with little humor. They are stern and emotionally cold. George smiles and looks up at the two men.

Newman sits down with his pad and looks at his watch.

NEWMAN
13:44. You concur?

Pratt looks at his watch and nods. Newman writes this on his pad. Newman looks at George.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)

So, what were you doing yesterday, boy?

GEORGE

Sir?

NEWMAN

(slowly, anger)

What...were...you...doing...yesterday?

GEORGE

(thinks for a second)

Nothing, sir.

NEWMAN

You weren't down by the railroad tracks?

George shifts in his chair. Pratt walks behind George.

PRATT

Which girl did you go after first?

George looks up.

GEORGE

I. . .

EXT. LUMBER MILL

ESTABLISHING Alderman Lumber Company.

INT. LUMBER COMPANY MAIN BUILDING

Sitting at his desk, Alderman reads through papers and files, a cup of coffee on his desk.

Someone knocks on the door and Alderman looks up. He see's Stinney poke his head into the office.

STINNEY

You wanted to see me?

ALDERMAN

Come in, Mr. Stinney.

Stinney walks in, takes off his hat and stands in front of Alderman's desk. Alderman motions for George to sit.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

Stinney, how long have you been working here?

GEORGE

About fifteen years, sir.

Alderman nods.

ALDERMAN

Are you happy here, boy?

George shifts his in seat upon being called "boy."

STINNEY

I have nothing to complain about, sir.

Alderman snaps his fingers and six burly looking white men enter the room. They stand with their arms crossed staring at a now nervous Stinney.

ALDERMAN

Stinney, we know all about your boy. We know what that little nigger did.

Stinney stands up and looks at Alderman.

STINNEY

Now, my son's a good boy. . .

Alderman nods his head and four of the men grab Stinney and lift him off the ground. Stinney struggles and fights but his completely overpowered.

ALDERMAN

If you're smart, you'll get the hell out of town before that little boy of yours gets you into trouble.

The two other men open the door. The four guiding Stinney walk out the door as Alderman watches.

EXT. LUMBER MILL

The four men throw Stinney face first into the gravel parking lot. Alderman walks over.

ALDERMAN

Get this trash off my parking lot.

Stinney stands up slowly and is violently picked up by one of the burly men. He carries Stinney to the other side of the gate and then drops him in the dirt.

The gate closes behind the burly man. Alderman looks at Stinney.

EXT. POLICE STATION

ESTABLISHING POLICE STATION in mid afternoon.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM INTERIOR

George looks exhausted. He is sweating and near tears.

Newman slams his hands on the table, shocking George into reality.

Missing from the room is Pratt, though his suitcase is still in the room.

NEWMAN

God dammit, boy. We know you did it. We know. Just tell us and we'll help you.

GEORGE

I don't know nothing, sir. Please let me go home.

NEWMAN

You niggers are something else. You've been here six hours, boy. . .and you ain't once said a fucking thing I want to hear.

Pratt knocks on the door and comes in. His hands are behind his back. He looks at Newman's angered face and George's scared face and smiles.

He sits down next to George.

PRATT

George, listen. We know what you did. We know you wanted the two girls. How about this?

Pratt leans forward and takes his hands out from behind his back to show a huge bowl of chocolate and vanilla ice cream.

George's eyes widen at the sight of food, especially ice cream.

PRATT (CONT'D)

(calm)

I know you're hungry.

George nods.

PRATT (CONT'D)
I know you're tired.

George nods.

Pratt looks at Newman.

PRATT (CONT'D)
I'll make you a deal.

GEORGE
Sir?

PRATT
If you tell this man the things he wants to know, I'll give you this entire bowl of ice cream. Do we have a deal, young man?

George looks at Newman then at the ice cream. He nods his head furiously and takes the ice cream. He begins to eat.

Pratt looks at Newman and smiles.

PRATT (CONT'D)
He's all yours.

Newman picks up his pen.

NEWMAN
Do you know the old drainage ditch near the railroad tracks?

George nods his head as he eats.

EXT. MURDER SCENE - LATE AFTERNOON

George is led to the ditch where the bodies were found. Pratt and Newman stand on each side of him. George looks down at the water and sees nothing but mud.

NEWMAN
There are metal pieces everywhere around here.

Newman points to a few pieces of broken wood.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)
And there's wood over there.

Pratt looks at George.

PRATT

Is there anything here that seems like it shouldn't be where it is?

George looks around and motions in a direction with his head.

GEORGE

There's a railroad spike in the water. What would that be doing there?

Newman looks over at the railroad spike and smiles. He pulls it out of the water. It is about fifteen inches long and a bit on the heavy side as Newman struggles to pick it up.

NEWMAN

This spike is out of place?

George nods and smiles as though he helped out the police with something.

Newman walks over to Pratt with the spike in his hand.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)

People are preparing to string him up tonight.

Pratt nods.

PRATT

Lynching him won't bring them girls back. We need him alive for trial.

Pratt looks at George, who is splashing in the water.

PRATT (CONT'D)

I'll take him to Columbia tonight. We'll hold him there until the trial.

Newman looks at George and shakes his head.

NEWMAN

Don't be thinking you're gonna hold that murderer for a long time.

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN CENTER - MID MORNING

Legend: March 26th, 1944 - Day 3

The church bells begin to chime. It is 9 AM and people are walking into the large, Baptist church on the southeast corner of the town center.

INT. ALCOLU CHURCH

The church is packed. Standing room only and filled to over-flowing. No one is talking. They sit upset, depressed.

As the front of the church stands the REVEREND. He looks over his congregation and then at the front of the room to see the Thames family and the Binnicker family sitting together.

Reverend raises his bible. Everyone looks up.

REVEREND

Blessed is our Lord, Jesus Christ.

CONGREGATION

(response)

Blessed be Jesus.

Reverend puts the bible down and leans forward from his podium.

REVEREND

My friends. The Lord tests us at every step of our lives. He tests us to insure that our faith in his word, his name, and his kingdom is given the respect and love he demands being the God of our fathers.

The congregation murmurs agreement.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

As with Job, the lord challenges us as a way to renew our faith. Yesterday, the Lord gave us the ultimate challenge. . .

Reverend looks at the Thames family to see Mother Thames beginning to well up. Reverend, moved, remains steady.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

When that little boy, George Stinney. . .

Reverend begins to well up as well.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

(choking on words)

Murdered those two little white girls.

The congregation's mood turns from upset to slow anger. Everyone looks at each other and then at the two victims' families at the front.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Now, the Lord asks us to forgive. To turn the other cheek.

Reverend looks at his "flock" and his mood sours.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I love Jesus. I love preaching the word of Jesus to all my friends in Alcolu.

Reverend picks up his bible and points to the Thames family and the Binnicker family.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

But when I see these good people missing one of the most important members of their family because some murdering coon's family can't control their little monkey.

Someone in the back stands up.

ANGRY MAN #1

(furious)

They're all the same! They'll kill us all of they had the chance!

Reverend puts his hand up.

REVEREND

We are all God's children. As such, no one group can be judged by one person.

Reverend points to the direction of the jail.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

But that nigger isn't one of God's children.

The congregation applauds. Slowly, Betty's mother stands up. Everyone quiets down almost instantly in an immediate sign of respect.

Reverend looks at the distraught woman and softens.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

(gentle)

Mrs. Binnicker. Would you like to address the congregation?

Betty's mother nods. Reverend motions her to step to the podium. As she does, Reverend steps back.

Betty's mother has tear lines down her face.

BETTY'S MOTHER
(almost unheard)
I. . .I. . .

Reverend walks up to Betty's mother and puts his hand on her shoulder.

REVEREND
It's okay. Take your time.

Betty's mother closes her eyes and nods quickly. She opens them and takes a breath in and out deeply.

BETTY'S MOTHER
I love my children. All of my children.
They are my life. And part of my life is
gone. We haven't eaten or slept in two
days. Tomorrow. . .

Betty's mother looks at Mr. Binnicker and then at the crowd.

BETTY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Tomorrow, we bury our daughter. And the
animal that killed her still walks
around. My baby is gone and that. .
.black bastard. . .

The crowd is shocked that a woman would use such language in a church.

BETTY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(angry)
Took her away from me because. . .because
he wanted to violate her!

The crowd looks up at Betty's mother, instantly infuriated.

Betty's mother hardens. Her look becomes cold.

BETTY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
The police told us that he wanted to. .
.defile my daughter, so he killed Mary to
get rid of her and when Betty fought
back, he killed her too.

Another man stands up.

Reverend takes Betty's mother by the shoulders. She is shuddering and shaking.

Binnicker comes up to take his wife, who has lost her composure. Tenderly, he sits her back down on the pew next to him. The other children hug their mother.

Reverend comes back to the podium and looks at the congregation.

REVEREND

(angry)

Those people do nothing but take and take from us. We gave them everything. They hurt us all.

The congregation responds angrily.

EXT. STINNEY HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

ESTABLISHING Stinney House.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mother Stinney sits in the living bawling her eyes out, being consoled by Stinney. The three daughters watch helpless. Charles stands in the corner.

Stinney talks to Mother Stinney MOS, but she doesn't seem to respond to his soothing, calming words.

REVEREND (V.O.)

I know his family doesn't care. Those people are all the same. They are laughing at us because they hurt white people.

Stinney looks out the window and sees flickering lights. Instantly, a brick crashes through the a window in the living room.

STINNEY

(panicked)

Get down! Get down!

Everyone obeys. Stinney crawls on his hands and knees to the window.

REVEREND (V.O.)

Our boys are fighting murdering Nazis and those Nips in Japan to save our way of life, and for what? So niggers can murder our children in our backyard?

Stinney looks out the window.

FRONTYARD

He sees a cross burning on his front lawn and seven white men in white hoods holding clubs and metal rods in their hands. They stand in aggressive poses.

KLANSMAN #1

Get your ass out here, boy!

STINNEY (O.S.)

(yelling)

We didn't do nothing!

Two klansman looks at each other. One pulls out a glass bottle filled with liquid with a rag sticking out of end, the other flips on a lighter.

KLANSMAN #1

Your little nigger son's going to die tonight.

Mother Stinney hears this and screams.

MOTHER STINNEY (O.S.)

No! George! Stop them!

STINNEY (O.S.)

(terrified)

Shut up!

Stinney sees the klansman lighting the Molotov cocktail. They hand it to the man who has been talking. He looks at the flame, then at the house.

KLANSMAN #1

(threatening)

If you know what's good for you, boy. .
.you won't bother with that dead nigger anymore.

He throws the Molotov cocktail through the window. The house instantly catches on fire.

Panic inside the house! The little girls start screaming.

LIVING ROOM

Stinney stands up and hurries his children out of the house.

STINNEY

Back door. Out the back! Now!

Mother Stinney cries out. Stinney grabs her after he sees Charles lead the girls safely outside.

MOTHER STINNEY

George! They're going to kill our boy!

Stinney pulls on Mother Stinney to get her to move towards the back door.

They run to the back door and outside.

BACKYARD

Instantly, someone that was hiding strikes Stinney in the back of the head with a long, hard object. Mother Stinney screams and Stinney falls on his face on the back porch.

He looks up to see his three daughters being held by three white men in white hoods by their hair. The girls are terrified.

He sees his wife being held by another white man with a metal rod under her chin, choking her. Stinney begins to fade in and out.

Someone grabs Stinney's head by his hair. He lifts up Stinney's head, bloodied by the strike.

KLANSMAN #1

You ain't gonna do nothing to help that nigger murderer.

Stinney groans and begins to fade again. Klansman shakes his head.

KLANSMAN #1 (CONT'D)

If you are smart, boy. . .you'll get you and your niglets out of town tonight. Because if we see you in Alcolu again. . .Well, there are a lot of trees and I have a lot of rope.

Klansman points to the three girls and Charles.

KLANSMAN #1 (CONT'D)

We'll start with three girls. Then will hang your nigger whore wife.

Klansman releases Stinney's head. Stinney, weakly, looks up, groggy.

KLANSMAN #1 (CONT'D)

Then we'll string you and your other boy up together.

Klansman kicks Stinney in the face, knocking him out. He turns to the other klansmen and nods. They release the girls and Mother Stinney, who run to Stinney.

The one holding Charles pushes Charles face first into the ground.

The house burns around them and the Klansmen leave.

KLANSMAN #2 (O.S.)

(yelling)

You better be gone by morning, boy!

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING Sheriff's Office with a huge crowd of white people standing outside.

There is a mob outside. They are holding lit torches, ropes, the Confederate flag, the South Carolina flag, the United States flag and assorted weapons in their hands. They shout at the Sheriff's Office's locked doors. There is a large pile of wood under a tree in the town center.

The people in the crowd scream "Give us the nigger," "Justice for Mary and Betty" and "Death to the nigger Stinney."

The crowd starts moving towards the door. As they do, the doors fly open and Newman rushes out with five DEPUTIES holding shotguns. Newman cocks the shotgun and fires into the air. The angry crowd calms down.

NEWMAN

(shouting)

You all go home now! There ain't nothing you gonna do tonight.

The people in the crowd shake their heads and murmurs discontent amongst themselves.

MOB #1 (O.S.)
 (unseen)
 Give us that nigger now!

Newman cocks the shotgun and holds it up to the crowd.

NEWMAN
 (calm)
 Now, I'll shoot the whole lot of you if
 you don't get the hell out of here!

The crowd gets angrier. They start moving towards the officers.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)
 (shouts to the deputies)
 Aim into the crowd now!

As the other officers raise their shotguns, the crowd begins to back down a bit. They stop advancing on the sheriff's officers and a stand off begins.

MOB #2 (O.S.)
 (unseen)
 That nigger gonna die tonight!

Newman shakes his head.

NEWMAN
 There ain't gonna be a lynching on my
 watch!

MOB #1 (O.S.)
 Bring the nigger out, or we'll go in
 there and get him!

Newman looks to see the crowd will not back down.

NEWMAN
 You want the boy? You're too late!

Newman points south.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)
 He's in Columbia! Go there and do your
 lynching.

The crowd calms down. This is a let down.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)
 That officer from the Governor's office
 took him there earlier this afternoon.

The crowd begins to turn away from the Sheriff's Office.

MOB #1 (O.S.)

(angry)

How do we know you're not lying to us,
Newman?

Newman unlocks the door and opens it.

NEWMAN

You want to look for him? Be my guest.

The crowd, upon hearing that, begins to disperse. There is nothing more to do.

Newman watches the crowd leave and head back home. As the crowd thins, Newman lowers his gun. The other deputies follow suit.

Soon, the Alcolu town center is empty and quiet, save the gentle breeze and the six police officers standing on the steps of the Sheriff's Office.

They put their guns to their sides, turn and walk into Sheriff's office.

Silence. Peace.

EXT. ALCOLU CEMETARY - LATE MORNING

Legend: March 27th, 1944 - Day 4

Most of Alcolu has come out. They are in black, watching two small coffins being lowered into the ground.

Reverend stands MOS and gives the eulogy. The Thameses and the Binnickers sit together, the adults holding their children. Flowers are laid all over the ground. Two photos of the two murder girls sit in front of the burial sites.

There is a feeling of depressed melancholy in the air.

REVEREND

Ashes to ashes.

EXT. STINNEY HOUSE

The house is burnt to the ground: black, charred remains of their house, still smoking and smoldering. The garage has been ransacked. Items scattered all over the yard.

REVEREND (V.O.)

Dust to dust.

EXT. BUS STATION

The Stinneys sit with very little of their possessions with them. Stinney's face is covered and has red marks all over the white bandages. The girls sit near the mother, not moving. Mother Stinney just sits and stares. Charles sits with his mother, who hugs him as tightly as she can.

They climb onto a greyhound bus as Stinney watches them to make sure nothing bad happens. As soon as the family is on board, Stinney climbs on.

The door closes. The bus pulls away. On the placard over the door is the word "Charlotte." The bus backs away from the bus station, shifts into 1st gear and pulls away, beginning its trek to Charlotte.

REVEREND (V.O.)

Amen.

CROWD (V.O.)

(together, soft)

Amen.

INT. JAIL CELL

George lies in a ball in a 8x8 square foot jail cell, alone. He wears jail issue clothing. Next to him is a well worn, well read, breaking apart Holy Bible.

George appears to be segregated from the rest of jail population. There is no one around him.

On the floor lays a tray with his last meal, half eaten.

A white detention officer walks past George's cell. He stops and looks at the boy. On his name plate on his chest is the name JOHNSON.

JOHNSON

(calm)

Hey.

George doesn't respond.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Hey. Boy! You hear me?

George, again, doesn't respond. Johnson pulls a chocolate bar from his pocket and ruffles it.

George looks up and sees Johnson opening the packaging.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Hello. Would you like to have a piece with me?

George looks at Johnson very suspiciously.

GEORGE

(quiet)

Last time Mr. Charlie gave me something, I was arrested.

Johnson smiles. He breaks the chocolate bar into two pieces. He puts his hand through the bars and offers George half.

JOHNSON

(smiles)

I guess you'll have to trust me, boy. I'm just here to watch you.

George walks towards Johnson.

GEORGE

You ain't gonna do nothing to hurt me, sir?

Johnson shakes his head. George quickly grabs the chocolate bar out of Johnson's hand, runs back to his cot, sits down and devours it as though he hasn't eaten in a month.

Johnson watches, holding the other half of the chocolate bar in his hand. He sees a chair, walks over to it, pulls it to the door of George's cell and then sits.

JOHNSON

Your parents come to see you?

GEORGE

(soft)

No, sir.

JOHNSON

How come?

George shrugs his shoulders.

GEORGE

Maybe they're scared, sir.

Johnson looks around.

JOHNSON

Jails are usually noisy. Why are you so quiet?

GEORGE

Ain't got nothing to say, sir.

JOHNSON

You heard about their house?

George looks up, confused.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Klan burnt it down.

George looks at Johnson, stunned. He looks down.

GEORGE

My family?

JOHNSON

I heard they were okay. They left town.

George sits on the cot and hugs his bible.

GEORGE

It's my fault. I didn't know.

Johnson looks at his watch.

JOHNSON

Did you kill them girls, boy?

George ices up. He looks at Johnson cold, a small hint of betrayal.

GEORGE

I never touched them girls, sir.

George falls onto his cot and throws the blanket over him, hiding his face from Johnson.

Johnson stands up.

JOHNSON

Well, that's how you're the same as everyone else. Everyone in here is innocent.

Johnson puts the chocolate bar on the ground and walks away.

George sees the chocolate bar. He stands up and walks over to the chocolate bar.

He picks it up then drops the chocolate bar into his half eaten, jail meal. He walks over to the cot, picks up his bible, opens it and starts reading.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EXTERIOR

ESTABLISHING the office of Assistant District Attorney Frank McLeod. His name appears on a placard on the door.

INT. MCLEOD'S OFFICE

Inside a overly garish and over decorated office, a middle aged white man in a suit and tie sits in an over large leather desk chair. He is balding with white hair on the side. This is DA FRANK MCLEOD, the prosecutor in the case.

In the office with him is Newman and Alderman, who sit drinking coffee in chairs facing the desk.

McLeod's desk is extremely clean and organized.

He picks up a file folder and looks over the paperwork.

MCLEOD

So, the kid confessed to the crime?

NEWMAN

To me and to the officer from the Governor's office.

McLeod nods.

MCLEOD

You have this all on record.

NEWMAN

I know what the kid said. I didn't need to write it down.

McLeod looks at Newman and sours.

MCLEOD

No record, the judge might not allow it. The jury might not accept it.

Alderman looks at McLeod, confused.

ALDERMAN

You're kidding right? That nigger killed and tried to rape two white girls.

(MORE)

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

Ain't no jury in the world not going to convict a nigger for doing that anywhere in the state of South Carolina.

McLeod leans forward in his chair and nods in agreement.

NEWMAN

Do you know who's going to defend him?

McLeod puts down the file folder and picks up another. He thumbs through the first two pages, then smiles.

MCLEOD

(smiles)

The court appointed Charles Plowden.

Alderman looks at McLeod and Newman, smiling.

ALDERMAN

Young, ambitious. . . I wonder what he wants to be when he grows up.

Alderman chuckles.

NEWMAN

Do you think he can get the kid off?

McLeod shakes his head.

ALDERMAN

Maybe I should meet this young man and see where he stands on this "innocent until proven guilty" nonsense.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Dearest Momma. I miss you.

INT. JAIL CELL

George sits on his cot with a piece of paper on his bible and a pen in his hand. He is thinner than he was. On the floor is, again, a half eaten jail issued meal.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Momma, I'm sorry I did this to you. I know you must hate me for making the family look bad. I don't know what happened after they took me. I hope you're all okay.

SERIES OF SHOTS

1) George being harassed by larger, tougher inmates due to his size. They pin him to the ground and are about to beat him up when the officers jump in and separate them. Johnson picks up George by his shirt and throw him against the wall, puts his hands behind George's back and cuffs George.

Johnson puts George's head down and force marches him away. George does not struggle or fight. All this happens through George's next voice over.

GEORGE (V.O.)

I know I'm alone here, but I know I have you and Daddy and the girls waiting for me when I get out. It's been tough here, but I'm holding my own.

2) Johnson uncuffs George, opens a door and throws George into solitary confinement.

JOHNSON

(angry)

I knew you'd cause trouble eventually, boy. You niggers are all the same.

George rubs his arms. He sits on the floor in a ball and stares at the door.

GEORGE (V.O.)

The officers have taken good care of me. They make sure I'm not attacked or hurt. And this one officer, Officer Johnson, even brought me something nice one day.

3) George walks down the line when he passes a white GUARD. The guard puts out his billy club and stops him.

GUARD

Rest of y'all boys just keep on walkin'.

The rest of the line continues until George is alone with the Guard and four other GUARDS.

Guard spits tobacco juice from his mouth.

GUARD (CONT'D)

So, you like killing white girls, boy?

George doesn't answer. Guard looks at the other Guards.

GUARD (CONT'D)

This nigger don't know how to talk, boys.

The other Guards laugh.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(angry)

This nigger thinks he's special. Don't cha, boy?

Guard puts the billy club end under George's chin and lifts up George's head. George looks up and remains stoic.

Guard shrugs his shoulders and puts the billy club down.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Get out of here.

George lowers his head and continues walking. As soon as he passes, Guard hits George square on the back of the legs. George falls like a rock to the ground and holds his legs, rolling on the ground, screaming in pain.

The guards laugh.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Leave him here.

Guard and the others walk away as George writhes in pain on the ground.

GEORGE (V.O.)

I hate jail, Momma. But it's not bad. It's like school. Just do what the guards say and everything is okay.

4) George sits in his darkened cell, laying in the cot with his eyes open, staring at the ceiling. Around him is yelling and screaming from other inmates. It sounds like a prison riot, but George does not move.

GEORGE (V.O.)

I will make it through this. And then I will be with you. I just want you to know I didn't do the thing they said I did. I don't know why I am here.

INT. SMALL LIVING ROOM

In a small living room, Mother Stinney, Charles and the girls listen to Stinney reading Stinney's letter. Stinney is visibly shaken.

STINNEY

(reading)

"But what keeps me going is knowing you will come to me soon and take me away after all of this is over. I will see you at the trial. Give my love to my sisters. And tell Charles I'll teach him to swim when I get home. I miss all of you. Georgie."

Mother Stinney holds her daughters and looks up at Stinney.

MOTHER STINNEY

We gotta go see the boy. He needs us.

STINNEY

I know, dear. But if we go back to Alcolu, they'll kill us. I took a risk to get this from Sheriff Newman.

Mother Stinney stands up.

MOTHER STINNEY

I don't care. That's my boy they got there!

Mother Stinney heads to the coat rack and puts on a scarf. Stinney stands up.

STINNEY

(gentle)

We can't go.

Mother Stinney has stopped listening. She puts on her jacket. Stinney walks over to her. He pulls her into him. She embraces her husbands and starts to weep.

MOTHER STINNEY

He needs me, George.

STINNEY

Until this is over, Georgie is on his own. We can't help him.

Mother Stinney buries her head in Stinney's chest as the girls watch.

MOTHER STINNEY

I just want him home, George.

The two embrace in the living room as the girls watch helpless.

INT. MCLEOD'S OFFICE

McLeod sits at his desk. Alderman is with him in one of the chairs facing the desk.

Someone knocks on the door and enters. He is dressed in a blue suit. He is a young man, thin with dark hair and not very attractive. This is CHARLES PLOWDEN. In his hand is a suitcase with a file folder on the outside.

Alderman stands up and extends his hand. McLeod stands up and stands behind his desk.

PLOWDEN

You wanted to see me?

McLeod picks up his file folder and starts reading.

MCLEOD

Stinney, George. . .aged 14 years, 6 months old. Accused of killing two girls. . .

PLOWDEN

I know the case I'm defending. And I'd rather not do it.

Alderman smiles. McLeod looks up at Plowden.

MCLEOD

It's your job to defend this little nigger and I'm here to give you my case to help you.

Plowden shakes his head and opens his file folder.

PLOWDEN

McLeod, I'm not even an attorney. I'm a tax man. No one in South Carolina wants this case and neither do I. This is a career killer for me. You think I want a to be a tax commissioner my entire life?

McLeod looks at Plowden.

ALDERMAN

So you want more?

PLOWDEN

This is an election year, Mr. Alderman. I've already started campaigning for the state legislature. How will it look in the eyes of voters if I am the lawyer who got this black kid off?

Alderman chuckles a little. McLeod closes his file folder and looks up at Plowden.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)

And I don't think you want to be known as the DA that allowed that little nigger off for killing two white girls, do you, Frank?

Alderman laughs.

ALDERMAN

I think my problems are solved. My family is safe from a murderer and I know who I'm supporting in November.

Plowden looks at Alderman.

ALDERMAN (CONT'D)

So long as you do your job.

INT. JAIL CELL

George is thinner than he was before. There is a semi-healed bruise over his right eye and a nearly healed cut over his top lip. He sits in a ball staring at the ceiling.

The door to his cell opens and Johnson stands holding the key.

JOHNSON

On your feet, boy. You got a visitor.

George stands and walks slowly with his eyes to the ground. Johnson closes and locks the door behind George.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Keep moving, boy.

INT. VISITING ROOM

Johnson opens the door to a jail visiting room. The visitors and the inmates are separated by thick glass with holes in it to allow each to hear each other speak.

Johnson points all the way to the end. George walks slowly past all the visitors and the inmates.

George gets to the end and turns. His face explodes in sheer happiness as he sees Mother Stinney sitting across from him. George quickly sits down and touches the glass. Mother Stinney does the same.

She looks at the condition of her son.

MOTHER STINNEY

Oh, Georgie. What have they done to you?

George looks at his mother and smiles.

GEORGE

Momma, is it just you?

Mother Stinney nods her head. She lifts up her purse and pulls out a small handkerchief.

MOTHER STINNEY

Why, Georgie? You had to say you saw the girls. Why did you have to say that?

GEORGE

(quiet)

I didn't think it would matter, Momma.

MOTHER STINNEY

(quickly)

Two dead white girls. You know they was looking for a someone black to put it on. Mr. Charlie had no problems taking you away from us.

George looks at the ground.

GEORGE

Sorry, Momma.

Neither knows what to say to the other. The silence is awkward and painful.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

How's Daddy?

Mother Stinney nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And the girls?

Mother Stinney nods and forces a smile.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

How is Charles?

Mother Stinney purses her lips together and laughs through her tears.

MOTHER STINNEY

He's fine. They're all fine. They all miss you, Georgie.

GEORGE

(quiet, shame)

I miss them too, Momma. When can I go home?

Mother Stinney shakes a little with that question. She, unfortunately, know the answer.

MOTHER STINNEY

(changing the subject)

Your father thinks I went to visit my mother for the day. I can't stay long, Georgie.

Mother Stinney puts her hand to the glass separating her from her son. George also does this. If the glass weren't there, they would be holding hands.

MOTHER STINNEY (CONT'D)

The house is quiet without you.

GEORGE

Remember the times you would yell at me and Charles about yelling through the house.

Mother Stinney chuckles a little.

MOTHER STINNEY

I used to tell you I'd have them take you away if you didn't behave.

George looks at his mother and discovers the truth.

GEORGE

Momma, how is everyone?

Mother Stinney shakes her head.

MOTHER STINNEY

(confessing)

It's like someone died, Georgie. Father doesn't speak much anymore, the girls keep asking when you will be coming home and Charles keeps staring out the window waiting for you to come home.

George's look changes to hopeless despair.

GEORGE
(innocent)
Momma, when can I go home?

Mother Stinney tries to speak, but nothing comes out. She slowly pulls her hand away from the glass and looks at it. She looks at her son and the tears begin to well up in her eyes.

MOTHER STINNEY
(slowly)
I don't know. Just remember I love you.

Mother Stinney looks at her boy and then stands up. She takes her purse.

MOTHER STINNEY (CONT'D)
Momma will always love you.

Mother Stinney looks at her son unable to control her emotions, walks away. George sits helplessly watching.

GEORGE
Momma?

Mother Stinney doesn't stop walking. She doesn't turn around. It would be too painful.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Momma? Come back!

Mother Stinney covers her eyes and runs out the door. George, terrified stands up and tries, in vain, to look over the glass at his mother.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(screaming, crying)
Momma! Don't leave me.

Johnson walks over to George.

JOHNSON
(stern)
Let's go, boy.

George looks at the ground, defeated.

GEORGE
(almost a whisper)
Please don't leave me.

Johnson taps George's shoulder again, a little more force.

JOHNSON

Move it, boy!

George stands up and follows Johnson back to his cell, always looking at the ground.

INT. JAIL CELL

George sits in his cell, looking at his hands. He looks around his cell.

GEORGE

(quietly)

I didn't do it.

George looks at the bars of his jail cell.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(a little louder)

I didn't do it.

Stinney walks to the door. He grabs it and starts pulling on it as though he is trying to rip the bars out of the ground.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(louder)

I didn't do it.

George starts rocking back and forth holding the door in his hands as though his is trying to use his body strength to rip the door off the hinge.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(yelling)

I. . .didn't. . .do. . .it!

Johnson walks over after hearing the yelling to see George pulling on the door.

JOHNSON

(commanding)

Shut the fuck up, boy!

Johnson takes out his billy club and lifts it as though he is about to high George's fingers.

GEORGE

(mind gone)

I didn't do it. I didn't do it!

JOHNSON

I don't give a shit! Shut the fuck up
before I shut your black ass up!

George lets go of the door and turns to his cot. He starts ripping things off his cot; pillows, blankets, even the cot. George has lost his mind. He tears his cell apart, all the while screaming "I didn't do it."

Johnson watches, then puts his billy club away. He walks away from the tantrum and stands with the Guard that struck George with the billy club.

GUARD

Do we do anything?

JOHNSON

(shakes his head)

Let the monkey rip up his cage. It's
only a week until he goes to prison.

George has torn up the pillows and the blanket. He trips over his own feet and falls on the mattress.

Later, George snaps out of his insanity. He sit on the mattress, his legs under his knees, weeping.

GEORGE

(through the tears)

I want to go home. Please God, let me go
home.

Stinney picks up his bible and holds it to his chest. He rocks back and forth. George looks at his skin and then up at Johnson and the Guard.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Please let me go home.

JOHNSON

(calm)

Only if the jury says you can.

Guard laughs.

GUARD

So you ain't never going home again,
nigger boy!

George rocks back and forth, then falls back onto the mattress, tears streaming down his face, saying almost automatically "Momma, help me."

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN CENTER

Life seems to have returned to normal. People go about their daily activities with little or no fanfare. The church bell rings and all people, dressed in their Sunday "Going-to-Church" clothing, start walking towards the baptist church.

A man stops at a newspaper stand and buys a newspaper. He looks at the front of *The Manning Times* and reads the headline:

INSERT - MANNING TIMES FRONT PAGE

"George Stinney, Accused Murderer, Returns Tomorrow to Face Trial. Alcolu Prepares Homecoming."

The man puts the newspaper under his arm and walks toward the church.

EXT. BACK OF SHERIFF'S OFFICE - EVENING

In an empty alley, two sheriff's deputies stand holding shotguns. They look nervous and uneasy. Each has sweat puddles under their armpits and are sweating down their faces.

From the end of the alley, a nondescript black car turns and starts driving towards them slowly. The two deputies walk slowly and deliberately. One watches the van, the other looks around at the surrounding area.

The car turns its lights off and slowly comes to a halt in front of the two deputies.

The doors open and four officers holding shotguns exit. The two from the front of the car move to stand in front of the headlights. The two that exited the back doors stand in front of the tail lights facing the direction from which the car traveled.

All four hold their shotguns in a position where if they needed to fire, the action would be easy and fast. No one smiles.

The two at the door walk down the steps and face the rear passenger side door. As they stand, George's foot appears. Then the other foot becomes visible. George is shackled.

Sliding out of the car, George stands, looking at the ground.

He wears a black and white striped prison outfit, shackled from head to toe. George can't really walk, he shuffles his feet.

George is shuttled quickly into the police station.

INT. HOLDING CELL

George slides his hands through the slot in the door. An officer takes his keys and unlocks the handcuffs. George is free of his shackles.

George runs to the cot, jumps in, gets into a fetal position and pulls the covers over his head.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Your lawyer will visit you tomorrow.

George closes his eyes. He starts whispering "Momma, help me. Help me please." Slowly he stops. Peace comes to him and George falls asleep.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

George sits in a Spartan room with no decorations, one light and only one window bringing outside light into the room. All in all, this room looks and has the feeling of a medieval torture chamber.

George sits shackled to the chair. He cannot stand, he can barely shift in his seat and he can only have limited ability to move his arms on the table.

No one is in the room with him. He is alone. His eyes never leave looking at the floor.

The door to the room opens and Johnson escorts Plowden into the room.

Plowden looks at George and sighs. Then turns to Johnson.

PLOWDEN

That is all, officer.

Johnson looks at George and then walks out the open door, closing it behind him.

George looks at Plowden, confused.

GEORGE

(quiet)

Who are you, sir?

Plowden puts down his briefcase and sits, pretty much ignoring George. He opens his briefcase and pulls out a legal pad. From his from inside pocket, he pulls out a fountain pen.

PLOWDEN

(indifferent)

I'm your attorney.

George watches Plowden intensely. Plowden does not make eye contact as he writes on his legal pad.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)

(indifferent)

Sorry I did not come when you were in Columbia. I had more important things to do.

George shakes his head and looks at his hands.

Plowden opens his brief case and pulls out a file folder.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)

So, why did you do it?

George's head shoots up.

GEORGE

(forceful)

I didn't do it.

Plowden opens the file folder.

PLOWDEN

(reading a list)

You saw the girls the day they disappeared. You took the police to the spot of the murder. . .

GEORGE

(forceful)

They took me!

Plowden shakes his head.

PLOWDEN

Same idea. You knew where the bodies were. You even showed the police the murder weapon.

George looks toward the ground.

GEORGE
I didn't do it, sir.

Plowden puts his file folder down and looks at George for the first time.

PLOWDEN
Look, boy. If you aren't going to be honest with me, I can't help you. The entire county knows you killed those two girls. Why not make your peace before God and tell me the truth?

George breathes in slowly and deeply.

GEORGE
(deliberate)
I. . .did. . .not. . .

PLOWDEN
(interjecting)
Do it. . .yeah, yeah. We can't use "George Stinney is innocent because he said he did not do it" in court. Do you have any witnesses that can say where you were at the time the girls were killed?

GEORGE
(quiet)
Just my family.

Plowden throws his pen on the table and shakes his head.

PLOWDEN
No one is going to believe your family. A jury will know they will lie to save you. Anyone else?

Stinney thinks for a minute. He shakes his head.

GEORGE
Just them. You can have them say. . .

Plowden shakes his head.

PLOWDEN
Your family isn't in Alcolu anymore. They aren't even in the Clarendon County. And I don't have the time or resources to hunt them down.

George looks up, shocked. For the first time, there is fear in his eyes.

GEORGE
(nervous)
My trial is going to be here?

Plowden nods without looking at Stinney as he ruffles in his briefcase.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Can you get it changed? You said everyone in the county thinks I did it.

Plowden shakes his head.

PLOWDEN
The judge would deny it. You can get a fair trial here.

George shakes his head.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)
When you were with the girls, was there anyone else there?

GEORGE
(hesitant)
No, sir.

Plowden stands up. He opens his briefcase and puts all the papers and the file folders inside. He closes the briefcase, stands up and bangs on the door. Plowden turns to look at George.

PLOWDEN
(angry)
You had better hope I can convince the jury that you're too young to commit murder, son.

The door opens and the Guard stands looking at Plowden and George.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)
It's the only hope you have.

Plowden leaves. Guard looks at George. George sits and doesn't move. He stares straight ahead and doesn't move a muscle.

GEORGE
(quiet)
Please, sir. Just another minute.

Guard looks at Stinney. Instantly, he grabs George by his arm, pulls him out of the chair and drags him out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

The room is empty as George screams in terror and pain O.S.

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Stop! You're breaking my arm! Stop!
Please! Momma! I want my mother!

There is a sound of a billy club hitting skin, then George is silent.

INT. COURTROOM - AFTERNOON

Legend: Monday, April 24th, 1944 - Day 31

Clarendon County Superior Court - Manning, South Carolina

The courtroom is standing room only. Everyone and their brother has come to see George put on trial. The courtroom is filled to overflowing. Not surprisingly, all of the spectators are white. There is not one black face in the audience.

INT. OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM

The entire population of Alcolu and most of Manning are also outside the courtroom, jamming all the hallways leading to the courtroom.

EXT. COURTYARD

Even more people fill the courtyard leading to the courthouse. All faces are white.

INT. COURTROOM

McLeod and Plowden sit at the lawyer's tables reading papers and writing on legal pads. A side door opens and a BAILIFF walks in with George in handcuffs. The commotion in the courtroom stops as everyone turns to see George walk into the court.

The feeling in the court turns to one of absolute hatred. People whisper to each other as they point and look at George.

George, dressed in a white shirt and blue jeans, stares at the ground as he is lead to the defense table.

One man tries to rush George but is pounced on by three police officers. They wrestle the man to the ground, flip him over, handcuff him and quickly escort him out of the courtroom. No one helps the man or even makes a sound.

George sits down next to Plowden. He looks up and smiles.

GEORGE

Afternoon, sir.

Plowden ignores him and continues reading. George looks at McLeod and smiles cordially. McLeod shakes his head and then continues reading.

Behind McLeod, an OLD MAN points to George, slides his index finger over his neck and mouths "you're dead, boy." George looks to the ground, shaking a little.

BAILIFF

All rise!

Everyone stands.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)

Superior Court in and for the County of Clarendon will come to order. Court is now in session. The honorable Judge Stoll presiding.

As George stands, he looks around the courtroom. His head and eyes dart around to see all the white faces with looks of hatred and murder on their faces and in their eyes.

GEORGE

(down)

They didn't come.

Plowden, angry, motions for George to be quiet.

JUDGE STOLL, a bald, thin man with silver and gray hair enters.

STOLL

Be seated.

Stoll raps his gavel and everyone sits. Stoll looks at McLeod and Plowden. The clock behind him reads 2:30.

STOLL (CONT'D)

This afternoon we will hear the case of the People of the State of South Carolina versus George Julius Stinney, Jr. Is the State ready to proceed?

McLeod rises.

MCLEOD

The State is ready, your honor.

McLeod sits.

STOLL

Is the defense?

Plowden rises

PLOWDEN

The defense is ready your honor.

Stoll looks at the Bailiff and nods.

BAILIFF

Will all those who have been selected to serve on the jury please step into the jury box?

Twelve people walk forward and stand in the jury box. McLeod step into the jury box. All are white. Two are women, jurors #4 and #10.

STOLL

Is the jury acceptable to the prosecution?

MCLEOD

The State objects to jurors #4 and #10.

STOLL

Does the defense have any objection to removing these two jurors from the jury?

PLOWDEN

Defense has no objections.

The two women stand up and leave and a replaced by two older white men.

STOLL

Is the jury acceptable to the prosecution?

MCLEOD

The jury is acceptable, your honor.

STOLL

Defense?

FLOWDEN

It is acceptable, your honor.

Stoll raps his gavel.

STOLL

The jury has been selected. Mr. Prosecutor, your opening statement.

McLeod stands and walks to the jury box.

MCLEOD

This is a simple case. This is the case of a a boy viciously attacking two innocent, defenseless girls, crushing their skulls and leaving them in a muddy ditch, covered by the bicycle so no one will find them.

McLeod looks at the members of the jury look at George.

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

The evidence is overwhelming. The defendant, George Stinney, confessed to the crime not once, but twice, took the police to where he murdered the two little girls and even pointed out the murder weapon that he used. You will hear his motives from the two officers that took his confession. You will hear the testimony of the medical examiners that determined the cause of death and you will hear the testimony of the man who found the girls after a two day manhunt. All this evidence points to George Stinney as the culprit. . .and after everything is presented, you must find this "boy" guilty of murder in the first degree. Thank you.

McLeod returns to his seat. Stoll looks at Plowden.

STOLL

Defense. Your opening statement.

Plowden stands up and looks at the jury. He puts his pen in his front pocket.

PLOWDEN

Gentlemen of the jury. What we have before us is not as simple as the prosecutor has set in a his cut and dry opening statement. The defense does not deny the defendant committed the crimes that he is accused of. . .

George looks up at Plowden, terrified. He puts his hands together and sits at the desk.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)

The defense asks the jury to consider the age of the defendant. He too, is a child. As a result, he is incapable of being held responsible for the crimes he has committed. We know, looking at that, you will find him not-guilty. Thank you.

Plowden sits.

INT. WITNESS STAND

Newman sits in his police uniform.

MCLEOD (O.S.)

Sheriff Newman, did you interview the defendant?

Newman looks at George.

NEWMAN

I did.

McLeod stands at the lectern between the two attorney's tables.

MCLEOD

Did the defendant confess to the crime?

NEWMAN

(nods)
He did.

The crowd reacts with a surprised murmur.

MCLEOD

Did you record this confession?

Newman shakes his head.

NEWMAN

Recording machine was broken. But I remember everything the defendant said.

MCLEOD

(smiles)

Please tell the jury what George Stinney said in his confession.

NEWMAN

Defendant Stinney said he saw the two girls walking. They came up to him and inquired about the location of maypops so they could give some to their mothers. As they were walking together, one of the girls, Mary Emma Thames, fell into a ditch.

George looks at Plowden.

NEWMAN (CONT'D)

George then said he tried to help Mary Emma out of the ditch, but Betty June attacked him.

MCLEOD

What happened next?

NEWMAN

The defendant said he picked up the murder weapon, a 15 inch metal spike, and starting hitting the girls. He claimed self defense.

The crowd reacts with scorn. Stoll raps for order.

MCLEOD

How old were the two girls?

NEWMAN

Mary Emma Thames was eight. Betty June Binnicker was eleven.

MCLEOD

Now, look at the defendant. How old is he?

NEWMAN

He is fourteen years old.

McLeod is about to play his ace card and looks at George.

MCLEOD

In your experience as a police officer,
can you believe the defendant's story of
self defense?

George looks at Plowden, who does nothing.

NEWMAN

No. Even at fourteen years old, negro
boys are much stronger than white girls.
There is no way those two darling little
girls could have fought off the
defendant.

MCLEOD

Thank you. Your witness.

Plowden stands.

STOLL

Defense?

PLOWDEN

The defense has no questions for this
witness.

PLOWDEN AND GEORGE

George looks as Plowden sits and Newman leaves the
witness stand.

GEORGE

(quiet)

I never said that to no one.

PLOWDEN

(hissing)

Keep still, boy, or I'll change your plea
to guilty.

STOLL

Will the State calls its next witness?

MCLEOD

The State calls Officer Samuel Pratt to
the stand.

LATER

Pratt sits in a suit and tie, his badge hanging out of
his front suit pocket.

MCLEOD

You are a state trooper, are you not?

PRATT

I am.

MCLEOD

You are the one that escorted the defendant to his jail cell in Columbia, am I correct?

PRATT

Yes, sir, you are.

MCLEOD

During that trip, did the defendant make any statements to you as to motive for committing the crimes he is accused of?

PRATT

He did.

MCLEOD

Did you record these statements?

PRATT

I was the passenger in the car, sir. I had nothing to record the confession on.

MCLEOD

(surprised)

But the defendant confessed to the crime?

Pratt nods his head.

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

Please tell the jury exactly what the defendant said to you.

Pratt shakes his head.

PRATT

Certain things shouldn't be said in front of good Christian women, sir.

McLeod nods.

MCLEOD

Your honor, may I ask for some time so the bailiffs can clear the court of the women?

Stoll looks up.

STOLL

Granted. We will take a fifteen minute recess while the bailiffs clear the court before the witness gives the court the morbid details of the confession.

Stoll raps his gavel. The women in the audience pick up their purses, umbrellas, coats and begin to walk to the doors.

WITNESS STAND - LATER

Pratt sits on the witness stand.

PRATT

George Stinney said he did play tag with the girls, but then left. He didn't go home though. He returned a short time later.

McLeod stands near the witness. There are no women in the courtroom.

MCLEOD

Go on.

PRATT

According to the defendant, he was interested in the older girl, Betty June Binnicker.

MCLEOD

As a police officer, what does it mean when a man says he is "interested" in a woman?

PRATT

(uneasy)

It means he wants to engage in sexual contact with her.

The crowd reacts with shock and disgust. George looks at the ground and closes his eyes.

MCLEOD

Continue, officer.

PRATT

George stated he knew he could not have Betty June Binnicker in the presence of a witness, so he picked up the railroad spike and began to beat Mary Emma Thames until her body stopped moving.

Pratt looks at George and smiles.

PRATT (CONT'D)

Once the Thames girl was gone, Stinney began to move onto Betty June. Betty June resisted all of Stinney's advances. Stinney said he got angry and chased her after she tried to run away to look for her missing friend.

George tugs on Plowden's sleeve.

PRATT (CONT'D)

He caught up to her, but she continues to resist his sexual urges. Angry and frustrated, he picked up the same metal spike he used to kill Mary Emma Thames and began to batter Betty June Binnicker until her body fell into the ditch.

MCLEOD

So, according to his confession to you, George Stinney's motive was. . .

PRATT

(nodding)

He intended to rape Betty June Binnicker and killed Mary Emma to get rid of the witness.

The crowd stares at George, murder in their hearts.

MCLEOD

I'm confused. Sheriff Newman gave a different account. He said Stinney claimed self-defense. Are you saying he changed his story?

PRATT

Maybe his guilt of killing two little white girls was too much, even for a negro to take.

MCLEOD

That is all, thank you.

Plowden rises. George tugs on his sleeve again and shakes his head. Plowden shows no interest.

PLOWDEN

Officer Pratt, when did this confession take place?

PRATT

On the way to the Columbia City jail.

FLOWDEN

Thank you. No more questions.

George looks at Plowden as Plowden sits.

FLOWDEN AND GEORGE

George picks up a pen and writes something. He shows it to Plowden.

Plowden looks at the crudely written note - "I did not do it."

Plowden picks up a pen and writes something to George. George looks - "I don't care, boy." Plowden take the paper, crumples it and throws it into his briefcase.

MCLEOD (O.S.)

The State calls Scott Lowden

LATER

Lowden sits in a wrinkled but clean button down shirt and blue jeans.

MCLEOD (O.S.)

Mr. Lowden, you discovered the bodies of the two little girls.

LOWDEN

Yes, sir. . .I sure did.

The women have come back into the courtroom.

MCLEOD

Please describe the condition of the bodies for the jury.

Lowden looks at the jury.

LOWDEN

(calm)

On top of these bodies was a children's bicycle with the seat broken off. They were down wrapped around each other.

MCLEOD

They?

LOWDEN

(embarrassed)

The two girls. Their legs were wrapped around each other and their arms were in each other's hair. When I pulled them out of the water, their eyes were still open.

MCLEOD

What did you see?

LOWDEN

Something I will never forget, and all the time wondering what kind of monster could do something to those two sweet girls.

McLeod looks at George.

MCLEOD

I think the court knows what kind of monster.

Plowden stands up.

PLOWDEN

Objection!

MCLEOD

Withdrawn. No further questions.

STOLL

Your witness, Mr. Plowden

PLOWDEN

Mr. Lowden, did you find anything that connects the two girls to the defendant?

LOWDEN

Other than their dead bodies?

LATER

Bozard is now on the witness stand, dressed in a black suit and tie.

MCLEOD (O.S.)

Dr. Bozard, you and Dr. Baker performed the post mortem examination of the two little girls, is that correct?

BOZARD

Yes it is. We did it at Tuomey Hospital over in Sumter.

MCLEOD

Could you tell the court exact what you discovered?

Bozard flips open a file folder, pulls back one piece of paper, puts on his reading glasses and looks at the paper.

BOZARD

We examined the body of the eleven year old white girl. There was evidence of at least seven blows on the head of the child that seemed to have been made by a blunt instrument with a small round head about the size of a hammer. Some of these have only cracked the skull while two have punched definite holes in the skull.

MCLEOD

What was the cause of death?

BOZARD

Severe blunt force trauma.

LATER

Baker is now on the stand.

MCLEOD (O.S.)

Dr. Baker, you also examined the bodies of the two girls?

BAKER

I did.

MCLEOD

Do you have anything to add to Dr. Bozard's testimony?

Baker looks at George and sighs.

BAKER

I examined both bodies. Dr. Bozard concentrated on the cause of death. I looked for any evidence of trauma any place else.

MCLEOD

Officer Pratt stated that the defendant confessed to wanting to have sexual relations with the Betty June Binnicker, even to go so far as saying the defendant might have raped her. Did you find evidence of rape in your examination?

Baker looks at George and then at McLeod.

BAKER

I cannot positively state that either girl was raped since I found little evidence of it. But, I cannot rule it out. It is possible sexual assault occurred.

The court room erupts in violent anger at that disclosure. Men rush the defense table to try to get to George. Numerous bailiffs pounce on them, cuff them, and lead them out rather roughly. Stoll bangs for order.

Two bailiffs pull out their guns and stand next to George, protecting him.

As the men that rushed George are carried out, Stoll points his gavel at the audience.

STOLL

(looking at the crowd)

If I see one more outburst like that, you're all going to jail.

Stoll throws his gavel down on the desk. He looks at McLeod.

STOLL (CONT'D)

Mr. McLeod, you may continue.

MCLEOD

Nothing more, your honor.

STOLL

Mr. Plowden?

Plowden stands as McLeod sits.

FLOWDEN

Your honor, I have no questions for this witness.

McLeod stands.

MCLEOD
Your honor, the State rests.

Stoll looks at Plowden.

STOLL
Mr. Plowden, you may call your first witness.

Plowden moves to the lectern and looks at the jury, addressing them.

PLOWDEN
(calm)
Gentlemen of the jury, I have no witnesses to call. There is no reason to call witnesses to defend George Stinney. Because George Stinney, even though we admit on the defense that he committed these crimes, is too young to be held responsible. George Stinney is just a child himself.

McLeod starts looking through his papers on his table.

PLOWDEN (CONT'D)
South Carolina law is very specific in this. We do not hold children accountable for crimes that they are too young to. . .

McLeod stands up with a piece of paper in his hand.

MCLEOD
Objection, your honor.

PLOWDEN
What grounds?

McLeod holds up a piece of paper.

MCLEOD
Immaterial. The law Mr. Plowden quotes states that South Carolina holds that children under fourteen years old cannot be held responsible for their crimes.

STOLL
Go on?

MCLEOD
I am holding George Stinney's birth certificate. On it, his birthday is clearly marked as October 21, 1929.
(MORE)

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

That means that at the time of the crime, George Stinney was fourteen years, five months old. The law does not apply.

Stoll looks at McLeod and then at Plowden.

STOLL

Objection sustained.

McLeod hands Plowden the birth certificate and sits down. Plowden looks it over, then at George.

PLOWDEN

Your honor, we have no case. The defense rests.

Stoll looks at Plowden.

STOLL

(mild sarcasm)

Closing statements. Mr. Plowden.

Plowden stands up and turns to the jury.

PLOWDEN

Gentlemen of the jury, even though the law states George Stinney is old enough to be held accountable for his crime, he is still a child. We're talking five months. It isn't even half a year. This boy can't be held responsible for his acts.

Plowden sits down. Stoll looks at McLeod.

STOLL

Mr. McLeod.

McLeod stands up.

MCLEOD

Five months. Hell, it don't matter. If the law can be bent for this person, this murderer, then next, a sixteen year old boy will kill and his lawyer will say "it's only two years. We can bend the law just this one time." Maybe an eighteen year old boy will rape and murder. That boy is old enough to serve in our fine army, defending you and me and our way of life against the Japs and the Nazis. But it's four years. . .we can bend the law. How far do we bend the law before the law becomes meaningless?

McLeod looks at the jury and walks to the jury box. He points to George.

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

This boy killed two girls. Beat them to death. Why? He wanted to engage in immoral, sexual relations with the older, acts that are illegal in South Carolina because colored folks and white people are forbidden under the law. So he killed little eight year old Mary Emma Thames.

In the audience, Mary Emma's mother grabs her husband's hand.

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

And then, when Betty June Binnicker resisted his carnal advances, he *killed her too*. If you know anything about the coloreds, you know that the confession this boy gave to Officer Pratt is more plausible than the lies he told Sheriff Newman.

McLeod looks at George.

MCLEOD (CONT'D)

This boy is guilty. Do what is right by country, by God and by law. Convict him of the crimes he committed. Thank you.

McLeod sits. Stoll turns and looks at the jury.

STOLL

Gentlemen of the jury. You have heard the case of the People of South Carolina versus George Julius Stinney, Jr. You are now required by law to deliberate on his fate.

GEORGE

George looks around the court again as Stoll speaks. He looks for something or someone one. Again, all he sees are white faces.

STOLL (O.S.)

You hold a young man's life in your hands. However, if the evidence presented shows the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, you must, by law, convict him.

(MORE)

STOLL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If there is a doubt, you must vote not guilty. Bailiff, please escort the jury to the jury room.

George watches the twelve old and middle aged white men on the jury stand and exit the courtroom out of a side door. Stoll picks up his gavel.

STOLL (CONT'D)

This court stands in recess.

Stoll bangs the gavel. The clock above his head reads 4:55.

INT. HOLDING CELL

George sits with a bible in his hand. He looks out the window. He stands up to see the sun beginning to set over the western horizon. He looks and sees two black children playing and chasing each other under a tree.

George looks on the field and sees his brother Charles. George smiles.

EXT. FIELD

George runs up to Charles and touches him.

GEORGE

Tag. You're it!

George starts to run. Charles chases him. What follows are two boys of similar age, brothers, having fun together as the sun sets in the background.

MOTHER STINNEY (O.S.)

Georgie! Charles! Dinner!

George stops running and looks towards his home.

GEORGE

Coming, Momma!

Charles tackles him. Stinney looks up at Charles smiling. Then Charles turns and runs toward the house.

George stands. He gives chase almost instantly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You'll pay for that, Charles!

George then stops and looks at his home. He turns and watches the sun set to the west.

MOTHER STINNEY (O.S.)
 Georgie. . .Georgie. . .

Her voice fades and morphs into a man's voice.

GUARD (O.S.)
 George. George.

INT. HOLDING CELL

The daydream over, George turns to see the Guard opening the cell door.

GUARD
 They're ready for you, boy.

COURTROOM

The spectators mill around the courtroom. They talk and carry on conversations.

McLeod and Plowden are talking and laughing. Alderman comes up to them and shakes their hands. Alderman turns to Plowden and tells Plowden something. Plowden responds by saying "thank you." Alderman sits down behind McLeod's desk.

A side door opens and George enters. Everyone stops talking and watches George being escorted to the defense table.

BAILIFF
 All rise!

Everyone stands.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)
 Superior Court in and for the County of Clarendon will come to order. Court is now in session. The honorable Judge Stoll presiding.

Stoll enters and walks to his desk. He picks up the gavel.

STOLL
 Be seated.

Stoll bangs his gavel. Everyone sits. He turns to the Bailiff.

STOLL (CONT'D)
Bailiff, please escort the jury back into
the courtroom.

Bailiff walks to the side door and opens it.

George looks at the clock on the wall behind Stoll. It read 5:05. George holds his bible close to his chest.

The jury enters.

Stoll looks at the FOREMAN, an older white man with a full head of gray hair.

STOLL (CONT'D)
Has the jury reached a verdict?

FOREMAN
Yes, your honor. We have.

The Bailiff walks over to Foreman and takes the folded piece of paper from him. He walks to Stoll and hands it to him. Stoll opens the paper, reads it, then hands it back to the Bailiff. Bailiff gives it back to the foreman.

STOLL
Will the defendant please rise and face
the jury?

George slowly stands up. Plowden joins him.

STOLL (CONT'D)
Mr. Foreman, please read the verdict.

FOREMAN
We, the jury, in the above titled action,
find the defendant, George Julius
Stinney, Jr. . . guilty as charged on all
counts.

The court erupts in cheers. From outside the courtroom and outside the courthouse, people cheer and celebrate the conviction.

George looks at Plowden.

Alderman shakes McLeod's hand, smiling.

Stoll raps for order. The court quiets down.

STOLL

Do you have a recommendation for mercy?

FOREMAN

No, your honor. The jury does not.

STOLL

Thank you, Mr. Foreman. The jury is excused.

The jurors exit through a side door.

Stoll looks at George, who is shaking. George holds his bible even closer to his body.

STOLL (CONT'D)

Does the defendant have anything to say before I pronounce sentencing?

As George tries to speak, Plowden holds his arm.

PLOWDEN

No, your honor. My client has nothing to say.

George tries to speak, but Plowden ignores him. George turns to Stoll.

STOLL

George Julius Stinney, Jr. . .you have been found guilty of two counts of first degree murder by a jury of your peers. I hereby sentence you to death by electric chair, to be carried out at the Central Correctional Institution in Columbia, on June 16th, 1944.

Stoll raps his gavel.

STOLL (CONT'D)

This court is adjourned.

Instantly, five bailiffs grab George and shuttle him out of the court. The courtroom turns into pandemonium as people inside the courtroom and outside the courtroom swarm to get George for some vigilante justice.

MALE VOICES (O.S.)

Get the nigger! String him up! Lynch to coon!

The Bailiffs pull out their guns and point them at the crowd.

Newman comes in with six sheriff's deputies armed with shotguns. They cock their shotguns and point them at the crowd. Newman stands on the defense table.

NEWMAN

(yelling)

Officers have been ordered to shoot anyone that tries to stop justice!

The crowd quiets down.

MALE VOICES (O.S.)

We'll get that nigger outside! Let's go!
Kill him!

Newman points and ten officers block the exit all with loaded shotguns and their fingers on the trigger. The crowd stops and gets quiet.

NEWMAN

(yelling)

There are twenty-five officers outside with orders to shoot anyone that interferes! You will do nothing!

EXT. COURTHOUSE SIDE ALLEY

A crowd of people are held back by officers with shotguns. They look to see a police van already turned on with an officer in the driver's seat.

The door to the courthouse swings open and eight officer with guns come out, surrounding a fully shackled George. They throw George into the van, then get into the van and close the door. They point their guns out the windows as the van goes into gear and begins to drive away.

INT. DEATH ROW INTAKE ROOM

Legend - Friday, April 28th, 1944 - Day 35

An older gentleman in a correctional officer's uniform sits at his desk reading papers. He looks a bit frazzled and rather tired. This is Block Supervisor SERGEANT SMITH, the man in charge of Death Row at Central Correctional Institution.

Another officer walks up to him and hands him a file folder. This is GUARD STEVENS.

STEVENS

The file for the new inmate, sir.

Smith takes it and opens it.

The door to the room flies open and three Prison Guards walk in with George, dressed in black and white prison gear, his prison number on the front and back. George clutches his bible.

Smith looks up at the boy and then motions for the Guards to bring the boy to the chair in front of his desk. The Guards comply.

SMITH
(gentle)
Please sit down.

George obeys the order. He is so short, his feet dangle and do not reach the floor. Smith leans forward, sees this and then sits back down, looking at George.

SMITH (CONT'D)
(gentle)
Son? How old are you?

George shakes his head and doesn't answer. He holds his bible even closer to his chest.

Smith sees that and looks at the Guards standing next to George.

SMITH (CONT'D)
Unshackle him. I don't think we'll have
trouble with him. Will we, son?

George looks at the humorless officers that stand around him, then at Smith and shakes his head.

One of the Guards, TAYLOR, reaches down and pulls the bible out of George's hands. George starts to panic.

TAYLOR
What should we do with the bible?

Smith puts his hand and motions for Taylor to stop.

SMITH
Give it back. No one ever got hurt
holding the Good Book.

Taylor obeys and gives the bible back. George calms down and clutches the Bible even closer to his body.

The Guards take out their keys and take off all the chains and cuffs that bind George. Smith reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a coin and hands it to Taylor.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Taylor, go to the soda machine in the Guard's room and get me a bottle of Coca Cola.

Taylor nods, takes the coin and leaves the room.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Son, I'm gonna ask you again. How old are you?

GEORGE

(slowly)

Fourteen and five months sir.

Smith throws his pen on the desk. He looks at the other Guards.

SMITH

They send me a child younger than my own boy to. . .son, do you know what this place is?

George nods.

GEORGE

(tearing up)

It's where you're gonna kill me.

Smith looks at the door that Taylor left through. He looks at George, whose head is down.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Everything'd be okay if my momma were here.

Smith sighs.

SMITH

Stevens, see if we can find this boy's parents. See if they can come here to be with him.

Stevens nods.

Guard Stevens nods exits. Taylor comes back into the room with an open bottle of Coca Cola and a paper cup. He hands them to Smith, who pours a cup of Coca Cola and hands it to George.

GEORGE

Why you being so nice to me, sir?

George takes the cup and Smith moves to sit on the edge of the desk.

SMITH

Son, I ain't gonna lie to you. This is where you will die. There's nothing I can do to stop that. But, there ain't no reason for me, or the men I am in charge of, to hurt you or do anything to make your time here worse than it is.

George drinks the soda.

GEORGE

I didn't do it, sir.

SMITH

You were found guilty. My hands are tied.

INT. DEATH ROW CELL

George walks into his lonely cell on Death Row. Smith closes the door behind him.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - MORNING

Legend - Wednesday, May 3rd, 1944 - Day 40

Sitting in the visitation room are two black men. One wears pastor's clothing, the other in a business suit.

A door on the other side of the partition opens and George walks out, holding his bible, escorted by Smith.

George sits across from the two gentlemen. He looks at them confused. The pastor smiles.

DAVID

George. I'm John David of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This is Elijah Williams from the NAACP.

WILLIAMS

How are they treating you, son?

George shakes his head and smiles a little.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

We don't have a lot of time to work on this. But we're going to do everything we can to get you out of here.

George looks up.

GEORGE

How are you going to do that, sir?

WILLIAMS

First we need to stop the execution. We need a judge to stay the execution so we can work on getting the sentence changed.

DAVID

We are working on going to the Governor in order to do that. He can commute the sentence to life imprisonment. That will give us the time to get you out.

George looks up and nods. It's the first glimmer of hope since his arrest.

GEORGE

The Governor? Is he a good man? He knows I did nothing wrong.

Williams inhales to mask his concern. David smiles.

DAVID

Of course he does, George. We all know you're innocent.

David looks at George's worn bible.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Would you like the AME Church to give you a new bible? That one looks old.

George shakes his head. Smith walks up to George.

SMITH

(sincere)

Sorry, gentlemen. I have to take him back now. We need to do count and prepare for lunch.

David and Williams stand up and look at George being handcuffed.

WILLIAMS

Don't worry, George. We'll get you out of here.

George smiles and walks with Smith through the door back to the cells.

MONTAGE

A: Williams stands at a lectern in a court room arguing in front of a dispassionate white judge.

B: David sits in the AME Church's library watching men and women writing letters. He picks one up and looks at it.

C: He reads: To the Honorable Olin D. Johnston, Governor of South Carolina. Dear sir: Child execution is only for Hitler.

D: Williams opens his mail. He opens a letter and sees a crudely drawn picture of a black man hanging from a tree with the words "stop helping that nigger rapist or you will get it too." Williams crumples it up and throws it away.

E: David and a group of three other AME members walk down a Columbia street at night. They are dragged into an alley and, through the shadows on the walls of the building, are beaten to the ground.

F: George sits in his prison cell. He is motionless. Smith looks at him and sighs, but continues walking through the halls.

DEATH ROW HALL

Taylor comes up to Smith and looks down at George's cell.

TAYLOR

That kid hasn't really moved in over two weeks.

SMITH

(ignoring)

Any luck finding his parents?

Taylor shakes his head.

INT. WILLIAMS' OFFICE - NIGHT

David and Williams look at each other as if they have had a massive argument. They are angry, winded and tired.

David holds up his Bible.

DAVID

I knew white justice wouldn't work. We listened to the NAACP. And now we have no more time.

WILLIAMS

We have to do things this way. It's the law.

David slams his Bible on the desk.

DAVID

The law is going to execute that poor kid in less than seven days, Mr. Williams! What are you going to do about it?

The phone rings.

WILLIAMS

(picking it up)

Williams! Yeah. Yeah! Good! Make sure everyone we know sees it.

Williams puts the phone down.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

The Daily Item in Sumter is running a front page story on George Stinney. If we can't use the courts, maybe the public can pressure Governor Johnston to do the right thing and stay the execution.

David looks at Williams.

DAVID

Any luck with the parents?

Williams shakes his head.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - MORNING

Legend - Tuesday, June 13th, 1944 - Day 78

STOCK FOOTAGE of various city locations all over South Carolina.

MONTAGE

- 1: Charleston
- 2: Columbia
- 3: Greenville
- 4: Manning
- 5: Alcolu

Intermixed are people drinking coffee and reading the newspaper. All over the state, the Daily Item story on George Stinney is front page news.

DAVID (V.O.)

The A.M.E. Church protested to Governor Olin D. Johnston in a telegram the imminent execution June 16 of a 14 year old Negro boy convicted of the murder of two young white girls.

SERIES OF SHOTS

01: A woman writing a letter. The envelope is addressed to Olin D. Johnston.

02: A black man walking into Western Union, sitting down and dictating a telegram to the clerk.

03: A church group standing around a telephone as one of the older woman dials.

04: A switchboard room is going crazy and the workers are frazzled by all the incoming calls. As soon as one hangs up, another phone call instantly comes in.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Inside a posh office, GOVERNOR OLIN JOHNSTON sits at his desk with an AIDE standing next to him.

The office is almost immaculate, save a few scattered papers that look as though they have been thrown across the room.

The door to the office is open and the noise from outside almost drowns out the voices in the office.

JOHNSTON

(upset)

You know, I don't need this shit. I got a Senate run to plan!

AIDE

That newspaper up in Sumter ruffled a lot of feathers.

Johnston stands and walks to the window. He turns to look at the door.

JOHNSTON
 (yelling)
 Someone please close that damn door!

Aide looks over and a female SECRETARY closes the door from the outside.

Olin relaxes, knowing he is alone.

JOHNSTON (CONT'D)
 (calmer)
 Look, I don't want to be the one known as the governor that allowed a fourteen year old boy to die in the chair.

Aide sits down and crosses his legs.

AIDE
 Sir, let me read you something.

Aide pulls out a piece of paper.

AIDE (CONT'D)
 Dear Mr. Governor Olin D. Johnston.

Aide chuckles.

AIDE (CONT'D)
 He spelled your name wrong. Anyway. "Sir, that nigger in prison killed two white girls. Do the Christian thing and send that raping little coon to Hell where he belongs." There is no signature.

JOHNSTON
 Okay. So, some looney sent us a letter.

AIDE
 (shakes his head)
 Not one looney, sir. For every person wanting you to help that boy, there are twenty that want him dead.

Johnston looks at Aide.

JOHNSTON
 That means?

Aide holds up the note.

AIDE
 Sir, this is South Carolina right here. The people calling in. .
 (MORE)

AIDE (CONT'D)

.they ain't never gonna vote for you worth nothing. These people. . .the ones who sent in letters and calls like this, this is the majority. You want to go to Washington to stand side-by-side with Roosevelt when we win this war, you know what you need to do.

JOHNSTON

(concerned)

How will history judge me though? He may be the youngest person executed.

Aide shakes his head.

AIDE

Trust me, Governor. No one's gonna remember this in a year. And whatever history thinks of you. . .you'll be long dead.

Johnston walks to his seat at his desk and sits down. He picks up a pen and begins to write. Aide stands next to him.

SMITH (V.O.)

The Governor said Friday he had studied the case and found no reason to intervene, making this statement after the C.I.O., Tobacco Worker's Union, the National Maritime Union and the White and Negro Ministerial Unions at Charleston asked him to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. The execution will go on as planned.

INT. DEATH ROW CELL

George sits staring at the window, tears coming down his face. Smith sits in front of George, reading the newspaper to him MOS.

JOHNSTON (V.O.)

It may be interesting for you to know that Stinney killed the smaller girl to rape the larger one. Then he killed the larger girl and raped her dead body. Twenty minutes later he returned and attempted to rape her again, but her body was too cold. All of this he admitted himself.

George looks at Smith and shakes his head.

GEORGE

(quiet)

I never did that, sir.

George turns and looks out the window. Smith stands up, puts the newspaper under his armpit, watches George, sighs.

SMITH

(quietly)

No, I don't think you did either.

EXT. WHITE FARM HOUSE

In front of an old, white farm house with the paint peeling, two white CHILDREN, two boys, play catch in the front yard as a brown Studebaker pulls into the driveway. The children run over to the car as the driver's side door opens.

DRIVEWAY

The boys run over to the car as a dishevelled Smith steps out of the car. His tie is loosened and the top button of his shirt is undone. He looks at his sons as they run up to him. The younger one, MICHAEL, aged 12, runs up and hugs Smith.

MICHAEL

Daddy, Momma said you will make dinner cold.

Smith smiles weakly and nods his head.

SMITH

(quiet)

Go inside boys. Go have dinner. I'll be inside in a little while.

Michael and his younger brother run into the house as Smith watches.

Smith turns and walks toward a beaten down, weathered garage behind the house.

INT. GARAGE

As Smith opens the door, light shows a man's worth station and workshop. Woods litters the floor, partially fixed and broken furniture is everywhere. On the walls are tools upon tools. This is Smith's sanctuary.

Smith walks inside and turns on the light. He walks over to a partially repaired baby's cradle. He pulls up a chair and sits down in front of the cradle, rocking it back and forth.

He looks to the heavens and then takes his tie off.

HARRIET (O.S.)

Are you coming in for dinner?

Smith turns around and sees his wife, HARRIET, standing in the doorway. She is 40 years old and has the body of a woman who has given birth to two children. Her hair is up and she wears a kitchen dress with an apron.

Smith turns and smiles.

SMITH

Just give me a second, Harriet.

HARRIET

Something's bothering you.

Smith shakes his head and stands up. He looks at the cradle and closes his eyes.

Smith turns and takes his wife's hand in his hand. He turns off the light and closes the door.

INT. DINING ROOM

At the dinner table, the two boys pretty much inhale all the food they get on their plates. Harriet, being a southern woman, eats slowly and deliberately.

Smith, on the other hand, picks at his food and doesn't eat a bite.

Within an instant, the two boys get into a fight with each other. They start arguing and pushing each other. Harriet tries to separate them and looks up to Smith to get his help, but Smith has left the table.

Harriet separates the boys and, MOS, orders them to their rooms. Angry, the boys reluctantly obey.

As the boys leave, Harriet looks outside through the windows in the parlor and sees Smith sitting on the rocking swing.

EXT. PORCH - DUSK

Smith sits in the rocking swing, a beer in his hand, as the sun sets over the western mountains of South Carolina. He doesn't really move, but the chair rocks back and forth.

Harriet comes out with a glass of sweet tea and sits on the chair next to her husband. She puts the glass on a circular end table next to the rocking swing and sits down, taking Smith's hand in her hands and kissing it.

Smith leans back and looks up to see a large hornet's nest above him.

SMITH

(quiet)

Remind me to deal with those hornets this weekend, dear.

Harriet nods and watches the sun dip below the mountains.

HARRIET

What's bothering you tonight?

Smith shakes his head. Harriet ignores that and looks at Smith's face.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

It's that boy in prison, isn't it?

Smith closes his eyes and nods. Harriet smiles.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

You don't normally have this problem when a convict is about to die. Why this boy?

Smith sighs and looks at his wife.

SMITH

I've been with this child a month now. I really don't see a murderer in him.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

He was convicted. The jury did.

SMITH

(annoyed)

An all white jury in a hick town. That boy never stood a chance.

Harriet takes a drink of sweet tea.

SMITH (CONT'D)

(drained)

That boy doesn't have a bad bone in his body. I've see niggers that are bad. Lots of them. This boy isn't one of them. And I have to send someone I really think is innocent to their deaths.

Smith takes a swig from his beer bottle and stands up. He walks to the verdana steps and stands looks over his front yard.

SMITH (CONT'D)

I don't know what I should do.

HARRIET

(resolute)

You do your job. You do it well, and then you go to church and ask the Reverend for guidance and salvation.

Smith turns and looks at Harriet, helpless.

SMITH

He's a couple years older than Michael. Would you say the same thing if it were our boy there?

Harriet sighs and shakes her head. Smith nods.

SMITH (CONT'D)

He is alone, Harriet. We can't find his family.

Harriet looks up at Smith, concerned. She stands up and holds her husband in her arms.

SMITH (CONT'D)

(quiet)

He's going to die alone.

Harriet shakes her head.

HARRIET

They'll be there. I have faith in God that they will be with their son.

Smith shakes his head and walks toward the front door.

SMITH

(sad)

God and I aren't on good terms these days, Harriet. God wouldn't let this happen to an innocent child.

Smith walks inside and leaves his wife alone.

INT. BEDROOM

As Michael sleeps in his bed, Smith watches over him, a melancholy expression on his face. Michael turns and, for some reason, wakes up to see his father looking at him.

MICHAEL

(sleepy)

I'm sorry I got into the fight at dinner,
Daddy.

Smith shakes his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I know you don't like use fighting.

Smith looks out the window and smiles.

SMITH

I wouldn't change that for the world.

Michael looks at his father confused, but then turns again and falls back to sleep. Smith watches for a few more seconds, then closes the door.

INT. VISITATION ROOM

David and Williams sit and wait. The door swings open.
Legend - Friday, April 16th, 1944 - Day 81

Smith walks out and looks at the two men.

SMITH

He has no interest in seeing either of
you.

Smith turns and walks away. David and Williams look at each other, stunned, shocked and hurt.

DAVID

(yelling)

Tell him we'll pray for him.

Smith stops and turns around.

SMITH

Prayer ain't gonna save his life,
preacher.

Smith opens the door, goes back to Death Row, and closes the door.

INT. DEATH ROW CELL - LATE AFTERNOON

Smith sits on a chair looking at George who sits on his cot. George looks at the tray that his last meal came in on.

Taylor walks over and hands George a metal bowl filled with ice cream and a large paper cup filled with Coca Cola. George takes them and starts to eat.

SMITH

George, I've had to do a lot of soul searching.

GEORGE

What do you mean, sir?

Smith leans forward.

SMITH

When I die, how will I explain to my judge at the Pearly Gates that I sat and did nothing when one of his children was executed? Because it was my job.

Smith takes the newspaper he read earlier from under his butt and opens to the second page.

SMITH (CONT'D)

The Japs kill children. The Nazis. The Italians. The Spanish. Those Commie bastards kill children. We're Americans. We're better than that. Christ, you're three years younger than my oldest son.

Smith puts his hand on George's shoulder.

SMITH (CONT'D)

George, we tried to find your parents. I'm sorry.

George looks up, his eyes lifeless and cold.

Smith looks at his watch. It shows 6:30. Smith stands up and looks at Taylor and the rest of the Death Row Guards.

SMITH (CONT'D)

(hardened)

We have a job to do.

The Guards stand George on his feet. They begin to strap him into the cuffs and shackles. George looks on his cot and sees his Bible.

GEORGE
(scared)
Please, sir. My Bible?

Smith nods, grabs it and hands it to George.

After a last second adjustment. . .

TAYLOR
All ready, Sergeant.

INT. DEATH ROW HALL

In the hall, a black MINISTER stands holding a Bible.

Smith walks out first. George follows him. The other three Guard stand on each side of George. George's chest heaves in and out. Tears begin falling from his face.

Overcome, George falls to the ground. Smith sees this and walks over to George.

SMITH
(gentle)
Come on, son.

GEORGE
(crying)
I can't sir. I didn't do it.

Smith and Taylor take George from under his armpit and stand him up.

SMITH
Please, George. Just start walking. We will go as fast or slow as you want.

George slowly moves his feet. The Guards walk at George's pace. Minister begins performing last rites, automatic and without any emotion, truly not caring.

INT. OLD SPARKY ROOM

Another GUARD stands in the room next to a switch. A second GUARD stands next to the electricity monitor. A microphone sits in the corner. A DOCTOR with a stethoscope stands in the corner.

INT. WITNESS ROOM

The Binnicker and the Thames families sit watching, but just the fathers and the older boys. Also inside the room are Alderman, Newman, McLeod and Pratt.

Absent from the room are any of George's family.

Alderman looks at Binnicker.

ALDERMAN

Are you ready for this, Mr. Binnicker?

Binnicker nods.

BINNICKER

Thank God he won't do it to anybody else.

ALDERMAN

And after this is over, my family is safe too.

Newman turns to Alderman

NEWMAN

Odd thing to say.

Alderman chuckles.

ALDERMAN

All our families will be safe.

INT. OLD SPARKY ROOM

The door opens. George, Smith and the others walk into the room. The Guards move George to in front of Old Sparky.

George's chest heaves up and down. He is close to hyperventilating. George looks around the room.

GEORGE

(quiet)

Momma?

Silence.

George looks at Smith, terrified. Smith sighs and puts his hands on George's shoulders, rubbing them to try to make George relax.

Smith looks at Taylor and asks a questions with his eyes and facial expression "Are his parents here?" Taylor, just as upset as Smith, slowly shakes his head.

The Guards begin to undo all the shackles and cuffs. Each one that comes off, George jumps with fright.

Smith moves George up to the chair and sits him down. Smith frowns. George is too short for the chair.

Smith walks over to the microphone and puts it in front of George. As he does this, the others strap George into the chair. However, Old Sparky is designed for a full grown adult. George is 5'2" and 90 pounds.

The straps don't fit. They are too big. They cannot be fastened using the buckles. The Guards look at each other, then start tying them together in slip knots or square knots. Each movement or sound causes George to breath quickly and jump.

George's head darts around. His eyes look around wide open.

The Guards tie George's legs to the chair and then begin to wet down his legs. They attach the metal clamps to his legs where it is wet and fasten it on with the nut and bolt so it cannot come off. George begins to cry.

Taylor wets down a sponge and puts it on George's head. George jumps again. The metal electric hat needed to execute George lowers onto his head and is strapped around his chin. George looks at Smith.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Please, sir. Help me.

Smith closes his eyes and shakes his head. This is too hard for him. He wants to help, but can't.

Smith walks in front of George and looks at George's terrified face. Smith falters a little, but resumes his cold, professional demeanor almost instantly.

SMITH

(hard)

Do you have anything to say before sentence is carried out?

George starts crying and shakes his head.

Smith nods and Taylor moves the microphone away. Smith pulls out a piece of paper.

SMITH (CONT'D)

George Julius Stinney, Jr, you have been found guilty of murder in accordance to the laws of the State of South Carolina by a fair and impartial jury of your peers. You have been sentenced to die by electrocution.

Smith looks at George, who is crying uncontrollably.

SMITH (CONT'D)

(voice cracking)

May God have mercy on your soul.

Taylor walks over and puts the face mask over George's face. George screams in horror and terror.

Smith turns his head away.

INT. WITNESS ROOM

The witnesses grow impatient. Alderman taps his foot on the ground.

ALDERMAN

Just juice this fucking nigger already.

Newman looks at Alderman, concerned.

NEWMAN

You're enjoying this?

Alderman chuckles a little.

ALDERMAN

Coon killed two girls. Soon he'll be in Hell where he belongs. What is there not to enjoy?

Newman, shocked, turns away, disgusted by Alderman's crass, callous attitude.

INT. OLD SPARKY ROOM

Smith looks at Taylor finishing tying the mask around George's head.

GEORGE

Momma. Help me!

Smith inhales.

SMITH

(slowly)

Roll on one.

The guard by the electricity monitor turns up the electricity. The lights in the room flicker and dim almost immediately. The electricity machine begins to hum.

George start shaking and breathing quickly.

GEORGE

(to Smith)

Please. Don't.

Smith inhales and tries to remain calm, but he is faltering.

The Guard looks at Smith and nods.

Smith closes his eyes.

SMITH

(hesitates, then slowly)

Roll on two!

The Guard by the switch flips the switch. Instantly, George's body contorts and shifts as 2400 volts of electricity streams through his body. He shakes. He twists.

Smith turns away, unable to watch.

Suddenly, one of George's hands breaks free of the binding and shoots out, shaking as the electricity runs through his body.

TAYLOR

Do we stop?

SMITH

We can't stop it!

George's head shakes again and the mask slides off his face.

INT. WITNESS ROOM

The witness turn away from looking at George. Only Alderman watches, indifferent and almost happy.

BINNICKER

Please stop it now.

Newman turns his head away.

NEWMAN
They can't stop it!

Alderman watches intently, a cool, almost serene smile comes over his face. If he were a sadist, he would get sexual satisfaction to what is happening to George. He smiles.

INT. OLD SPARKY ROOM

George's whole body shakes. Without the mask, everyone sees his wide-open, tearful eyes and saliva pouring out of his mouth.

TAYLOR
Stop it now?

Smith turns away and looks up as if to curse God himself.

SMITH
You had to make this. . .Damn you.

Smith looks at his watch.

SMITH (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Turn it off!

The Guard by the switch turns the machine off. The electric chair rests and George's body slumps forward. Smith looks at the doctor. The doctor walks over to George's slumped body and puts the stethoscope to George's chest. He steps back and shakes his head.

Smith closes his eyes and turns away.

SMITH (CONT'D)
(sighs)
Roll on two.

The Guard by the switch flips on the switch and then. . .

DARKNESS.

FADE IN:

EXT. ALCOLU TOWN CENTER
Legend - Saturday, June 17th, 1944

People walk in the center of town. The birds chirp.
Life is peaceful.

An ELDERLY MAN walks to a PERSON selling newspapers. The man buys one and looks at the front page.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

Headline of the Daily Item: "Operation Overlord Begins to Bring Hitler to his Knees. Allied Forces land in Normandy."

Near the bottom of the page, in a small, three inch news article is the headline: "George Stinney, 14 years and five months old, was the youngest person ever to die in the chair."

BACK TO SCENE

Elderly man looks at the newspaper seller.

ELDERLY MAN

Looks like the war will be over soon.
Good thing. What those Nazis do is
terrible.

Elderly man sits in a rocking chair, opens his newspaper and begins to read.

FADE TO BLACK.

ON A BLACK SCREEN:

In 1944, South Carolina executed the youngest American in the 20th century. Few noticed, less cared.

Later, it was determined that the railroad spike used to murder the two girls weighed over twenty pounds, making it almost impossible for George to lift or swing.

One Alcolu resident stated many years later, the real culprit, now deceased, confessed on his deathbed to the crime.

In December 2014, a federal judge vacated the conviction after 70 years, due to lack of evidence. Until this time, South Carolina refused to do so because George Stinney had "been convicted justly under the laws at the time."

Dedicated to those who have been victimized by an uncaring justice system anywhere in the world.

CLOSING CREDITS

THE END