

Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*: Lyrics to Six Songs

“Now”

FREDRIK

Now, as the sweet imbecilities
Tumble so lavishly
Onto her lap
Now, there are two possibilities
A, I could ravish her
B, I could nap

Say

It's the ravishment, then we see
The option
That follows, of course
A
The deployment of charm, or B
The adoption
Of physical force

Now, B might arouse her
But let us assume
I trip on my trouser
Leg crossing the room
Her hair getting tangled
Her stays getting snapped
My nerves would be jangled
My energy sapped

Removing her clothing
Would take me all day
And her subsequent loathing
Would turn me away
Which eliminates B
And which leaves us with A

Now,
Insofar as approaching it
What would be festive
But have its effect?
Now,
There are two ways of broaching it
A, the suggestive
And B, the direct

Say
That I settle on B, to wit
A charmingly
Lecherous mood
A,
I could put on my nightshirt or sit
Disarmingly
B, in the nude

That might be effective
My body's all right

But not in perspective
And not in the light

I'm bound to be chilly
And feel a buffoon
But nightshirts are silly
In mid-afternoon

Which leaves the suggestive
But how to proceed?
Although she gets restive
Perhaps I could read.

In view of her penchant
For something romantic
De Sade is too trenchant
And Dickens too frantic
And Stendhal would ruin
The plan of attack
As there isn't much blue in
The Red and the Black.

De Maupassant's candor
Would cause her dismay
The Brontes are grander
But not very gay
Her taste is much blander,
I'm sorry to say,
But is Hans Christian Andersen
Every risqué?
Which eliminates A

Now,
With my mental facilities
Partially muddied
And ready to snap
Now
Though there are possibilities
Still to be studied
I might as well nap

Bow
Though I must
To adjust
My original plan
How
Shall I sleep
Half as deep
As I usually can?

When now I still want and/or love you,
Now as always,
Now,
Anne . . .

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"Later"

HENRIK:

Later

When is later?

All you ever hear is "Later, Henrik—

Henrik, later."

"Yes, we know, Henrik,

Oh, Henrik,

Everyone agrees, Henrik,

Please, Henrik!"

You have a thought you're fairly bursting with

A personal discovery or problem, and it's

"What's your rush, Henrik?

Shush, Henrik!

Goodness, how you gush, Henrik!

Hush, Henrik!"

You murmur

"I only

It's just that--"

"For God's sake--!

Later, Henrik . . ."

"Henrik" . . .

Who is "Henrik"?

"Oh, that lawyer's son, the one who mumbles

Short and boring

Yes, he's hardly worth ignoring."

And who cares if he's all dammed--

I beg your pardon--

Up inside?

As I've often stated

It's intolerable

Being tolerated

"Reassure Henrik,

Poor Henrik.

Henrik, you'll endure

Being pure, Henrik."

Though I've been born, I've never been!

How can I wait around for later?

I'll be ninety on my deathbed

And the late, or, rather, later, Henrik Egerman!

Doesn't anything begin?

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“Soon”

ANNE

Soon, I promise
Soon, I won't shy away
Dear old—

Soon, I want to
Soon, whatever you say

Even now
When you're close and we touch
And you're kissing my brow,
I don't mind it too much
And you'll have to admit
I'm endearing,
I help keep things humming,
I'm not domineering,
What's one small shortcoming?

And think of how I adore you,
Think of how much you love me.
If I were perfect for you,
Wouldn't you tire of me
Soon,
All too soon,
Dear old—?
Soon—

HENRIK
“Later”

ANNE
I promise

HENRIK
When is “Later”?

ANNE
Soon
I won't shy
Away.

HENRIK
“Later, Henrik, later”
All you ever hear is,
“Yes we know, Henrik,
Oh, Henrik,
Everyone agrees, Henrik.”

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ANNE	HENRIK	FREDRIK
Dear Old	“Please, Henrik!”	
Soon	“Later”	<i>(in his sleep)</i> Now, As the Sweet imbecilities
I want to	When is “later”? All you ever hear is	
Soon, Whatever you	“Later Henrik, Later.”	Trip on my Trouser leg, Stendhal
Say	As I’ve often Stated When?	Eliminates “A,” but When?
Even Now, When you’re Close and we Touch,	Maybe Soon, Soon, I’ll be Ninety and	Maybe Later
And you’re Kissing my Brow,	Dead.	When I’m Kissing your Brow and I’m Stroking your Head, You’ll come Into my Bed
I don’t mind it too Much.	I don’t mind it too Much	
And you’ll Have to admit I’m Endearing, I Help keep things Humming I’m not Domineering, What’s One small short- Coming? And Think of how I adore you, Think of how Much you love me. If I were perfect For you, Wouldn’t you Tire of me Later?	Since I Have to admit I Find peering Through life’s gray Windows impatiently Not Very cheering Do I fear Death? Let it Come to me Now, Now, Now, Now. Come to me Soon. If I’m Dead. I can Wait.	And you’ll Have to admit I’ve Been hearing All those tremulous Cries Patiently, not Interfering With those tremulous Thighs Come to me Soon, Soon, Soon, Soon, Come to me Soon, Straight to me,

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"Soon" (cont'd)

ANNE

We will
Soon.

Soon.

Soon

HENRIK

How can I
Live until
Later?

Later . . .

Later . . .

FREDRIK

Never mind how,
Darling.
Now
I still want
And/or
Love you.

Now as
Always.

Now,
Desirée

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“Liaisons”

MADAME ARMFELDT

At the villa of the Baron De Signac,
Where I spent a somewhat infamous year,
At the villa of the Baron De Signac
I had ladies in attendance,
Fire-opal pendants

Liaisons! What's happened to them?
Liaisons today
Disgraceful! What's become of them?
Some of them
Hardly pay their shoddy way

What once was a rare champagne
Is now just an amiable hock,
What once was a villa, at least,
Is "digs."
What once was a gown with train
Is now just a simple little frock
What once was a sumptuous feast
Is figs.
No, not even figs—
Raisins!
Ah, liaisons!

Where was I? . . . Oh, yes . . .

At the palace of the Duke of Ferrara,
Who was prematurely deaf but a dear.
At the palace of the Duke of Ferrara,
I acquired some position,
Plus a tiny Titian . . .

Liaisons! What's happened to them,
Liaisons today?
To see them—indiscriminate
Women, it
Pains me more than I can say,
The lack of taste that they display!

Where is style?
Where is skill?
Where is forethought?
Where's discretion of the heart?
Where's passion in the art,
Where's craft?
With a smile
And a will
But with more thought,
I acquired a chateau
Extravagantly o
Verstaffed

Too many people muddle sex
With mere desire,
And when emotion intervenes,
The nets descend.
It should on no account perplex,
Or worse, inspire.
It's but a pleasurable means
To a measurable end.
Why does no one comprehend?
Let us hope this lunacy's just a trend

Where was I? . . . Oh, yes . . .

In the castle of the King of the Belgians.
We would visit through a false chiffonier.
In the castle of the King of the Belgians,
Who, when things got rather touchy,
Deeded me a duchy.

Liaisons! What's happened to them.
Liaisons today?
Untidy—take my daughter, I
Taught her, I
Tried my best to point the way.
I even named her Desiree.

In a world where the kings are employers,
Where the amateur prevails
And delicacy fails
To pay,
In a world where the princes are lawyers,
What can anyone expect
Except to recollect
Liai

(She falls asleep.)

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“Send in the Clowns”

DESIREE
Isn't it rich?
Are we a pair?
Me here at last on the ground,
You in mid-air.
Send in the clowns.

Isn't it bliss?
Don't you approve?
One who keeps tearing around,
One who can't move.
Where are the clowns?
Send in the clowns

Just when I'd stopped opening doors,
Finally knowing the one that I wanted was yours,
Making my entrance again with my usual flair,
Sure of my lines,
No one is there.

Don't you love farce?
My fault, I fear.
I thought that you'd want what I want -
Sorry, my dear.
But where are the clowns?
Quick, send in the clowns.
Don't bother, they're here.

(Fredrik apologizes ruefully and leaves.)

Isn't it rich?
Isn't it queer,
Losing my timing this late
In my career?
And where are the clowns?
There ought to be clowns.
Well, maybe next year. . . .

“Send in the Clowns” (Reprise)

DESIREE
Isn't it Rich?

FREDRIK
Are we a pair?
You here at last on the ground

DESIREE
You in mid-air.
Was that a farce?

FREDRIK
My fault, I fear.

DESIREE
Me as a merry-go-round.

FREDRIK
Me as King Lear.
Make way for the clowns.

DESIREE
Applause for the clowns.

BOTH
They're finally here.

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"The Miller's Son"

I shall marry the miller's son
Pin my hat on a nice piece of property
Friday nights, for a bit of fun
We'll go dancing
Meanwhile

It's a wink and a wiggle
And a diggle in the grass
And I'll trip the light fandango
A pinch and a diddle
In the middle of what passes by

It's a very short road
From the pinch and the punch
To the paunch and the pouch and the pension
It's a very short road
To the ten thousandth lunch
And the belch and the grouch and the sigh

In the meanwhile
There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed
And a lot in between
In the meanwhile
And a girl ought to celebrate what passes by.

Or I shall marry the business man
Five fat babies and lots of security
Friday nights, if we think we can
We'll go dancing
Meanwhile

It's a push and a fumble
And a tumble in the sheets
And I'll foot the highland fancy
A dip in the better
And a flutter with what meets my eye

It's a very short fetch
From the push and the whoop
To the squint and the stoop and the mumble

It's not much of a stretch
To the cribs and the croup
And the bosoms that droop and go dry
In the meanwhile

There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed
And there's many a tryst
And there's many a bed
To be sampled and seen
In the meanwhile
And a girl has to celebrate what passes by.

Or I shall marry the Prince of Wales
Pearls and servants and dressing for festivals
Friday nights with him all in tails
We'll have dancing
Meanwhile

It's a rip in the bustle
And a rustle in the hay
And I'll pitch the quick fantastic
With flings of confetti
And my petticoats away up high

It's a very short way
From the fling that's for fun
To the thigh pressing under the table
It's a very short day
'Til you're stuck with just one
Or it has to be done on the sly
In the meanwhile

There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed
And there's many a tryst
And there's many a bed
There's a lot I'll have missed
But I'll not have been dead when I die!
And a person should celebrate everything
Passing By

And I shall marry the miller's son...