

# THE FIX

An Opera in Two Acts

Score by:  
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Libretto by:  
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For: Minnesota Opera  
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620 1st Street North  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
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**SETTING**

1919 - 1921; Mostly Chicago, but also New York, Cincinnati, and South Carolina.

**CAST**

**THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX:**

"Shoeless" Joe Jackson - baritone  
Arnold "Chick" Gandil - bass-baritone  
Eddie Cicotte - tenor-baritone  
Claude "Lefty" Williams- tenor  
George "Buck" Weaver - baritone  
Oscar "Happy" Felsch - tenor  
Charles "Swede" Risberg - bass-baritone  
Fred McMullin - baritone  
Ray "Cracker" Schalk - tenor-baritone  
Charles Comiskey - bass-baritone

**THE GAMBLERS:**

Bill "Sleepy" Burns - baritone  
Arnold Rothstein - baritone  
Abe Attell - tenor

**THE CIVILIANS:**

Ring Lardner - tenor-baritone  
Hugh Fullerton - tenor  
Alfred Austrian, Esq. - bass  
Judge Kenesaw "Mountain" Landis - bass  
Katie Jackson (married to Joe)- soprano

**Principals:** Joe Jackson, Katie Jackson, Lefty Williams, Chick Gandil, Ring Lardner, Hugh Fullerton, Charles Comiskey, Alfred Austrian, Abe Attell, Sleepy Bill Burns.

**SCENE 1**

*(1919, Greenville South Carolina; a porch outside a modest bungalow: the home of "SHOELESS" JOE JACKSON, who is talking to ALFRED AUSTRIAN, a lawyer for the Chicago White Sox; Joe is a lanky, but fit athlete with a lazy and slow southern drawl, hang-dog face and pitcher ears; he wears comfortable work clothes; Alfred looks out of place in his three piece suit and office ways. He clutches a briefcase.)*

**JOE**

I don't know.

**AUSTRIAN**

Course you do, Joe.  
All I need is  
Your John Hancock,  
We're good to go,  
And I can catch my train.

**JOE**

But Katie--

**AUSTRIAN**

What Katie?

**JOE**

Nothin'  
Just wished she was here.

**AUSTRIAN**

Your wife isn't you,  
Is she?  
Is she, Joe?

**JOE**

No--

**AUSTRIAN**

Your wife,  
She tell you what to do?

**JOE**

Don't yours?

**AUSTRIAN**

Not even if I was married.  
This is business, Joe.  
Train won't wait.  
I know you don't  
Know how to read,  
But the numbers make sense.

**JOE**

You're selling me short.  
Players with half my stats,  
Get twice as much.

**AUSTRIAN**

That's business, Joe.  
Mr. Comiskey,  
Knows your talents.  
You're a valued member  
Of the White Sox family.  
You'll get a bonus  
If you us  
The World Series.

**JOE**

And that's wrote down?

**AUSTRIAN**

Don't you trust me, Joe?  
*(Joe hesitates.)*

**JOE**

And if I don't sign?

**AUSTRIAN**

Then you won't play.  
Sorry.  
Them's the rules.  
*(Sidles up to him.)*  
No one likes a hold out, Joe.  
No one likes a selfish lout.  
You don't want to let your teammates down,  
Do you?  
Think of the kids.  
Think of your fans.  
*(Proffers the contract.)*  
It's now or never, Joe.  
*(Joe stares at the paper, not knowing what to do.)*  
I've got to run.  
*(Joe stares some more.)*  
Joe...

**JOE**

Where do I sign?

**AUSTRIAN**

The dotted line.  
*(Joe signs)*  
It's a fair deal,  
You won't regret it.  
This year I know it,  
Sox'll win the Pennant.  
*(Katie Jackson, Joe's wife, enters with a sack of groceries.)*

Katie--

**JOE**

Afternoon, Miss.

**AUSTRIAN**

Missus.

**KATIE**

**AUSTRIAN**

I'm Alfred, I--

**KATIE**

Know who you are, Mr. Austrian.  
I saw the taxi--

**AUSTRIAN**

Hate to run,  
But--

**JOE**

Train to catch.  
*(Austrian starts to exit.)*

**KATIE**

What's going on?

**AUSTRIAN**

Business, dear.  
Just business.  
Good day.  
*(And he's gone; Katie glares at Joe.)*

**KATIE**

Joe--

**JOE**

I know.

**KATIE**

*(The contract.)*  
Is that your contract?  
Joe--

**JOE**

Well, where the hell you been?  
*(Snatches it from him.)*

**KATIE**

*(Reading.)*  
Of all the nerve.  
That man, that cheat,  
That slippery old eel.

**JOE**

He said-- he promised  
It was a fair deal.

**KATIE**

Of all the nerve.  
This is not what we talked about.

**JOE**

He said--  
He promised--

**KATIE**

What?  
If it's not in writing--  
It's just not so.

**JOE**

He said--

**KATIE**

And here--  
Here's a clause  
They can fire you--

**JOE**

No!

**KATIE**

They can.  
On a whim.  
On two weeks notice.

**JOE**

He played me for a sucker.

**KATIE**

*(Joe takes the contract from her and looks  
at it, helpless.)*

Oh, Joe,  
You trust in people more than you should.  
Oh, Joe,  
It's your blind spot,  
Your flaw.  
It's also what makes you good  
It's why I love you so.  
But your faith in others, Joe,  
Is your Waterloo.

**JOE**

My what?

**JOE**

Please don't be mad at  
me, Katie.

I know my business.

**KATIE (CONT'D)**

That Mister Comiskey.

I'd like to strangle  
him, I would.

**KATIE (CONT'D)**

I'm not so sure.

**JOE**

I will make it up to you.  
I'll win the World Series.

**KATIE**

You can't do that on your own.

**KATIE (CONT'D)**

You're only one man.  
You'll do what you can,  
But in the end  
I love you, Joe  
More than you know.

**JOE**

If I have to,  
I will.  
Two things I know:  
I love you, Katie,  
More than anything.

**JOE (CONT'D)**

I will make it up to you.  
I promise.  
The money we get from  
The Series  
Will more than make up for  
Comiskey's dirty pool.

*(They embrace as lights change to...)*

**SCENE 2a**

*(COMISKEY PARK, THE WHITE SOX LOCKER ROOM. PLAYERS bustle about, celebrating, drinking beer, changing into street clothes, talking to REPORTERS, among them wide-eyed reporters: gadfly RING LARDNER, and the supreme skeptic HUGH FULLERTON. Both weave in and out of White Sox Players, searching for the perfect quote; they include Joe, ace Pitcher EDDIE CICOTTE, intimidating Shortstop CHARLES "SWEDE" RISEBERG, ex-boxer First Baseman ARNOLD "CHICK" GANDIL, affable southpaw pitcher CLAUDE "LEFTY" WILLIAMS, third baseman GEORGE "BUCK" WEAVER, center fielder OSCAR "HAPPY" FELSCH, utility infielder FRED MCMULLIN, and irascible Catcher RAY "CRACKER" SCHALK.)*

**BALLPLAYERS**

Just another game  
No, not just any game  
We're going to the Series, Boys.  
Feels like old times.

**HAPPY**

I'm forever blowing bubbles.

**HAPPY/EDDIE**

Blowing bubbles in the air.  
They fly so high,  
Nearly reach the sky...

**SWEDE**

*(Tossing beer bottles to Players.)*

One for you,  
And two for me.

**BUCK**

I'll take one.

**CHICK**

Pass one over here.

**HAPPY/EDDIE/BUCK/CHICK**

I'm dreaming dreams

**JOE**

Come on, Joe!

**HAPPY/EDDIE/BUCK/CHICK**

I'm scheming schemes!  
I'm building castles high!

**JOE**

No thanks.

**CHICK**

Couldn't a done it without you, Joe.

**JOE**

Oh, I don't know.

**CHICK**

Don't be such a hay seed.  
A year like you had?  
I'd give my right arm --

**LEFTY**

No great loss.  
*(A few of the Players chuckle.)*

**CHICK**

That hands me a laugh.

**HAPPY**

Lefty'd be happy to give his left arm.

**LEFTY**

Happy'd be sad,  
If he wasn't so goddam happy all the time.  
*(on the other side of the locker room...)*

**HUGH**

Good game, Swede.

**SWEDE**

Get lost--

**HUGH**

Why so sour?

**SWEDE**

Can't you reporters  
Give it a rest?

**HAPPY**

We're celebratin' here.

**HUGH**

Just one quote.  
*(Chick steps in.)*

**CHICK**

How's this:  
"If it wasn't for the ace  
On first base,  
We woulda lost."

**HUGH**

*(Scribbling.)*  
Said the modest First Baseman.

**CHICK**

Here's your headline:  
"Skinflint Comiskey  
Gets pennant  
At rock bottom prices".

**HUGH**

Now that they won't print.

**SWEDE**

Why the hell not?

**HUGH**

The man's admired.

**RING**

He's the savior of baseball.

**SWEDE/CHICK**

Not by a long shot.  
What a crook!

**CHICK**

*(Joining.)*  
 Try working peanuts  
 And see how you feel.

**HUGH**

Ingrates.

**RING**

Curmudgeon.

**HUGH**

Getting paid to play baseball,  
 You call that a job?

**CHICK**

Don't like what you do?

**HUGH**

Not the point, my dear boy.

**HAPPY**

I'm forever blowing bubbles

**ALL PLAYERS**

Bubbles!  
 Pretty bubbles in the air

**RING**

How's it feel, Joe,  
 Going back to the show?

**JOE**

I'll tell you  
 After we won.

**RING**

This team is the best  
 In all my years,  
 I've never seen better

**HUGH**

Watch it, Ring.  
 Don't jinx it.

**RING**

Relax, you old putz.  
 We're celebratin', boys!

**ALL PLAYERS**

I'm forever blowing  
 bubbles  
 Bubbles!  
 Pretty bubbles in the  
 air  
 They fly so high  
 Nearly reach the sky  
 Then like my dreams  
 They fade and die.

**HUGH**

I'll bet you a hundred,  
 Sox take it in six.

**RING**

I'm not a betting man, Hugh.  
 And anyway--

**CRACKER**

That's a sucker bet--

**RING**

That's right, Cracker!

**CRACKER**

Sox can't win,  
 'Less Joe drops dead,  
 And God drops everything else.

*(One by one, all the Players join in:)*

**ALL**

Fortune's always hiding,  
 I've looked everywhere,  
 I'm forever blowing bubbles,  
 Pretty bubbles in the air.

*(While they are singing, Lefty buttonholes  
 Joe and leads him out into the HALLWAY.)*

**SCENE 2b****LEFTY**

You believe those scribblers?  
 Those blood-sucking leeches?

**JOE**

Ring is alright.  
 I always liked him.

**LEFTY**

Get wise, Joe.  
 That whole bunch,  
 Carrying water for that cheapskate,  
 Comiskey.  
 He's got the whole press  
 Wrapped round  
 His skin flint little pinky.  
 Bastard owes me  
 Twenty-five Gs --

**JOE**

Oh.

**LEFTY**

Bonus from last year.

**JOE**

I didn't know.

**LEFTY**

Thirty games I won for him.

**JOE**

I thought you was paid.

**LEFTY**

No.

**JOE**

Oh.

**LEFTY**

Bastard  
He owes me.  
And I can't say a damn thing,  
If I do,  
I get canned,  
And no other team would take me.

*(Pulls him further from the Locker Room door.)*

Did Chick tell you his plan?  
Did he pull you aside?

**JOE**

No.

**LEFTY**

"A chance to make a lotta dough."

**JOE**

Oh?  
How?

**LEFTY**

That's what he said.  
Comiskey and Austrian  
Treat us like dirt.  
You're one of the greatest,  
And they pay you slave wages.

**JOE**

What's that mean, "A chance to make a lotta dough"?

**LEFTY**

Sh!

*(Voices waft in from the Locker Room.)*

**ALL**

Fortune's always hiding

**LEFTY**

Let's walk  
 We'll talk  
 A way to get back  
 At that Old Bastard, Commy  
 Before it's too late.  
 He owes me.

*(Lefty leads Joe away and off.)*

**ALL**

Fortune's always hiding  
 I've looked everywhere,  
 I'm forever blowing bubbles,  
 Pretty bubbles in the air.  
 I'm forever blowing bubbles,  
 Pretty bubbles in the air.

*(This "song" segues seamlessly into a JAZZ  
 INTERLUDE: lights shift, and the Locker  
 Room is replaced by...)*

**SCENE 3**

*(... a NEW YORK NIGHT CLUB. A CHORUS OF  
 FEMALE DANCERS, scantily dressed, perform  
 the end of a floor show. The transition  
 settles on a smattering of tables and  
 seated PATRONS watching the show. At one  
 of these, we find ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN,  
 meticulously dressed in the height of  
 fashion, and DOT KING, a young show girl  
 and Rothstein's mistress; a LARGE  
 BODYGUARD is busy keeping "SLEEPY" BILL  
 BURNS" from Rothstein's table; Sleepy,  
 dressed in rumbled clothes, has the  
 demeanor of a sad clown -- NOTE: The  
 floor show may continue upstage and in a  
 dim light.)*

**SLEEPY**

Five minutes, please!  
 That's all I ask.

**BODYGUARD**

Mr. Rothstein is busy.

**SLEEPY**

A proposition,  
 A simple request.

**BODYGUARD**

You and half Manhattan.  
*(A short, svelte, firecracker of a man,  
 ABE ATTELL, moves in.)*

**ABE**

What the hell's goin' on here?

**BODYGUARD**

This son of a bitch,  
Refuses to blow.

**ABE**

Scram,  
Or I'll put you  
On yer keister, buster.

**SLEEPY**

You and whose army?

**BODYGUARD**

Whoa.  
You don't now who yer dealing with, Mister.  
Abe Attell here's  
A boxer,  
A tree time champeen.

**SLEEPY**

Of what?  
Dwarfs everywhere?  
*(Abe slaps him across the face.)*  
Ow!  
*(Rothstein stands and intervenes.)*

**ROTHSTEIN**

Abe, do you mind?  
We're trying to watch.

**ABE**

*(Walking out Sleepy.)*  
Sorry, Mr. Rothstein.  
*(Rothstein walks away.)*

**SLEEPY**

Mister Rothstein, sir.  
Can I have a word?  
Sport Sullivan sent me!  
*(Rothstein stops in his tracks.)*

**ROTHSTEIN**

How d'you know him?

**SLEEPY**

An acquaintance of mine.  
Monicker's  
Sleepy,  
Sleepy Bill Burns.  
Nice to meetcha.  
I'm a ball player --  
Or was.  
But now I'm in business...  
Of sorts.

**ROTHSTEIN**

Meaning?

**SLEEPY**

I never met a bet I didn't like.

**ROTHSTEIN**

So talk to me, mister.

Whadaya got?

Make it quick.

*(Sleepy makes sure no one is within  
earshot.)*

**SLEEPY**

The fix is on.

**ROTHSTEIN**

What fix?

**SLEEPY**

The Sox throw the Series.

**BODYGUARD**

Can't be.

**ROTHSTEIN**

What a bunch of malarkey.

They're heavily favored.

**SLEEPY**

Which is why...

You see,

If they lose--

**ABE**

Someone's rakin' in green.

**SLEEPY**

That's right.

**ROTHSTEIN**

Shut up, Abe.

*(Sidling up to Sleepy.)*

I've heard of games thrown,

But not a whole World Series.

How's that happen?

**SLEEPY**

Chick Gandil,

First basemen.

He's got it all figured out.

Details to come later,

When he sees the dough.

**ROTHSTEIN**

How much?

**SLEEPY**

Hundred g's.

**ROTHSTEIN**

That's a lot. And all this from me?

**SLEEPY**

No one comes close  
Who has that kind a cabbage.

**BODYGUARD**

Bunch a bunk,  
You ask me.

**SLEEPY**

They lose, you win big.

**ROTHSTEIN**

And so does every other schmuck.  
And on my dime.

**SLEEPY**

But you're first to know.  
The odds go up,  
The longer you wait.  
*(Long pause as Rothstein mulls this over.)*

**ROTHSTEIN**

No.

**SLEEPY**

But --

**ROTHSTEIN**

Too risky.  
Get lost.

*(To Abe.)*

Buy him a drink.  
*(He goes back to his table; Bodyguard follows him.)*

**ABE**

Sorry I slapped you, pal.  
Whaddya want?

**SLEEPY**

I ain't thirsty.

**ABE**

Come on now, boyo.  
Prohibition's just 'round the corner.  
You never know  
When the next one  
Will be your last.  
*(He gestures a COCKTAIL WAITRESS.)*  
Sweetheart!  
Two whiskeys!

**SLEEPY**

Have you ever had a sure thing  
Slip through your fingers?

**ABE**

Who hasn't, Pal.  
But I make my own luck.  
*(He pulls him to one side.)*  
And you could too.

**SLEEPY**

Whaddya mean?

**ABE**

So,  
If you pay the Players,  
The fix is on?

**SLEEPY**

But I don't got the cash.

**ABE**

You know that,  
And I know that,  
But the Players?  
*(Winks.)*  
What do they know?  
*(The Waitress returns with their drinks;  
Abe hands Sleepy his, and raises his  
glass; they toast, and the lights change;  
A BRIEF JAZZ INTERLUDE, takes us to... )*

**SCENE 4a**

*(A CHICAGO HOTEL ROOM, afternoon; White  
Sox Players Joe, Lefty, Buck, Eddie,  
Happy, Swede, Buck and Eddie; some smoke  
cigars or cigarettes; others simply  
listen; the atmosphere is pensive and  
tense.)*

**BUCK**

Where's the money?

**CHICK**

Money's coming.  
*(Long pause.)*

**BUCK**

I don't like it fellas.  
I been played for a rube before,  
Once bitten,  
Twice shy.

**CHICK**

And three times a fool.

**BUCK**

Who you calling a fool?

**CHICK**

Anyone who don't know  
Easy money  
When they see it?

**BUCK**

Another thing, boys --  
How's it all work?  
There's only eight of us.

**FRED**

We got two of our best pitchers.

**CHICK**

A righty *and* a lefty.

**FRED**

And Joe.  
Ain't that right, Joe?

**CHICK**

Not to mention me,  
And Swede.  
Practically the whole starting line-up.

**BUCK**

Where's Cracker?

**FRED**

*(Disdain:)*  
Cracker.

**CHICK**

Cracker,  
That sap,  
That boy scout.  
Never liked us anyhow.

**CHICK**

Come on, Buck.  
You in or out?  
You out,  
Then blow.

**BUCK**

I'm out.  
I'll blow

**CHICK**

Fine.  
Go.  
We don't need you.  
Just stinking up the joint.  
*(Buck starts to go; he turns.)*

**BUCK**

Am I the only one  
 Sees this is bust?  
                   *(No one answers.)*  
 Sorry boys.  
 I got a wife and kids.  
                   *(He exits.)*

**CHICK**

Last I checked,  
 We all got families.

**FRED**

Goddam yeller.

**CHICK**

Time to fight fire with fire.  
 Ain't a man in this room  
 Ain't been stiffed by old Commy.  
 All the bastard cares about's  
 His money.

**FRED**

Time we get ours.

**EDDIE**

Where's this dough,  
 You been talking about?

**HAPPY**

Buck had a point.

**FRED**

Money's out on bets.

**CHICK**

The less you know,  
 The better y'all be.

**FRED**

This is how it works.

**CHICK**

They bet against us,  
 They pay us when we lose.

**FRED**

A sure thing.

**CHICK**

What do you say  
 We all take a vote?

**FRED**

A show of hands--

**CHICK**

No.  
 No!  
 Go round the room.  
 Person by person.  
 Then we'll know  
 Who is in,  
 Who is out.  
 And why.  
 One last thing, Boys:  
 It's an all or nothin' deal,  
 All in or all out.  
 There's no other way--  
 Look.  
 Comiskey won't trust us,  
 But we got each other,  
 Ain't that right?  
 All seven in this room,  
 Or it ain't gonna work.  
                   *(A pause, as the Players size each other  
                   up.)*  
 Fred, you start.

**FRED**

I'm in.

**CHICK**

Big surprise.  
 Swede?

**SWEDE**

In.  
                   *(The votes proceed on down the line...)*

**HAPPY**

Baby needs a new pair of shoes.

**LEFTY**

Sure, why not?

**CHICK**

Joe?  
                   *(All eyes are on him; the LIGHTS SHIFT to  
                   isolate Joe.)*

**JOE**

Katie, you say:  
 "You trust in people more than you should.  
 It's your blind spot,  
 Your flaw.  
 It's what makes you good."  
 It's why she loves me so.  
 Katie, I wish I weren't made that way.  
 I can't let the boys down.  
                   *(LIGHTS RESTORE; Joe looks at the others.)*

I'm in.  
                   *(There's no celebratory exclamation;  
                   (MORE)*

*only a silent moment in which all feel  
the gravity of what they have just agreed  
to do.)*

**CHICK**

Good.  
It's done.

**FRED**

We best get back to the ball park.  
*(The Players rise to leave. Lefty  
approaches Joe. Aside:)*

**LEFTY**

You-- you okay?

**JOE**

*(Lying)*  
Never better.  
*(They exit; all except Eddie, Chick and  
Fred; Eddie Closes the door.)*

**CHICK**

What's up?  
Something wrong?

**EDDIE**

I ain't throwing no game,  
'Less I first see some dough.

**CHICK**

You agreed!

**EDDIE**

Maybe so,  
But I ain't no sucker.

**FRED**

Aw hell!  
Screw him, Chick.

**CHICK**

We can't,  
And he knows it.  
He's pitching game one.

**EDDIE**

Them's my conditions.  
Take 'em or leave 'em.  
*(He starts to leave.)*

**CHICK**

Wait.  
*(Eddie stops.)*  
You'll get you yer goddam money.  
*(Eddie nods, then leaves; Chick walks to  
an ADJOINING ROOM DOOR.)*

**FRED**

What now?

**CHICK**

Keep still, will ya?  
And shut yer yapper.  
While I talk to these wise-guys.  
*(He knocks on the door; It opens -- in  
walks Abe and Sleepy.)*

**ABE**

Well, how'd it all go, Boys?

**CHICK**

We got problems.

**SLEEPY**

How's that?

**FRED**

Weaver's out.

**CHICK**

Not that.  
Shut up.  
Eddie Cicotte won't  
Take the fall  
'Less he's paid up front.

**SLEEPY**

The money's all out on bets.

**CHICK**

I told them,  
But Eddie's smarter than the rest.  
Maybe smarter than Fred and me.

**ABE**

I told you, Sleepy.  
I said this would happen?

**SLEEPY**

You did, you did.  
And now we must take action.  
*(Abe reaches into his breast pocket --  
Chick and Fred flinch; Abe scoffs, then  
pulls out an envelope; He hands it to  
Chick.)*

**CHICK**

What's this?

**ABE**

Insurance.

**SLEEPY**

Others might call it twenty Gs.

**FRED**

Holy cripes.

**CHICK**

But-- you said--

**ABE**

I say a lot of things.  
Compliments of Mr. Rothstein.  
Give half this to Cicotte,  
The other to Jackson.

**CHICK**

Why him?

**ABE**

We got to be sure.  
Shoeless Joe Jackson,  
Playing top notch?  
Will lessen the chances,  
This thing goes  
According to plan.

**FRED**

But what about us?

**ABE**

You'll get yours--

**SLEEPY**

Later on.  
Like we said.

**ABE**

Can I count on you boys?

**CHICK**

Course you can.

**SLEEPY**

Good luck tomorrow --  
Or should I say bad?  
*(He laughs.)*

**ABE**

Regular clown,  
This one.  
*(They're at the door.)*  
Don't let us down.  
*(They leave by way of the front door.)*

**FRED**

Can you believe it?  
They was flush all along.

**CHICK**

Here's half.

*(Hands over half the bills to Fred.)*

Give that to Eddie.

Tell him hit the first batter.

**FRED**

Why?

**CHICK**

A sign that he's in,

And the fix is on.

**FRED**

What about Joe?

**CHICK**

He'll do what he's told.

*(Splits the remaining cash.)*

Five for you,

Five for me.

Mum's the word.

**FRED**

I won't tell a soul.

**SCENE 5***(Lights shift to Cincinnati's REDLAND FIELD PRESS BOX; hints of a pre-game brass band fanfare -- or even the STAR SPANGLED BANNER -- OFF; Ring and Hugh sit among other REPORTERS with typewriters, all readying themselves for the first game of the World Series.)***RING**

What's the line, Hugh?

**HUGH**

I wonder what's up.

The Sox were a sure thing.

Now it's even money.

**RING**

Curious, that.

**HUGH**

Something's fishy.

**RING**

Rumors all over town

The Sox will throw the Series.

**HUGH**

You believe 'em?

**RING**

All bunk!  
Just rumors.  
I'll bet you a Benjamin  
Sox take it in six.

**HUGH**

Ring, you're not a gambling man.

**RING**

That's how sure  
I am  
My boys  
Are on the up and up.

**HUGH**

Something's wrong,  
I can smell it.  
That's all I'll say.

**RING**

Sox take it in six,  
Put your money  
Where your nose is.

**HUGH**

What the hell.  
You're on.

*(They shake on it: on stage, in another light -- perhaps surrounding Hugh and Ring -- a few players warm up, throwing, batting, etc.; Eddie, warming up, and Joe, practicing his swing, are featured.)*

**RING**

I love this team, Hugh.

**HUGH**

I know you do.  
Look, Cicotte's  
On the mound,  
Warming up.

**RING**

Give me eight stooges  
And one Joe Jackson  
Any day,  
Any team  
Can't lose.

**HUGH**

One hell of a player,  
I'll grant you that.

**RING**

Much more, my friend,  
Much, much more.  
An immortal.

**(MORE)**

He does it all:  
 He hits,  
 He fields,  
 He steals.  
 A country bumpkin  
 Straight from the sticks,  
 Never read a book,  
 Never will.  
 But we will write  
 The tale of Joe Jackson,  
 From now  
 Till the end of all time.  
 Such grace,  
 Such cunning,  
 Such beauty in motion.  
 What a piece of work, this man,  
 How perfect every season.  
 How infinite, his abilities,  
 And yet,  
 Up here?  
 Without an once of reason.

**HUGH**

Get off your high horse--

**RING**

Think of it, Hugh.  
 A boy from squalor,  
 Makes it big,  
 On nothing short of  
 A dream,  
 What God gave him.  
 The ideal in  
 A many a boy's eye--

**HUGH**

And not a few adult kids either--

**RING**

Of what we all dream to be:  
 Perfection.  
 A God living on Earth.

**HUGH**

And yet all too human.

**UMPIRE (O.S.)**

(*Spoken.*)  
 Batter up!

**HUGH**

From what I hear.

**RING**

Killjoy.

**HUGH**

Pollyanna.

**RING**

Just a fan, Hugh.

**HUGH**

Rose colored glasses.

*(We hear the CROWD swell; on one side of the stage, a CINCINNATI RED PLAYER strolls up to home plate, puts up his bat, and readies for a pitch. Eddie, on the other side of the stage, gets ready to pitch; NOTE: both Players are face out towards the audience in "Two Faces East" fashion.)*

Lead off batter's up!

**RING**

Steady Eddie, ready to roll.

This boy can't miss, Hugh.

*(Eddie pitches; the Reds Player instantly falls to the ground, hit by the pitch. The Crowd "Ooo's"; Red and Hugh look at one another.)*

**HUGH**

Unless of course he's trying to.

*(LIGHTS SHIFT to... )*

**SCENE 6**

*(The HALLWAY underneath Comiskey Park; Joe paces, waits for Lefty, who emerges from the Locker Room; both are in street clothes -- and looking very dapper.)*

**JOE**

Lefty.

**LEFTY**

Joe.

I thought you'd gone.

**JOE**

Is the locker room empty?

**LEFTY**

Yup.

What is up?

**JOE**

I can't do this no more.

**LEFTY**

Do what?

**JOE**

You know what.

We're down three games to one.

**LEFTY**

But you're having a great series.

**JOE**

It's hard  
To play bad.

**LEFTY**

Not for me.  
Didn't you see?

**JOE**

It's eating me up.  
I can't sleep,  
I can't eat.  
All this playing to lose,  
I can't take no more.

**LEFTY**

I know how you feel,  
But there's nothing to do.  
The deed has been done.  
We been paid to lose.

**JOE**

What pay?

**LEFTY**

That's true.

**JOE**

We got nothing so far.  
Is the money still out on bets?  
We been played for the fool,  
And that's the truth.

**LEFTY**

So what do we do?

**JOE**

We play to win--  
To win!

**LEFTY**

Play to win.

**JOE**

What can we lose?

**LEFTY**

Play to win!

**JOE**

Agreed!

**JOE/LEFTY**

What can we lose?  
Play to win.

**LEFTY**

Leave us tell  
The other fellas.

**JOE**

And see who follows.  
*(They exit; A JAZZ INTERLUDE takes us  
to...)*

**SCENE 7a**

*(... a subterranean JAZZ CLUB on Chicago's  
Near North Side; a JAZZ COMBO plays as  
REVELERS, GAMBLERS, PROSTITUTES, and  
BALLPLAYERS drink, cavort pour themselves  
into the night's celebration.)*

**SWEDE**

Bartender!  
Over here,  
Another bucket a beer!

**HAPPY**

Better make it two--  
Two wins in a row!

**SWEDE**

Put it there, Pal.  
Nice catch in the fourth.

**HAPPY**

Couldn'a done it without you boys.  
*(Eddie, a GIRL on his arm, interrupts.)*

**FRED**

You boys  
Getting more beer?  
We're dying of thirst over there.

**HAPPY**

Well, well, what have we here?

**FRED**

What's your name, doll?  
I forget.

**BERNICE**

Bernice, you dumb ox.  
You boys ballplayers too?

**FRED**

She didn't even know the Series was going on.

**BERNICE**

I got better ways to spend my time.

*(Purring.)*

But if baseball means hanging

With the likes a you...

*(Sleepy and Abe emerge from the crowd and make a bee-line for Fred.)*

**SLEEPY**

Fred!

There you are!

**ABE**

We been looking all over.

*(The BARTENDER hands over a couple buckets of beer; Swede and Happy take one a piece.)*

**SWEDE**

'Scuse me, Fellas.

It's starting to stink over here.

**SLEEPY**

Boys, what gives?

**ABE**

Today's the day

You were s'posed to lose.

**HAPPY**

I must've forgot.

**ABE**

Listen here, wise-ass--

**HAPPY**

My friends call me Happy.

**ABE**

We had an agreement.

**HAPPY**

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

*(Chick joins them.)*

**CHICK**

*(Sarcastic.)*

Hiya there, Sleepy.

Mr. Attell.

You fellas in town for the game?

*(Abe take Chick up by the scruff of the neck.)*

**ABE**

Don't give me that bull,

You redneck.

You cheat!

**SLEEPY**

Let's everyone calm down.  
 Now Abe, let him go.  
 Chick, we had a deal.

**ABE**

You were supposed to have lost  
 The Series by now.  
 Instead you're  
 On the verge  
 Of winning it all.

**CHICK**

Those losses you ordered?  
 They're all out of bets.  
*(The Players laugh uproariously; in the  
 bg, Lefty, Joe and Katie enter the bar.)*

**ABE**

We'll get you your money.

**CHICK**

*(Sarcastic.)*  
 I'm sure that you will.

**SLEEPY**

I give you my word.

**CHICK**

Get lost.

**FRED**

Tell him, Chick!

**CHICK**

*(To All.)*  
 For the record,  
 I never saw these two  
 Before in my life.

**FRED**

Me too!

**HAPPY**

Me three!

**CHICK**

Now if you'll excuse me,  
 You gutter scum,  
 We have some celebratin' to do.  
*(Abe grabs Chick and pulls back for a  
 punch when Swede locks his arms from  
 behind; Chick punches Abe in the face; he  
 falls to the ground.)*

**SWEDE**

Watch it there, Pal.  
 Two against seven  
 Ain't very good odds.  
*(The Players laugh and drift back into the crowd.)*

**SLEEPY**

*(Apart.)*  
 Are you crazy?

**ABE**

Rothstein will kill us  
 If these guys don't play ball.

**SLEEPY**

Actually, the opposite's true.  
*(Sotto Voce to Abe -- hands Abe a handkerchief.)*  
 Abe, you're bleeding.  
 Go fix it.  
*(The Jazz Combo takes over as Abe exits to a rest room; Sleepy bellies up to the bar; Joe and Katie come up beside him -- Joe signals to the bartender.)*  
 You're Shoeless Joe Jackson. That your girl?

**JOE**

My wife.

**KATIE**

How'd you do?

**SLEEPY**

Been better, thanks.  
 I picked the Reds  
 To win the Series.

**JOE**

That's a sucker bet.

**SLEEPY**

Maybe so.  
 My bad luck is killing me.  
 Literally.  
*(Joe kisses Katie passionately.)*  
 You two sure are sweet on each other.

**KATIE**

Everything's rosy  
 When you win.

**SLEEPY**

No truer words.  
 In this country?  
 Losing's a sin.  
*(The Bartender hands Joe and Katie drinks.)*

**KATIE**

No hard feelings, Mister,  
But I hope you lose your bet.  
*(Joe and Katie move into the crowd.)*

**SLEEPY**

Bartender, bring me the phone.  
*(Abe re-enters.)*

**ABE**

You ready to beat it?

**SLEEPY**

No.  
I got an idea.  
*(Bartender brings Sleepy a phone; Sleepy dials.)*  
I know a guy,  
Knows a guy,  
Can get this job done.  
*(The Jazz Combo takes over and the scene shifts to...)*

**SCENE 7b**

*(OUTSIDE THE JAZZ CLUB, a couple hours later. Katie and Joe stand on the curb looking for a cab; OTHER PATRONS periodically leave or go into the bar.)*

**KATIE**

You're gonna win, Joe Jackson.  
Something big's going to happen.  
I can feel it in my bones.  
*(A rather large man in a fedora and top coat, appears upstage and lingers.)*

**JOE**

Then next year--

**KATIE**

Next year  
We'll be flush.  
But we don't need much.  
Just us.

**JOE**

We need "fair."  
We need justice.  
We don't need much,  
'Cause I got you.

**KATIE**

And I got you.

**JOE/KATE**

Just us.  
 Next year  
 We'll be flush.  
 But we don't need much.  
 Just us.  
*(The Large Man, SIDNEY STAJER, steps down to them.)*

**SID**

You're Joe Jackson.

**JOE**

You want a autograph?

**SID**

No.  
 A word  
 Alone.

**KATIE**

We're on our way home.  
*(Man steps in, menacingly.)*

**SID**

A business matter  
 Won't take too long.  
*(In the bg, Lefty and Happy leave the bar.)*

**HAPPY**

Joe!  
 Katie!

**KATIE**

Pardon me.  
*(Katie moves up to Lefty and Happy.)*

**JOE**

Look, Mister --

**SID**

I brung you a message.  
 Short and sweet.  
 Lose the Series,  
 Or your wife pays.  
 With her life.  
*(Sid walks off into the darkness; Katie rejoins Joe.)*

**KATIE**

Joe.  
 We can grab a cab together--

**JOE**

No.  
 You go.

**(MORE)**

I gotta talk to Lefty.  
Happy, get Katie home safe.

**KATIE**

What's going on?

**JOE**

Just do what I say!

**KATIE**

Is everything alright?

**JOE**

Everything's Jake,  
If you go now.

*(Looks her in the eye.)*

Please, Katie.

I'm right behind you.

*(They kiss; Happy and Katie go off to find  
a cab.)*

**LEFTY**

What gives?

**JOE**

They said they're gonna kill Katie.

**LEFTY**

What?

Who?

**JOE**

I don't know.

Just now.

Some guy.

He says if we don't lose the Series,  
They're gonna hurt Katie.

Oh Jesus, Lefty,

What the hell did I do?

**LEFTY**

Calm down, Joe.

**JOE**

I can't lose on my own,  
Even if I tried.

**LEFTY**

But I can, Joe.

I'm on the mound tomorrow.

We lose,

It's over.

**JOE**

No Lefty,

You can't.

And I wouldn't ask you.

**JOE**

It's all my fault.  
 If I hadn't said yes,  
 I wouldn't be in this  
 fix.  
 It's all my fault.  
 Oh God, what have I  
 done?  
 It's all my fault.

**LEFTY**

It's not your fault.  
 There's no other way.  
 Don't you see?  
 I'm the one.  
 It's all my fault.  
 I got you into this.  
 It's all my fault.

**LEFTY**

Joe!  
 It's not your fault.  
 I'll make this right.  
*(Lights shift and we move to...)*

**SCENE 8**

*(Orchestral transition to Game 8, VARIOUS  
 LOCALES AROUND COMISKEY FIELD: THE PRESS  
 BOX, where we find Ring and Hugh.)*

**RING**

What did I tell you, Hugh?  
 The Sox are on the up and up.

**HUGH**

We'll see.  
 The opera ain't over--

**RING**

Till Joe Jackson swings.  
*(ON THE THIRD BASE LINE, Katie reaches  
 over the box seat fence and kisses Joe.)*

**KATIE**

For luck.  
 Not that you need it.  
*(In THE OWNER'S BOX, Austrian hands  
 Comiskey a sheet of paper.)*

**AUSTRIAN**

Record breaking sales,  
 Mister Comiskey.

**COMISKEY**

You mean today?

**AUSTRIAN**

No.  
 The whole Series,  
 In the history of Series.  
*(ON THE MOUND, center, Lefty takes his  
 position as Starting Pitcher.)*

**COMISKEY**

We must be doing something right.

*(NEAR THE DUGOUT, the Players warm up;  
Swede brushes past Cracker, who pushes  
Swede.)*

**CRACKER**

Watch it, asshole!

*(Swede shoves him back.)*

**SWEDE**

Watch it yourself.

**CRACKER**

Screw you!

*(Chick moves in to back up Swede.)*

**BUCK**

*(to Cracker)*

What's going on?

**CRACKER**

Who the hell knows?

We winning today, Chick, or losing?

**CHICK**

Shut your trap.

**CRACKER**

I hate your guts.

**BUCK**

Go to hell--

**CRACKER**

You first!

**BUCK**

You cheating bastard.

**HAPPY**

Guys!

**BUCK**

Asshole!

**HAPPY**

Break it up!

**KATIE**

You're gonna win.

**AUSTRIAN**

*(With the above.)*

The playing field is level.

**RING**

He does it all.

**AUSTRIAN**

What's bad about that?

**KATIE**

*(With the above.)*

Joe Jackson.  
Something big's going to happen.

**AUSTRIAN**

And why?

**RING**

A country bumpkin  
Straight out of the sticks.

**KATIE**

I can feel it in my bones.

**RING**

Never read a book,  
Never will.

**KATIE**

Next year,  
We'll be flush.

**AUSTRIAN**

Who is winning?

**KATIE**

But we don't need much--

**RING**

But we will write the tale--

**KATIE**

Just us--

**AUSTRIAN**

And ask why.

**RING**

But we will write  
The tale of Joe Jackson.

**KATIE**

Just us.

**AUSTRIAN**

Who is winning--

**KATIE**

We don't need much--

**AUSTRIAN**

And ask why.

**KATIE**

Just us.

**RING**

From now till the end of time.

*(Lights iris down to Lefty, ON THE MOUND.)*

**UMPIRE (O.S.)**

*Play ball!*

*(Joe watches from the dugout as Lefty winds up and throws the first pitch; midway through his wind-up, the lights dump out.)*

**END OF ACT I**

**ACT II****SCENE 1**

*(Lights up on the White Sox LOCKER ROOM.  
The setting is the same as the top of Act  
I; the mood is decidedly different --  
dark and pensive. The Players -- all are  
present except Chick -- look stooped and  
defeated, despite their winning record.  
There is a tub of bottled beer in a  
corner, though no one is celebrating.  
Hugh searches for an interview.)*

**HUGH**

I'm forever blowing bubbles!  
What's the matter, Boys!  
Come on!

**HAPPY**

Forever blowing bubbles.

**HAPPY/HUGH**

They fly so high...

**HAPPY**

Nearly reach the sky...  
That's all I got for you, Hugh.  
I gotta blow.  
*(He exits.)*

**HUGH**

So,  
Ain't anyone gonna celebrate?  
*(Buttonholes Cracker, on his way out.)*  
Cracker!  
White Sox take the flag.  
Second year, ain't that great?

**CRACKER**

Gotta win the Series, Hugh.  
And we're gonna do that too,  
Just you wait.

**HUGH**

Game's not  
Much fun,  
All these long faces.  
*(sotto voce:)*  
Is it the investigation?

**CRACKER**

I ain't sayin'--

**HUGH**

Off the record--

**CRACKER**

I ain't sayin' nothin'.  
*(And he's gone.)*

**(MORE)**

*Hugh grabs the arm on Eddie, also on his way out. Others Players exit under the following.)*

Eddie! **HUGH**

Gotta run. **EDDIE**

Not so fast. **HUGH**  
What do you think?

<b>HUGH</b>	<b>EDDIE</b>
About the grand Jury	Oh brother,
Just convened?	Don't bother me.

*(Eddie exits. Buck starts out; Hugh follows.)*

**HUGH**  
Buck! What have you heard?!  
Don't go, boys,  
I need a quote!  
A word!

*(Hugh follows Buck outside. All but Joe, Lefty and Swede are left in the Locker Room.)*

**JOE**  
Things been heatin' up.

**SWEDE**  
Keep your mind  
On the game--

**LEFTY**  
And your eye on the ball.

**SWEDE**  
That's all.

**LEFTY**  
That's right.

**SWEDE**  
Things'll cool down.

**JOE**  
All I'm sayin'  
It's eatin' away

**(MORE)**

At me.  
And people talkin'--

**SWEDE**

We're winnin'.

**JOE**

Still.

**SWEDE**

So?

**JOE**

What if...  
We all just come clean?

**SWEDE/LEFTY**

No!

**JOE**

-- and told the whole story.  
I been thinking--  
*(Swede grabs him by his collar.)*

**SWEDE**

Well don't.  
Last thing we need:  
You using your noggin',  
You spilling the beans.  
*(He grabs him by the scruff)*

**JOE**

Hey!

**LEFTY**

Get your mitts off him, Swede.

**SWEDE**

Or else what?

**LEFTY**

You'll see what.  
*(Tense pause; Swede lets go his grip.)*

**SWEDE**

Goddam hayseed!  
You sing,  
We all pay.

**LEFTY**

*(To Joe:)*  
Come on,  
Let's go.

**SWEDE**

Remember,  
It was an all or nothing deal.  
**(MORE)**

You get my drift?  
 If one of us rats,  
 We all sink on the ship.

**JOE**

I ain't never been good,  
 At telling no fibs.

**SWEDE**

You don't gotta lie, Joe.  
 Just keep your mouth shut.  
*(Lights shift to Comisky's Office at the  
 Ball Park...)*

**SCENE 2**

*(Comiskey and Austrian host an austere  
 looking man with a daunting mane of grey  
 hair: JUDGE KENESAW "MOUNTAIN" LANDIS. He  
 wields a walking stick and is dressed in  
 black; he wears a cape.)*

**COMISKEY**

I'm honored, Judge Landis.

**AUSTRIAN**

Or should we say "Commissioner."

**LANDIS**

The honor's all mine.  
 So revered is the name of Comiskey.

**AUSTRIAN**

Your position is brand new.  
 Born out of this scandal--

**LANDIS**

If I find  
 These ballplayers guilty,  
 They'll have hell to pay.

**COMISKEY**

As well they should.

**AUSTRIAN**

A substantial fine  
 Should send a message--

**LANDIS**

No!  
 Much more than that.  
 If they broke the law,  
 They're treated the same  
 As everyone else.  
 Not only a fine,  
 But jail-time.

**COMISKEY**

Oh.

**AUSTRIAN**

Seems a bit much.

*(Landis shoots him a look.)*

Of course I'm no judge.

**LANDIS**

Sinners must pay.  
 They must suffer,  
 Not gain.  
 Don't misread me.  
 I love the game,  
 as much as-- nay, more  
 Than most.  
 Baseball's a mirror  
 Of all that is good  
 In this nation.  
 Simple, yet nuanced;  
 Temporal, yet timeless.  
 The batter  
 The pitcher,  
 The man with a rock.  
 The man with a stick.  
 They face one another  
 To see who's the better.  
 I love it, I do.

**COMISKEY/AUSTRIAN**

Well I do to! / Me too!

**LANDIS**

The struggle supreme.  
 The playing field,  
 Level--

**AUSTRIAN**

Yes--

**COMISKEY**

Level!

**AUSTRIAN**

Where talent  
 Trumps birthright.

**COMISKEY/AUSTRIAN**

It trumps-- / Talent trumps--

**AUSTRIAN/COMISKEY/AUSTRIAN**

Talent trumps birthright!

**LANDIS**

And damned if I'll watch  
 A bunch of scoundrels  
 Spoil it all  
 For a fistfull  
 Of silver.

**AUSTRIAN**

And yet...  
*(Landis shoots another look.)*  
 You might,  
 Delay action,  
 Till the end of the season?

**LANDIS**

No!  
 The wheels of justice, sirs,  
 Turn without bias.

**AUSTRIAN**

But the fans--

**LANDIS**

My aim,  
 Is to save,  
 The game.  
*(He moves towards the exit.)*  
 Good day.  
*(He's gone.)*

**AUSTRIAN**

Damn!

**COMISKEY**

So close!  
 Always on the verge  
 Of a championship.

**AUSTRIAN**

And yet...  
 Worst case scenario?  
 The boys are convicted--

**COMISKEY**

Don't even think it!

**AUSTRIAN**

We forfeit the series -- but...  
 We lose lots of deadwood,  
 A few bloated contracts.  
*(Comiskey see where Austrian is going... )*

**COMISKEY**

Ah --

**AUSTRIAN**

We clean house.  
Sign a few long ball hitters.

**COMISKEY**

Some Babe Ruth types.  
I see.

**AUSTRIAN**

It's a whole new ballgame.  
For fans  
Hungry for homers.

**COMISKEY**

Yes,  
Turn straw into gold.

**AUSTRIAN**

And crisis to profit.  
*(Lights shift to...)*

**SCENE 3A**

*(4 p.m. The JAZZ CLUB, which has been  
changed into a SPEAKEASY. A BOUNCER mans  
the front door. Joe, half-drunk sits at  
the end of the bar, unnoticed by PATRONS.  
Joe beckons the bartender.)*

**JOE**

Bartender!  
Another beer!  
*(A secret knock on the door. The Bouncer  
lets in Ring, who is a little drunk.)*

**RING**

Hello brother!  
Let me in!  
"Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin!"

**PATRON**

Ring!

**CHORUS**

Ring!

**PATRON**

Where you been?

**RING**

Where haven't I been?

**JOE**

Hold off on that drink.

**RING**

Since prohibition started,  
 It's hard to stay dry.  
 Something about  
 Wanting what you can't have.  
 Bartender!  
 Set one up!  
 And then another!  
     *(Bumps into Joe, on his way out.)*  
 Sorry Mister --  
     *(Grabs him.)*  
 Wait! No Mister-- it's Joe!  
 Shoeless Joe Jackson.

**PATRON**

You don't say!

**JOE**

Gotta run.

**RING**

Not so fast-- boys, look!  
 A star!  
 An immortal!

**PATRON#2**

It's Shoeless Joe Jackson!  
     *(The Patrons crowd around.)*

**RING**

Hey!  
 How 'bout you tell these boys  
 Who will win,  
 Who will lose.  
 A pocket of gold's  
 Waiting for those  
 With the news -

**PATRON**

Yeah, Joe,  
 Tell us!

**PATRON#2**

*(Sarcastic.)*  
 What's your "crystal ball" say?

**PATRON**

Tell us!

**PATRON#2**

Or your bookie!  
     *(Laughs.)*

**PATRON#3**

Baby needs a new pair a shoes.

**JOE**

I gotta run.

**RING AND CHORUS**

Not so fast!

**RING**

Cut the crap, Joe  
 And tell us,  
 Who was in on the fix.  
 Who got dirty?  
 Who stayed clean?

**PATRON**

The *White Sox* turned *dirty*!  
 That hands me a laugh!

**PATRON#2**

Think of the cleaning bills.

**PATRON#3**The *White Sox* turned black.**RING**

You oughta be a scribbler!  
 The *Black Sox* of Chi-town,  
 You can't get 'em clean.

**CHORUS**

You can't get em clean!

**PATRON**

Come on, Joe,  
 Just one tip.  
 Who's taking the Series?

**CHORUS**

We'll cut you in--

**JOE**

*Stop it!*  
                   *(Silence.)*  
 Leave me alone!  
 All of ya!  
                   *(He exits.)*

**PATRON**The *Black Sox*--**PATRON#2**

I love it.

**PATRON**

I love it more!

**RING**

That's how folklore is born.

**PATRON#3**

The Black Sox.

**CHORUS**

The Black Sox,  
You can't get them clean.

**RING**

That's how it's born.  
*(Light shift to...)*

**SCENE 3B**

*(Joe and Katie Jackson's Chicago apartment. Joe rushes in.)*

**KATIE**

Joe!

I was worried.

Where were you, Joe?

**JOE**

Katie,

I done something --

Doesn't matter. I can't  
stand it no more.

**KATIE**

What?  
Slow down, Joe.

**JOE**

I done something horrible.

**KATIE**

Talk to me, Joe.

**JOE**

I can't.  
I'm scared  
You'll never forgive me.

**KATIE**

Whatever it is,  
It can't be that bad.  
Joe?

**JOE**

I'm rotten to the core.  
I was in with the boys,  
We threw all them games--

**KATIE**

What?!  
No!

**JOE**

I knew all about it.

And I didn't do nothing  
to stop it.

**KATIE**

Oh God no, please, Joe --

But you had a great  
Series.

**JOE**

It ain't easy  
Playing bad,  
When all's you know  
Is how to play good.

**KATIE**

Dear Lord,  
How could you, Joe?  
Dear Lord,  
How could you, Joe?

**JOE**

Oh, please don't hate me, Katie.

**KATIE**

Sh. Okay. Settle down.  
I love you Joe,  
No matter what.  
Have you told anyone else?

**JOE**

No.

**KATIE**

So here's what we do...  
We go down to the courthouse--

**JOE**

No!

**KATIE**

We tell them,  
That's all.  
We come clean,  
They'll show us mercy.

**JOE**

It feels so bad on the inside.  
It's got to come out.

**KATIE**

You see?  
That's right.  
We got to go, Joe.

**JOE**

They told me they'd kill you--

**KATIE**

What?  
Who told you--  
When?

**JOE**

Last game of the Series.  
Some... man--  
Said he'd hurt you,  
If we didn't play lousy.

**KATIE**

Then you tell them that too.  
I'm not afraid,  
And you shouldn't be either.  
We need "fair."  
We need justice.  
Right, Joe?  
We don't need much.  
Cause I got you.

**JOE**

And I got you.

**JOE/KATE**

I got you.  
But we don't need much.  
Not much,  
Just us.

*(She and Joe exit. Lights shift to...)*

**SCENE 3C**

*(The COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM, downtown Chicago. Austrian is waiting as Joe and Katie are shown in by a COUNTY AIDE.)*

**KATIE**

Outside is a madhouse.  
How do people know?

**AUSTRIAN**

Rumors, maybe.  
The telephone operator.

**KATIE**

Oh.

**AUSTRIAN**

Listen.  
You're doing the right thing, you two.  
I want you to know,  
I'm on your side.

**JOE**

I just want it out.

**AUSTRIAN**

Naturally so.  
Excuse us,  
Missus Jackson.

**KATIE**

I won't go.

**AUSTRIAN**

Sorry.  
Those are the rules.

**KATIE**

If you abuse him,  
You mislead him,  
There'll be hell to pay.  
You hear me?

**AUSTRIAN**

Understood.  
*(She exits. Austrian goes to another door  
and brings in a CLERK to transcribe Joe's  
confession.)*

The best medicine,  
For a deed gone wrong,  
Is to talk.  
Let it out,  
Throw it all up,  
Like you might  
A bad sandwich.  
Sign here first.

**JOE**

What is it?

**AUSTRIAN**

An immunity waiver.

**JOE**

'Munity-what?

**AUSTRIAN**

Designed to protect you, Joe.

**JOE**

I'd sign my own death warrant  
If you asked me.

*(He signs the paper.)*

**AUSTRIAN**

*(Spoken.)*

So begin.

**JOE**

I done it.  
I cheated.  
I knew.

**(MORE)**

From the whole crooked top  
 All the way to bottom,  
 I knew all about it.  
 We-- the boys--  
 We met late last season  
 In some hotel.  
 I didn't say much,  
 But, yeah, I agreed  
 To the whole dirty scheme.  
 But--  
 Well then,  
 In the games,  
 I couldn't play crooked.  
 So-- so-- so...  
 So I played to win...  
 To win, sir.  
 That's what I do.  
 That's what I did.  
 But we lost just the same  
 Cause the others,  
 They wasn't playing the game  
 On the up and up.

**AUSTRIAN**

Who else?  
 I need names.

**JOE**

Do I have to?

**AUSTRIAN**

You do.

**JOE**

Chick.  
 He was the leader,  
 Him and McMullin.

**AUSTRIAN**

Swede?

**JOE**

He was in on it,  
 And Happy,  
 And Eddie too.

**AUSTRIAN**

And Weaver?

**JOE**

Yeah, sure.

**AUSTRIAN**

What about Lefty?  
 (No answer.)  
 Joe, I need to--

**JOE**

Yes!  
Lefty too.

**AUSTRIAN**

That's eight in all,  
Including you.

**JOE**

I dunno.

**AUSTRIAN**

Who put you up to it?

**JOE**

Never seen 'em, sir.  
Only Chick did.

**AUSTRIAN**

How much did you get?

**JOE**

Please--

**AUSTRIAN**

You got to tell it all.

**JOE**

Five grand.  
I took it, I did.  
And oh God,  
Am I sorry.  
All I ever wanted  
Was to play baseball,  
Since I was old enough to lift a bat.  
And I ruined it all,  
For what?  
Cause I couldn't say no.

**AUSTRIAN**

You sure about that?

**JOE**

I don't know.  
Guess I'll never know why,  
I did what I done.  
I didn't want to disappoint no one.

**AUSTRIAN**

*(Turning Bad Cop:)*  
Cause you're greedy.

**JOE**

What?

**AUSTRIAN**

You did it to line your pockets

**JOE**

No!

**AUSTRIAN**

At the cost of the fans.

**JOE**

No!

**AUSTRIAN**

The little kids who worship you.

**JOE**

Please

**AUSTRIAN**

What've you done, Joe?

**JOE**

Please, Mr. Austrian.

**AUSTRIAN**

Don't beg forgiveness.  
You won't get it from me.  
Think of your fans?

**AUSTRIAN**

Rooting and hollerin' --

**JOE**

Don't!

**AUSTRIAN**

For Shoeless Joe!  
And this is what they get!  
You make me sick!

**JOE**

*(pleading, begging.)*

Just let me play ball.  
Please!  
I'll make it up to you,  
To the fans.  
I'll play to win  
I promise!  
Just let me play ball.  
It's all I do.  
It's all that I know.  
Please,  
Mr. Austrian...  
Please...

*(Joe is spent, destroyed.)*

**AUSTRIAN**

*(With compassion:)*

Joe,  
You done good.  
This is right.

*(He lets that settle.)*

**(MORE)**

Wait here,  
While I notarize  
This confession.

**JOE**

Confession?

**AUSTRIAN**

Sure, Joe.

What the hell did you think this was?

*(He exits. Joe stands in a tight light as music builds around him. His image, and the images of the seven other conspirators, appear in dramatic fashion on the back wall. Hugh enters.)*

**SCENE 3D**

**HUGH**

Jackson,  
Cicotte,  
Lefty,  
And Weaver.  
Risberg,

**JOE**

But --

I thought...

No!

Katie! Where are you?!

**HUGH**

Gandil,  
McMullin,  
And Felsch.

Remember these faces, folks.

*(The images turn into a headline: EIGHT WHITE SOX PLAYERS ARE INDICTED.)*

They are the faces  
Of greed and corruption.  
The living,  
Breathing  
Symbols  
Of all that is wrong  
In the land of the free,  
And the home of the brave.

*(Hugh folds himself into a loud crowd of FANS and barking REPORTERS outside the Court Building. The chorus grows loud and disruptive.)*

**MOB**

*[Note: these lines are overlapped; the result is cacophonous.]*

Where are they?

You see them?

I want a glimpse!

They should be ashamed

Degrading the game

*(The players appear.)*

**(MORE)**

*They make their way through the crowd.)*  
 Here they come!  
 There they are!  
 Why'd you do it, boys?  
 Crook!  
 Scoundrel!  
 We believed in you, Joe!  
 Hick!  
 Will you fight it,  
 Or fold?  
 You yellow bellied bastard!  
 You cheat!  
 Greedy bastard!  
 You won't win this one, asshole!  
 Whadya do with your blood money, Jackson!

**BOY**

*(Cutting through the din.)*  
 Say it ain't so, Joe.

**HUGH**

Remember these mugs, folks,  
 And never forget,  
 That all is not well  
 When heroes  
 Turn traitor.

*(Ring joins Hugh as projected headlines  
 appear: BLACK SOX IN CONSPIRACY WITH  
 GAMBLERS; then TRIAL BEGINS TODAY; and  
 PROSECUTION PROMISES GUILTY VERDICT.)*

**RING**

I can't watch.

**HUGH**

Trial of the century, Ring.

**RING**

Century's young, Hugh.  
*(The courtroom and all participants,  
 assembles.)*

**HUGH**

In all, three confessed:  
 Jackson,  
 Cicotte,  
 And Lefty--

**RING**

What a circus.

**HUGH**

More like a fracas.  
 Everyone's got something to lose.  
 It's what we live for.

**RING**

They broke my heart, Hugh.  
I'm through with baseball.  
See you at the fights.

**HUGH**

*(Sarcastic.)*

Right.  
Where everything's  
On the up and up.

**RING**

Least in the ring,  
They're honest  
About being crooked.  
*(Lights shift to full on the COURTROOM.)*

**SCENE 4A**

*(The eight indicted ball players sit behind a defense table -- all wearing suits -- with their lawyer BEN SHORT. Opposite, the prosecution team, headed by Asst. State Atty. GEORGE GORMAN. JUDGE HUGO FRIEND presides. In the SPECTATOR GALLERY: Katie, Hugh, Comiskey, Austrian, Cracker and Judge Landis.)*

**BAILIFF**

*(spoken, perhaps as the scenery shifts.)*

Let it be known the defendants are indicted on conspiracy to defraud the public, conspiracy to commit a confidence game, conspiracy to defraud Charles Comiskey, and conspiracy to defraud Ray Schalk.

**GORMAN**

The State calls Mr. William Burns.  
*(Burns, dressed in a green suit and purple shirt, nervously approaches the witness stand. The Big Man, emerges from the back of the room.)*

Mister Burns  
You are here on your own accord?

**SLEEPY**

*(Inaudible:)*

Yeah.

**GORMAN**

Mister Burns  
Will you speak so the court can hear you?

**SLEEPY**

*(Slightly louder.)*

Yessir.

**GORMAN**

In your own words  
Please tell the court  
About your part  
In this conspiracy.

**SLEEPY**

Conspiracy of what?

**GORMAN**

*(Obvious.)*  
Fixing the World Series.

**SLEEPY**

Oh that.  
That's a thing  
A fella  
Can't do on his own.

**GORMAN**

Do you see anyone here  
Who helped you?

**SLEEPY**

Them ballplayers,  
There.

**GORMAN**

Anyone else involved?

**SLEEPY**

Depends on the  
The word involved.

**GORMAN**

I use it in the usual sense.

**SLEEPY**

No, then,  
Cause everyone involved  
Was sorta unusual.  
*(Laughs from the Spectators.)*

**GORMAN**

Why don't you  
Tell the story  
In your own words.

**SLEEPY**

Them's the words  
I usually use.  
*(More laughs. Sleepy gains confidence.)*  
It all began  
In New York--  
The Big Apple--  
While the Sox was in town.  
I spotted Cicotte--

**GORMAN**

Eddie Ciccote.

**SLEEPY**

None-other, the same.  
 He told me  
 He might fix a game,  
 If the price was right,  
 He'd go to Gandil  
 Get some boys  
 To fall in line.

**GORMAN**

And what did you do?

**SLEEPY**

I Sat on it for a week or two.  
 When the Sox won the Pennant,  
 I got friendly with Abe.

**GORMAN**

Abe Attel?

**SLEEPY**

None other.

**GORMAN**

The man  
 Who has mysteriously  
 Disappeared.

**SLEEPY**

I don't know nothing about that.

**GORMAN**

Please continue.

**SLEEPY**

I met with the boys  
 Oh, three or four times.  
 They said  
 They was willing to fall,  
 Break a bat,  
 Muff a ball,  
 If the dough was  
 In line,  
 So.

**GORMAN**

So what, Mr. Burns.

**SLEEPY**

So they crossed us is what.  
 I fronted the dough,  
 And I lost my shirt.

**GORMAN**

Your witness.

*(Defense Attorney Short approaches.)*

**SHORT**

Mr. Burns,  
You play the horses,  
Shoot craps.

**SLEEPY**

I have in my day.

**SHORT**

Have you ever gambled illegally?

**GORMAN**

Objection!

**JUDGE FRIEND**

Sustained.

**SHORT**

In your experience,  
Do gamblers lie?

**SLEEPY**

The good ones  
Never get caught.  
*(Laughs.)*

**SHORT**

Sounds crooked.  
Are you lying right now, sir?

**SLEEPY**

Got no reason to.  
Got immunity?  
What's your excuse?  
*(Laughs.)*

**SHORT**

Mr. Burns, you don't like me very much, do  
you?

**SLEEPY**

Oh, you're all right, Ben. We could use a  
fella with your brains in our type of  
operations.

*(More laughs; Lights shift to a hallway in  
the courthouse. Gandil passes Comiskey.)*

**SCENE 4B**

**GANDIL**

Hey there, Comiskey.  
Ya Ol' Roman --

**COMISKEY**

Watch it, Mister.

**GANDIL**

Why?  
I ain't working  
Your plantation no more.

**COMISKEY**

Your side's losing, Gandil.

**GANDIL**

Says who?

**COMISKEY**

Anyone with ears.  
It's clear,  
You're the ring leader.  
Don't think now you've quit baseball.  
The long arm of the law,  
Won't reach you.

**GANDIL**

Blind old man,  
Can't you see,  
The jury's on our side--

**COMISKEY**

The law is on ours--

**GANDIL**

They know you make millions  
While we get slave wages.  
We're the heroes here,  
Not fat cats in cages  
Way up high  
Above the field.  
I'm glad to be rid'ya,  
Free of your clutches.

**COMISKEY**

I hear you're  
Set up quite nicely.  
A ranch,  
A few acres.  
Guess we all know  
Who made off  
With the green-backs.

**GANDIL**

*(Moving in, menacingly close.)*

I learned from the best.  
Ol' Roman,  
Ol' pal.  
Look out for number one,  
Screw everyone else.  
Ain't that how it works?

**(MORE)**

*(Lights shift to Austrian, lead Landis into his Office.)*

**SCENE 4C**

**JUDGE FRIEND**

Has the jury reached a verdict?

**FOREMAN**

*(Stands.)*

We have, Your Honor.

We find the defendants...

Not guilty--

*(The courtroom erupts in cheers as the Foreman tries to finish his verdict readings. The Players throw their hats in the air. Katie finds Joe, hugs him. Spectators swarm the Players, who are all reaching across the crowd to shake hands with the Jurors. Judge Friend gives up trying to maintain order, and smiles along with everyone else. Hugh, Comiskey and Austrian are appalled. The Jury lifts up Joe and Lefty onto their shoulders and carries them around the courtroom. This scene morphs into a restaurant where Jurors and Players celebrate together into the night.)*

**PLAYERS**

Huzzah!

Hallelujah!

**KATIE**

Joe, over here!

**JOE**

Katie! We did it!

**KATIE**

You're not through  
With baseball  
Afterall!

**ALL**

Huzzah!  
Hallelujah!  
I knew it!

**HAPPY**

Hey, thanks!

**JUROR**

Was nothing!

You're one of us.

Those others--

**JUROR#2**

Those fat-cats!

**JUROR**

They're the ones  
Belong in jail,  
Not you.

**JUROR#2**

Comiskey, his crew!

**LEFTY**

God bless you!  
All-a yous!

**BUCK**

And God bless Judge Friendly too!

**ALL**

Here-here!

**SWEDE**

*(Joking:)*  
There-there!  
*(Laughs all around.)*

**HAPPY**

I'm forever blowing bubbles  
Pretty bubbles in the air.  
They fly so high...  
*(On the other side on the stage,  
simultaneous with the carousing:)*

**HUGH**

A travesty!

**CRACKER**

Idiots!

**COMISKEY**

Morons!

**HUGH**

In the name of of that is good.

**AUSTRIAN**

Salt of the Earth, my foot.

**CRACKER**

Makes me want to  
Throw it in  
Give up the game.

**COMISKEY**

Don't think it, Cracker.  
Baseball needs men like you.

**AUSTRIAN**

They know not what they've done.

**COMISKEY**

*(Slyly.)*  
 Oh, they will in time.  
 When the sun comes up,  
 And they read the headlines.  
*(Comiskey winks at him. Austrian, Comiskey  
 and Cracker leave, disgusted. We're now  
 fully in the bar/restaurant.)*

**ALL**

I'm dreaming dreams

**HAPPY**

God bless you.

**ALL**

I'm scheming schemes  
 I'm building castles so high!  
*(The party recedes, characters exit, till  
 only Happy -- drunk -- remains.)*

**HAPPY**

Fortune's always hiding,  
 I've looked everywhere.  
 I'm forever blowing bubbles...  
 Pretty bubbles...  
 In the air...  
*(A separate Light comes up on Landis.  
 Projected, a headline: WHITE SOX BLACK  
 AGAIN BANNED FROM BASEBALL)*

**LANDIS**

*(Maybe spoken:)*  
 Regardless of the verdict of juries, no player  
 who sits in conference with gamblers, where  
 the ways and means of throwing a game are  
 discussed, will ever play professional  
 baseball! Henceforth, the eight ballplayers,  
 known idiomatically as the Black Sox eight,  
 are hereby banned from engaging in major  
 league baseball, for life!  
*(The music turns sour. Lights up on Chick,  
 Fred, Lefty, Joe and Katie.)*

**JOE**

What just happened?

**CHICK**

*(To Joe.)*  
 We were down, Joe,  
 And then they kicked us.  
 Same as always.  
 Least they didn't convict us.  
*(He and Fred exit, smiling.)*

**JOE**

Then why do I  
 Feel like I'm in prison.  
*(Lefty exits.)*

**KATIE**

Let's go.

**JOE**

Sweet Katie.

**KATIE**

Back to Carolina, Joe.  
 I hate this city.  
 Carolina, Joe.  
 Home sweet home.

**HAPPY/SWEDE/EDDIE**

*(Offstage, haunting.)*  
 I'm Forever blowing bubbles  
 In the air.  
*(Katie grabs hold of Joe's hand, and they  
 exit. ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE continues and  
 takes us to TWELVE YEARS LATER: 1933.)*

**SCENE 5**

*(The SPEAKEASY has turned back into a  
 legitimate bar once again. It's  
 afternoon; a couple patrons nurse beers --  
 one is Ring -- he coughs uncontrollably.)*

**RING**

Another, brother!  
*(Ray "Cracker" Schalk -- well groomed and  
 in a business suit, carrying a briefcase -  
 - walks in.)*

**BARTENDER**

You should see to that cough.

**RING**

Soon's they find  
 A cure for TB,  
 I will.  
*(Cracker bellies up to the bar.)*

**CRACKER**

I'll have one of those suds.

**BARTENDER**

How's it out there??

**CRACKER**

Hotter as hell.

**RING**

Hey, I know you.  
You're Cracker Schalk,  
Catcher for the Sox.

**CRACKER**

Used to be.  
Not no more.  
Now scouting for the Cubs.

**RING**

Shoulda known.  
Woulda known, but--  
Remember me?

**CRACKER**

Why, if it ain't old Ring.

**RING**

How'd you do?

**CRACKER**

Not bad.  
And you?

**RING**

Been better.  
How's scouting?

**CRACKER**

Can't complain.  
'Threads have changed.  
Ballgame's the same.

**RING**

Ain't seen you since--

**CRACKER**

Way back when--

**RING**

The scandal.

**CRACKER**

Makes me sick.  
I wasn't  
Even in on it.

**RING**

You stayed true.

**CRACKER**

Damn straight I did.

**RING**

Ever hear from the boys?

Them bums?  
**CRACKER**

Those cheats.  
**RING**

Never talked to them back then.  
 Why now?  
**CRACKER**

Buck Weaver--  
**RING**

Never did play again.  
**CRACKER**

Poor guy.  
**RING**

Shoulda been smarter.  
**CRACKER**

The others.  
**RING**

Some played  
 Bush league ball  
 Under other names.  
 Most--  
 I don't know.  
 Just disappeared--  
 Though...  
**CRACKER**

What?  
**RING**  
*(A scene develops on the other side of the stage -- a tiny dry liquor store in South Carolina.)*

I seen Joe.  
**CRACKER**

No.  
**RING**

Once.  
**CRACKER**

Where?  
 How?  
**RING**

While ago now.  
**CRACKER**  
*(An older Joe Jackson walks into the store and walks behind the counter.)*  
**(MORE)**

*Cracker drifts into this scene.)*  
 I was scouting,  
 Down in Carolina.  
 Stopped by a  
 Hole-in-the wall shop,  
 To buy some smokes.  
 And while I was paying...

**JOE**

Two bits, sir.

**CRACKER**

It was Joe, for sure.  
 All stooped over  
 And older, too.  
*(Joe takes a bill and changes it.)*  
 Thanks... Mister...  
*(Cracker starts to go out of the store,  
 then stops and turns.)*

**CRACKER**

Joe.  
*(Joe looks at him.)*  
 Don't you recognize me?

**JOE**

Why sure I do, Ray.  
 Wasn't sure  
 You wanted to know me.  
*(Katie enters -- she spots Ray; walks up  
 to Joe, holds his arm. Cracker tips his  
 hat and leaves... he walks back into the  
 bar and 1933. Lights dim on the store.)*

**RING**

God, he had a pretty swing.

**CRACKER**

Best damn hitter I ever seen.  
*(Joe pick up a broom and sweeps the floor;  
 Katie opens a ledger.)*

**RING**

A boy from squalor,  
 Made it big,  
 On nothing short of  
 A dream,  
 What God gave him.  
 The ideal in  
 A many a boy's eye,  
 Of what we all hope to be:  
 Perfection.  
 A God on Earth.

**THE END**