

Chapter 28: Invictus

In Chapter 28: *Invictus*, the profound efforts surrounding the memorial services for Congressman John Lewis are meticulously detailed, showcasing the dedication of those closest to him, especially his longtime aide, Michael Collins. Collins, having worked with Lewis for years, was tasked with leading the planning for his memorial, gathering a diverse group of people, including his congressional staff, close friends, and communications professionals. The memorial services were meticulously organized over the span of several days, with Collins and his team addressing the challenges that arose during the preparation process. They met virtually through Zoom calls, discussing various logistics, from crowd management to coordinating with media outlets to ensure that every aspect of the tribute was handled with the care and reverence it deserved. An important moment in the process was the arrangement of an honor guard, which was orchestrated by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to oversee the ceremonial transport of Lewis's casket. Stephen McDaniel, reflecting on the fast-paced nature of the planning, expressed awe that such a grand and intricate memorial could be prepared so quickly, considering the massive scale and emotional depth involved.

The ceremonies honoring Lewis were groundbreaking, marking a monumental event that spanned over six days and traversed five cities, creating an unparalleled tribute to his life and legacy. The services not only attracted numerous mourners but also garnered the attention of the media, highlighting how deeply Lewis had impacted American society and politics. Several key figures, including former Presidents, Lewis's family members, and many of his closest colleagues, shared moving reflections on his dedication to justice, equality, and civil rights. The journey began in Troy, Alabama, where the first public ceremony took place at Troy University, the very institution where Lewis had once been denied admission due to racial segregation. This symbolic act began a series of commemorative events that paid tribute to his courage and his long battle for civil rights. The following day, the "Final Crossing" ceremony took place in Selma, Alabama, where his casket was carried over the Pettus Bridge—a poignant location tied to the historical significance of the Civil Rights Movement. The procession continued with another significant stop in Montgomery, Alabama, where Lewis lay in state at the Alabama State Capitol, before making its way to Washington, D.C., where his casket was placed on the Capitol's catafalque.

In Washington, despite the gravity of the occasion, President Trump chose not to attend or make a statement regarding Lewis's death, which stood in stark contrast to the deep respect shown by so many others. The ceremony culminated in Atlanta, where Lewis's final resting place was prepared beside his late wife, Lillian, at South-View Cemetery. The funeral service at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta was attended by numerous dignitaries, including former Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, who each shared heartfelt eulogies for Lewis, highlighting his legacy as one of the defining figures of the 20th century. A particularly emotional moment occurred when twelve-year-old Tybre Faw, a young man who admired Lewis's life and work, recited Lewis's favorite poem, *Invictus*, symbolizing the enduring resilience that defined Lewis's character. The ceremony was not only a farewell to a national hero but also an urgent reminder of the ongoing struggle for civil rights and voting equality, a cause that had been dear to Lewis's heart throughout his life. As the funeral service concluded, the outpouring of support, love, and remembrance reflected a collective determination to honor Lewis's work and continue his fight for equality and justice. Even in his passing, Lewis's legacy remained potent, shaping the way future generations would engage with the pressing social issues of the time.