

# SKY BOYS

Written by Deborah Hopkinson

Adapted by Megan Helwig

*Darkness. Figures appear silhouetted in the “steel forest” coming to work. One worker begins with a solid slow beat as he hammers the steel. Workers begin their day with sounds that fit into a construction orchestra.*

*Rhythmic sounds that mimic constructions site sounds. As the sounds build to a climax, we die down to calmer sounds as the sun rises and we sing our working song:*

COMPANY:

Watch out Sky Boys  
Don't slip in the rain  
Or let the wind whisk you away  
X2

Six hundred men are working here  
Making something new  
Bold, soaring  
A symbol of hope  
American dreams come true.

Watch out Sky Boys  
Don't slip in the rain  
Or let the wind whisk you away  
X2

Straight as a pencil  
As it scrapes the sky  
We will remember  
Til the day we die  
Built by the arms  
Of America's men  
Bringing pride and hope  
To our land once again

Watch out Sky Boys  
Don't slip in the rain  
Or let the wind whisk you away

Lone Voice: *Watch out, sky boys- don't slip in the rain or let the wind whisk you away. (X2)*

*The rest of the company hums the "Sky Boys" tune while John sits at the dinner table with his two children, Susie and Jimmy. After the company hums the tune once through, John hums the tune once more alone as he reads his newspaper at the breakfast table.*

Susie: Dad, what's that you're humming?

John: Hmmm? What was that?

Jimmy: You've been humming the same tune for the last ten minutes. What is it?

John: Oh.... Hmmm, well let's see now. Where did I learn that from? I think it goes- "Watch out, sky boys... don't ....um? slip.... In the rain?"

Susie: Sky boys? Is that some kind of gang of superheroes?

John: Well, Susie, they sort of were. Back when I was just about your age-

*The scene shifts back as John becomes a young boy out looking for wood. He talks over the shift from dining room to the New York streets.*

John: - My pop had just lost his job, so I had to look for firewood to help out. I had just passed a big pile of wood torn down from an old hotel when I heard all about it.

Passerby #1: Have you heard the news?

Passerby #2: No, what?

Passerby #1: Mr. Raskob wants to build the tallest skyscraper in the world!

Passerby #3: You can't mean taller than Mr. Chrysler's building?

Passerby #1: That's so! They say it'll be done by next May.

Passerby #2: Things are so bad, it seems foolish to even try.

Passerby #3: Course, you never know!

John: I had never looked forward to anything more in my life. I raced home to tell my pop, but he didn't think they could do it. I would go and watch the building site each day, just to see it get built.

*Trucks roll onstage (portrayed by actors). Again, rhythmic. In the rhythm, these lines are chanted by the actors in time.*

Truck #1: First come rumbling flatbed trucks.

Truck #2: Bundles of steel on their backs.

Truck #3: The steel is strong and new.

Truck #4: Only eighty hours old.

John: As I watched, a steel forest appeared. Two hundred and ten columns, so firm and strong they can bear the full weight of this giant-to-be: 365,000 tons.

*The Sky Boys come out. Underscoring this next dialogue is their anthem "Sky Boys". Maneuvering under beams, over pipes and across bars, they "dance" across the stage to the rhythm of the construction site.*

John: Sometimes I brought my friend Jack to watch with me. One day, he asked me-

Jack: Wouldn't you love to be one of them? A Sky Boy! The wind in your face! Strong as the iron you are building with! I wanna be one of those guys when I grow up.

John: We would sit outside and watch them build up that giant. The Sky Boys each had a job to do and they did it well.

*Sound interludes introduce each "Boy".*

Water Boy: Some of us would climb high with a bucket of water to give the Sky Boys a drink. They call us the Water Boys.

The Heater: Some of us work with the metal. I get it nice and red-hot in the forge and I toss it up high! They call us the Heaters.

The Catcher: Well, someone's gotta catch that red-hot metal! That's exactly what I do. I catch it in my pail and cool it down in the water to get its shape. They call me the Catcher.

The Bucker-Up: Now, that metal is ready to go to use. It's a two man job! One of us has to hold it steady. I'm called the Bucker-Up.

The Gunman: Once it's nice and steady, it has to be pounded into the steel. That's my job. I'm the Gunman.

Jack: John and I would sing their song as they played it for us.

Company: *(in rhythm as the "Boys" act it out)* Toss-catch-steady-pound.  
Toss-catch-steady-pound. Toss-catch-steady-pound. Toss-catch-steady-pound.

John: We would catch some of the Sky Boys after they left at night and ask them questions that burned our curiosity awful bad.

Jack: Hey, mister! Where do you get your food?

Sky Boy #1: There are five different lunch stands where we can visit and even a restaurant specifically for us. Mmmmmmm, beef stew!

John: Hey, mister! How do you get all the way up there? It seems pretty high up to climb a ladder.

Sky Boy #2: Why son, we've got some elevators that will take us places. Not only that but we've got our own railways for each floor to move heavy stuff.

Jack: Hey mister!

Sky Boy #3: Yes, boy?

Jack: *(motions to him to move closer. Hushed tones)* What happens when you have to go to the bathroom?

Sky Boy #4: *(laughs)* We got some fancy toilets for us to go right near where we work.

Jack and John: *(looking at each other in amazement)* Wooooooooowwww!

*The Sky Boys begin to hum their tune once again and sounds begin again underscoring the next bit of dialogue.*

John: The building grew taller and taller! June passed, July came, August flew by and so on until finally November brought a skin to the mighty iron skeleton.

Jack: On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1931 at 5:42pm, the Sky Boys gave out a shout because they had built the tallest building in the world.

John: We watched as workers tirelessly finished the inside of this enormous construction as we waited for our chance to see inside. Then *(sounds stop and silence)*:

ALL: May 1, 1931. Opening Day!

All: Sixty thousand-

John: Tons of steel.

All: Ten Million-

Jack: Bricks.

All: Two thousand-

Sky Boy #1: Tons of marble.

All: Sixty-five hundred-

Sky Boy #2: Windows.

All: Seventy miles-

Sky Boy #3: Of water pipes.

All: Eighteen hundred and sixty-

Sky Boy #4: Stairs.

All: One year and forty five days.

Sky Boys: Seven million man hours.

John and Jack: More than three thousand men.

John: The ribbon was cut. I was there to see it. How surprised I was when I turned to see my father behind me.

Dad: Let's go up, son. I been puttin' our pennies aside. I seen you watching those Sky Boys. Today, let's take you up to meet the sky.

John: We went inside with a big crowd jostling to get to the front. The lobby was glittering like a jewel. The Empire State Building- the pride of New York City! We got to the top, and Dad looked out over the city.

Dad: If we can do this, we can do anything.

*(John looks at his dad admiringly and then looks out over the city)*

*As the dialogue goes on, the scene transitions back to the dining room.*

John: And that's how I felt too. I stayed up there at the top for a while with my dad. Seeing the world from the point of view from the Sky Boys was something I had dreamed about for a year, and I was finally there. Up, where the Sky Boys were.

Susie: Wow, Dad! That was a pretty good story. Was it true?

John: You bet. Sometimes I look up at the Empire State Building on the way to my work and just sit and remember. On some days, it's almost as if I could still hear them singing-

Jimmy: Watch out, sky boys- don't slip in the rain or let the wind whisk you away. Right, Dad?

John: Right, son. *(checks his watch)* Hey, now! It's almost time for school! Let's get going!  
*They exit humming the tune as the building rhythm commences and fades out.*

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