

Assassins

Music: Stephen Sondheim

Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim

Book: John Weidman

Premiere: Tuesday, December 18, 1990

Everybody's Got the Right

A shooting gallery at a carnival. Shelves of prizes. The target figures are all men, dressed formally in various fashions from the last two hundred years. The Proprietor stands behind the counter.

PROPRIETOR

(as Leon Czolgosz enters)

Hey, pal -- feelin' blue?

Don't know what to do?

Hey, pal --

(Czolgosz looks over)

I mean you --

Yeah.

C'mere and kill a president.

(Czolgosz crosses to the counter.)

No job? Cupboard bare?

One room, no one there?

Hey, pal, don't despair --

You wanna shoot a president?

C'mon and shoot a president...

(shows Czolgosz a gun)

Some guys

Think they can't be winners.

(smiles, shakes his head)

First prize

Often goes to rank beginners.

CZOLGOSZ

How much?

PROPRIETOR

Four-fifty. Ivor-Johnson. .32. Rubber Handle. Owls stamped on the sides.

CZOLGOSZ

All right, give me.

(He puts his money on the counter, and the Proprietor hands him the

gun. Czolgosz slowly examines it as John Hinckley enters.)

PROPRIETOR

(to Hinckley)

Hey kid, failed your test?

Dream girl unimpressed?

Show her your the best.

(proffers another kind of gun)

If you can shoot a president --

(Hinckley approaches the counter.)

You can get the prize

With the big blue eyes,

Skinny little thighs

And those big blue eyes...

(presses the gun into Hinckley's hand)

Everybody's

Got the right

To be happy.

Don't stay mad,

life's not as bad

As it seems.

If you keep your

Goal in sight,

You can climb to

Any height.

Everybody's

Got the right

To their dreams...

HINCKLEY

Deal.

CZOLGOSZ

(unable to open his gun)

Mister --

HINCKLEY

(plunking money down on the counter)

I said "deal."

CZOLGOSZ

(to Hinckley)

You. Wait your turn.

HINCKLEY

It is my turn.

CZOLGOSZ

I was here first --

PROPRIETOR

Watch it now, no violence!

(He shows Czolgosz how his gun opens and closes as Charles Guiteau enters.)

PROPRIETOR

(to Guiteau)

Hey, fella,

Feel like you're a failure?

Bailiff on your tail? Your

Wife run off for good?

Hey, fella,

Feel misunderstood?

C'mere and kill a president...

GUITEAU

Okay!

(He pays the Proprietor, who hands him a silver-mounted .44. Giuseppe Zangara, a tiny angry man, enters, groans and leans against the counter, rubbing his stomach.)

ZANGARA

Marron...

PROPRIETOR

What's-a wrong, boy?

Boss-a treat you crummy?

Trouble with your tummy?

This-a bring you some relief.

(holds out a gun)

Here, give some

Hail-a to da chief --

ZANGARA

You gimme prize--

PROPRIETOR

Anything you want.

ZANGARA

(reaching for the gun)

I want prize. You gimme prize!

PROPRIETOR

(lifting the gun up high)

Only eight bucks. Cheap for "anything you want."

(Zangara pays for the gun and grabs it.)

Everybody's
Got the right
To be different,

(Samuel Byck enters, dressed in a Santa Claus suit, carrying a sign which reads: SANTA SAYS, ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS MY CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT [OVER].)

Even though
At times they go
To extremes.
Aim for what you
Want a lot --
Everybody
Gets a shot.

(Byck turns around, revealing the other side of his sign: TO PEACABLY PETITION MY GOVERNMENT FOR THE REDRESS OF ALL MY GRIEVANCES.)

Everybody's
Got the right
To their dreams --

(Byck goes to the counter. As he pays for and receives a gun from the Proprietor, Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme enters and eyes the shooting gallery with interest. At the same time, Sara Jane Moore enters and moves toward the booth, fishing clumsily in her handbag for money.)

PROPRIETOR
(to Fromme)
Yo baby!
Looking for a thrill?
The Ferris wheel is that way.

(Fromme comes over.)

No, baby,
This requires skill --

(Fromme puts money down; the Proprietor shrugs, gives her a gun.)

Okay, you want to give it a try...

(As Fromme plays with the gun, Moore is spilling keys, credit cards, lipstick, etc., over the counter.)

Jeez, lady--!

(indicates Czolgosz)

Give the guy some room!
The bumper cars are that way...

(Moore finds her money; Proprietor gives her a .38, which she accidentally points at his stomach.)

Please, lady --

(turning barrel away)

Don't forget that guns can go boom...

(John Wilkes Booth enters and contemplates the scene.)

PROPRIETOR
Hey, gang,
Look who's here.
There's our
Pioneer.

(to Booth)

Hey, chief.

(gesturing toward the Assassins)

Loud and clear:

BOOTH
(to the Assassins)
Everybody's
Got the right
To be happy.
Say, "Enough!"
It's not as tough
As it seems.

Don't be scared
You won't prevail
Everybody's
Free to fail,
No one can get pu in jail
For their dreams.

Free country--!

PROPRIETOR
-- Means your dreams can come true:

BOOTH
Be a scholar --

PROPRIETOR
Make a dollar --

BOOTH, PROPRIETOR
Free country--!

BOOTH

-- Means they'll listen to you:

PROPRIETOR

Scream and holler --

BOOTH

Grab 'em by the collar!

BOOTH, PROPRIETOR

Free country--!

BOOTH

-- Means you don't have to sit --

PROPRIETOR

That's it!

BOOTH

-- And put up with the shit.

ASSASSINS

Everybody's

Got the right

To some sunshine --

BOOTH

Everybody...

ASSASSINS

Not the sun

But maybe one

Of its beams.

One of its beams.

ALL

Rich man, poor man,

Black or white,

Pick your apple,

Take a bite,

Everybody

Just hold tight

To your dreams.

Everybody's

Got the right

To their dreams...

(They turn to face the targets, raising their guns. Just as they are about to shoot, Hail to the Chief is heard, then a voice on the P.A. system.)

VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln!

(Booth looks up at an imaginary theater box, then leaves. A gunshot offstage.)

BOOTH'S VOICE

Sic semper tyrannis!...

The Ballad of Booth

A Balladeer, a 20th-century folk singer, enters carrying a guitar.

BALLADEER

Someone tell the story,
Someone sing the song.

Every now and then
The country
Goes a little wrong.

Every now and then
A madman's
Bound to come along.
Doesn't stop the story --
Story's pretty strong.
Doesn't change the song...

Johnny Booth was a handsome devil,
Got up in his rings and fancy silks.
Had him a temper but kept it level.
Everybody called him Wilkes.

Why did you do it, Johnny?
Nobody agrees.
You who had everything,
What made you bring
A nation to its knees?

Some say it was your voice had gone,
Some say it was booze.
Some say you killed a country, John,
Because of bad reviews.

Johnny lived with a grace and glitter,
Kinda like the lives he lived on stage.
Died in a barn in pain and bitter,
Twenty-seven years of age.

Why did you do it, Johnny,
Throw it all away?
Why did you do it, boy,
Not just destroy
The pride and joy
Of Illinois,
But all the U.S.A.?

You brother made you jealous, John,
You couldn't fill his shoes.
Was that the reason, tell us, John --
Along with bad reviews?

(The inside of a tobacco barn in rural Virginia is seen. It is night. John Wilkes Booth sits on the floor, a pair of crutches nearby. He reads feverishly through a pile of newspapers.)

BOOTH
Damn!

(He takes a tattered diary out of his pocket and starts to write. The door opens, and David Herold rushes in.)

HEROLD
They're coming! They'll be here any minute --

BOOTH
I need your help. I've got to write this and I can't hold the pen!

HEROLD
Johnny, they've found us! We've got to get out of here!

BOOTH
Not till I finish this.

HEROLD
Johnny --

BOOTH
No! Have you seen these papers? Do you know what they're calling me?! A common cutthroat! A hired assassin! This one says I'm mad!

HEROLD
We must have been mad to think we could kill the President and get away with it!

BOOTH
We did get away with it! He was a bloody tyrant and we brought him down! And I will not have history think I did it for a bag of gold or in some kind of rabid fit!

HEROLD
Johnny, we have to go --

BOOTH
No! I have to make my case! And I need you to take it down!

HEROLD
We don't have time!

BOOTH

(draws his gun and points it at Herold)
Take it down.

(Herold takes the diary, writes.)

An indictment. Of the former President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, who is herein charged with the following High Crimes and Misdemeanors.

BALLADEER

They say your ship was sinkin', John...

BOOTH

(glances at him briefly; back to Herold)
One: That you did ruthlessly provoke a war between the States which cost some six hundred thousand of my countrymen their lives. Two --

BALLADEER

You'd started missing cues...

BOOTH

(glances again; back to Herold)
Two: That you did silence your critics in the North by hurling them into prison without benefit of charge or trial. Three --

BALLADEER

They say it wasn't Lincoln, John.

BOOTH

(to Balladeer)
Shut up! Three --

BALLADEER

You'd merely had
A slew of bad
Reviews --

BOOTH

I said shut up!

VOICE

(from outside barn)
Booth! I have fifty soldiers out here, Booth! Give yourselves up or we'll set fire to the barn!

HEROLD

Don't shoot! I'm coming out!

BOOTH

No!

(Herold rushes out. Booth lunges for him and collapses; to the Balladeer)

I have given up my life for one act, you understand? Do not let history rob me of it's meaning. Pass on the truth! You're the only one who can. Please...

(He tosses the diary to the Balladeer.)

BALLADEER

He said,
"Damn you, Lincoln,
You had your way --

BOOTH

(to Balladeer)
Tell 'em, boy!

BALLADEER

With blood you drew out
Of Blue and Gray!"

BOOTH

Tell it all!
Tell them till they listen!

BALLADEER

He said,
"Damn you, Lincoln,
And damn the day
You threw the 'U' out
Of U.S.A.!"

He said:

BOOTH

Hunt me down, smear my name,
Say I did it for the fame,
What I did was kill the man who killed my country.
Now the Southland will mend,
Now this bloody war can end,
Because someone slew the tyrant
Just as Brutus slew the tyrant --

BALLADEER

He said:

BALLADEER, BOOTH

Damn you, Lincoln,
You righteous whore!

BOOTH

Tell 'em!
Tell 'em what he did!

BALLADEER, BOOTH

You turned your spite into civil war!

BOOTH

Tell 'em!

Tell 'em the truth!

BALLADEER

And more...

BOOTH

Tell 'em, boy!

Tell them how it happened,

How the end doesn't mean that it's over,

How surrender is not the end!

Tell them:

How the country is not what it was,

Where there's blood in the clover,

How the nation can never again

Be the hope that it was.

How the bruises may never be healed,

How the wounds are forever,

How we gave up the field

But we still wouldn't yield,

How the Union can never recover

From that vulgar,

High and mighty

Niggerlover,

Never--!

Never. Never. Never.

No, the country is not what it was...

(The barn begins to burn. Booth prays silently for a moment.)

Damn my soul if you must,

Let my body turn to dust,

Let it mingle with the ashes of the country.

Let them curse me to hell,

Leave it to history to tell:

What I did, I did well,

And I did it for my country.

Let them cry, "Dirty traitor!"

They will understand it later --

The country is not what it was...

(He puts his gun to his head. Blackout on Booth. The sound of a gunshot.)

BALLADEER

Johnny Booth was a headstrong fellow,

Even he believed the things he said.

Some called him noble, some said yellow.

What he was was off his head.

How could you do it, Johnny,
Calling it a cause?
You left a legacy
Of butchery
And treason we
Took eagerly,
And thought you'd get applause.

But traitors just get jeers and boos,
Not visits to their graves,
While Lincoln, who got mixed reviews,
Because of you, John, now gets only raves.

Damn you, Johnny,
You paved the way
For other madmen
To make us pay.
Lots of madmen
Have had their say --
But only for a day.

Listen to the stories.
Hear it in the songs.
Angry men
Don't write the rules
And guns don't right the wrongs.

Hurts a while,
But soon the country's
Back where it belongs,
And that's the truth.

Still and all,
Damn you, Booth!

How I Saved Roosevelt

RADIO ANNOUNCER

(as a band plays El Capitan)

That was President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, ladies and gentlemen, speaking to a crowd of supporters here in Miami's beautiful Bayfront Park. A group of notables are pressing in around the President-elect's car. There's Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago, and --

(Gunshots are heard, then screams.)

There's been a shot! I can't see -- wait! Mr. Roosevelt is waving! He's all right! But Mayor Cermak has been hit! The police have somebody in custody. An immigrant. Giuseppe Zangara. We take you now to a group of eyewitnesses who will tell us

what they saw!

(Five bystanders are revealed clustered around a microphone.)

BYSTANDER #1

We're crowded up close,
And I see this guy,
He's squeezing by,
I catch his eye,
I say to him, "Where do you
Think you're trying to go, boy?
Whoa, boy!"
I say, "Listen, you runt,
You're not pulling that stunt,
No gentleman pushes their way to the front."
I say, "Move to the back!", which he does with a grunt --
Which is how I saved Roosevelt!

BYSTANDER #2

(pushing #1 away from the microphone)

Then --

Well, I'm in my seat,
I get up to clap,
I feel this tap,
I turn -- this sap,
He says he can't see,
I say, "Find a lap
And go sit
On it!"
|Which is how I saved --

|BYSTANDER #3

|Then --

He started to swear
And he climbed on a chair,
He was aiming a gun -- I was standing right there --
So I pushed it as hard as I could in the air,
Which is how I saved Roosevelt!

ALL THREE

Lucky I was there --

BYSTANDER #1

That's why he was standing back so far--!

BYSTANDER #3

That's why when he aimed, he missed the car--!

ALL THREE

Just lucky I was there,
Or we'd have been left
Bereft
Of F.D.R.!

(Zangara is seen strapped into the electric chair)

ZANGARA

You think that I scare?
No scare.
You think that I care?
No care.
I look at the world --
No good. No fair. Nowhere.

When I am a boy,
No school.
I work in a ditch.
No chance.
The smart and the rich
Ride by,
Don't give no glance.

Ever since then, because of them,
I have the sickness in the stomach,
Which is the way I make my idea
To go out and kill Roosevelt.

First I was figure I kill Hooever,
I get even for the stomach.
Only Hoover up in Washington.
Is wintertime in Washington,
Too cold for the stomach in Washington --
I go down to Miami kill Roosevelt.

No luagh!
No funny!
Men with the money,
They control everything.

Roosevelt, Hoover --
No make no difference.
You think I care who I kill?
I no care who I kill,
Long as it's king!

BYSTNADER #4 (MAN)
The crowd's breaking up
When I hear these shots,
And I mean lots --

BYSTANDER #5 (HIS WIFE)
I thought I'd plotz --

MAN
I spotted him --

WIFE
My stomach was tied in knots --

MAN

So I barrelled --

WIFE

Harold--!

No, what happened was this:

He was blowing a kiss --

MAN

|She means Roosevelt --

|

|WIFE

|I was saying to Harold, "This weather is bliss!"

MAN

When you think that might have missed seeing him miss--!

BOTH

Lucky we were there!

WIFE

It was a historical event--!

MAN

-- Worth every penny that we spent!

THE BYSTANDERS

Just lucky we were there!

BYSTANDER #1

To think, if I'd let him get up closer--!

BYSTANDER #3

I saw right away he was insane --

(dragging Bystander #2 forward)

Oh, this is my husband, we're from Maine --

BYSTANDER #2

He told me to sit, but I said, "No sir!"

BYSTANDER #4

This makes our vacation a real success!

BYSTANDER #5

(to approaching photographer)

Are you with the press?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes.

BYSTANDER #5

Oh God, I'm a mess...

BYSTANDER #1

Some left wing foreigner, that's my guess --

ZANGARA

No!

BYSTANDERS

And wasn't the band just fantastic?

ZANGARA

No left!

You think I am left?

No left, no right,

No anything!

Only American!

Zangara have nothing,
No luck, no girl,
Zangara no smart, no school,
But Zangara no foreign tool,
Zangara American!
American nothing!

And why there no photographers?
For Zangara no photographers!
Only capitalists get photographers!

NoBYSTANDERS

Right!Lucky

No fair!I was there!

Nowhere!

So what?I'm on the front page --

Is that bizarre?

No sorry!And all of those pictures, like a star!

And soon noJust lucky I was there!

Zangara!We might have been left

Who care?

Bereft of F.

Pull switch!

No care,D.

No more,

No --R!

(Zangara is elctrocuted.)

Gun Song

CZOLGOSZ

(examining an empty pistol)

It takes a lot of men to make a gun,

Hundreds,

Many men to make a gun:

Men in the mines

To dig the iron,
Men in the mills
To forge the steel,
Men at machines
To turn the barrel,
Mold the trigger
Shape the wheel --
It takes a lot of men to make a gun...
One gun...

BOOTH
(entering)
And all you have to do
Is move your little finger,
Move your little finger and --

(Czolgosz clicks the trigger)

You can change the world.

Why should you be blue
When you've your little finger?
Prove how just a little finger
| Can change the world.
|
| CZOLGOSZ
| I hate this gun...

GUITEAU
(enters, holding a gun up admiringly)
What a wonder is a gun!
What a versatile invention!
First of all, when you've a gun --

(points it at the audience)

Everybody pays attention.

When you think what must be done,
Think of all that it can do:
Remove a scoundrel,
Unite a party,
Preserve the Union,
Promote the sales of my book,
Insure my future,
My niche in history,
And then the world will see
That I am not a man to overlook!
Ha-ha!

GUITEAU, BOOTH, CZOLGOSZ
And all you have to do
Is squeeze your little finger.
Ease your little finger back --

(They click the triggers.)

You can change the world.
Whatever else is true,
You trust your little finger.
Just a single little finger
Can change the world.

MOORE

(enters, fishing through her purse)
I got this really great gun --
Shit, where is it?
No, it's really great --
Wait --

(pulls out a lipstick, drops it back)

Shit, where is it?
Anyway --

(continuing to fish)

It's just a .38 --

(pulls out a large hairbrush)

But --

(drops it back)

It's a gun.
You can make a statement --

(pulls out a shoe)

Wrong --
With a gun --
Even if you fail.

It tells 'em who you are,
Where you stand.
This one was on sale.
It -- no, not the shoe --
Well, actually the shoe was, too.

(drops it back in, fishes again)

No, that's not it --
Shit, I had it here --
Got it!

(pulls gun out, waves it around)

Yeah! There it is! And --

ALL

All you have to do
Is crook your little finger,
Hook your little finger 'round --

(They pull their triggers; the men's guns click; Moore's goes off.)

MOORE

Shit, I shot it...

OTHERS

-- You can change the world.

QUARTET

Simply follow through,
And look, your little finger
Can
Slow them down
To a crawl,
Show them all,
Big and small,
It took a little finger
No time
To change the world.

(Booth, Guiteau, and Moore leave.)

CZOLGOSZ

(continues to examine his gun)
A gun kills many men before it's done,
Hundreds,
Long before you shoot the gun:

Men in the mines
And in the steel mills,
Men at machines,
Who died for what?

Something to buy --
A watch, a shoe, a gun,
A thing to make the bosses richer,
But
A gun claims many men before it's done...

Just

One

More...

The Ballad of Czolgosz

The Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo, New York. Czolgosz watches
some fairgoers in line waiting to shake hands
with President McKinley.

BALLADEER
Czolgosz,
Working man,
Born in the middle of Michigan,
Woke with a thought
And away he ran
To the Pan-American Exposition
In Buffalo,
In Buffalo.

Saw of a sudden
How things were run,
Said, "Time's a-wasting,
It's nineteen-one.
Some men have everything
And some have none,
So rise and shine --
In the U.S.A.
You can work your way
To the head of the line!"

ATTENDANT
Single line, ladies and gentlemen. Line forms here to meet the
President of the United States. Single line to shake hands with
President William McKinley.

BALLADEER
Czolgosz,
Quiet man,
Worked out a quiet
And simple plan,
Strolled of a morning
All spick and span,
To the Temple of Music
By the Tower of Light
At the Pan-American Exposition
In Buffalo,
In Buffalo.

Saw Bill McKinley there
In the sun.
Heard Bill McKinley say,
"Folks, have fun!
Some men have everything
And some have none,
But that's just fine:
In the U.S.A.
You can work your way
To the head of the line!"

CROWD
Big Bill--!

BALLADEER
-- Gave 'em a thrill.

CROWD
Big Bill--!

BALLADEER
-- Sold 'em a bill.

CROWD
Big Bill--!

BALLADEER
-- Who'd want to kill
A man of good will
Like--?

ALL
Big Bill!

FAIRGOER #1
Doesn't the President look marvelous? So round and prosperous!

FAIRGOER #2
Do you know what his favorite dish is? It was in the paper. Beef.

FAIRGOER #3
I'm told that in his spare time he enjoys collecting coins!

(Czolgosz joins the end of the line.)

BALLADEER
Czolgosz,
Angry man,
Said, "I will do what
A poor man can.
Yes, and there's nowhere
More fitting than
In the Temple of Music
By the Tower of Light
Between the Fountain of Abundance
And the Court of Lilies
At the great Pan-American Exposition
In Buffalo,
In Buffalo."

Wrapped him a handkerchief
'Round his gun,
Said, "Nothin' wrong about
What I done.
Some men have everything
And some have none --
That's by his design
The idea wasn't mine alone,
But mine,
And that's the sign:

In the U.S.A.
You can have your say,
You can set your goals
And seize the day,
You've been given the freedom
To work your way
To the head of the line --

(Czolgosz reaches McKinley -- and fires.)

To the head of the line!"

Unworthy of Your Love

HINCKLEY

I am nothing,
You are wind and water and sky,
Jodie.
Tell me, Jodie,
How I can earn your love.
I would swim oceans,
I would climb mountains,
I would do anything for you.
What do you want me to do?

I am unworthy of your love,
Jodie, Jodie,
Let me prove worthy of your love.
Tell me how I can earn your love,
Set me free.
How can I turn your love
To me?

(Squeaky Fromme is seen on the opposite side of the stage.)

FROMME

I am nothing,
You are wind and devil and Go,
Charlie,
Take my blood and body
For your love.
Let me feel fire,
Let me drink poison,
Tell me to tear my heart in two,
If that's what you want me to do...

I am unworthy of your love,
Charlie darlin',
I have done nothing for your love.
Let me be worthy of your love,
Set me free --

HINCKLEY

I would come take you from your life...

FROMME

I would come take you from your cell...

HINCKLEY

You would be queen to me, not wife...

FROMME

I would crawl belly-deep through hell...

HINCKLEY

Baby, I'd die for you...

FROMME

Baby, I'd die for you...

HINCKLEY

Even though --

FROMME

Even though --

HINCKLEYFROMME

I will always know:I will always know:
I am unworthy of your love,I am unworthy of your love,
Jodie darlin',Charlie darlin',

BOTH

Let me be worthy of your love.
I'll find a way to earn your love,
Wait and see.
Then you will turn your love to me,
Your love to me...

The Ballad of Guiteau

Charles Guiteau stands at the foot of the gallows, the Hangman
waiting at the top of the steps.

GUITEAU

I am going to the Lordy,
I am so glad.
I am going to the Lordy,
I am so glad.
I am going to the Lordy,
Glory hallelujah!
Glory hallelujah!
I am going to the Lordy...

BALLADEER

(entering)
Come all ye Christians,

And learn from a sinner:
Charlie Guiteau.
Bound and determined
He'd wind up a winner,
Charlie had dreams
That he wouldn't let go.
Said, "Nothing to it,
I want it, I'll do it,
I'm Charles J. Guiteau."

Charlie Guiteau
Never said "Never"
Or heard the word "No."
Face with disaster,
His heart would beat faster,
His smile would just grow,
And he'd say:

GUITEAU
(cakewalking up and down the gallows steps)
Look on the bright side,
Look on the bright side,
Sit on the right side
Of the Lord.
This is the land of
Opportunity,
He is your lightning,
You His Sword.

Wait till you see tomorrow,
Tomorrow you'll get your reward!
You can be sad
Or you can be president --
Look on the bright side...

(finishes a step or two higher than before)

I am going to the Lordy...

BALLADEER
Charlie Guiteau
Drew a crowd to his trial,
Led them in prayer,
Said, "I killed Garfield,
I'll make no denial.
I was just acting
For Someone up there.
The Lord's my employer,
And now he's my lawyer,
So do what you dare."

Charlie said, "Hell,
If I am guilty,
Then God is as well."
But God was acquitted

And Charlie committed
Until he should hang.
Still, he sang:

GUITEAU

(cakewalking up and down the steps)
Look on the bright side,
Not on the black side.
Get off your backside,
Shine those shoes.
This is your golden
Opportunity:
You are the lightning
And you're news!

Wait till you see tomorrow,
Tomorrow you won't be ignored!
You could be pardoned,
You could be president --
Look on the bright side...

(finishes a step or two higher)

I am going to the Lordy...

BALLADEER

Charlie Guiteau
Had a crowd at the scaffold --

GUITEAU

I am so glad...

BALLADEER

-- Filled up the square,
So many people
That tickets were raffled.
Shine on his shoes,
Charlie mounted the stair,
Said, "Never Sorrow,
Just wait till tomorrow,
Today isn't fair.
Don't despair..."

GUITEAU

(feverishly, cakewalking up the steps)
Look on the bright side,
Look on the bright side,
Sit on the right side...

(reaches the Hangman)

Of the...

(steps backwards to the bottom, then with resolution starts up again)

I am going to the Lordy,
I am so glad!
I am going to the Lordy,
I am so glad!
I have unified my party,
I have saved my country.
I shall be remembered!

I am going to the Lord...

(Hangman adjusts noose)

BALLADEER
Look on the bright side,
Not on the sad side,
Inside the bad side
Something's good!
This is your golden
Opportunity:
You've been a preacher --

GUITEAU
Yes, I have!

BALLADEER
You've been an author --

GUITEAU
Yes, I have!

BALLADEER
You've been a killer --

GUITEAU
Yes, I have!

BALLADEER
You could be an angel --

GUITEAU
Yes, I could!

(Hangman puts hood over Guiteau)

BALLADEER
Just wait until tomorrow,
Tomorrow they'll all climb aboard!
What if you never
Got to be president?
You'll be remembered --

(Guiteau dances briefly.)

Look on the bright side --

(again)

Trust in tomorrow --

(once more)

GUITEAU, BALLADEER
And the Lord!

(Hangman pulls the trapdoor lever.)

Another National Anthem
The sound of lamentation is heard.

CZOLGOSZ
I did it because it is wrong for one man to have so much service
when other men have none...

BOOTH
I did it do bring down the government of Abraham Lincoln and avenge
the ravaged South...

HINCKLEY
I did it to prove to her my everlasting love...

FROMME
I did it to make them listen to Charlie...

ZANGARA
I did it 'cause my belly was on fire...

GUITEAU
I did it to preserve the Union and promote the sale of my book...

MOORE
I did it so my friends would know where I was coming from...

BYCK
Where's my prize?

CZOLGOSZ
I did it because no one cared about the poor man's pain...

MOORE
I did it so I'd know where I was coming from...

BYCK
I want my prize...

ZANGARA
I did it 'cause the bosses made my belly burn...

HINCKLEY

I did it so she'd pay attention...

MOORE

So I'd have someplace to come from, and someplace to go...

BYCK

Don't I get a prize?...

GUITEAU

I did it 'cause they said I'd be ambassador to France...

BOOTH

I did it so they'd suffer in the North the way we'd suffered in the South...

BYCK

I deserve a fucking prize!...

FROMME

I did it so there'd be a trial, and Charlie would get to be a witness, and he'd be on TV, and he'd save the world!...

GUITEAU

Where's my prize?

BYCK

I did it to make people listen.

CZOLGOSZ, FROMME

They promised me a prize...

HINCKLEY

Because she wouldn't take my phone calls --

ALL

(except Zangara)

What about my prize?...

ZANGARA

Because nothing stopped the fire--!

ALL

(except Byck)

I want my prize!...

BYCK

Nobody would listen!

BALLADEER

(entering, to Assassins)

And it didn't mean a nickel,

You just shed a little blood,

And a lot of people shed a lot of tears.

Yes, you made a little moment

And you stirred a little mud --

But it didn't fix the stomach
And you've drunk your final Bud,
And it didn't help the workers
And it didn't heal the country
And it didn't make them listen
And they never said, "We're sorry"--

BYCK
Yeah, it's never gonna happen,
Is it?
No, sir --

CZOLGOSZ
Never.

BYCK
No, we're never gonna get the prize --

FROMME
No one listens...

BYCK
-- Are we?

ZANGARA
Never.

BYCK
No, it doesn't make a bit of difference,
Does it?

OTHERS
(variously)
Didn't.
Ever.

BYCK
Fuck it!

OTHERS
Spread the word...

ALL
Where's my prize?...

BALLADEER
I just heard
On the news
Where the mailman won the lottery.
Goes to show:
When you lose, what you do is try again.

You can be

What you choose,
From a mailman to a president.
There are prizes all around you,
If you're wise enough to see:
The delivery boy's on Wall Street,
And the usherette's a rock star --

BYCK
Right, it's never gonna happen, is it?
Is it!

HINCKLEY, FROMME
No, man!

BYCK, CZOLGOSZ
No, we'll never see the day arrive --

ASSASSINS
(variously)
Spread the word...
Will we?
No, sir --
Never!

No one's ever gonna even care if we're alive,
Are they?...
Never...
Spread the word...
We're alive...
Someone's gonna listen...
Listen!

BYCK
Listen...
There's another national anthem playing,
Not the one you cheer
At the ball park.

MOORE
Where's my prize?...

BYCK
It's the other national anthem, saying,
If you want to hear --
It says, "Bullshit!"...

CZOLGOSZ
It says, "Never!" --

GUITEAU
It says, "Sorry!" --

OTHERS
Loud and clear --

ASSASSINS

(variously)

It says: Listen

To the tune that keeps sounding
In the distance, on the outside,
Coming through the ground,
To the hearts that go on pounding
To the sound
Getting louder every year --

Listen to the sound...

Take a look around...

We're the other national anthem, folks,
The ones that can't get in-
To the ball park.

Spread the word...

There's another national anthem, folks,
For those who never win,
For the suckers, for the pikers,
For the ones who might have been...

BALLADEER

There are those who love regretting,
There are those who like extremes,
There are those who thrive on chaos
And despair.
There are those who keep forgetting
How the country's built on dreams --

ASSASSINS

People listen...

BALLADEER

-- And the mailman won the lottery --

ASSASSINS

They may not want to hear it,
But they listen,
Once they think it's gonna stop the game...

BALLADEER

-- And the usherette's a rock star.

ASSASSINS

No, they may not understand
All the words,
All the same
They hear the music...
They hear the screams...

BALLADEER

(to the Assassins)

I've got news --

ASSASSINS

They hear the sobs,
They hear the drums...

BALLADEER

-- You forgot about the country --

ASSASSINS

The muffled drums,
The muffled dreams...

BALLADEER

-- So it's now forgotten you --

ASSASSINS

And they rise...

BYCK

You know why I did it? Because there isn't any Santa Claus!

ASSASSINS

Where's my prize?

BALLADEER

And you forgot --

ASSASSINS

Where's my prize?

BALLADEER

-- How quick it heals --

ASSASSINS

Promises and lies...

BALLADEER

-- That it's a place
Where you can make the lies come true --

ASSASSINS

Spread the word...

BALLADEER

-- If you try --

ASSASSINS

Gotta spread the word...

BALLADEER

-- That's all you have to do --

ASSASSINS

Right,

All you have to do...

(They advance on the Balladeer, forcing him off the stage, then turn front.)

Well, there's another national anthem,
And I think it just begun
In the ball park.
Listen hard...

Like the other national anthem
Says to each and every fan:
If you can't do what you want to,
Then you do the things you can.

You've got to try again!

(variously)

Like they say,
You've got to keep on trying
Every day
Until you get a prize...
Until you get a prize ...

(One by one, they start to leave the stage.)

Until you're heard...
Mustn't get discouraged...
Spread the word...
Mustn't give up hope...

Up to you --
Don't say --
-- What you choose...
-- It's never gonna happen...
Spread the word...

ALL
You can always get a prize...

BOOTH
You can always get your dream...

BYCK
Sure, the mailman won the lottery...

November 22, 1963

The sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. There is a clock on the wall and, on a shelf, a radio, through which is heard country-and-western music. Faint street noises from outside. Lee Harvey Oswald sits on a carton of books reading a note he has just written. Beside him are a lunch

pail and a long package.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

That was the Blue Ridge Boys and Heartache Serenade. And now we take you live to KTEX --

(Oswald turns off the radio, re-reads the note, opens the lunch pail and pulls out a pistol. As he puts it to his head, he hears whistling. John Wilkes Booth appears.)

BOOTH

Oh! I'm sorry. I was just browsing. Please carry on with whatever you were --

(He notices the pistol; Oswald flushes and shoves it back in the pail. Booth indicates the clock.)

Is that the right time? Yes? I don't know what's the matter with this watch. Excuse me for a moment --

(He turns the radio on.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

-- speaking to you from Love Field, where tthe President's plane has just touched down and is taxiing toward us across the tarmac. We understand the President plans to speak briefly --

(Oswald stalks over and snaps the radio off. Booth picks up the note.)

BOOTH

Dearest Marina. Today I end my life so that your life can begin. Last night --

(Oswald snatches the note.)

I'm sorry, was that your note?

OSWALD

Fuck you.

BOOTH

We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot here. It's my fault. I shouldn't --

(Oswald grabs his lunch pail and heads for the door.)

You're not going are you? Come on, I didn't mean to -- Alik.

OSWALD

(stopping)

What did you call me?

BOOTH

Alik. You used to like that nickname. Back in Minsk. Marina said Lee

sounded Chinese, so she called you Alik. Of course I don't have to call you Alik. I just thought --

OSWALD

How do you know what Marina called me?

BOOTH

I know lots about you, Lee. Let's see...Born, New Orleans, October 18, 1939. Father, Robert, died before your birth. Crazy mother, Marguerite. Dropped out of school at 17. Joined the Marines. Court-martialled twice. Defected to the Soviet Union, October 1959. Defected back, June 1962. Married, Marina Nikolaevna. Two children, June and Rachel. Current employment, stock boy, Texas School Book Depository, Dallas, Texas...Oh. And this morning, depressed over your estrangement from a wife who views you as a dismal and pathetic figure, you rose before dawn, kissed your sleeping children, put your last hundred dollars and your wedding ring into a demi-tasse cup which Marina's mother gave you for a wedding present, and came here to kill yourself...

OSWALD

Who are you?

BOOTH

I'm your friend, Lee.

OSWALD

I don't have any friends.

BOOTH

Yes, you do. You just haven't met them yet.

OSWALD

Show me your badge.

BOOTH

My what?

OSWALD

You bastards think you are so smart. I know my rights. You try to interrogate me in my place of business I can sue you for harassment.

BOOTH

Ah! You think I'm with the F.B.I.!

OSWALD

I have a right to see your badge.

BOOTH

Search me, Lee. You think I've got a badge. Come on, search me.

(Oswald starts to frisk him.)

The F.B.I. You really love those morons, don't you? Hell, why wouldn't you? No one else cares if you live or die. Those guys can't get enough of you. "How was your day, Lee? Sell any secrets to the Soviets? Sabotage any defense plants? Kick off your shoes and tell us all about it!"

OSWALD

(shoving him away)

Fuck you, whoever you are!

BOOTH

Lee. I'm sorry, Lee. It's just so sad. I mean, it's all you ever wanted, isn't it? Someone who won't leave you alone. Someone who wants to hear about your day. Someone, anyone -- your mother. Mother Russia. The Marines. Your wife Marina...Attention must be paid.

OSWALD

What's that mean?

BOOTH

It's from a play, Lee. About a salesman. A man very much like you, Lee. Independent, proud, a decent man who tries and tries but never gets a break. So he does something really dumb. When things go really sour, when he realizes that his whole life has been a failure built on lies, he kills himself. And when he's dead, his wife stands at his grave and says attention must be paid. She has to beg the world to pay attention to this poor, misguided nobody. I'll tell you something, I'm an actor, Lee. And I'm a good one. But Willy Loman is a part that I could never play. And I don't think that you should play it either.

OSWALD

I don't know what you're talking about.

BOOTH

What do you want, Lee?

OSWALD

You know so much, why don't you tell me?

BOOTH

You want what everybody wants. To be appreciated. To be valued. To be in other people's thoughts. For them to think of you and smile. You want someone to love you, Lee. Right?...Isn't that it?...Lee?

OSWALD

Yes.

BOOTH

Forget it.

OSWALD

What?

BOOTH

It's never gonna happen. It's a fantasy. You've got to give it up.

OSWALD

I'm going to kill myself! Don't you think I've given up?!

BOOTH

No, I think you're going to kill yourself because you think that's how to get it. "When I'm dead, then they'll be sorry! When I'm dead, they'll know how much they loved me!" When you close your eyes you probably see the funeral, don't you, Lee? A gentle rain is falling. Everybody has umbrellas --

OSWALD

Shut up!

BOOTH

There's Marina, weeping quietly. Your sobbing children clutching at her skirt. Your mom, your dad. Every boss who ever fired you --

OSWALD

Shut the fuck up!

BOOTH

Sorry, Lee. It's just so childish. It's so dumb --

OSWALD

You think it's dumb?! If I shouldn't kill myself what should I do?! Go home?! Beg her to take me back?! Plead with her?! Beat her up?!

BOOTH

You tried all that. It doesn't work.

OSWALD

I know it doesn't work! So tell me what I should do!

BOOTH

You should kill the President of the United States.

OSWALD

What?

BOOTH

His plane landed at the airport fifteen minutes ago. He's coming into town to make a speech. His motorcade is going to go right past this window. When it does, you shoot him.

OSWALD

You're nuts.

BOOTH

Maybe I am, so what?

OSWALD

I didn't come here to shoot the president.

BOOTH

He didn't come here to get shot...All your life you've been a victim, Lee. A victim of indifference and neglect. Of your mother's scorn, you're wife's contempt, of Soviet stupidity, American injustice. You've finally had enough, so how're you planning to get even? By becoming your own victim.

OSWALD

I am not a murderer.

BOOTH

Who said you were?

OSWALD

You just said I should kill the President.

BOOTH

Lee, when you kill a president, it isn't murder. Murder is a tawdry little crime; it's born of greed, or lust, or liquor. Adulterers and shopkeepers get murdered. But when a president gets killed, when Julius Caesar got killed -- he was assassinated. And the man who did it...

OSWALD

Brutus.

BOOTH

Ah! You know his name. Brutus assassinated Caesar -- what? -- two thousand years ago, and here's a high school drop-out with a dollar twenty-five an hour job in Dallas, Texas, who knows who he was. And they say fame is fleeting...

OSWALD

This is stupid. Up here on the sixth floor, what would I do? Throw school books at him?

BOOTH

What's in the package?

OSWALD

What package?

BOOTH

The package that you brought to work. What's in it?

OSWALD

Curtain rods.

BOOTH

You sure?

OSWALD

Sure I'm sure. Marina wanted me to take them to the --

(Booth tosses the package to Oswald, who opens it, revealing a high-powered rifle.)

BOOTH

That's a Mannlicher-Carcano. 6.5 millimeter. Stopping range 900 yards. The sight's already been adjusted.

OSWALD

Who are you?

BOOTH

My name is John Wilkes Booth, Lee.

OSWALD

John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln.

BOOTH

Attention has been paid...All your life you've wanted to be part of something, Lee. You're finally going to get your wish.

(Booth gestures. The other Assassins appear.)

OSWALD

What is this?

BOOTH

The past you never had, the future you'd abandoned -- it's called history, Lee.

GUITEAU

My name is Charles Guiteau. I assassinated President James Garfield.

CZOLGOSZ

Leon Czolgosz. William McKinley.

BYCK

Sam Byck. I'm going to try to kill Dick Nixon.

HINCKLEY

John Hinckley. Ronald Reagan.

FROMME

Lynette Fromme --

MOORE

Sara Jane Moore --

FROMME, MOORE

Gerald Ford.

ZANGARA

Zangara. F.D.R.

OSWALD

I don't get this --

MOORE

It's simple, Lee.

CZOLGOSZ

(indicating pre-Oswald Assassins)
You're going to bring us back.

HINCKLEY

(indicating post-Oswald Assassins)
And make us possible.

GUITEAU

We're in you're debt, old boy.

BYCK

This Bud's for you, babe.

GUITEAU

Bravo!

(The Assassins applaud. They crowd in around Oswald, patting him on the back, reaching for his hand. He shoves them back, throws down the rifle and grabs his lunch pail.)

HINCKLEY

What's he doing?

OSWALD

Getting out of here.

GUITEAU

You mean you're not going to do it?

OSWALD

| Goddamn right.

| (The Assassins turn to Booth.)

| GUITEAU

| He's not going to do it!

| FROMME

| You said he would!

| HINCKLEY

| You promised!

| BOOTH

| O.K., O.K., shhh...

Lee, I'm sorry. I know things are happening kind of fast here. But you can't leave now.

OSWALD

No? Watch me --

(He heads for the door.)

BOOTH

You have a responsibility here, Lee.

OSWALD

To who? To you?

(a chorus of "yes"s from the Assassins)

I'm responsible to me and no one else!

BOOTH

Not anymore, Lee. Fifty years from now, they'll still be arguing about the grassy knoll, the Mafia, some Cuban crouched behind a stockade fence, but this -- right here, right now -- this is the real conspiracy. And you're a part of it.

OSWALD

Get out of my way.

BOOTH

Listen to me, Lee. You have to do this. Now. You won't get another chance.

OSWALD

So what? So I'll do something else. I'll shoot my wife. I'll shoot my kids. I won't shoot anyone! Who cares?!

BOOTH

He wants to know who cares...I care, you stupid fool! We all care! Haven't you been listening, for Christ's sake?! Are you such a vapid, vacuous nonentity --

(The Assassins make a quiet "shushing" sound.)

Sorry. I'm sorry...John --

HINCKLEY

Yes, sir?

BOOTH

John, when Lee was 8 he had a dog. What was its name?

HINCKLEY

Tex.

BOOTH

The Marines sent him to radar school. Where?

HINCKLEY

The Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida.

BOOTH

The K.G.B. official who de-briefed him in the Kremlin -- what was his name and rank?

HINCKLEY

Lieutenant-Colonel Boris Kutzov.

BOOTH

Lee. Eighteen years from now, when John tries to assassinate President Reagan, they're going to search his room, and do you know what they're going to find? Every book about you ever written.

HINCKLEY

(to Oswald)

Can I have your autograph?

BOOTH

(opening the window)

Take a look, Lee. You know what that is, outside that window? That's America. The Land Where Any Kid Can Grow Up To Be President. The Shining City, Lee. It shines so bright you have to shade your eyes. But in here, this is America, too. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." An American said that. And he was right. But there are no lives of quiet desperation here. Desperation, yes. But quiet? I don't think so. Not today. Today we're going to make a joyful noise. This is the big one. You're the big one. You're the one that's going to sum it all up and blow it all wide open. Why, after you...

GUITEAU

Tell him.

BOOTH

Should I tell him?

ASSASSINS

(variously)

Go on!...Tell him!...Go ahead!

BOOTH

What the hell...Is Artie Bremer here tonight? Where's Artie Bremer?!

BREMER'S VOICE

(from somewhere in the audience)

It was a bum rap! My penis made me do it!

BOOTH

Who's next?! Who else is out there?!

ANOTHER VOICE

Death to the enemies of Palestine!

BOOTH

Of course, of course! Sirhan Sirhan!

(A rebel yell is heard.)

BOOTH

And James Earl Ray!

(The Assassins give a rebel yell.)

Why do these rednecks always have three names? James Earl Ray. John Wilkes Booth --

OSWALD

Lee Harvey Oswald!

BOOTH

I have seen the future, Lee. And you are in it.

(He snaps his fingers -- the radio comes on.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER

-- and now the motorcade is turning onto Elm Street. There's someone holding up a banner. "All the Way with JFK." The President is smiling and waving as his car heads for Dealey Plaza where it will swing past the Texas Book Depository and --

(Booth snaps his fingers -- the radio goes off. He holds out the gun.)

OSWALD

People will hate me.

BOOTH

They'll hate you with a passion, Lee. Imagine people having passionate feelings about Lee Harvey Oswald...

(Oswald reaches for the gun, hesitates, then drops his hand.)

Somebody. Help me...

(Zangara steps forward, speaks in Italian. The Assassins translate.)

MOORE

Please. I beseech you --

CZOLGOSZ

We are the hopeless ones. The lost ones...

GUITEAU

We live our lives in exile...

BYCK

Expatriates in our own country...

HINCKLEY

We drift from birth to death, despairing...

FROMME

Inconsolable...

GUITEAU

But through you and your act, we dare to hope...

MOORE

Through you and your act we are revived and given meaning...

CZOLGOSZ

Our lives, our acts, are given meaning...

HINCKLEY

Our frustrations fall away...

BYCK

Our fondest dreams come true...

FROMME

Today, we are reborn, through you...

(Pause)

BOOTH

We need you, Lee.

MOORE

Without you, we're just footnotes in a history book.

GUITEAU

"Disappointed office seeker."

CZOLGOSZ

"Deranged immigrant."

BOOTH

"Vainglorious actor."

FROMME

Without you we're a bunch of freaks.

HINCKLEY

With you we're a force of history.

GUITEAU

We become immortal.

ZANGARA

Finally we belong.

MOORE

To one another.

CZOLGOSZ
To the nation.

GUITEAU
To the ages.

BYCK
Bring us together, babe.

MOORE
You think you can't connect. Connect to us.

CZOLGOSZ
You think you're powerless. Empower us.

BOOTH
It's in your grasp, Lee. All you have to do is move your little
finger. You can close the New York Stock exchange.

GUITEAU
Shut down the schools in Indonesia.

MOORE
In Florence, Italy, a woman will leap from the Duomo clutching a
picture of your victim and cursing your name --

CZOLGOSZ
Your wife will weep --

FROMME
His wife will weep --

ZANGARA
The world will weep --

GUITEAU
Grief. Grief beyond imagining --

HINCKLEY
Despair --

MOORE
The death of innocence and hope --

CZOLGOSZ
The bitter burdens which you share --

BYCK
The bitter truths you carry in your heart --

GUITEAU
You can share them with the world.

BOOTH
You have the power of Pandora's Box, Lee. Open it...

(He holds out the gun. Oswald takes it and crouches at the window.)

GUITEAU

I envy you...

MOORE

We're your family...

HINCKLEY

I admire you...

CZOLGOSZ

I respect you...

MOORE

| Make us proud of you...

| BOOTH

| I envy you...

| GUITEAU

| We're your family...

HINCKLEY

| I admire you...

| FROMME, MOORE

| We're depending

| On you...

| ZANGARA

| You are

The

| Future....

| GUITEAU, MOORE

| We're your family...

| CZOLGOSZ

| We respect you...

BYCK, GUITEAU

Make them listen to us,

We've been waiting for you.

BYCK, ZANGARA

Make them listen, boy...

ALL

(variously)

We admire you...

We're your family...

You are the future...

We're depending on you...
Make us proud...
All you have to do
Is squeeze your little finger.
Squeeze your little finger...
You can change the wor--

(Oswald fires. Silently, the Assassins leave. Oswald turns, lurches to his feet, takes his lunch pail and goes out. Booth returns, picks up Oswald's suicide note, takes matches from his pocket and burns it. A slide is projected upstage: the famous photo of Oswald being shot by Jack Ruby.)