

# Chapter Twenty: On the Hill

In Chapter Twenty, titled "On the Hill," John Lewis embarks on a significant journey. With a basket of champagne, jambalaya, and balloons, he arrives at the Peachtree train station with Lillian and their son, John-Miles, for his swearing-in in Washington. The group travels on Amtrak, bringing along friends who transform the trip into a celebration. Reflecting on his tumultuous past as he gazes into the darkness from the train, Lewis conveys gratitude for his struggles, stating, "The beatings, the arrests—it was all worth it."

Once in Washington, Lewis arrives at Union Station and feels a sense of nostalgia as he gazes at the Capitol dome, reminiscent of his first visit in 1961. His assigned office in the Cannon Building, furnished with red carnations and Piper Sonoma champagne, lacks telephones and is filled with typewriters. As he settles into the political landscape, he finds himself amid Georgia's delegation, dubbed "Redneck Row." They celebrate with an initial party in the Caucus Room.

On the day of his swearing-in, Lewis faces the Capitol's maze, getting lost until rescued by Senator Sam Nunn. He expresses excitement about his fellow freshmen, including Joseph Kennedy II and Mike Espy, marking a milestone for the Congressional Black Caucus. Meanwhile, Love Collins and Richard Ossoff work on staffing his office, eager to secure talented individuals for critical positions, while Lewis remains calm and unconcerned.

Despite some staffers feeling overlooked, Lewis navigates hiring with patience, ultimately appointing Clarence Bishop as chief of staff, who faces challenges when balancing Lewis's ambitions with Lillian's vision for a youthful office environment. In this early phase, Lewis's legislative agenda unfolds amid ongoing efforts to maintain personal connections with prominent colleagues as they curate their southern politics vis-à-vis the Democratic Leadership Council.

As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that Lewis's journey is laden with the expectations of history but also revealing the complexities of his political relationships and personal commitments. By the end of the chapter, Lewis emerges as a dedicated leader, grappling with issues of race, power, and community, poised to make his mark in Congress amidst changing political tides.