

LANDSLIDE LYNDON

A Power Play in Two Acts

By

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LANDSLIDE LYNDON: CAST LIST

10 ACTORS

Below are their significant characters:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 White Male | Lyndon Baines Johnson |
| 2 White Female | Lady Bird Johnson |
| 3 Black Female | Zephyr White |
| 4 White Male | Robert F. Kennedy |
| 5 Hispanic Male | George Brown. Huisso. Rayburn. Baker.
Coke. Poll Worker. Trooper. McNamara. WH
Aide #1 |
| 6 White Male | Herman Brown. Moyers. Sam Johnson. Senator
Richard Russell. Justice Black. JFK.
Sheriff Clark |
| 7 Black Male | Martin Luther King. Cronkite. Judge.
Westmoreland. Beggar |
| 8 Black Male | John Lewis. Truman. Jenkins. NYA Man. WH
Aide #2 |
| 9 Black Female | Jimmy Lee Jackson. FDR. Khrushchev. Pilot.
Doctor. Mr. Evans. Thug. Inspector. WH
Aide #3 |
| 10 White Female | Jackie Kennedy. Alice. George Wallace.
Senator Byrd. John Connally. Buck
Buchanan. WH Aide #4 |

Additionally, actors will play various Soldiers, Protesters, Aides, Southerners, Senators, Reporters, Joint Chiefs, Marchers, and Dead Bodies

ACT I

I-1

SCENE 1: THE PEN

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. NIGHT.

March 30, 1968 - the night before
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON announces he
will not run for re-election.

Lights up on the Oval Office.
Someone sits in the chair at the
Resolute desk, turned away, their
back to us. As they turn toward
us, we see it is a BLACK WOMAN in
a maid's outfit. She pulls out a
pen that she keeps in her front
pocket and looks at it fondly.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

SONG: "THE PEN"

This Pen
I look at it now and then
Write a word with it now and again
'Cause I'll always remember when
He put it in my hand
When the signing was done.
Saying, "Zephyr Wright
I think you just might
Be the one who helped me see the light.
You deserve this pen tonight
More than anyone."

CRONKITE

*Today Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil
Rights Act of 1964*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Me - just the girl
Who made him breakfast while he was saving the world
Who laid his shoes out every night
Who saw his secrets in the morning light.
Now me - just the cook!
Was my voice the thing that it took
To make him turn a leaf in his old book
To grab this country 'til it shook
To make him see the girl within
To live in my shoes
In my skin?

But now it's 1968
Things no longer look so great
For the great LBJ
That signing seems worlds away.
It's all riots, it's all tears,
It's been four long years
Since he gave me this pen
Its ink has long run dry since then
I'm sorry LBJ -
But how many kids did you kill today?

I-2

SCENE 2: HOW MANY KIDS?

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. NIGHT

We hear PROTESTERS' chants coming
from outside the White House

PROTESTERS

*Hey, Hey, LBJ. How many kids did you kill
today?*

Zephyr spins in the high-backed
chair so we can't see her. LBJ
ENTERS. Not seeing her, he goes to
close the curtains and calls out

LBJ

Zephyr! Can't we keep that damned noise out?

Zephyr sneaks out and comes back
in with a bowl of chili on a tray.
Sets the tray down.

ZEPHYR

Yes Sir, Mr. President.

Closes the curtains to the portico

Would you like that bowl of chili now?

LBJ

(angry)

no!...

(apologetically)

Yes...

*Thank you Zephyr, just close all the curtains
and keep those goddamned protesters away.*

Picks up chili as oval set recedes
slightly and lights dim.

Lights continue to dim to half in the Oval Office as a squad of SOLDIERS pops up from the floor in jungle camo as if emerging from a trap door in the jungle. A group of protesters stand outside, and another group of protesters enter from both sides. SFX Smoke rises from the stage.

SONG: "HOW MANY KIDS?"

PROTESTER 1

Smoke is rising on the horizon on the far side of the ocean
[RAB: ORIGINAL MELODY]

SOLDIER 1

Turn eighteen, they put you in green and on a plane to cross

PROTESTER 2

Now we keep hearing the end is near and victory's in motion

SOLDIER 2

It's pretty clear from here that we've already lost

PROTESTER 1

Will you pull the plug? Or can you only pull a trigger?

PROTESTER 2

'Cause it's time to pull the rug from under you. Your time is through

PROTESTER 3

There is no drug that we can take to help us figure

PROTESTER 4

Out the mess we're in and why you've been so untrue

LBJ goes to the desk and holds up the blue folder in his right hand and looks at it for a moment, then puts it down and holds up the red folder in his left hand and gazes at it.

PROTESTERS/SOLDIERS

Hey hey hey, LBJ
How many kids did you kill today?
You always had to win
Every game you play
There's no price too high to pay.
Hey hey hey, LBJ
How many body bags today?
You really had to take this all the way
Was it worth it, can you say?

LADY BIRD

Even after thirty years my Lyndon
I have never seen you quite like this.
Spinning round and grasping at the wind and
It seems every time I aim to help, I miss

PROTESTERS

Everything they told us of our country - they were lying
Do you watch the same TV at night that we all do?

SOLDIERS

Don't you see the blood? Tell me why all my friends are dying
And why nothing you ever say is true

PROTESTERS/SOLDIERS

Hey hey hey, LBJ
How many votes did you steal today
Knowing that with every little power play
Someone was pushed out of the way

LADY BIRD

Hey hey hey, LBJ
How many hearts did you break today?
Knowing no matter how far you stray
I will never fly away.

Lights up on LBJ isolated with
Zephyr looking on

PROTESTERS

(Softly chant)

Hey, hey
LBJ, how many kids did you kill today.

LBJ

(to the protesters)

You want to know how many kids?

(looking at the report)

58! OK?

(sitting down, head in hands, quietly)

Oh God. 58 kids.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON and BILL MOYERS
enter

LADY BIRD

Darling, sit down. You'll make yourself sick.

The music has begun again. ROBERT
F. KENNEDY enters, pushing a
coffin. LBJ interrupts Lady Bird

LBJ

*Wait - Bird, is that? Oh dear God - that
silver spoon Boston brat ass-cracker Robert F
Kennedy...*

RFK

Did you have to take the oath of office
While my brother was not yet in the ground?

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

The whole country mourning what we lost with

RFK

You there in his bedroom already crowned.

LADY BIRD

We'd been waiting for something great and you delivered

BILL MOYERS

Rural lights

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Civil rights

LADY BIRD/BILL MOYERS/ZEPHYR
WRIGHT

And a helping hand

PROTESTER 1

But what good is all that giving if that giver

SOLDIER 1

Sends our children to be killed in a foreign land?

As the final chorus is sung,
chorus members enter the stage
either pushing coffins or carrying
soldiers in their arms.

ENSEMBLE (EXCEPT LBJ & BIRD)

Hey hey hey, LBJ
How many bills did you pass today
More than anybody before you could say
And maybe no one since your day

But Hey hey hey, LBJ
Did you throw your legacy away
On that day you sent our sons and brothers away?
So hey hey hey, LBJ
How many kids did you kill today?
You always had to win every game you played

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

But somehow

LADY BIRD

Some way

SOLDIER 1

Some how

Some day

RFK

You're gonna have to pay.

All exit except LBJ, Lady Bird,
RFK, and Zephyr

I-3

SCENE 3: LANDSLIDE LYNDON

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. MARCH 30, 1968

RFK is lit in a side light,
staring at LBJ

WALTER CRONKITE (TV)

Eugene McCarthy scored an upset in New Hampshire, taking home 48 delegates to President Johnson's 42. Meanwhile, Senator Robert Kennedy spoke before an adoring crowd of 13,000 today, following his recent announcement that he will enter the Democratic primary for president.

LBJ

Goddammit!

SONG: "LANDSLIDE LYNDON - PART 1"

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

Why is Bobby Kennedy

Always ahead of me?

He gets loving crowds

I get obscenities

Hurled from across the White House gates

I got to make a change...

(contemplatively)

Or should I wait?

Martin Luther King won't return my calls

And Ho Chi Minh - he's got me by the balls

Eugene McCarthy's got more delegates

In New Hampshire.

What the hell it's
All a fucking mess
I'm losing now I guess

They called me "Landslide Lyndon"
I'm thick-skinned and
I only know victory
But now it seems I got my hands tied
And the landslide
Is gonna land on me.

WALTER CRONKITE (TV)

*Meanwhile, protesters continue to throng the
White House.*

LBJ

Grr. Cronkite!

(to the audience)

*I tell ya - if he swallowed a nail, he'd spit
out a corkscrew*

Moyers enters

LBJ (CONT'D)

*Bird, I can't take it anymore. Zephyr! Bring me
a Fresca! And Moyers! A man's ass is like a
Texas cottonfield - you need to care for it
with the finest tools, or it dries up like a no-
humped camel in the deep Sahara*

BILL MOYERS

How can I help your, um, ass, sir?

LBJ pulls out a roll of toilet
paper from the desk

LBJ

*The Oval Office needs softer toilet paper. This
stuff is like sandpaper! And take this down:
Vietnam. I will not be the first US president
to lose a war!*

SONG: "LANDSLIDE LYNDON - PART 2"

LBJ (CONT'D)

These two folders on my desk
Like two boulders on my chest
One of them a plan from McNamara
(holds up the red folder)
Designed to kill, to really scare the
Shit out of every commie in Nam
Operation "Red Carpet Napalm"
Every tunnel, every tree, every town -
We kinda just burn the whole place down

We'll leave a fuckin mess
But we'll win the war I guess.

Then there's Operation Bright Blue Door
(holds up the blue folder)
We bring our boys safely ashore
We leave Vietnam forevermore
And I'm the first president to lose a war.

I should be Landslide Lyndon,
But the Hindenburg is what I see.
'Cause now it seems I got my hands tied
And the landslide
Is gonna land on me.

LBJ (CONT'D)

Bird, I need your advice.

LADY BIRD

*Well, darling, if you pick the red folder,
Bobby Kennedy is gonna whip you like a re-
headed stepchild. If you go blue, Nixon'll
snatch you bald-headed.*

LBJ

*I know!
Moyers, you taking notes?*

BILL MOYERS

Uh... What did she just...

LBJ

*She said I'm fucked either way. You understand
English?*

BILL MOYERS

*Uh... yeah, of course. There are no flies on my
Mama, sir.*

LBJ pauses and looks sideways at
Moyers, raising one eyebrow for a
beat, half-impressed that he's
used a Southern expression, but
half-laughing at his inept choice.

LBJ

Good.

(pacing and talking to himself)

Blue or red, blue or red?
Wish there was a purple one instead.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

(to the audience as Moyers and Bird walk
off)

Poor man, there's a fire in his head.
But I know he's a good man.

LBJ
(to the audience)
Well of course I am
And I didn't ask for Vietnam
If I could, I'd take back every bomb
But now that we're in it,
I'll spend every minute
Making sure that we win it for the people of Saigon.
Those protesters want me to lose this fight

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
(to LBJ and the audience)
Is it possible they're right?

LBJ pauses, confused by Zephyr's
question

LBJ
What?

LBJ (CONT'D)
No, look
Everything that I am
Anything worth a damn
That I've ever done
Came through in the end cause I wouldn't bend
I do not turn tail and run
'Cause when I was a child
The Hill Country wild
Was unforgiving ground
You fought for your supper
You scratched your way up or
They pulled you down.

I-4

SCENE 4: YOU'RE A LOSER SAM JOHNSON

EXT. JOHNSON CITY, TX. 1920. DAY

The Oval Office transforms into
Johnson City Main Street. LBJ
changes his appearance and becomes
Young Lyndon. He picks up two
garbage pails. The Protesters
change appearance, donning caps
and transforming into KIDS. We see
them taunt Young Lyndon.

KIDS

Hey hey hey, LBJ
So many bills that your dad can't pay
He's a boozier who's been led astray
By big dreams that got away

What a shame, Lyndon Baines
Daddy really couldn't play the game
Now he's destitute and lame
Will you grow up to be the same?

KID 1

Weakling!

KID 2

Coward!

LBJ drops his garbage pails and
awkwardly puts up his dukes He
"kicks like a girl" then spots SAM
JOHNSON walking down the street.
He runs to Sam

LBJ

Daddy!

Young LBJ, now safely walking with
his dad, looks back and sticks his
tongue out and shakes his buttocks
at the kids. They shake their
fists in a "we'll get you next
time" kind of way - they stay a
few paces behind LBJ as he walks
with his father

SONG: "YOU'RE A LOSER, SAM JOHNSON"

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Son, I'm off to the State House. We've got a big vote.

LBJ

You gonna help people 'round here?

SAMUEL JOHNSON

That's the hope.

LBJ

You gonna shake hands? Hatch some plans?

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Force appeals

LBJ

(eagerly)

You gonna take stands? Fight for rights?

SAMUEL JOHNSON

I'll make some deals.

As they walk, lights darken a bit as TOWNSPEOPLE start surrounding Sam. The two get separated. The scene turns violent, ending in Sam and LBJ on the ground getting kicked by their enemies. The young boy HUISSO can be seen hiding in back, watching nervously)

TOWNSPERSON 1

Where's my money, Sam Johnson?

KID 1

Where's my ball, Lyndon Baines?

TOWNSPERSON 2

(pushing Sam Johnson)

You're a good man, but a dreamer

A kid spins Lyndon around, trying to get his ball.

KID 2

You, kid, are a pain.

TOWNSPERSON 3

You'll dream yourself into the poorhouse if you don't smarten up

KID 3

Your father's a loser and you're just his pup.

TOWNSPERSON 1

(throwing first punch)

Your out of money Sam Johnson.

TOWNSPERSON 2

Your credit's all gone!

TOWNSPERSON 1

(kicks)

Too many rotten yields, your cotton fields are going for a song.

Huisso runs in and tries to help LBJ. The kids start kicking him, too.

TOWNSPERSON 2

(kicks)

He thought he could help people and win.

TOWNSPERSON 3

(kicks and spins Huisso)

Now the banks are calling everything in.

KID 1

(kicking Huisso)

Lyndon needs some help from his little wetback friend!

KID 2

Get this beaner back to Mexico, we'll kick his rear end.

LBJ

Help! Fire! There's a fire down at Madame Scarlett's!

Kids and townspeople run off.
Huisso helps LBJ and Sam up from
the ground.

HUISSO

Thanks, Lyndon.

LBJ & HUISSO

I owe you my life.

LBJ

Dad, let's go get 'em. Do you still have that knife?

HUISSO

Yeah! Let's get in the car. Chase them down with your gun.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Boys, there's too many fights. You can't win every one.

LBJ

But they beat Huisso up
Can't you pass a new bill?
To protect all the people?

SAMUEL JOHNSON

That's running uphill.
It's Texas, I've lost all those battles before
Knocked down on my ass on the ol' State House floor

LBJ

But you always taught me to do what is right
To lift people up, not to run from the fight!

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Lyndon and Huisso, we could get that gun
Stop those bullies, maybe even kill one
And maybe they kill one of you, and now what have you done?
They would still be racist
And we would still be poor.
Better make sure you know just what you're fighting for

Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometime you gotta lose to win the war.

Sam leaves. LBJ, still on the
ground, looks to Huisso

LBJ
Man, my dad just rolled over.

LBJ (CONT'D)
C'mon Huisso. Let's go buy a sweet

HUISSO
They took my last penny - it's lost in the street.

LBJ
Well, I'll pay the penny. C'mon, it's my treat.
Let's go get a comic.

HUISSO
You know I can't read

LBJ
You don't go to school?

HUISSO
I work picking weeds. It's the only way that I can help my
family's needs
My family's poor. We're not like you

LBJ
You know, Huisso, we're pretty poor, too.

I-5

SCENE 5: THE MAN MY DADDY WAS

EXT. JOHNSON CITY, TX. 1918. DAY

Huisso leans over and picks LBJ
off the ground)

SONG: MY DADDY'S DREAMS

LBJ
Here in the Hill Country, the soil is so thin
That the rain'll wash it all away before the crops come in
And though he breaks his back to work the land
The seeds he plants, they never seem to come out as he
planned
Daddy sees a day when all this suffering will be through
But who will make my daddy's dream come true?

The women haul the water here from rivers far from home
Momma washes clothes by hand until she's aching in her bones
No radios or lights for the Hill Country this year
Those power lines we've heard about - they never made it here

Momma, Daddy had a plan but he just couldn't see it through
So, who will make my daddy's dream come true?

I'm gonna make my daddy's dream come true

Electric lights come on

LBJ (CONT'D)

Won't make his mistake
Won't dream the whole day through
I can feel the power surging through
He dreams. I'll do.

LBJ is now at a blackboard in a classroom of Mexican students. On the board is written in script "Mr. Johnson" And below it in block letters: "El Maestro = Teacher" and "Manzana = Apple" and "Filibustero = Filibuster" and "Papel Higiénico = Toilet Paper"

LBJ (CONT'D)

C'mon in, kids. Welcome to the Welhausen School

LBJ (CONT'D)

Every child in this classroom
Can learn to read and write
To those thugs that called you "wetback"
You'll get back at them all right

'Cause one day, one of them might work for you
You learn your letters here and then there's nothing you
can't do

Now they are outside. LBJ picks up a ball and tosses it back and forth with the kids

LBJ (CONT'D)

Soon they'll do the same in the whole state and country too
That's how I'll make my daddy's dream come true

I'm gonna make my daddy's dream come true
Won't make his mistake
Won't dream the whole day through
I can feel the power surging through
He dreams.

I'll do

Last year in Oklahoma
The men in the sheets came round
Every black home aflame
Their bodies on the ground

So I wonder who are we supposed to be?
Where's that country that we learned about?
And where does that leave me?

I will make the anthems that we sing all ring true
I will make my daddy's dream come true

I'm gonna make all your dreams come true
I'm gonna take this aching land and make it new
There's nothing. NOTHING I won't do
To make this country's dream come true

Lights up on Zephyr, listening.
RFK emerges from the shadow with
slow sarcastic clapping

RFK

*Nice per-faw-mence! Very nice. You'd think you
were Mahatma Gandhi. You were more like Al
Capone.*

LBJ

*Bobby Ke - I'm telling this story.
(to the audience)
Cue the bongos!*

Music starts

LBJ (CONT'D)

I knew if I wanted to keep my promise
I needed the power that came with Congress
Now I'm not saying I didn't bend a few branches to get there

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

I did.

LBJ (CONT'D)

But I started small - as a Congressional aide.

I-6

SCENE 6: THE TOWER OF POWER (P1)

EXT. WASHINGTON DC. 1933. DAY

LBJ transforms himself into 23-
year-old LBJ.

He starts climbing the stairs of the Capitol Building, pushing the AIDES and NYA MEN off each sub level as he ascends. The scene ends with him atop the Capitol, flinging open windows and tossing money out of his pockets as he sings TOWER OF POWER. RFK and Zephyr look on.

SONG: "THE TOWER OF POWER (P1)"

LBJ

You see... the congressmen's aides made a "Little Congress."
It's a little-known club where aides can practice their debates

CONGRESSIONAL AIDE

This club has no power, are you sure your really want this?

LBJ

Of course, a fake Congress - I can hardly wait!

CONGRESSIONAL AIDE

Now you say you want to run for the Little Congress leader?

LBJ

(to the audience)

A position I invented

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

(approvingly)

You little fox!

WOMAN AIDE

But I'm running as well!

LBJ

And it was clear I couldn't beat her
So I had my friends stuff the ballot box.

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to audience, with fake surprise)

I won! Look at that!

LBJ (CONT'D)

And with the branches in place
My connections all flowered
With the congressmen living in
The tower of power!

Yes, everybody knows me
And everybody owes me now
Well I was low before
But now I'm on the mountain
'Cause nobody cares
If you take the stairs
Or you make it to the zenith
From the nadir
By taking a ride in the elevator

LBJ & ZEPHYR & RFK
Of the tower of power
The tower of power

LBJ
On the tower of power

Say, is this the National Youth Administration?
I'm here because I want to join and serve and help my nation

LBJ sticks out his tongue at RFK

NYA MAN
Alright my friend, welcome to the NYA

LBJ
I can't believe you let me run things on my very first day!

NYA MAN
Wait a minute buddy, you're totally new

LBJ
It's OK, if you stay then you can help me too

NYA MAN
Who ARE you?

LBJ
I'm young but they tell me I'm a rising star
And I'm pretty sure that word of me has just reached FDR

FDR is wheeled in. They shake
hands. RFK reacts in disbelief

RFK
You better fall in line. You better shake and fear and cower
Or he'll throw you out the window of the tower of power...

LBJ throws the NYA man out a
window. Climbs on the desk and
shimmies

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
Yes everybody knows him

RFK

And everybody owes him now

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Well he was low before

LBJ

But now I'm on the mountain

ALL

'Cause nobody cares
If you take the stairs
Or you make it to the zenith
From the nadir
By taking a ride in the elevator
Of the tower of power
The tower of power

LBJ

(to the audience)

*Who am I kidding, Zephyr? My elevator was still
stuck in the basement. And if I was really
gonna keep, uh, ascendin'...*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

...you needed a wife.

I-7

SCENE 7: ORNITHOLOGY

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE, AUSTIN TX. 8/1/2934. DAY

Johnson emerges from an office and walks by four secretaries typing. He spots Lady Bird among them and looks back at her while she keeps typing. He drops his tie clip obviously but there is no response. Then he drops his pen more obviously. Another secretary notices and gives it to him.

LBJ

Oh, I'll just take those papers...

LBJ doubles back, purposely trips and falls right in front of Lady Bird.

LADY BIRD

Oh my - are you alright?

SONG: "ORNITHOLOGY"

LBJ

My leg - they might have to carry me
But...
My god, would you marry me?

LADY BIRD

Oh dear - I don't even know you at all.

LBJ

I'm sorry - it must be the fall. I'm like some drunken
sailor!

LADY BIRD

Let's start again - I'm Claudia Taylor.

LBJ

Oh, but I heard...

LADY BIRD

Yes, they call me Lady Bird.

LBJ

So they do - well you know I'm a bit of an ornithologist
myself, I -

LADY BIRD

Oh my!

LBJ

No, I mean, not that I'm studying you, oh gosh - tell me
about yourself!

LADY BIRD

Oh, well they say I'm rather shy.

LBJ

They should call you "Pleasing to the eye."

LADY BIRD

You're quite a charmer.

LBJ

Now, Lady Bird, I was raised a farmer.
And I learned you've got to put fertilizer on those crops to
make them grow

LADY BIRD

(looks quizzically at him))

Which is to say?

LBJ

Don't you know?
Just that complimenting you
Will help our relationship grow, too!

LADY BIRD

Relationship? We just met three minutes ago - maybe four...

LBJ

Well then, tell me more!

LADY BIRD

Well, OK. I like to read and
(pointing to the typewriter)

Write

I could read novels all night!

LBJ

I love reading myself and I think it's the key
To helping everyone rise up in this country

LADY BIRD

Yes I -

LBJ

(cutting her off)

You see, in Cotulla, nearby
There's a school where I

A group of kids is sitting to the
left and LBJ walks over, moving
his hands around as if teaching)

LBJ (CONT'D)

Taught these kids from Mexico
And everyone else said, "Just let them go.
They're poor and illiterate."
But I ain't a quitter, it
Took me time and a few dirty looks
But I had them children reading books!

LADY BIRD

That is ama-

LBJ

I learned that if you want to bring out the best in them
You've got to invest in them.

LADY BIRD

Just like watering crops...

LBJ

Exactly! God, I could listen to you talk all day - did I ask
you to marry me yet?

LADY BIRD

Once.

LBJ

Well, I'm asking you again.

LADY BIRD

That's so sweet.

LBJ

You DO want to marry me? My life is complete!

LADY BIRD

I didn't say that. I don't even know your name.

LBJ

Right! Of course! I'm Lyndon Baines Johnson

But they call me LBJ!

(motioning to the sky as if his letters
are floating in the air)

LADY BIRD

FDR... LBJ. Your initials - just like our new president...

LBJ

(acting as if he never one thought of
this)

Well, I never noticed that. Huh.

Now listen, Lady Bird. I work for Congressman Kleberg

LADY BIRD

Don't tell me you're gonna try to woo me by introducing me to
your big time friends.

LBJ

That depends. Is it gonna work?

LADY BIRD

Maybe - cover for me girls!

I-8

SCENE 8: THE TOWER OF POWER (P2)

INT. WASHINGTON DC. THE CAPITOL 1937. DAY

LBJ and Lady Bird stand outside
the impressive doors of the office
of the Majority Leader of the
House.

RFK

(to audience)

*Well, what do you know? And her daddy's rich.
Bonus!*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Well, you're the expert in rich daddies

LBJ

(to audience, entertained)

*Ooh... Shots fired! Anyway, now that my house
was in order, it was time to run for yours.*

(MORE)

LBJ (CONT'D)

*And there was only one man who could help me
get there.*

LBJ knocks on the door and enters
to find FDR sitting at his desk.

SONG: "THE TOWER OF POWER (PART 2)"

LBJ (CONT'D)

Sir! President Roosevelt
There's never been anyone alive who's felt
More of the appeal of your New Deal
'Cause to many a man, a raw one's dealt

FDR

Go on

LBJ begins to push FDR in his
wheelchair

LBJ

So if you need a fighter till the fighting's done
I'm a party backing, court packing son of a gun
A liberal lion who won't stop trying
To win every battle, till the war is won.

FDR

Mr. Johnson is it? I appreciate your visit
How you've jumped in the ring
And your willingness to kiss it.
But you lack any revenue
Backing or name
Come back in a year or two
When you're old enough to play the game

LBJ

Fine! I'll be back!

LBJ lets go of the wheelchair with
a little push, sending it across
the stage. He exits. FDR just
looks at the audience as he rolls
across, miffed.

LADY BIRD

Now what're you gonna do?

LBJ

I don't have a fucking clue

SCENE 9: DARK MONEY

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE. AUSTIN TX. 1937. DAY

Sinister guitar riff for Dark
Money starts.

Lights up on an office. Barrels of oil are all around. Construction equipment. Through a window, a huge dam is under construction. Big sign reading "Brown Brothers Construction Company. Since 1919".

HERMAN BROWN

Good morning, George

GEORGE BROWN

Good morning, Herma-

HERMAN BROWN

No, it's not! That dam's going up too slowly!

GEORGE BROWN

Herman, the workmen are barely sleeping... I think -

HERMAN BROWN

George, you're not supposed to think! Remember... Mommy gave me the brains. And you got...

GEORGE BROWN

(as if reciting)

The privilege of being your younger brother.

HERMAN BROWN

That's right

SONG: "DARK MONEY"

HERMAN BROWN (CONT'D)

How did we Brothers Brown
Find our way around
All the nasty regulations that they've got in this town?
Like how we can't just dump smoke in the sky?
And we can't build our dam too high?

GEORGE BROWN

Well

HERMAN BROWN

(putting his hand over George's mouth)

We find the aged men
Who with a paper and pen
Make exceptions for us if and only and when
We give them a reason but that's not the end...
You thank them, George, and then

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN
(singing together)

You give them dark money
It'll make sure our future is bright.
With all that dark money
Honey, you'll find that you win every fight
Suddenly the deepest darkest night
Seems sunny
When you've got a lot
Of dark money

GEORGE BROWN
So when the inspectors come
And find you're leaving scum
In the riverbed, you shake your head
And ask them what sum
Of money it would take to be sure
They feel that the water's still pure.

INSPECTOR MCCLUSKEY enters

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN
Inspector McCluskey!

INSPECTOR MCCLUSKEY
*I was shocked, SHOCKED, to find the pH in the
riverbed downstream of this dam is at a level
toxic to all forms of life!*

George hands him a huge envelope

INSPECTOR MCCLUSKEY (CONT'D)
*But uh... even more shocked to find out our pH
sensor was broken!*

LBJ is seen skulking at the back
of the stage, listening in.

HERMAN BROWN
Well, I just can't get my fill of these
Electrical utilities
The power and the money is insane

GEORGE BROWN
We send payments to our man in
Congress, trusted Buck Buchanan
Who makes sure that every law we break is changed!

Buck Buchanan walks in holding up
a bill

BUCK BUCHANAN
*Boys, I've drafted a bill that will make it
legal to build your federal dam on state land.*

GEORGE BROWN

Amazing!

They hand him the money

BUCK BUCHANAN

(as he pockets the money)

Thank you bo- Oh!... I don't feel so well.

Buck clutches his chest as he has
a heart attack

BUCK BUCHANAN (CONT'D)

Ah!

Buck collapses. Herman rushes over
to feel his pulse, looks slowly
back to George

GEORGE BROWN

(voice shaking)

Herman?

HERMAN BROWN

Fuck!

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN

(looking at the audience in horror)

We're gonna need a new Buck.

HERMAN BROWN

The one congressman

Who worked for us is gone.

(puts his arm around George)

We're through, it's true, my brother.

As Herman sings mournfully, LBJ
walks in from the shadows,
stepping with a giant over-
exaggerated gait over Buck's
carcass to get to the brothers

LBJ

Now wait... The game goes on.

(pointing at himself and smiling)

...there's another.

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN

Who?

LBJ

I'm a candidate for Congress - name's Johnson

With no revenue stream and I wants one.

I say I'm a liberal but that's just an act

I'll take your calls and in fact

I'll take your...

LBJ & HERMAN & GEORGE BROWN
Dark money

HERMAN BROWN
(to Johnson)
It'll make sure your future is bright.

LBJ & HERMAN & GEORGE BROWN
With all that dark money
Honey, you'll find that you win every fight
Suddenly the deepest darkest night
Seems sunny

LBJ
When I've got

LBJ & HERMAN & GEORGE BROWN
A lot of

RFK emerges suddenly

RFK
You're all criminals!

They chase RFK offstage

LBJ & HERMAN & GEORGE BROWN
Dark money.

LBJ
(spoken over the outro music)
Now I think we're gonna get along boys...

LBJ walks across the stage back to
FDR

LBJ (CONT'D)
Hey Mr. President!

FDR
Shit.

LBJ
These guys with a dam
They know who I am
And they say they're gonna back me

FDR
So you're a goddamn lackey
For big business now.
Doesn't change the fact of how
Without vision, integrity or knowledge of the laws
You're just alive with drive
But you're searching for a cause

LBJ skulks away to find Lady Bird waiting for him. She sees he's despondent and knows why.

LADY BIRD

FDR again?

LBJ

Bird, I absolutely NEED his support before I run and he won't...

LADY BIRD

You know, I bet Roosevelt's a lonely man
Hardly seen his children since the day he first ran
He doesn't need cash or connections, hon
In the end, the president needs a...

LBJ

(slowly catching on)

I've got it!

LBJ goes back to FDR, who sees him, panics, and tries to move his chair backwards

FDR

Why won't this go backwards?

LBJ

Wait

LBJ sings softly and slowly

LBJ (CONT'D)

Think of me less as loyal foot soldier
And more of a man who will always hold your
Hand when you're feeling like you need someone
Think of me as your loving son

FDR softens a bit

FDR

Well I appreciate your caring. Not to mention your work in the NYA. Come down to the Oval on Monday and we'll talk

LBJ reaches down and gives FDR a big bear hug, practically choking him

LBJ

Thank you!

FDR

Alright ... son

LBJ

Bird, put up a pot roast. We're having company

LBJ and FDR separate as Lights
come up on Zephyr

LBJ (CONT'D)

*I know what you're thinkin' - I got some cash
and the head honcho on my side but still no
actual power...*

Lights come up on CONNALLY and
JENKINS

RFK

*But what do we have here? The Democratic Funds
Committee*

LBJ

My future lackeys!

LBJ shakes their hands vigorously

LBJ (CONT'D)

Walter Jenkins! John Connally!

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

*Well, truth is, these two couldn't squeeze a
dime out of an oil well. But you just watch me
now...*

JENKINS

*Hey Lyndon Johnson, you're needed
We're feeling defeated
The Democratic Funds Committee's really depleted.*

LBJ

*I don't have time to spare
But if no one wants it, I could be the chair.*

CONNALLY & JENKINS

Great!

LBJ

(picks up the phone)

*Herman Brown, how ya been? How's that bridge? How's the dam?
Well you know you've always got the backing of Uncle Sam
Well remember that base, right near my hometown?
That's gonna be built by none other than Brown and Brown*

LBJ (CONT'D)

You got the contract!

CONNALLY & JENKINS

He did?

LBJ

(puts hand up to them, as if to say,
"Shush")

What's that? You'd like to show appreciation
To the leaders of our nation?

CONNALLY & JENKINS

How much did he say?

LBJ

(matter-of-factly)

Brown is down for 90K!

CONNALLY & JENKINS

(Jenkins mock-staggers and clutches his
chest, as if having a heart attack)

We're rich!

CONNALLY

Well, Lyndon, you've got the Midas touch
You came through in the clutch

JENKINS

But isn't it illegal to donate that much?

LBJ

Well now boys, that just depends.
On whether he funnels it all through 200 friends...

CONNALLY

And then?

LBJ

Then we start winning again...
Jenkins, Connally,
You boys want to start working for me?

Yes! We've got dark money
Flowing from us to the Dems

LBJ (CONT'D)

I'm giving out dark money
Honey, I'm the man who gives out all the gems.
Suddenly the power brokers come to me on one knee
Hoping I'll give them some of my dark money.

RFK shakes his head and gives
Johnson a dirty look.

I-10

SCENE 10: THE TOWER OF POWER (P2)

INT. WASHINGTON DC. THE CAPITOL 1937. DAY

SONG: "THE TOWER OF POWER (Part 2)"

RFK

And when the year was done, everyone in Congress knew

LBJ

I was the Pharaoh of Dinero
Kept the funds coming through.

RFK

Between the oil and the dams, your hands got kinda dirty
But that's the way you get to be a congressman by thirty.

LBJ

And there's plenty room for companions in my palace
Like my loyal boys
(gestures to Connally and Jenkins)

RFK

And your new friend, Alice.

RFK puts his arm around ALICE
GLASS, who has sexily walked in.
He passes her to LBJ who kisses
her. LBJ twerks with her for a
moment before singing the next
verse. Alice watches LBJ until the
end of the song

RFK (CONT'D)

If you climb through the slime, you can always take a shower
And make a clean break for the tower of power.

LBJ

Yes everybody knows me
And everybody owes me now
Well I was low before but now I'm on the mountain
'Cause nobody cares if you took the stairs
Or like me

RFK

You've got the balls

LBJ

To say, "Fuck the stairs!"

RFK

And climb the walls

LBJ

Of the tower of power

RFK
(It's built from dark money)

LBJ
The tower of power

RFK
(dark money)

LBJ
The Tower of Power

The scene ends with LBJ back on the top of the tower he built before, now in a congressman's style suit, with the letters "L.B.J." floating in the sky like fireworks. He tosses dollar bills at the people below.

After the song, RFK looks on and shakes his head. LBJ scowls at him. Alice exits, passing Lady Bird. Both women stop as they assess each other. Lady Bird then continues into the apartment. The Lights change

I-11

SCENE 11: WATERCOLORS IN THE RAIN

INT. WASHINGTON DC. THE JOHNSON APARTMENT 1942. DAY

LADY BIRD
Happy Anniversary, my handsome congressman. I'm so glad you're

LBJ
Bird! Did you make a steak?

LADY BIRD
What? I made a casserole.

LBJ
A casserole? Mr. Rayburn's coming over in one hour. You know he likes steak!

LADY BIRD
I'm sorry dear, I didn't...

LBJ
And you get this place cleaned up. I got to go back to the Capital. And for God's sake, you suck in that belly when Mr. Sam gets here.

LADY BIRD

I will. But when you come back, it's our third anniversary and I want to talk about...

LBJ

Steak!

The door slams before she can finish the sentence. Lady Bird composes herself. She puts on her coat and takes out her umbrella as she heads out the door to go to the market

SONG: "WATERCOLORS IN THE RAIN"

LADY BIRD

Here's the trick
Soon as he's gone
Don't let the harsh things that he says still linger on
Just fly along
And know the door
Will one day open up for us and we'll find more
Meanwhile we're painting watercolors in the rain
Washed out reflections of rejections and campaigns
As I walk past the children in our neighborhood
I end each summer standing where I stood

LBJ walks between buildings,
holding a newspaper over his head
to block the rain

LBJ

Even now
Past five long years
Can't get a single bill I fight for past their sneers

LADY BIRD

He has to rise

LBJ

She wants a son

LBJ & LADY BIRD

But every road I see before me takes too long

LBJ

I am painting watercolors in the rain
And if I leave no mark
Then that will be my shame

LBJ & LADY BIRD

We're just not climbing as fast as we should
And we end each summer standing where we stood

LADY BIRD

DC's vipers think you're my Pied Piper
And all my claws are blunt
But lions mate with lions
And I am on the hunt.

And so I work
I help him rise
But long for so much more than his elusive prize
Turn a blind eye
Push him to run
Then we'll make time to have a daughter or a son

LBJ & LADY BIRD

'Til then we're painting watercolors in the rain
We know if nothing lasts there's nothing to explain
'Til we climb high enough to really do some good
We end each summer standing where we stood.

LIGHTS

I-12

SCENE 12: "WARM SPRINGS INTERLUDE"

EXT. A VERANDAH AT WARM SPRINGS, GA. 1945 DAY.

FDR onstage in a wheelchair in
spotlight. As Cronkite talks
spotlight slowly goes out.

WALTER CRONKITE (TV)

*And a nation mourns. President Franklin Delano
Roosevelt has died of a cerebral hemorrhage.*

LBJ

(to Lady Bird)

I loved that man like a daddy, Bird.

LADY BIRD

(to audience)

*But when one door closes, you gotta kick in
another.*

I-13

SCENE 13: "PROFESSIONAL SON"

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE. 1945. DAY

LBJ stands outside the Oval Office
door with present-day Zephyr by
his side. He enters the room,
where PRESIDENT TRUMAN is already
seated behind his desk.

TRUMAN

Good afternoon, Congressman... Is it Johnson?

SONG: "PROFESSIONAL SON"

LBJ

(unctuous)

President Truman, your name it fits you
'Cause there's never been a man so true
Like my daddy, you don't pass the Buck
The people complain
But you don't give a fu-

TRUMAN

(jumping in before LBJ can finish the
word)

Stop!

You're embarrassing

Yourself my boy.

I know you mean to kiss up

But the truth is you annoy

Well I've been around the block, OK?

I've seen just how you roll

You had Franklin wrapped around your finger

And your goal

Right now is pretty plain to see

You mean to do the same to me

Just like you did to FDR

And I'm sure it's helped you rise so far

But I've raised one child already

And I'm done!

So please stop trying to be my son

TRUMAN & STAFF

(Truman's staff starts singing backup)

A professional son

Seems to be the game you play

But everyone

Around you found

That you'd manipulate your way

By kissing so much ass

That all the asses had to run

(The staff all point to their asses)

Ain't no way
I'm letting you play me
With your game of professional son

I don't know what it's like in Texas
But back home in Missouri
If someone licks your forehead
Boy you run off in a hurry

But your hands on every shoulder
As you whisper in the ear
Of anyone who's older
Saying, "Let me help you, dear."

But holding nothing sacred
But your meteoric rise
You'll be an emperor so naked
Wearing nothing but the lies
That you used on the last president
And mean to use on me
Go find some nursing home resident
Who needs some TLC
I got problems, I don't need another one
So please stop trying to be my son!

A professional son
Seems to be the game you play
But everyone
Around you found
That you'd manipulate your way
By kissing so much ass
That all the asses had to run

Truman starts walking LBJ towards
the door.

TRUMAN

*Son, power for its own sake has no value.
You've got to use it to help those less*

LBJ

You know that sounds just like my dad

TRUMAN

Get out!

Truman slams the door in LBJ's
face.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Well, that was a setback. Looks like he's not looking for a
favorite son

LBJ

Yeah. And I'd already lost a Senate race in 1941

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

You were defeated?

LBJ

The other guy cheated.

The Brown Brothers enter and
whisper in LBJ's ear.

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN

Maybe you can learn a thing or two from him
If you don't cheat, the other guy will - and he'll win

LBJ

(to audience)

And I needed Truman's presidential weight
To support another run in 1948
And I had to win.
Look, you lose twice running for the Senate
And you're a has-been

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN

So Lyndon, whatever it takes, you better have won
Or the money dries up and then Lyndon...you're done

I-14

SCENE 14: THE BALLAD OF COKE STEVENSON

INT. JOHNSON'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE. 1948. DAY.

LBJ, Jenkins, and Connally are
relaxing in his office.

CONNALLY & JENKINS

1948!

The race for Senate in the Lone Star State!

LBJ

*Alright boys, our senator's dead and I'm gonna
be your next one!*

SONG: "THE BALLAD OF COKE STEVENSON"

JENKINS

Boss, someone new just declared
We're completely unprepared
To fight off such a hero of the folk...
You're up against Coke!

LBJ

Coke Stevenson?

CONNALLY

My god, we're done
Coke's already won!

LBJ

Did either of you suspect this?
I got no defense
I'm up against
Mr. Texas!"

LBJ & CONNALLY AND JENKINS
(in 3-part harmony)

Shit!

Band starts playing a Western like
"Rawhide." COKE STEVENSON enters
with hordes of fans. He's dressed
like Elvis Presley, but with more
of a cowboy feel.

COKE STEVENSON

Because I'm Coke

ALL

He's Coke!

COKE STEVENSON

Coke Stevenson
And I'll get even one day before I'm done
The wind whispers my name
I'm in every Texas plain
With the Lone Star State I am one
Coke Stevenson.

ALL

He's honest!
He's brilliant!
We listened when he spoke.
The lawyer with the cowboy boots
He's Coke!

LBJ

*Now, shee-i-i-t. We're gonna need to do
something big.*

SFX: A helicopter is heard
offstage

I-15

SCENE 15. JOHNSON CITY WINDMILL

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS. 1948. DAY

A rope ladder unfurls from
overhead. LBJ climbs on. There's a
farm in the background. The "whup
whup whup" of a helicopter sounds
from overhead

LBJ
(shouting into a mic attached to his
chest)

Make way for the Johnson City Windmill!

Lady Bird's head appears above.
She is calling down from the
chopper

LADY BIRD
Lyndon, watch your kidney stone
That rope is oh so thin
You've hit 80 stops today

LBJ
Bird, Don't you wanna win?

LBJ (CONT'D)
(clutching his flank)
Aah!

LBJ (CONT'D)
I've still got hours in me
Pass me a cigarette
And take me down
To that farming town
We haven't been there yet

JENKINS
But sir, that's the one place
Where victory's well in hand

LBJ
There's people down there, dipshit
Let's get this thing to land.

LBJ (CONT'D)
(through mic to crowd)
I hope you friends will vote for me
And bring along your family
I'm LBJ
And I'm here to say
That you're my biggest fans
Now can I shake some hands?

LBJ starts pressing the flesh with
the people

JENKINS
That's 19 unplanned stops you made
I don't know how you do it.

LBJ
Hey look there's my old friend down there
We're not just passing through it

LBJ (CONT'D)

(through mic to the crowd)

Huisso, is that you my friend?
Get a load of what I did!
I'm running for the senate seat!
Hey is that your little kid?

HUISSO

Meet Lyndon Baines Johnson Gonzales
We named him after you
You brought us lights and jobs and dollars
Showed 'em all we matter, too.

LBJ

Look at that! A little boy!
A little boy named Lyndon
You tell your son I've just begun

JENKINS

Sir... It's time to catch the wind and -

LBJ

I know, I know, Jenkins, I've got to go. Got 28 more drops
Adios, mi Amigo Huisso
Take her up!

JENKINS

This guy never stops.

LADY BIRD

Honey, don't aggravate your kidney stone!

LBJ

*I'm fine, Bird
Aaah!*

(Beat. He looks at audience)

Apparently not.

I-16

SCENE 16: THE BIGGER THE LIE

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS. 1948. DAY.

Coke Stevenson's Team is on one
side of the stage around a table,
while LBJ's Team is on the other
side. RFK is center stage, front.

RFK

So, even though Lyndon had been paying off all
Of the men who run elections in the county of Duval

CONNOLLY

It wasn't enough, Boss - the votes came in
And it looks like it's gonna be Stevenson.

RFK
199 votes was the spread

LBJ
To think that I'm done, having lost by a thread

RFK
(as if he were voicing Lyndon's interior
thoughts)
A man of honor might live to fight another day

LBJ
Fuck that! There's gotta be another way!

ZEPHYR

Walks in, joins RFK
Oh dear, didn't he know the election was done?

CONNALLY
(holding up the newspaper)
It was already on the cover of the Dallas Sun!

LBJ
Boys! find me 200 votes - which is one
More than they have - and then we've won!
(a beat, as he thinks)
Alright, well what if some worker were somehow to "find"
(uses air quotes)
A box of ballots that were left behind?

RFK
(nauseated)
...how convenient. Votes found that were left uncounted

CONNOLLY
They'll have to change the tally when they've found that

LBJ and Connally make "shocked
John Belushi" looks as if to show
how surprised they would be

LBJ
Two Hundred and twenty three
of the votes in the box were all for me!

RFK
The bigger the lie...

LBJ
...The more they wanna believe in it

CONNALLY

So why not just keep on repeating it?

LBJ

The votes locked in that box for me

CONNOLLY

Halt the heist

ALL

And set them free.

Lights off on LBJ's side and
lights up on Coke and his crew

COKE'S AIDE

Coke, they're calling it Box 13!

RFK

It's the shadiest thing I've ever seen.

COKE'S AIDE

The votes inside will make them change the call!

COKE STEVENSON

Something's not right - we're going down to Duval
(walks across the stage)
We'll open that box and we'll see who's won

COKE'S AIDE

Bring an order from the courts

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Bring a lawyer!

COKE'S AIDE

(seeing the aide cock a rifle)

Bring a gun?

Aide appears with a rifle

COKE STEVENSON

Show me the tally on the voter's list!

CONNALLY

We misplaced the tally but I'll show you my fist.

COKE STEVENSON

Under law, I've a right to see
The list and ballots in the box, so give 'em to me!

Coke reaches for the drawer.
Connolly gets up and pulls a rifle
up but Coke Aide is faster and
overwhelms him, then holds him in
a lock and pulls out his own gun

CONNALLY
(sill in head lock, gun facing him)
Under... the... desk...

RFK
(examining the list)
Look at the last batch of names on the list

COKE
I bet these people -

RFK
- don't even exist?

COKE AIDE
It's all the same handwriting
And color, too

RFK
And it's written alphabetically!

CONNALLY
(trying to look innocent)
Strange, but true...

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
(looking appalled)
Oh Mr. Lyndon! You stole the 200 votes that you needed...

RFK
Yup. Take those votes away, and Johnson is defeated!

Stage fills with supporters from
both sides. A scuffle ensues to
take the box.

CONNALLY
Hey! Give me that back!

Coke and his guys run across the
stage with the box, right into
LBJ. As they're running back and
forth between LBJ and Connally,
they sing

COKE STEVENSON
The bigger the lie

COKE'S AIDE
The more they wanna believe in it.

RFK

That's why those guy keep repeating it.

LBJ

The votes in that box call for me!

LBJ & CONNALLY

Halt the heist!

All suddenly hold up "Halt the
Heist" signs.

LBJ & COKE STEVENSON

And set them free.

Coke runs away with the box and
puts it on a desk in front of a
judge. The judge pounds his gavel.

COKE STEVENSON

The federal judge ruled to open up Box Thirteen!

Supreme Court Justice HUGO BLACK
appears.

JUSTICE BLACK

Not so fast!

ALL

Supreme Court Justice Black

JUSTICE BLACK

In the flesh

LBJ

(aside to Justice Black)

You sure took your time...

JUSTICE BLACK

*Nice to see you Lyndon. I really enjoyed that
free fishing trip.*

Justice Black walks up to Judge
Davidson and calmly closes the box
again. The Judge looks shocked. He
starts to address Justice Black

JUSTICE BLACK (CONT'D)

I just decided -
Whether or not Lyndon Johnson lied,
It's up to the State, all its matters to run
This federal trial is done!

Justice Black exits

COKE STEVENSON
(standing)

It's not fair!

LBJ
(strolls by Coke with a big smile. To the audience)

Do I look like I care?

RFK
After that, "Landslide Lyndon" became his name

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
They meant it sarcastically,

LBJ
but it's all the same.
'Cause I did everything.
And I won the game.

Lights up on Zephyr and RFK
standing, arms folded
disapprovingly

LBJ (CONT'D)
(to audience)

*What?
Don't give me that look.
Coke Stevenson was a bigot and a racist!
Zephyr, if I hadn't won, he would've saddled
the nation with his brand of hate*

RFK
So you...

LBJ
Like Coke was gonna help the poor? The blacks?

I told you - everything great I've ever done
Got done 'cause I wouldn't turn tail and run

ZEPHYR
But you cheated. You stole.
You're better than this.

LBJ
(Pauses, stung)

Hmmm.
Now let's put this box somewhere safe
where it will never be missed

While he's talking, LBJ places a large cowboy hat on the box and grabs it and walks fast across the stage, then slows down once he's out of range.

I-17

SCENE 17: BOX 13

INT. THE JOHNSON'S HOUSE. 1948. NIGHT.

LBJ enters the door to their Washington home. Lady Bird and Zephyr Wright are mulling about. Lyndon enters holding the large hat from which he pulls out a loaf of bread and the oversized Box 13 with the words "Precinct 13" written on it. Zephyr stops working and watches the scene

LBJ

Bird, I'm home. Put this box somewhere safe and private, will you?

LADY BIRD

Lyndon, is that a ballot box?

LBJ

Just put it in the back of my study with my stuff, dear

LADY BIRD

Lyndon, I don't like this. What if -

LBJ

Just do it

LADY BIRD

(starting to put it away)

Is this a statue?

Lady Bird looks at the inscription as lights come up on Alice Glass on another part of the stage

ALICE GLASS

(facing front)

"Oh how we soared like eagles. Love, Alice with a kiss"

Lights down on Alice as Bird finishes reading.

LADY BIRD

Alice

(Slowly realizing)

(MORE)

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

Alice Glass

Alice Glass gave you this?

LBJ take the statue away from her

LBJ

Oh, that's nothin'. It was years ago.

LBJ starts to exit, holding the
statue

LBJ (CONT'D)

*Bird, how many times do I have to tell you to
stay out of my stuff*

LBJ exits

SONG: "BOX 13"

LADY BIRD

My Lyndon's got a box
And every night he locks
All his secrets and his lies
Away from prying eyes

While she sings, Alice Glass walks
through the front door as if
invading their space and starts
dancing with Lyndon

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

Stolen votes are locked inside
And stolen hearts he'd like to hide
Well, maybe he's still hopin'
That I'll never get it open

Box 13
Box 13
Some things might be better
Just left unseen
When you cheat at every game
And you're treating me the same
You can keep the dirt inside
But you're still unclean
With Box 13

I swore that I would fly
With him, but every lie
He puts behind that door
Clips my wings a little more

I have a dream I take the things inside
(opens the box)
And spread his secrets far and wide
(mimes throwing things to the wind)

I take that giant down a notch
I let him get his own damn scotch
I leave him with his other loves
'Cause I'll be flying high above
Alone up in the atmosphere.

So why am I still standing here?

LBJ re-enters in another part of
the stage and sits at his desk. He
is surrounded by his cronies,
smoking cigars and laughing

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

With Box 13

Box 13

You think some things might be better just left unseen
You think I can't see its hidden lies
But I was born with X-ray eyes
This box has armored sides
But I can see between
Them into Box 13

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Maybe you could face him
And tell him how you feel
Put him in his place
Maybe that's how you heal?

During this bridge, LBJ lets in
friends and cronies who start to
sit down in the living room and
smoke cigars, laughing over their
victory.

LADY BIRD
(shaking her head)

I learned long ago
That I'm a co-star in his show
And if I let the curtain drop
Then life for both of us will stop
So I take each thought of every tryst
The feeling of my tightened fist
The stranger's bracelet left around
And all the letters that I found
Each neglected negligee

Bird picks up some lingerie in the
closet as if he hasn't asked to
see her in it in ages

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

And every word I'd like to say
I pick each thorn out of my skin
I take it all and put it in...

As Lady Bird sings the last
chorus, she takes the eagle and
stuffs it into Box 13 and puts the
box up on a shelf

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

Box 13. Box 13
Nothing can be felt
If nothing can be seen
So I will stand beside my King
And I will swallow everything
But in the end, I'll also win.
I'll be the Queen
And forget about Box 13
Box 13
Box 13

LIGHTS

I-18

SCENE 18: KINGPIN OF THE SENATE

INT. SENATE CHAMBER. 1948. DAY

LBJ stands in the Senate Chamber,
with senators at desks all around
hi, sleeping or reading
newspapers, some with their feet
up. One is listening to a radio.

SONG: "KINGPIN OF THE SENATE"

LBJ

Men, it seems
In the Senate dream
Of becoming a committee chair

CONNALLY

But the Chairs all have dentures
And most have dementia

LBJ lifts a sleeping senator up by
the collar to find him drooling.

JENKINS

They choose you based on how long you've been there...
(rolls his eyes)

LBJ

I'm gonna change that

LBJ (CONT'D)

Men, it's clear
In the Senate fear
One thing above all
Against PROGRESS time and again
These short-sighted men
Stand tall.

CONNALLY & JENKINS

They've invented the dreaded filibuster
Which means they've ended the chance of real debate
They gather all the strength they can muster
And stand there blabbering until it's so late

LBJ

That all of their colleagues have left them
And there's no chance the bill will pass

CONNALLY & JENKINS

Once they've blocked cloture
There's nothing to vote for

LBJ & CONNALLY AND JENKINS

These people just sit on their ass!

LBJ

And that's why
One day I

Will be the kingpin of the Senate
And I will never lose or draw
I'll win the marathon, the match, and the pennant
I'll turn any bill I want into a law!

CONNALLY & JENKINS

He'll be the kingpin of the Senate

LBJ

And with a word I can make you change your mind.

CONNALLY & JENKINS

If you think you've got the will
To block his bill

LBJ

I'll scheme and kill
To get it signed!

CONNALLY

Oh boy... Here comes Richard Russell!

LBJ

Russell?

JENKINS

The "gentleman segregationist" from Georgia

RICHARD RUSSELL

We men of the Southern coalition
Have united with a single-minded vision

RICHARD RUSSELL & SOUTHERNERS

Of the right of states
To write their own fates
And make their own decisions

RICHARD RUSSELL

To be able to keep the poll tax

SOUTHERNER 1

To enable us to hold back the blacks

SOUTHERNER 2

From casting votes
What a mess that would be

RICHARD RUSSELL & SOUTHERNERS

(harmonizing)

It's bad enough they're free

LBJ

Oh Lord!

LBJ (CONT'D)

You see what I mean?
These men have a dream
That the Civil War can somehow be reversed

SOUTHERNERS

To this dream we hold fast

LBJ

With the ghost of their past,
This house, it seems, is cursed

CONNALLY & JENKINS

They've blocked bills against lynching

SOUTHERNER 1

Such bills would be inching
Us closer to tyranny

SOUTHERNER 2

To strike a man down
While we're standing our ground
Is part of what it means to be free.

LBJ

By now it must be plain to see
That I simply have to be...

The kingpin of the Senate
Gotta push all these crazies aside
But when it come to the how and the when,
It's gonna be me who will decide!

CONNALLY & JENKINS

He'll be the kingpin of the Senate

LBJ

I will grab you by your lapel
Rules will break and bend
I will fight to the end
If I have to, I'll send you all to hell!

BOBBY BAKER

*Hello, Senator, can I get you a coffee?
Photocopy something, perhaps?*

LBJ

Now who the hell are you?

BOBBY BAKER

*I'm a page
I'm in high school!*

LBJ

Hmmm.

BOBBY BAKER

*You sure you don't want a coffee?
Senator Collins tends to drink tea
And I think he's gonna vote yea on the housing
bill*

LBJ

What'd you just say?

BOBBY BAKER

Do you want a coffee?

LBJ

No, the other thing. The housing bill

BOBBY BAKER

*Oh! You know, Collins is voting yes. Smith,
though, is planning a filibuster. At least,
that's what he said when I was shining his
shoes.*

LBJ

What'd you say your name was?

BOBBY BAKER

Baker

LBJ

Well, Mr. Booker -

BOBBY BAKER

Baker

LBJ

Either way, I'd love a coffee

Baker nods and begins walking
away. But LBJ grabs his arm
tightly

LBJ (CONT'D)

...And a few hours of your time!

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

This little child
No one knows,
Bobby Baker
I see in him
A mover and a shaker

BOBBY BAKER

Most see a simple fawning page
Over-eager, underage

LBJ

But I see a real kingmaker!
I see a boy whose ears are always open

BOBBY BAKER

The other senators say things best left unspoken
Around me 'cause they're sure
With motives plain and pure
I'll never tell a soul which way they're votin'

LBJ

Which senators are here today?
Which ones are in the air?
Who wants a vote without delay
And who just doesn't care?
Who is off on holiday
Who's having an affair?
I need to know.
And keep it all on the down low.

BOBBY BAKER

(Switching to "Tower of Power" melody)

But boss, you better hustle
Only Russell has the muscle
To help you be the whip, be the captain of the ship

LBJ

This Russell's gonna know me
He'll practically blow me!
See, I'll pass a bill that will
Make segregated bathrooms in DC

Russell runs over

RICHARD RUSSELL

Great job, Lyndon!

LBJ

Well it might seem wrong
For me to play along
But now I'm...

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER & CONNALLY &
JENKINS

The Kingpin of the Senate

BOBBY BAKER

No one reckoned that his weapon would be me

LBJ

Having whole control is my goal and my tenet
Is stopping the rubes and booboisie.

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER & CONNALLY &
JENKINS

He can do it as the Kingpin of the Senate

LBJ

I'm exactly where I know I need to be
In these sacred halls
I will bust your balls

BOBBY BAKER

Your bills will pass

CONNALLY

As they kiss your ass

LBJ

Finally I can see
The presidency!

The lights go down on them. Three
minions step to center stage.

SONG: "TOWER OF POWER. Part 3"

LBJ (CONT'D)

And how did it work out? Hit it boys...

One blows a note on a pitch pipe
and they sing in a capella
harmony.

MOYERS & BAKER & JENKINS &
CONNALLY

In just a few fast years he was the whip and then the leader
Schmoozing boozing smoking eating - meetings back to back
He rose above the forest like a mighty giant cedar
And then he screwed it up and had a heart attack.

I-19

SCENE 19: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. JULY 1955. NIGHT

Lights up on LBJ on a hospital bed
under a pinpoint of light.
Darkness surrounds him. Lighting
creates a sense of loneliness and
cold. Is LBJ dead?

LBJ

*I'm dead
I knew it*

SONG: "THE HEART OF THE MATTER"

CRONKITE (TV)

*If Johnson survives, there is widespread
speculation that his poor health will force the
Senate Majority Leader to retire from public
life.*

LBJ

(to the tune of The Man My Daddy Was)

So this is what it's like
When you've finally disappeared
Just like my daddy -
I did nothing
Just like I feared

The pinpoint of light expands.
Lady Bird and Zephyr enter and
stand by his bedside

LADY BIRD

Lyndon, you're alive!

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

But you're not yet in the clear

LBJ lights a cigarette as a DOCTOR
enters and takes his pulse

DOCTOR

She's right. And hey! You cannot smoke that cigarette in
here!

LBJ

Quit these things? Why doc I'm fine
It's just a little cough!
I'd sooner have you cut my pecker off.
I'm ready to get up and hit the trail
I'll do the things I always do to make sure we don't fail
I should have seen this coming - can't afford to take a break
Get me a fucking whisky and a 3 or 4 pound steak!

LBJ stands, but he is lightheaded
and unsteady

LBJ (CONT'D)

Whoa! WHOA!

He staggers and Lady Bird catches
him.

LADY BIRD

*Lyndon! Lyndon!
Take it easy!*

LBJ takes a step, falters, and
almost falls on the floor. Lady
Bird helps him to the bed

LBJ

Godammit!

(turning despondent)

I can't even walk, let alone run for anything

Reporters crowd into the room,
thrusting out microphones

CRONKITE

Mr. Johnson, are you really resigning from the Senate

LBJ

My friends, a man should recognize when it's time..

Bird puts her hand on his mouth
and cuts him off

LADY BIRD

...and this is not that time. This pause is truly Heaven sent
Lyndon will be running in one year for President

LBJ
(muffled)

I will?

LADY BIRD

Now shooo!!

The reporters leave

LBJ
Bird, I can't keep going, you know that I can't run
It's clear that I'm a loser, once this story hits I'm done
I am on my deathbed - and I need to tell you true
I've stepped out and I've wandered and I've mistreated you
You're the only one I've ever loved - I was stupid as a cow
I wouldn't blame you if you left me now.

LADY BIRD puts her hand over LBJ's
mouth to shush him

LADY BIRD
Oh Lyndon - will you shut up!

SONG: "WHERE WE FLY"

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

If you're soaring
I'll be by your side
If you're sore
I'll make your pain subside
If it's pouring
Then my wings will hide you
From the rain

If you're winning
I will win with you
If you've lost
Then we'll start anew
Beginning, and we'll see it through
Cause when you fall,
I'm falling too

Where we fly
We fly as one
There's nowhere so high
From here to the sun
And when the unfriendly skies
And these Harvard guys
Try to bring you down,
With just one word
Call for your Bird
And I'll be around

Some people say
You were so dirt poor
I was your way out

And You married me for
My daddy's estate
And my family dower
I was just one more brick
In that tower of power
But they don't know
That tower is ours.

So when you're dirty
I'm the one who cleans
If you're hurt on the field
I will be the Marines
'Cause no one knows what loyalty means
More than us

If you're heated
I will cool you down
If you've cheated
I'll cover up the clues left around
When defeated
I'll still be here to crown you
Victorious

Where we fly
We fly as one
There's nowhere so high
From here to the sun
And when the unfriendly skies
And these Harvard guys
Try to bring you down,
With just one word
Call for your Bird
And I'll be around

LIGHTS

I-20

SCENE 20: RFK'S OFFER

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. 1955 THE NEXT DAY

LBJ is alone in the hospital room.
He is finishing getting dressed,
ready to leave the hospital. RFK
enters and the lights come up.

RFK

Hello, Senator Johnson? Robert Kennedy

LBJ

Oh dear God! I am dead

RFK

My father sent me
In this auspicious hour
Make my brother Jack your VP
When you take on Eisenhower

LBJ

Bobby, I won't choose your brother Jack
He's a lightweight, he's a child, he's a playboy and a hack.

RFK

Maybe. But you'll need him if you're gonna take the North

LBJ

With that Boston pretty boy I'll come in fourth

A running mate who's always late, and with a health condition
At least that's what his doctor said - I mean his
pediatrician

RFK

You'll never win in '56. You're just a Southern boy.
The country's times are changing and you're still Dick
Russell's toy
Adlai Stevenson will win but he just doesn't have your grit
He'll lose to Eisenhower and we'll all be in the shit
You might just reconsider
Take a minute to review
Or you'll never make your daddy's dreams come true

RFK exits. LBJ calls after him

LBJ

*We'll see, errand boy. I still got some tricks
up my sleeve.*

I-21

SCENE 21: THE JOKE'S ON YOU

INT. THE CAPITAL. 1957

LBJ puts his arm around the
shoulder of Richard Russell

RICHARD RUSSELL

Senator Lyndon Johnson!

LBJ

Senator Richard Russell! *My boy Baker has been counting votes
and it looks like our quote unquote civil rights bill is
going to pass.*

RICHARD RUSSELL

Shall we retire to the cloakroom?

LBJ

I do believe we shall

They enter the Senate cloakroom

SONG: "THE JOKE'S ON YOU"

RICHARD RUSSELL

You know those lib-tards
Think you're on their side
As you talk about your civil right passion with pride

LBJ

But meanwhile I made sure that bill
Was so watered down on Capital Hill
That you could almost drink it down

RICHARD RUSSELL

Yes, even I could!
Man, you can screw 'em so bad...

LBJ

...And they still think I'm good!

LBJ & RICHARD RUSSELL

So Mr. East Coast, Big time, Modern elite
We've got you thinking that you're winning when we've got you
beat

LBJ

Pay attention to my pretty words
And not what I do
Because you'll wake up
In the morning to find:
The joke's on you

LBJ pours a glass of whiskey for
himself and a glass of milk for
Russell. He hands Russell a
cookie.

LBJ (CONT'D)

The joke's on you
The joke's on you

They leave the Senate and walk
down a street, passing a beggar -
a black man - who has his hat out

LBJ (CONT'D)

You know they love the way I talk about how I'll help the
poor

LBJ puts a dollar in the hat.
Russell grabs the dollar out of
the hat and hands it to a white
passer-by

RICHARD RUSSELL

But they won't notice if you help out the white people more
They think the South never really made it over to Austin

LBJ

(putting on a thick New England accent)

By the time I'm done, they'll think
I grew up in Bah-ston

RICHARD RUSSELL

They'll make you president
And once you've won

LBJ

I'll take all of their proposals
And veto every one!

LBJ & RICHARD RUSSELL

So Mr. East Coast, Big time, Modern elite
We've got you thinking that you're winning when we've got you
beat

By this time, they have arrived at
LBJ's house. Zephyr is present.

LBJ

Pay attention to my pretty words
And not what I do
You'll wake up
In the morning to find
The Joke's on you
The joke's on you
The joke's on you

I-22

SCENE 22: HER AND HIM

INT. LBJ'S HOUSE. DAY

Lights change as LBJ walks into
his house.

LBJ

*Whoo! I just worked up a sweat! Zephyr can you
bring us some drinks!*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Certainly, Mr. Johnson. Would you like thatwatered down?

LBJ sits at his desk, while Zephyr
dusts.

SONG: "HER AND HIM"

LBJ
(to the tune of The Pen)

Mrs. Wright
Bird and I thought we might
Fly down to Austin tonight
And Zephyr, while we're on that flight, if it's alright
Would you drive my car?

To the ranch
And bring
Our beagle twins
Lucy named them "Her" and "Him"
You can tour around and everything
It's not too far...

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
Are you kidding me, Mr. Lyndon?
You want me to drive there and back
Through six southern states while being black?
And when I need to wash or drink
I have to find a colored sink
And when
If we're stopped
For no reason by the cops
They treat us like we're common crooks
And beat us just for how we look
We'll spend the trip on tenterhooks
I'm sorry but that's why -
Me and those dogs are gonna fly.

LBJ
*I'm as dumb as a bumblebee on a horse's
bunghole. I'm booking those plane tickets for
the three of ya right now!*
(beat)
Although it's quite expensive
(pause)
How about the train?

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
Mr. Johnson!

LBJ
*The plane - of course, you're taking the plane
of course*

Lights out

SCENE 23: BETWEEN BROTHERS

JFK (PHONE)
*No, my name will have to go first on the bumper
stickers, Lyndon. You give my regards to Lady
Bird now. We'll talk soon.*

INT. LOS ANGELES HOTEL ROOM. JULY 1960 NIGHT

LBJ, Connally and Bobby Baker sit
in a hotel suite during the
Democratic National Convention.

LBJ

*Well, boys! That was Mr. JFK himself on the
phone. Take a look at the next Pres - er Vice
President of the USA. 1960 election, here we
come!*

There is a knock at the door

SONG: "BETWEEN BROTHERS"

CONNALLY

It's Bobby K

LBJ

RFK? Send him away...

CONNALLY

He says he needs to have your ear

LBJ

Alright. Let him in. But y'all stay here

RFK enters

LBJ (CONT'D)

Bobby...

RFK

Lyndon

Look, I'm not in the habit of rescindin'
Offers made,
But the liberals paid
A little visit to my brother
And they've asked him to pick another
VP

LBJ

You kidding me?
He just asked me 5 minutes ago!

RFK

Well losin's confusin' I know
But this kinda call
He can't defend it
I'm not even sure he meant it
He started something splendid
But bringing you along for the ride will end it
Do you really wanna see a fight on the floor?

You'll end up quite embarrassed I'm sure
Our liberal friends will knock you down
Disgraced, you'll never show your face in this town

BOBBY BAKER

Do you speak for your brother?

RFK

I speak for myself and no other

LBJ

Then get the hell outta here!

LBJ pushes RFK out

LBJ (CONT'D)

Get me JAY FK
On the phone
And don't let RFK near

This is insanity
Which Kennedy
Am I supposed to be listening to?
One brother
Says one thing, the other
Says another
Now what am I supposed to do?
(into the phone)
Do you want me, Jack?
Or are you taking your offer back?

JFK (PHONE)

Lyndon... Look I admit my brother's a bit out of it
I've made my decision and I'm proud of it

LBJ

Well, good
You should!

He hangs up the phone. Another
knock comes at the door.

LBJ (CONT'D)

Who's at the door now?

He opens the door to see RFK
standing in the hall, shaking his
head

LBJ (CONT'D)

Jesus

RFK

I'm not trying to taunt you
But I hope you get
That my brother doesn't want you
He just doesn't know it yet

LBJ

Well all of your liberal friends may doubt me
How you gonna win the South without me?
I'm not bothered
By you one bit
So go back to "Hahvahd"
You little shit!

LBJ slams the door in RFK's face

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

This is insanity
Which Kennedy
Am I supposed to be listening to?
One brother
Says one thing, the other
Says another
Now what am I supposed to do?
This boy's gonna pay
Nobody talks to the President elect that way!

CONNALLY

Sir, I think you mean "Vice President elect."

LBJ

Right. Did I say President?

CONNALLY

I mean, you'd have to say, "possible vice president elect," sir. You guys would have to win the general... first... sir.

LBJ

I know that, Connally!

CONNALLY

I mean, that is, IF he even picks you

LBJ

He picked me and I'm taking it!

BOBBY BAKER

Boss, I don't understand - you once said, "Kid, remember this..."

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER

The vice presidency is as valuable as a pot of warm piss

LBJ
Baker we discussed this
How many VPs ended up president again?

BOBBY BAKER
Well, uh... Adams... Jefferson
(mumbles)
Truman... uh... Ten!

CONNALLY
But Kennedy's young
He looks like Peter Pan!

LBJ
Well I guess I'm just a gamblin' man.

LBJ walks across the stage, meets
JFK. They both put their arms up
like they've just won the
election. Loud sounds of cheering
as ticker tape comes down and it's
like it's a parade.

I-24

SCENE 24: 13 DAYS 'TIL ARMAGEDDON

INT. THE SITUATION ROOM. OCTOBER 16, 1962. DAY

LBJ stands outside the Situation
Room while JFK's inner circle
comes in and out. LBJ is
constantly trying to get a bead on
what's going on, using a
stethoscope, holding his ear to it
at the wall as he drains a glass
of Scotch.

SONG: "13 DAYS 'TIL ARMAGEDDON"

FULL CAST
13 Days 'till Armageddon
13 ways in which we're headin'
For the final phase of life
We'll be dead in
An atomic haze
In only 13 days.
Day one!

LBJ acts as a narrator. He points
to JFK

LBJ
10/16/62
Jack's in his pajamas when he gets the news
Our planes in Cuba looking down
Found Soviet missile sites on the ground

JFK

What could I do?

RFK

These bombs in our backyard

JFK

Just couldn't be allowed

MCNAMARA AND RFK

But one wrong move

JOINT CHIEFS

One wrong move

As they sing, LBJ keeps trying to
get in, and is pushed out by RFK,
Joint Chiefs, etc.

LBJ

And we'd all be living in a mushroom cloud

ALL

Day Two!

LBJ

(pointing at JFK)

He's not sure what to do

ALL

Day Three!

JFK

Gromyko meets with me

Looks at me and with a grin

LBJ

Completely denies the entire thing

MACNAMARA

There's more...

ALL

Day Four!

JOINT CHIEFS

Better bomb their boats, their planes as well
We'll bomb those Cubans straight to Hell!

LBJ

We've got the plans
All ready to go

JOINT CHIEFS AND LBJ

Prep for invasion
Let's start the show!

JOINT CHIEFS
(Overlapping RFK and JFK's "mushroom
cloud" stanza)

Gotta show 'em how strong we are

LBJ
They'll wish they still had a Czar

JOINT CHIEFS
They'll fear our might near and far
Can't back down. Can't back down
Even if we're all living in a mushroom cloud

RFK AND JFK
But we all lose if we fight, don't you see?
We're steps away from World War Three

LBJ
Now listen boys, I've got a plan that -

JFK
That's great, Lyndon. Why don't you bring that back to us in
13 days...

JFK shuts door in LBJ's face. He
pauses, shrugs and turns and walks
down the hall, bumping into
McNamara.

LBJ
Say McNamara
I'd like a bigger plane

MCNAMARA
Lyndon, I'm not sure this is the right time

LBJ
I know there's a lot going on
I don't mean to be a pain

MCNAMARA
*Year, I mean we're kind of at the brink of
destruction here, sir. I -*

LBJ (CONT'D)
But Air Force Two
Feels more like Air Force Nine

MCNAMARA
*Mr. Vice President, we are in the midst of an
unprecedented situation, I-*

LBJ

What - is this a bad time?

MCNAMARA AND EVERYONE ELSE ON
STAGE

Yes!!

ALL

Day Five!

JFK

And I fear for our lives.

RFK

Where this will lead, no one can tell.

JFK AND RFK

Gotta give them time.

LBJ

Gotta give them hell!

JFK

So we choose something in between
War and peace: a quarantine
We stop their ships if they reach our line

MCNAMARA AND RFK

No more missiles getting in
But no one's dyin'

ALL

Day Six!

JOINT CHIEFS

Sir, we've moved in ships
And our planes over there
could bomb them from the air
But with so many missiles,
In one bombing run

MACNAMARA

There's no guarantee we'd get every one

JFK AND RFK

And even if only one gets through...

JOINT CHIEFS

Even if only one gets through

LBJ

We're through!

ALL

Seventh Day!

JFK

I get on TV to say
To the world what we've seen
And explain the quarantine
But LBJ and his team
Keep pushing me
To fight
And by night
We're at...

ALL

DEFCON Three!
Day Eight!

RFK

Most Russian ships head straight
Back home

MCNAMARA

But wait - Day Nine!
We're running out of time

RFK

The end is near I fear

LBJ

(pointing)

And here's the Soviet Premier...

KHRUSHCHEV AND HIS GENERALS

Mr. President, our missiles
I know that you hate 'em
But you're playing with Fire
With this ultimatum
A mistake's been made but it's you who've made it
Russia will not be intimidated
This will end in smoke from New York to Kiev!
Sincerely yours, Nikita Khrushchev.

ALL

13 days 'til Armageddon
13 ways in which we're headin'
For the final phase of the planet
Dammit
Can it be the end of days?
The final phase?
A nuclear haze?
In 13 days.
Day 10!

MCNAMARA AND RFK

Men, we're at DEFCON Two!

LBJ

Day Eleven and Khrushchev and a pen in the night.

The lights go out. We see a
spotlight on Khrushchev
writing/narrating at a desk, a
shoe in one hand and pen in the
other

KHRUSHCHEV

This letter I write:

KHRUSHCHEV (CONT'D)

Mr. Kennedy, this'll
Be a one time offer I'm afraid:
We'll remove all our Cuban missiles
If you promise never to invade

ALL

Day Twelve!

JFK

Ah hell!
That letter was good
But now he's sent another!

RFK

What's it say, my brother?

JFK stretches out his hand with
the letter

JFK

He wants us to remove all our Jupiter Missiles in Turkey
Nothing could be stupider

JFK AND RFK

This'll be proof that we can be extorted
A reputation like that - we can't afford it!

The following three sections are
sung in harmony

JFK & KHRUSHCHEV

What can I do?
These bombs in our backyard
Just can't be allowed
But one wrong move
Just one wrong move
And we'd all be living in a mushroom cloud

JOINT CHIEFS

Gotta show 'em how strong we are
They'll wish they were still in the hands of a czar
They'll fear our might near and far
Can't back down
Can't back down
Even if we're all living in a mushroom cloud

LBJ AND AIDES

Don't act like a pussy, you must give that fucker hell
We're Texas and we're proud
Even if we're living in a mushroom cloud.

JFK

Bobby, gather everyone in the ExComm group in the Oval. We've gotta make a decision.

RFK

Everyone?

JFK

Almost. Do not invite Johnson
We're trying to stop a war and he wants one

JFK, RFK and the Joint Chiefs
gather in the Oval Office. Johnson
walks to the side of the stage

JFK (CONT'D)

Alright I'm ignoring
The second letter
The first one Khrushchev sent was better
So I'll agree we never invade
And in exchange we're repaid

JFK AND RFK AND MCNAMARA

With those missiles gone right away

JFK

And we'll all live to see another day

RFK crosses the stage to meet with
the Russian Foreign Minister

ALL

Day Thirteen!

JFK AND RFK AND MCNAMARA

Thanks to the quarantine
Russia announces they're backing down
Taking their missiles and skipping town

JFK AND RFK

It's our finest moment
Our finest hour
We stared down a superpower

JFK, RFK AND MCNAMARA

Kept our people safe and sure
Did it without waging war

ALL

It's our finest moment
Our finest day

LBJ

(grouchy/eye rolling)

Made a hero out of JFK

ALL

And in our finest hour

RFK

We kept our nation safe and free

LBJ

(slowly)

And nobody

ALL

Nobody gave a damn.

LBJ

Nobody gave a damn about me

I-25

SCENE 25: SQUEAKY CLEAN

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. PRESENT DAY 1968. DAY

LBJ holds the blue and red
folders, an empty glass in front
of him, Ladybird, Zephyr, and
Moyers nearby. Protesters chanting
outside

PROTESTERS (OFFSTAGE)

*Hey, Hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill
today?*

LBJ

JFK, JFK, how many kids kissed your ass that day
(holds up the two folders)
J Fucking K. I'd like to see him figure this out.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Red folder?

RFK

Or blue folder

LBJ

*Look. I'm not going to abandon the Vietnamese.
I don't abandon people, never did*

RFK and Zephyr fold their arms in disbelief. Bird enters too, arms also folded. Bobby Baker appears.

BAKER

Really, boss?

Lights up on Reporters

SONG: "SQUEAKY CLEAN"

REPORTER 1

*Extra Extra!
Buy our paper
Get your news and quick facts
Johnson crony Bobby Baker
Investigated for kickbacks!*

Baker comes out to confront reporters

BOBBY BAKER

What? I don't even know what the words "kick back" mean!

REPORTER 2

It's when you get money from a company illegally in exchange for giving them a government contract.

BOBBY BAKER

Oh...you mean was I collecting envelopes?

REPORTER

Yes!

BAKER

No!

So you're accusing me of taking money from the Brown Brothers to get vending machine contracts for the army?

REPORTER 1

Yeah

BOBBY BAKER

Never happened

Baker continues to talk with them
silently as LIGHTS UP on LBJ and
other reporters

REPORTER 2

What's your comment
Mr. VP
How close are you with Baker?

LBJ

Well I've heard of him
Everyone can see
That boy's a real deal maker
But I never knew him all that well
Why he did those things - I really can't tell

LBJ continues to talk with them
silently as LIGHTS UP on Baker and
other reporters

REPORTER

*Is that true, Mr. Baker? You and the Vice
President hardly know each other?*

BOBBY BAKER

You mean Lyndon?

REPORTER

Yeah

BOBBY BAKER

Uncle Lyndy? Lyndy-poo?

REPORTER

If you say so

BOBBY BAKER

I hardly know him

REPORTER

What?

BOBBY BAKER

We pass in the halls

LIGHTS UP on LBJ and reporters

REPORTER 2

*But didn't Baker funnel illegal donations
through your radio station?*

LBJ

(shocked)

No! Boys, I gotta go!

LBJ tries to leave as lights come
up on Baker and reporters

REPORTER

*C'mon Baker. What about the rumors that you
were Johnson's fixer?*

BOBBY BAKER

That I can explain

Baker sings

BOBBY BAKER (CONT'D)

Well they say I got a friend of mine from South Carolina
To get his life insurance company to sign a
Policy with Johnson, despite his angina
His health is perfect - that's true! Well... kinda
But I didn't do that
Nor could you say that I'm
The one who made my friend
Buy advertising time
On KTBC, Lady Bird's radio station, no!
Nor did I ask him to buy Lady Bird that stereo...
So if you're wondering how I became a millionaire
Well you might wonder the same about Johnson.
But I don't care

Because we're squeaky clean

Lights up on both LBJ and Baker

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER

(LBJ joins in harmony)

So squeaky clean
They say that we're dirty

LBJ

I don't know what they mean

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER

We're just working for the red white and blue (and some
green)

COPS

*Robert Baker, you have the right to remain
silent*

The lights change, spotlighting
LBJ & Baker. Baker is being
handcuffed

BOBBY BAKER

Lyndon?

LBJ turns away

BOBBY BAKER (CONT'D)

Lyndon, for you I did it all
Why are you making me take the fall?

LBJ looks at Baker for a moment, a
glimmer of pity and guilt on this
face. And then...

LBJ

Oh god darn it

LBJ (CONT'D)

What do you know, my ride is here
I'm heading to the airport
Didn't y'all hear?
The President and I are on our way to Texas
Why don't you cover that
Instead of this witch hunt you're obsessed with!

LBJ sings on his way out, while
Baker sings as he is being slowly
dragged away in handcuffs

BOBBY BAKER

I should be squeaky clean
So squeaky clean

LBJ

(to himself)

When they haul him to court
Will he spill the beans?

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER

We're just working for the red white and blue (and some
green)
Because we're squeaky clean

Big vaudeville ending

LBJ & BOBBY BAKER (CONT'D)

We really mean it
We're squeaky clean

Baker is dragged away as lights
change

I-26

SCENE 26: DEALEY PLAZA

EXT. DALLAS, TEXAS. NOVEMBER 22 1963 DAY

In the motorcade, Lady Bird sits
in a car between LBJ and Senator
Yarborough, who is not talking to
LBJ

LADY BIRD

Oh Lyndon! Look at that crowd up at Dealey Plaza.

LBJ

I see it, Bird.

LADY BIRD

What's wrong, honey? They love you

LBJ

Oh, sweetheart. No one loves me

LADY BIRD

Look at them, Lyndon - they're all cheering

LBJ

I see the crowds, but all I'm hearing
Are cheers for the man in that car up ahead
To these folks, this country, Lyndon Johnson's dead

LADY BIRD

But Lyndon...

LBJ

As we speak back in DC
A senate committee investigates me
Life Magazine's working on an expose
On Baker and me - I'll be cast away!

LBJ & OTHER PEOPLE IN THE CAR

On the back of Landslide Lyndon,
They've pinned every sin done in DC

LBJ

I'm stuck on everyone's bad side
And the landslide
Is gonna land on me.

LADY BIRD

Lyndon, be patient. One day when the second term is over, the mantle will pass to you

LBJ

Bird, do you really think Jack would choose another
Successor, when his own brother
Sits beside him, loved and respected
Any chance I had - Bobby wrecked it
And when a horse is down, you kick it
Why not drop me from the ticket?

OTHER PEOPLE IN THE CAR

He once was Landslide Lyndon!

LBJ

Had the wind in my sails, now I barely crawl
I was never meant to be the president.
Daddy, looks like I'll never be anything at all.

GUNSHOT! BAM!

LIGHTS OFF

CROWD

SCREAMS

GUNSHOT!

LBJ

Bird! Get down!

SFX of swerving, skidding, peeling
rubber

GUNSHOT!

LIGHTS OFF

I-27

SCENE 27: SHARDS

INT. IN THE ETHER. LATER THAT DAY

The full cast (except LBJ) is
slowly drifting around on the
darkened, foggy, stage, in shock.

SONG: "SHARDS"

RFK

What's at the heart
Of this matter?

JACKIE KENNEDY

I lost my man

LADY BIRD

(pointing off stage)

They lost their dad

RFK

Who could invent anything sadder?

JACKIE KENNEDY

We held it all

RFK

In the palm of our hands

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Who'll glue us back again?

ALL
Who'll glue us? Now that we've fallen down

JACKIE KENNEDY
Off of the shelf

RFK
(Fallen) Down

JACKIE KENNEDY
Down with a crash

RFK
(Fallen) Down

JACKIE KENNEDY
Down to the floor

RFK
(Fallen) Shards

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
Of porcelain and glass

CABINET
All the king's horses
And all the king's men

JACKIE KENNEDY
All the king's daughters, too
Will you tell me who

ZEPHYR WRIGHT
Will glue us back together again?

Lights up on LBJ lying on the bed
in the plane's Presidential suite.
He is on the phone. Jackie's
hatboxes are strewn around

LBJ
(shouting)
*Look Bobby. It's legal, right? If it's done
now? Here? On Air Force One*

RFK (PHONE)
*I mean, it's legal, I suppose. But Lyndon I'm
not sure.*

LBJ
(still shouting)
I agree with you! We gotta do this - Now!

RFK
But that's not what I said!

Jackie enters and is shocked to
find LBJ in her bedroom

JACKIE KENNEDY

Oh!

LBJ hands up the phone, gets off
the bed, and walks out to the
larger room crowded with people

LBJ

(to everyone)

*Bobby says to do it now. I need her by my side.
No, not the judge - Jackie! I need you by my
side more than ever.*

LBJ gently positions Jackie to his
right

LBJ (CONT'D)

You just stand right here, honey

LBJ puts his hand on the Bible and
takes the oath in dumb show during
the following

SOLDIER 1

What's at the heart

PROTESTER 1

Of this matter

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

We were so young and pure

LADY BIRD

Heaven sent - heaven bound

The scene gradually morphs into
JFK's funeral procession. Horse-
drawn carriages with the casket
covered in Old Glory

PROTESTER 1

How do we pull

SOLDIER

Pull out this dagger?

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Now that we've lost

RFK

All that we'd found

ALL

Who'll glue us back again? Who'll glue us
Now that we've fallen
Down -
Off of the shelf
(Fallen) Down - down with a crash
(Fallen) down - down to the floor
(Fallen) Shards of porcelain and glass
All the king's horses and all the king's men

FEMALE PROTESTER

All the king's daughters, too

SOLDIER 1

Will you tell me who?

FEMALE PROTESTER

Will glue us back together again?

RFK

What's at the heart of this matter?
I lost my brother

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

We lost our way.
A nation once young
Now older and battered

PROTESTER AND SOLDIER

Is there another
To make it OK

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

(to audience)

Who are we now?
How will we recover?

LADY BIRD

Carry the torch
Show us the way

Lights up on the Capitol Building.
LBJ enters from top, talking from
a podium

LBJ

All that I have
I would give gladly
Not to be standing here
With you today

ALL

Who'll glue us back again? Who'll glue us
Now that we've fallen?

Down -
Off of the shelf
(Fallen) Down - down with a crash
(Fallen) down - down to the floor
(Fallen) shards of porcelain and glass
All the king's horses and all the king's men

JACKIE KENNEDY
All the king's daughters, too

RFK
Will you tell me who will glue us
Back together again?

Dark strains of the Shards Motif
play on horns as light comes back
up on House Chamber podium - we
see the cast in the far background
in shadow and LBJ standing in a
pinspot, looking directly at the
audience. His demeanor is serious,
grim as he looks up, puts on his
glasses, and slowly gives just a
hint of a determined smile.

LIGHTS

END ACT I

ACT II

II-1

SCENE 1: ON THE THRONE

INT. OVAL OFFICE BATHROOM. NOVEMBER 1963 DAY

The curtains part to reveal LBJ sitting on a HUGE toilet, with a golden toilet paper dispenser next to him on one side, and a typewriter on a table to the other. Begins with him alone.

SONG: "ON THE THRONE"

LBJ

I'm president!
Fucking president!
In my element
It's almost a surprise

All these amenities!
Left by the Kennedys
(runs a juicer)
While all my enemies are
Gone before my eyes

Now what is there to do
But take a moment to
Appreciate the view
From Pennsylvania Ave
In this room so sacred
I can sit here naked
What a kick-ass job I have!

Assorted AIDES and LACKEYS enter
to sing as a chorus

LBJ & AIDES & LACKEYS

'Cause I'm on the throne (he's on the throne)
I'm on the throne (he's on the throne)
Don't have to be
That lame VP
Oh how I'm home (he's right at home)
Oh the wing I live in is the West
I can take a shit on the Resolute desk,
While I've got Leonard Brezhnev on the phone!

BREZHNEV (PHONE)

Nyet!

LBJ & AIDES & LACKEYS

I'm finally sitting on the throne.

Let's help the working class
I'll wipe my own damn ass!

Let's get that tax bill passed
Hey there's no time to nap
(kicks a tired aide)

I've got a plan which I
Wrote down on this 2-ply
Let's see the Chinese try
And figure out this crap.

I thought of Medicare
Right here in my underwear
I shake my derriere and 5 assistants bring
The daily briefing to me
I read it while I pee
I'm telling you it's good to be the king!

'Cause I'm on the throne (he's on the throne)
I'm on the throne (he's on the throne)
Don't have to be
No lame VP
Oh how I'm home (he's finally home)
I can take a long walk through the Rose Garden
Give myself a presidential pardon
While The Queen of England's on the phone!

QUEEN ELIZABETH (PHONE)

Cheerio!

LBJ & AIDES & LACKEYS

I'm finally sitting on the throne.

Have...I...showed...you
Jumbo yet?
It's something you won't forget
And if you think I'm touching it while I walk these halls,
You bet!
And even when I'm wiping
The executive booty
I'm always performing my presidential
Duty!!!!

Be...cause I'm president
Your motherfuckin' President
Now I know what my daddy meant
When he said I could be
Something he never was
It's amazing what passion does
I made it this far because
I could see

How every moral line's
Meant to be broken sometime
And a little turpentine
Can make things clean
Now I can really control

The planet from this bowl
I'm telling you the world is my latrine!

AIDES & LACKEYS & LBJ
'Cause he's on the throne
(I'm on the throne)
He's on the throne
(Still on the throne!)
Doesn't have to be
No lame VP
Oh how he's home.

He can sign a bill for housing and roads

LBJ
Then wipe my ass with the nuclear codes

AIDES & LACKEYS
While Charles de Gaulle is on the phone

CHARLES DE GAULLE (PHONE)
Vous et Merde!

LBJ
I'm finally sitting

AIDES & LACKEYS & LBJ
We're here to do his bidding

LBJ
I govern while I'm shitting!

AIDES & LACKEYS
He's finally
Sitting
On
The
Throne!

LIGHTS

II-2

SCENE 2 ON THTE TOILET

INT. OVAL OFFICE BATHROOM. THAT SAME DAY

Spotlight up on LBJ on toilet,
talking on the phone

LBJ
Huisso! You will never believe where I am!

HUISSO (PHONE)
Lyndon, are you on the toilet?

LBJ
No! Well... maybe. But I'm in the Oval Office

He flushes the toilet, walks out
of bathroom.

LBJ (CONT'D)
(to audience)

*What? What? I know, I know. Red folder, blue
folder. That's years ahead. Could you just let
me enjoy this day?*

II-3

SCENE 3: A THOUSAND DAYS

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. NOVEMBER 27 1963. NIGHT

LBJ stands at a podium bearing the
Presidential Seal. He is
addressing a joint session of
Congress just 5 days after JFK's
assassination

LBJ
No memorial or eulogy
Could better honor President Kennedy
And the work he spent all his days and nights
Than the earliest passage of Civil Rights
At his inauguration in '61
He said "Our work has just begun."

CHORUS
Though it's our darkest moment
Our darkest hour

LBJ
Can't bring him back even with all my power
Though it's our darkest moment
Today we must resolve anew. I say:

J
Let Us Continue.

LIGHTS

II-4

SCENE 4: IMMINENT THREAT

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. AUGUST 2 1964. DAY

LBJ sits behind the Resolute Desk.
The TV is on. A map labeled THE
GREAT SOCIETY is mounted on a
large easel

WALTER CRONKITE (TV)
*It's August 2nd, 1964 and here's the news.
President Johnson is fighting for his political
future against conservative hero Barry
Goldwater.*

(MORE)

WALTER CRONKITE (TV) (CONT'D)

Goldwater called Johnson, "Soft on Communism" today at his speech on the Great Lawn. For now, Johnson continues to keep America's involvement in Vietnam as an advisory role.

SECRETARY (OFFSTAGE)

Mr. President? Martin Luther King, line one

LBJ picks up the phone and cleans his nails with the blue folder

LBJ

Martin? Did they find the bodies of those three civil rights workers yet? You keep me posted the minute you -

McNamara ENTERS

LBJ (CONT'D)

Hold on a second. McNamara's here

MCNAMARA

(out of breath)

Sir! Mr. President! We've gotta talk

SECRETARY (OFFSTAGE)

Mr. President. It's that tailor on line 2. You told me it wa-

LBJ

Oh. I'll take that! Martin, putting you on hold. McNamara, just a minute!

Slowly, like he has all the time in the world, LBJ swats a fly with the Red folder

LBJ (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Glad I gotcha. I want six pairs of those slacks. Boy they are good. But you gotta open up the part around my nutsack, you hear me? The last pair was just about the best pair yet, but it's tight around that whole area up to my bunghole.

MCNAMARA

Sir, I've -

LBJ picks up the phone. He uses the blue folder to hold the phone against his ear

LBJ

Hold on McNamara. Martin? ... All three killed? Just tragic.

Sees McNamara and joint chiefs
enter the room

Listen, I'll call you back.

Everyone freezes as RFK enters

SONG: "IMMINENT THREAT"

RFK

So here's McNamara telling LBJ
About a "crisis" brewing in Nam that day
He sounds like he knows what
He's talking about
I'll stick around
Just in case he leaves anything out

LBJ

McNamara - why you looking so dire?

MCNAMARA

Sir, the Gulf on Tonkin - it's on fire!

McNamara pulls down a map that
covers the map of the Great
Society. It is a close-up of the
Gulf of Tonkin

LBJ

What?

MCNAMARA

Be warned
It's a tale of guns and slaughter
Regarding our destroyers in the Tonkin waters

MCNAMARA & JOINT CHIEFS

This is an imminent threat
It's an imminent threat
If we don't get them, they'll get us with
Their imminent threat

LBJ and staff all lean forward

MCNAMARA

(waving his hands in the air)

Our boats, the Turner Joy and the Maddox

RFK

Note McNamara's dramatics...

MCNAMARA

Having made no prior provocation -

RFK

In fact, there were several recent covert operations...

MCNAMARA

We were cruising the Gulf and nothing more

RFK

We had bombed a radar station just the day before

McNamara glares at RFK as if to
say shut the F up!

MCNAMARA

Anyway...

MCNAMARA (CONT'D)

When suddenly several boats from Hanoi
Approached the Maddox and the Turner Joy
Our radar men picked up the nine blips
Of nine torpedoes headed for our ships

RFK

The captain of the Maddox
Thought it might've been less
Or maybe none at all
It's anyone's guess
How the story got started
And with no confirmation
Led us into war against another nation

LBJ

(turning to McBundy)

Well, my friends I'm afraid
I'm really not sure
What happened in the Gulf
Could we wait and hear more?

MCNAMARA

Or you could use it as a chance to wage your war
Not just on those ships
But on the land
Don't you see
This is everything that we planned?

LBJ

*Now maybe we should go on a few dates with
Vietnam before we just stick our dick in?*

MCNAMARA

But if you wait, Barry Goldwater would say that you're a
chicken!

LBJ

Show those Reds some of the red, white and blue

MCNAMARA

You would not just rule domestics
But foreign matters too!

LBJ

And if we talk about the soldiers that almost died

MCNAMARA

Soon you'd have the Congress on your side!

ALL

They'll see the imminent threat

JENKINS

Sir, we haven't confirmed one solid detail yet!

MCNAMARA

We just need pictures of the smoke
On every TV set
Of an imminent threat
An imminent threat

LBJ

(to audience)

Well now Congress, what do you say?
We back down now
And those crazy commie pinkos get away
With an act of aggression
With an act of war
We waver now
And there'll be so much more
I'm not asking for much
Just a little resolution
In the name of our freedom
And our constitution
That from now on when it comes to the Vietnamese
I can do whatever the hell I please!

This is an imminent threat
Well well well, Barry Goldwater said
I'd be so weak
That I would let the Viet Kong
Scare me away with an imminent threat
But No no no

RFK

And it passed that night!
Ninety eight to two

RFK (CONT'D)

A manufactured crisis

LBJ

(to RFK)

Oh, fuck you!

RFK

It wouldn't be the first time
Or the last
Past is prologue
And prologue is...

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
(bangs his gavel)

Passed!

II-5

SCENE 5: (INTERLUDE) RUSSELL IN A TUSSE

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE. SPRING 1964. DAY

Curtain up on Dick Russell yelling
at LBJ.

RUSSELL

*A real Civil Rights bill? You were the great
Southern hope. We were counting on you, Lyndon!*

LBJ

Well, Dick, I guess this time

LBJ punctuates his next words with
hard pokes to Russell's chest.

LBJ (CONT'D)

The joke's on you

RUSSELL

*Joke? Don't you, "well Dick" me!
What happened to you just pretending you were
ending segregation?
You can't help those people*

LBJ

*Those people are my people
And if you opened your eyes
You'd realize
They're your people too.
They are American people
Just like me and you
And if I can't help the people, sure...
Then
Well then what the hell's the Presidency for?*

Immediately segue into...

II-6

SCENE 6: WHAT THE HELL IS THE PRESIDENCY FOR?

INT. OVAL OFFICE. SPRING 1964. DAY

SONG: "WHAT THE HELL IS THE PRESIDENCY FOR?"

LBJ

What are we gonna tackle first, boys?

MOYERS

Well, right now the poor can't afford to see a doctor before
They fall to the floor like flies

LBJ & STAFF

Medicaid!

JENKINS

And you seldom see the elderly get an EKG 'til one of them
dies

LBJ & STAFF

Medicare!

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

And the kids at school get a drop of gruel
And maybe a half a Ding Dong

LBJ & STAFF

Head Start!

LADY BIRD

Because the farmers grow so little that all the vegetables
are gone

LBJ & STAFF

Farm Act!

LBJ & STAFF (CONT'D)

When the naysayers say, "Nay," say you're gonna stay
And kick in the door
'Cause what the hell (what the hell!)
What the hell (what the hell!)
Yeah what the hell else is the Presidency for?

Senator HARRY BYRD enters

LBJ

Senator Byrd!

BYRD

This bill is absurd
You lower taxes while we're in debt!

LBJ

Harry, carry on, but you don't know my whole plan yet!

BYRD

What's that?

LBJ leans menacingly into Byrd,
forcing him to lean backwards and
grab onto the wall

LBJ

Well, it's just that I got your budget down
I did it by firing half this town
Now I fulfilled my pledge to you -
You gonna let our tax bill through?

BYRD

(afraid)

OK! OK!

LBJ & STAFF

With the tax bill teed up, now I'm freed up
Civil rights can head to the floor!
'Cause what the hell (what the hell)
What the hell (what the hell!)
Yeah what the hell else is the presidency for?
It's for...

MOYERS

Upward Bound. Head Start

A puppet of Big Bird appears
alongside Lady Bird

LADY BIRD

PBS and NPR

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Job Corps, Peace Corps

MOYERS

Food stamps for the poor.

LBJ

On poverty, I declare a war
And there's so much more. We got...

JENKINS

Legal Services for every neighborhood

MOYERS

Clean air - let nature feel like nature should

LBJ

Law enforcement administration

LADY BIRD

Three bills for education

LADY BIRD & ZEPHYR

Immigrant family reunification

ALL

There's nothing we can't do as a nation

Senator BYRD enters

LBJ

Senator Byrd!

BYRD

I'm gonna kill this Civil Rights bill
I will keep it locked up on committee

LBJ

I convinced the House to vote without
Your shitty committee - what a pity!

BYRD

What?

JENKINS & MOYERS & BIRD & ZEPHYR

He made deals in a complex game of chess

LBJ

(to Byrd)

Now even your mother is voting yes!

BYRD

What?

LBJ

(turning to one Senator)

I'll support your base

LBJ (CONT'D)

(turning to another Senator)

I'll support your dam

LBJ (CONT'D)

(to audience)

Hell, I'll build them both with my own hands!

When the segregationists

Soil this nation it's

Time to go to war

'Cause what the hell...

What the hell...

What the hell else is the Presidency for?

RFK

(walks in clapping)

*Fantastic domestic agenda, Mr. President. But
what are you going to do about Vietnam?*

LBJ

(to audience)

*Don't listen to Bobby. He just never understood
that I would never abandon the Vietnamese
people. I do not abandon people.*

Jenkins appears.

JENKINS

Really, boss?

SCENE 7: WALTER JENKINS

II-7 INT. OVAL OFFICE. OCTOBER 1964. NIGHT

Cops enter and put Jenkins in handcuffs. He looks longingly towards the Oval Office, where LBJ now sits with Lady Bird

CRONKITE (TV)

White House Chief of Staff Walter Jenkins was arrested today for "disorderly conduct" with another man in a Washington DC public restroom.

LBJ

Don't you think I know that, Bird? Look. You're my right arm, Jenkins is my left. But we have an election in just a few weeks. We've got to cut Jenkins loose.

LBJ (CONT'D)

I know it's wrong
He's been my friend
But if we keep him on we'll lose this in the end

LADY BIRD

I understand, you want to win
But if you cut him loose, it's you, not him that's sinned
Where we fly, we fly as one
You've been like his dad

LBJ & LADY BIRD

He's been like our son

LADY BIRD

And when a forbidden kiss and prejudice try to bring you down
You know in the end, you stick with your friends

LBJ

I'm sorry, Bird. I've done the math and I have no choice. Now I'm calling a press conference

LADY BIRD

Well so am I.

CRONKITE

Lady Bird Johnson held her own press conference today, praising Walter Jenkins for his service to his country. Nevertheless, Walter Jenkins has resigned.

II-8

SCENE 8: THE KENNEDY BROTHER BLUES

INT. PRIVATE RESIDENCE, WEST WING. JANUARY 1965. DAY

LBJ at a dressing table. A picture
of JFK and RFK hangs on the wall.
Two aides enter.

MALE AIDE 1

*Alright, Mr. President. It's time to get you
ready for the state banquet*

LBJ

Thank you young man. Are you new?

MALE AIDE 1

*No sir I used to help dress President Kennedy
and his brother Robert.*

LBJ

*I see. They were both quite good looking
fellas.*

MALE AIDE 2

Oh! You wouldn't believe it

LBJ

*Well you boys got your work cut out for you,
making me look good.*

MALE AIDE 2

*Oh, sir, don't worry. We'll figure something
out*

LBJ

(miffed)

Figure something...

MALE AIDE 1

(looking Johnson over)

Maybe a male girdle

MALE AIDE 2

Oh yes!

LBJ

*Male girdle! I don't suppose Jack and Bobby
needed that*

MALE AIDE 1

(dreamily)

Ah, Jack!

MALE AIDE 2

(even more dreamily)

And Bobby!

LBJ
(mockingly)

Jesus! I hope Lady Bird's faring better

Light up on another part of the stage where Bird is being dressed. A picture of Jackie Kennedy is on the wall. A FEMALE AIDE holds makeup and a brush. She peers at Bird's face

FEMALE AIDE 1

OK, this is gonna take some work, but we got this, Mrs. President

LADY BIRD

Work?

FEMALE AIDE 2

I think if we put on two layers of base...

FEMALE AIDE 1

Great idea. Maybe we pluck the mustache

LADY BIRD

Mustache?

FEMALE AIDE 2

By the time we're done you'll look like Jackie Kennedy!

FEMLE AIDE 1 & FEMALE AIDE 2
(together)

Ah, Jackie!

Lights back up on LBJ and male aides.

MALE AIDE 1

Jack!

MALE AIDE 2

And Bobby

FEMALE AIDE 1 & FEMALE AIDE 2

Ah Jackie

LBJ

What is it with these Kennedys?

Lady Bird has joined LBJ

LADY BIRD

Well for one thing...

SONG: "THE KENNEDY BROTHER BLUES"

LADY BIRD

Their faces scream intelligence

LBJ

While mine just makes you scream
My ears are like an elephant's

LADY BIRD

Your nose, a bit extreme.

LBJ & LADY BIRD

They could both be stars in Hollywood
On the silver screen

LBJ

I could maybe be an extra
If you kept my face unseen

LADY BIRD

Well their father was well-regarded

LBJ

Mine had bills he paid too late

LADY BIRD

They both went to Harvard

LBJ

I went to Texas State

LBJ & LADY BIRD

They had yachts moored in the harbor
And a butler cleaned their plate

LBJ

I rode a mule to school like a fool
Where an outhouse was my fate
So I might as well face it
Their upper crust- I can still taste it
Gotta wash that Boston Sour down
With some Lone Star booze

LBJ & LADY BIRD

I need a remedy
For the Kennedy Brother Blues

LBJ

These aides are fucking killing me

LADY BIRD

Language dear

LBJ

Well I may say "shit" and "damn" a lot
It's true I don't mince words

LBJ (CONT'D)

And I can't compete with Camelot
And his merry band of turds.
Bird you could powder my nose
And iron my collar - it wouldn't help any.
His face is already on the half dollar
And mine wouldn't make the penny
So I might as well face it
I was just in the right place and
If I ran against them both today
I certainly would lose
I need a remedy
For the Kennedy Brother Blues

LBJ (CONT'D)

Well, now I grew up on grits
While they fed Jackie her foie gras
Spent my summers in the sticks
She'd be in the Hamptons at a spa
She can really put on the Ritz...

Lady Bird looks at a bra
disgustingly and throws it on the
floor

LADY BIRD

I can barely put on a bra

AIDES

(Looking up longingly)

Speaking of which, her tits -

MALE AIDE 2

They were just perfect!

BIRD

(Looking in the mirror
shaking her head)

Mine are blah...
So I might as well face it
All this makeup is just wasted
My feet are just too clumsy
To fit into her shoes
I need a remedy for the Jackie Kennedy
Blues

LBJ

*Now wait a minute, Bird. Fuck Jackie Kennedy.
You're the most beautiful First Lady in US
fucking history*

LADY BIRD

Not really, sweetie

LADY BIRD (CONT'D)

But maybe if I'm past beautification
I could beautify the nation
Take the billboards down
In every town
And replace them with carnations

LBJ

Your legacy will last for years to come.

LADY BIRD

They might forget my pale face
But they'll remember my green thumb!

LBJ

*Bird, you are going to make our great society
beautiful!*

LBJ & LADY BIRD

So we might as well face it
Their mystique, we can't replace it
It took our brains and brawn to get here
And together we can't lose

LADY BIRD

Those ghosts are dead to me
Don't need no remedy

AIDES

For Jackie Kennedy

LBJ & ALL

And the Kennedy brother blues...

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

(at the "kitchen", stirrping food, to the
audience)

*Doesn't it make you feel just a bit
uncomfortable when white people sing the blues?*

II-9

SCENE 9: THE BRIDGE

EXT. SELMA, ALABAMA. MARCH 1965. DAY

MARTIN LUTHER KING is on the phone
to LBJ

LBJ (PHONE)

Dr. King! Are you calling to congratulate me on my landslide election victory?

MLK

Uh... Yes Mr. President, of course, but I must let you know.

Things are still quite dire. Let me tell you what's going on

Lights up on MR. EVANS, a black man being questioned by a white poll worker as he tries to register to vote

SONG: "THE BRIDGE"

POLL WORKER

Alright, Mr. Evans... You wanna register to vote? All you gotta do is tell us the names of all the county judges here in Alabama

MR. EVANS

County judges? You kidding me?

POLL WORKER

(now smiling)

OK, here's a second chance - how many bubbles are there in a bar of soap?

MR. EVANS

I know what you're doing, sir

POLL WORKER

Alright, well you go back home and study your constitution and come back next year, OK?

Mr. Evans walks up to MLK. MLK points to Evans, who stops mid-step

MLK

*A bridge lies before us
Seems so far away*

MARCHERS

*We sing in a chorus
We march and pray*

Evans joins the chorus of marchers

MARCHERS (CONT'D)

Will no one sing for us today?

Wanna close that curtain
And know for certain
We have a voice, we have a say
Only from inside that booth
Can we stand up for the truth
And determine our tomorrows today.
Gotta vote!

SHERIFF CLARK runs in with a gun

MARCHERS (CONT'D)
(stepping back)
Sheriff Clark!

SHERIFF CLARK
Y'all can wait here all night long, just not in a pack
And you can chant and sing your songs, but stand in the back
Of the building. Don't want to scare the white children
Of Selma town. Now settle down!

MLK
Hundreds line up to register but the workers start late

POLL WORKER
We take an hour per person and a two hour break

LBJ (PHONE)
I support you Martin and your mission
(to an aide)
Let's get this shit on television

MARCHERS
Help us Governor Wallace
These troopers are upon us!

WALLACE
You want to stay safe, all right?
No more gatherings at night.

TROOPER FOWLER
Hey boy, is that a gun your carryin'?

JIMMY LEE JACKSON
No sir, we're just marching and singing.

TROOPER FOWLER
It's chaos you're bringing!

TROOPER FOWLER (CONT'D)
*Now why is this negro woman looking at me like
this?*

JIMMY LEE JACKSON
No! Stay away from my mother!

SFX: A Gunshot!

MLK

Mr. President, it's evident we need your voice
Our people must stay on this path, we have no choice

LBJ

Doctor King, I agree, but now everyone must see
The depths of this disgrace and they must see it on TV

MLK

And Selma, oh Selma is where it's gonna be.

MLK & JOHN LEWIS

We'll cross
Though the river runs so deep
We cross
Though they block us in the street
We cross
From the edge of defeat
This cause - not lost
We cross

JOHN LEWIS

To the capital Montgomery we slowly walk

MARCHER

You tell 'em, John Lewis

JOHN LEWIS

Hand in hand, side by side
As the state troopers stalk us

MARCHERS

Watch out! They're on that overpass!
They've got billy clubs and they've got tear gas

SFX: Chaotic rock music as the mob
beats them on the bridge

JOHN LEWIS

600 beaten

MARCHERS

But you're not defeatin' us

MLK

Just two days later we're marching again
But where's Governor Wallace?
Sheriff Clark and his mob will follow us
And we'll be trapped on that bridge again
This time we might just be killed by his men

LBJ

(into the phone)

George, you gotta protect them now!

WALLACE

Lyndon, it's the middle of the night. I'm sleepin' and I
wouldn't know how

LBJ

(into the phone)

Well "guvna" if you find it so hard
And you don't wanna spend the money
To save your own people from murder
Then starting tomorrow
Your national guard works for me!

WALLACE

You can't do that
That's giving the fox the keys to the hen house

LBJ

(into the phone)

Well George, it looks like my fox just fucked your roosters

WALLACE

But you can't just nationalize my state's guard

LBJ

(into the phone)

I just did!
Sleep tight!

LBJ slams down the phone.
Soldiers waving US flags enter to
protect the marchers from the
thugs that previously attacked
them. The marchers advance on the
bridge

MARCHERS

We cross
Though it might take a thousand years
We cross
Though the river's filled with tears
We cross
And when the other side appears
There is no cost
We cross

LEWIS

And we march for five days straight
And we sing and we demonstrate

MLK

And we try to wipe out the hate
From every single state

LBJ

(Interpolate LBJ contrapuntal here)

Their cause must be our cause, too.

It is all of us who must Overcome the crippling legacy of
bigotry and injustice.
And we shall overcome.

LADY BIRD

Scenes of Selma's cruelty
On every living room TV

MLK

Finally get the sympathy
We needed

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Suddenly with Alabama
People finally give a damn

JOHN LEWIS

A cry for action's made at last and heeded

CHORUS

It's our finest moment
Our finest hour

LBJ

I helped the people take back their power

ALL

And in our finest moment
Building the great society

LBJ

Maybe this will be my legacy?

SFX: Helicopter in the distance

LIGHTS

II-10

SCENE 10: THE OFFENSIVE ON TET

INT. OVAL OFFICE. JANUARY 1968. DAY

McNamara and LBJ are conferring.

SONG: "THE OFFENSIVE ON TET"

LBJ

The date is January '68
The war in Nam is looking pretty great
We've sent our men up to Khe Sanh
Nguyen Giap, their general's on the run

MCNAMARA

Today is Tet
Our men will get
Some needed rest at last I bet
The lunar new year
One of the few clear
Days when the bullets all disappear

GENERAL WESTMORELAND and Moyers
enter

LBJ

Westmoreland?

WESTMORELAND

While our soldiers in Khe Sanh
Were distracted
Theirs came to the South and suddenly attacked it

LBJ

On Tet? They attacked today?

MCNAMARA

Seems they're thrown the whole rule book away

ALL

It's an offensive on Tet
(The offensive of Tet)
It's our worst day in Vietnam
So far
And We should have never let
Our guard down
The offensive of Tet

T-t-t-t-Tet

LBJ

(to Westmoreland)

*Alright well can't we do a counteroffensive
Reverse this thing*

(to Moyers)

And how is this affecting our poll numbers?

MOYERS

It just happ

-LBJ

By the end of the day!

MOYERS

Of course

LBJ

(to Westmoreland)

Fix this! I'll be back

LBJ wanders across the stage as the lights darken until he finds himself at the ticker tape machine that reports the daily number of Vietnam-related deaths. He begins to pull on the paper. All the while, Tttt-Tet is being whispered by the chorus. There is a dark figure in the back corner behind the machine

LBJ (CONT'D)

12,727 casualties... 2,600 dead... all today.

Lights come up on the dark figure.
It's RFK

RFK
(shaking his head)

I told you

LBJ

*Oh Jesus.
If it isn't Mother Theresa*

RFK

Lyndon you gotta end this

LBJ

*You were for this war before you were against
it, Bobby.*

WESTMORELAND

Sir!

LBJ turns back to Westmoreland and heads back to the Oval Office as Westmoreland sings

WESTMORELAND (CONT'D)

*AWe just found outthey attacked 100 places
Towns and cities and most of our bases*

MCNAMARA

(looking down sheepishly)

And the embassy

LBJ

The embassy?

WESTMORELAND

*...has been attacked
They blew through the wall
But we're pushing back*

LBJ

Jesus

WESTMORELAND

And the South Vietnamese
In apparent retribution
Have taken captured officers for public execution

LBJ shakes his head. McNamara goes
to the memo machine

MCNAMARA

Sir, a cable came in today
Mass graves found in the town of Hue

LBJ

Well how many?
Don't hold back- please!

MCNAMARA

Sir, 3,000 South Vietnamese

LBJ

My god!

LBJ wrings his hands, thinking
what to do as the others sing

ALL (EXCEPT LBJ)

This offensive of Tet
We never thought it would get
So bad. Now we're beginning to regret
We had ever engaged the Viet
Kong at all
Who knew we'd fall
On Tet?

LBJ shakes his head, picks up the
red folder, and walks across the
stage while they're singing,
"TtttTet." He gets to the West
Wing and slumps down on the couch.

WALTER CRONKITE (TV)

*But it seems increasingly clear to this
reporter, that the only rational way out would
be to negotiate not as victors but as an
honorable people who lived up to their pledge
to defend-*

LBJ turns off the TV before
Cronkite can say, "democracy"

LBJ

Well happy goddamn Tet

RFK has been sitting on a swirling
chair, his back to the audience,
and now circles so he faces LBJ
and the audience

RFK
YYoulost Cronkitee.

ALL
(loudly now)
Tttttt Tet!

LIGHTS

II-11

SCENE 11: SORRY BOBBY (1)

INT. WHITE HOUSE BASEMENT. MARCH 1968. NIGHT

Lights up on LBJ in robe and
slippers, asleep, slumped against
the ticker tape machine. Red and
blue folders are at his side

LADY BIRD
Not the basement again, Lyndon. It's One a.m.

LBJ picks up the folders and
stands

LBJ
I must have fallen asleep

LADY BIRDL
*Lyndon, to Secret Service as they walk
you can't save all those brave boys if you're
exhausted*

CONNALLY
Boss. You got a call. It's the runt

LBJ
In the middle of the night?

LBJ picks up the phone

LBJ (CONT'D)
I'll be up soon, Bird

RFK
*Mr. President, I'm calling to inform you, eh,
That I will be opposing you for the Democratic
nomination for, er, the Presidency. The people,
er, you've done a great job, domestically. But
the people are not with you. You've lost them,
Lyndon*

SONG: "SORRY BOBBY"

LBJ

Sorry, Bobby, but I don't think you can handle this
Go back on the trail, hit the rail to Los Angeles
Don't you think that I cry when't you think that I cry
Each time I see a boy die
In the jungles over there?
But I've got to stay strong
Gotta pull us along
Or we just won't have a prayer

RFK

It was clear to me from the day Jack died
You would take the reins and push me aside
You could not hold back, you could not resist
You wanted me by your side while you raised your fist
Just to fight in a foreign land
But you stood where I couldn't stand

LBJ

It wasn't just provience that pulled me to the table
Power wasn't just placed into my hands.
No I wasn't born a prince but somehow I was able
To get more done in Washington than you pretty boys ever
planned...

LBJ grabs the folders as if still
deciding

RFK

Sorry, Lyndon that red folder will ruin you
Everything you got done will just rot in the sun
When the world's reviewing you
The people can't bear it, they want me to repair it.
From Springfield to Saigon
They want someone new who can stay strong and true
And their faith in you is gone

LBJ

(quietly)

Good night, Bobby, We'll talk soon

Transition lighting and music.
Lights up on present day LBJ
holding the two folders. Zephyr
has just served him the chili

ALL

Hey hey hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?

ZEPHYR

*Mr President. Um. I've been thinking. I think
I can help you with your folder question.*

LBJ
(scoffs)

*Heh. You too, Zephyr? You gotta get in line
behind Walter Cronkite and Bobby Kennedy first.
I've got my mind made up. Thanks.*

ZEPHYR

But -

LBJ
(muttering under breath)

*Bobby Kennedy. Thinks he can beat me. I'm gonna
win this war, I'm gonna win a second term by
another landslide and I'm gonna kick his ass.*

He is already moving on, looking
at cables.

LBJ (CONT'D)

*You just get me crackers for this chili, will
ya, sweetheart?*

Zephyr walks off stage unhappily

II-12

SCENE 12: LANDSLIDE LYNDON (REPRISE 3)

INT. OVAL OFFICE. THE PRESENT. NIGHT

Zephyr re-enters the scene with
Johnson's chili midway through the
scene.

MOYERS

*Boss. The latest polls are in. You're uh...
you're polling at twelve percent in Wisconsin.
For a sitting incumbent, it's not looking g-*

LBJ

Oh shut up. When have I ever listened to polls?

SONG: "LANDSLIDE LYNDON (REPRISE)"

LBJ (CONT'D)

Westmoreland, execute the plans in the red folder
I'm not gonna let even one dead soldier

Westmoreland enters

LBJ (CONT'D)

Have died in vain over there
By turning tail and running scared
We make our stand today
I'll take this all the way!

They call me Landslide Lyndon
I'm like the wind in a cold night coming through!
And Ho Chi Minh, I'm gonna have your tanned hide
And the landslide's gonna land on you.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

Sir, your crackers.

LBJ

Thank you.

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

*Listen, I really do think I could help you with
your decision, I -*

LBJ

*Godammit, Zephyr, I told you I'm busy. Your job
doens not include giving me advice on foreign
affairs -*

*Zephyr Knocks bowl of chili on to
the floor.*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

You are gonna listen to me for 6 seconds!

*LBJ truly taken aback, body leaned
away from her, scared. Frozen.*

ZEPHYR WRIGHT (CONT'D)

*(Quiet, almost lovingly tears in her
voice.)*

*You be a good boy, now Mr. President.
You listen to your daddy.*

LIGHTS

II-13

SCENE 13: THE PEN

*Zephyr tries to put the bowl back
on the tray. She comes across the
signing pen, picks it up and walks
off.*

SONG: "THE PEN (REPRISE)"

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

*This pen
I look at it now and then
Write a word with it now and again
'Cause I'll always remember when
you put it in my hand
When the signing was done.*

But it's all riots it's all tears
It's been four long years
Since you gave me this pen
It's ink has long run dry since then
As you send kids to die in a world away
The reason why, you couldn't say
And we said, "Can we fight for justice over here
While over there we just keep killing and instilling fear

She turns to LBJ

ZEPHYR WRIGHT (CONT'D)
(accusingly)

The rights that you gave me - do they get them too across the
sea?
I'm sorry LBJ, I'm throwing this pen away

II-14

SCENE 14: PRELUDE TO "SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA LOSE"

INT. WHITE HOUSE BASEMENT. LATER THAT NIGHT. NIGHT

LBJ stumbles out into the front of
the stage in his bathrobe, his
hair a mess, Cutty Sark glass in
his hand

LBJ

*How does a fucking blackout happen in the White
House? My god, it's 3 a.m. Where's that goddamn
machine? Ah yes...*

He grabs the feed and reads

LBJ (CONT'D)

*March second, 1968... what? ... Seventy three
dead... an ambush of company C near Quoi
Xuan... In 8 minutes... 48 men were gone." In
eight minutes - that's six a minute*

He pulls more ticker tape

LBJ (CONT'D)

*The names... Samuel Smith... Kyle Montgomery...
George Taylor... Lyndon - Lyndon Baines...
(slowing down)
Johnson ... Gonzales*

He puts his head in his hand and
sobs

LBJ (CONT'D)

No! Huisso, forgive me Huisso

He stumbles off stage in front of the curtain, dragging the ticker tape.

LBJ (CONT'D)

Bird?

The stage is dark as the curtain comes up. LBJ enters with a flashlight

LBJ (CONT'D)

Where's the bedroom? We're in the West Wing, dammit? Oh!

He is startled as his foot hits a body. He shines his flashlight over the stage to reveal 15 bodies, some in US army attire, some Vietnamese, lying dead on the ground. He continues to walk in his bathrobe over the bodies to exit

LBJ (CONT'D)

Oh my god

DEAD BODIES
(whispering sound collage)

Hey Hey LBJ
How many kids did you kill today?
Hey hey LBJ
Box Thirteen
Dark Money
Tower of Power
Votes for sale
How many kids did you kill today?

LBJ

Oh my god

II-15

SCENE 15 SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA LOSE

INT. WHITE HOUSE. LATER THAT NIGHT. NIGHT

SONG: "SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA LOSE"

LBJ

When did my vision
Get so unclear?
How did this mission
Drag on year after year?

I keep on finding myself wishin'
It all would disappear

With two battles lost
For every one we've won
Sometimes the bravest thing a man can do
Is turn around and run

Daddy, I can't hear your voice anymore
I need you to tell me - What am I fighting for?
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
To win the war.

You lose the first man on the hill
And soon another one is gone
Until you've sacrificed so much
That you've just got to soldier on.
And you're so stuck on your path
You can't uncross that Rubicon.

When every hill you've captured
With all the blood it cost
You wonder why you're there
You move on and it's lost

Daddy, I can't stand to hear these voices anymore
I need you to tell me - What are they fighting for?
What'll I tell my maker
When I'm standing at his door?
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
To win the war

LBJ hums as he leaves the
battlefield and returns to the
Oval Office

LBJ (CONT'D)

*Moyers! Get the networks in here. I'm getting
on TV.*

Everyone shuffles and cameras roll
in as LBJ sits at the desk

LBJ (CONT'D)

*Good evening my fellow Americans. Tonight we
stop our bombardment of North Vietnam in
exchange for substantive peace talks. I
therefore will not devote another minute to any
partisan personal goals...
Accordingly...*

LBJ (CONT'D)

I shall not seek
And will not accept
My party's nomination for another term as President of this
nation.
God bless you all.

Daddy, I can hear you like I never have before
Seems I've always run for something
Now I run for something more.
'Cause I've finally found the one thing I know is worth
fighting for
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
Sometimes you gotta lose
To win the war

LIGHTS

II-16

SCENE 16: MLK SHOT

INT. OVAL OFFICE. APRIL 4 1968. NIGHT

We see Zephyr bringing a meal to
LBJ as he sits at the resolute
reading folders. The TV is on.

As soon as Cronkite begins, we
hear the motif from Shards playing
over the news.

CRONKITE

Dr. Martin Luther King, the apostle of non-violence in the
civil rights movement, has been shot to death in Memphis,
Tennessee.

(volume lowers here as swells of SHARDS rise up)

*[Dr. King was standing on the balcony of a second-floor hotel
room tonight when, according to a companion, a shot was fired
from across the street. In the friend's words, the bullet
exploded in his face]*

As soon as the first words are
out, Zephyr falls to the floor.
Bird runs in, puts arms around
her. LBJ walks up, kneels, puts
arms around them both, as we hear
the swells of "shards" play us out
to...

LIGHTS

II-17

SCENE 17: SORRY BOBBY 2

INT. OVAL OFFICE. JUNE 6, 1968. NIGHT

RFK ENTERS THE OVAL OFFICE IN A
DREAM LIGHT

LBJ

Bobby?

During the next speech Bobby turns
from Lyndon and his words begin to
address the crowd.. the ghost
light becomes a real person ...we
hear the adoring crowd around him.

RFK

*You did the right thing, Lyndon. But I tell
you, I think whether it's between blacks and
whites, between the poor and the affluent or
over the war in Vietnam - that we can start to
work together again....*

*So thank you California for this win! and it's
on to Chicago, and --*

SFX: Gunshot

RFK is shot and falls to the
floor.

LBJ

No! No no no no no no

LIGHTS TO BLACK

Over the speakers we hear the
Shards theme as the radio
announcements taken from the day
RFK is shot

CRONKITE (TV)

*Senator Robert F. Kennedy was shot dead by an
assassin's bullet in his Los Angeles hotel.*

Shards theme plays hard here. It
segues into a kind of
thrumming/drumming as lights come
up on LBJ

SONG: "SORRY BOBBY (REPRISE)"

Come back, Bobby
I don't think I can handle this
Part of the man that I am
Was just lost in Los Angeles

LBJ

(Picks up, rockin now, he's mad)

You win Bobby, now they will love you more than me
They'll race to your side saying you'd have provided the
magic key
And if only I'd died, they'd have come to my side
and seen me as a hero too,
but I'll end up instead, between two martyrs dead,
with my legacy ripped in two.

RFK (IN A GHOST LIGHT)

They will tell the tale how Jack lit the flame.
They will laud his life.
They will sing his name.

LBJ

Will they talk about all the good I did?

RFK

No, they'll just read the names of each poor lost kid

RFK begins to recede into darkness

RFK (CONT'D)

They will say you were not my brother

LBJ

No one could be your brother.

LBJ (CONT'D)

I know we're no longer innocent, I know it was a fable,
I know that there's blood upon my hands
But, I've convinced Ho Chi Minh to talk peace at the table!

RFK

No, Nixon's stepped in, told them "wait!", so he'll win

LBJ

What? He fucked up all of my plans??!!

LBJ (CONT'D)

*My God. Some people will do anything to win an
election*

(Bobby recedes as a ghost)

LBJ (CONT'D)

Come back Bobby
Just when I'd finally abandoned this
If I passed you the mess
I knew you would finesse
and untangle this

So, I'm hoping tonight
That the songs that they write
About my poor life
Will mention the part
Where I opened my heart
And did some things right

After a beat, LBJ walks to the TV,
throws something at it just as he
did at the beginning of the play
and begins to race to the front of
the stage. Angry now.

I thought you'd glue us back again
Glue this house up
Even as mine came down
Now it's covered in loss
All this time coming down from the cross
I wanna keep marching but I don't know how
All the king's horses - where are they now?

LBJ

(legato/sad)

Come back, Bobby
I don't think I can handle this
Part of the man that I am
Was just lost in Los Angeles

LBJ (CONT'D)

(Picks up, rockin now, he's mad)

You win Bobby, now they will love you more than me
They'll race to your side saying you'd have provided the
magic key
And if only I'd died, they'd have come to my side
and seen me as a hero too,
but I'll end up instead, between two martyrs dead,
with my legacy ripped in two.

RFK (IN A GHOST LIGHT)

They will tell the tale how Jack lit the flame.
They will laud his life.
They will sing his name.

LBJ

Will they talk about all the good I did?

RFK

No, they'll just read the names of each poor lost kid

RFK begins to recede into darkness

RFK (CONT'D)

They will say you were not my brother

LBJ

No one could be your brother.

(Bobby recedes as a ghost)

LBJ (CONT'D)

Come back Bobby
Just when I'd finally abandoned this
If I passed you the mess
I knew you would finesse
and untangle this

So, I'm hoping tonight
That the songs that they write
About my poor life
Will mention the part
Where I opened my heart
And did some things right

After a beat, LBJ walks to the TV,
throws something at it just as he
did at the beginning of the play
and begins to race to the front of
the stage. Angry now.

II-18

SCENE 18: WHERE WE FLY (REPRISE)

INT. OVAL OFFICE. FALL 1968. NIGHT

LBJ, Moyers, Bird, and Zephyr
review dispatches from Vietnam

LBJ

*Well, at least I'm gonna do this one thing
right: I'm ending this war*

MOYERS

Actually sir, Hanoi's responded
They refuse to sign until you're gone and
Nixon went behind our back straight to Ho Chi Minh
He'll prolong the war to make sure that he can win

LBJ puts his head down on his arms

LBJ

*My God. Some people will do anything to win an
election*

Moyers and Zephyr exchange raised
eyebrow glances

LBJ (CONT'D)

The whole reason I gave up my power, all of my dreams, was to end this war. And Nixon took that away. They'll be working on dismantling my legacy until 2025.

An aide enters and gives him something to sign, but the pen doesn't work.

LBJ (CONT'D)

(disgusted, throw the pen)

Will someone get me a pen that works?

Zephyr retrieves the pen from the wastebasket and hands it to him.

SONG: "WHERE WE FLY (REPRISE)"

ZEPHYR WRIGHT

When you're beaten, and you're broken down
And it feels like Nixon's run you right out of town,
When the wins you've won have all been undone,
Don't forget what you started has only begun

LADY BIRD

When you're trying to picture each river you crossed
When you're crying over each teenager lost
When you're weighing the end game and all that it cost,
Will you stand for what's right or just drop down and fall?

As Bird sings, staffers start to drift onstage

LADY BIRD AND ZEPHYR

Where we fly
We fly as one
There's nowhere so high
From here to the sun

RFK

And when those selfish fears

HERMAN AND GEORGE BROWN

And those profiteers

LADY BIRD & ZEPHYR

Try to tear all you've built down

CAST

Together we'll rise

To those spacious skies
We'll whisper your name
And relight the flame
And we'll be around

LADY BIRD

With all you've done
We'll stand here as one
And we'll be around

CAST

Where we fly
We fly as one
There's nowhere so high
From here to the sun
'Cause with so much in this land
We gotta hold out our hand
And pull people up
When they're down
But don't take our word
Stand up and be heard

The cast parts and LBJ walks
through to center stage

LBJ

And I'll be around

CURTAIN CALL as How Many Kids?
plays as an instrumental reprise

THE END