

Someone In a Tree

Stephen Sondheim

Pardon me, I was there

You were where?

At the treaty house

At the treaty house?

There was a tree

Which was where?

Very near

Over here?

Maybe over there

But there were trees then, everywhere

May I show you?

If you please

There were trees

Then, everywhere

But you were there

And I was there!

Let me show you

If you please

(Old Man tries to climb the tree.)

I was younger then...

(Tries again.)

I was good at climbing trees...

(Tries again.)

I was younger then...

(Tries again.)

I saw everything...

(Tries again.)

I was hidden all the time...

(Tries again.)

It was easier to climb...

(Tries again.)

I was younger then...

(Tries again.)

I saw everything...

(Tries again.)
Where they came and where they went
I was part of the event
I was someone in a tree!

(Tries to climb once more.)
I was younger then!

(Suddenly, a young boy appears, scurries across the stage, and up the tree.)

(to the Old Man)
Tell him what I see!

I am in a tree
I am ten
I am in a tree

I was younger then

In between the eaves I can see—

(to the Boy)
Tell me what I see

(to the Reciter)
I was only ten

I see men and matting
Some are old, some chatting

If it happened, I was there! I see everything! I saw everything!

I was someone in a tree

Tell him what I see!

Some of them have gold on their coats

One of them has gold

(to the Reciter)
He was younger then

Someone crawls around passing notes—

Someone very old—

(to the Reciter)
He was only ten

And there's someone in a tree—

—Or the day is incomplete

Without someone in a tree
Nothing happened here

I am hiding in a tree

I'm a fragment of the day

If I weren't, who's to say
Things would happen here the way

That they happened here? I was there then
It's the pebble, not the stream. It's the fragment, not the day
I am here still

It's the ripple, not the sea
Not the building, but the beam
Not the garden, but the stone
Not the treaty house
Someone in a tree

(A Warrior slides the panel open underneath the house)
Pardon me, I am here
If you please, I am also here

They kept drinking cups of tea

They kept sitting on the floor

They drank many cups of tea

(to each other)
No, we told him that before

If you please, I am here

You are where?

In the treaty house

In the treaty house?

Or very near

Can you hear?

I'm below

So I notice

Underneath the floor
And so I can't see anything
I can hear them
But I can't see anything

But you can hear?

But I can hear
Shall I listen?

If you please

I can hear them now...
I shall try to shift my knees...
I can hear them now...
I hear everything...
I'm the part that's underneath
With my sword inside my sheath
I can hear them now
One is over me
If they knock, then I appear
I'm a part of what I hear
I'm the fragment underneath...
I can hear them now!

Tell us what you hear!

First I hear a creak and a thump
Now I hear a clink
Then they talk a bit
Many times they shout when they speak
Other times they think
Or they argue it
I hear floorboards groaning
Angry growls, much droning
Since I hear them, they are there
As they argue it
I'm the listener underneath

(Boy peers into the house.)
Someone reads a list
From a box

Someone talks of laws

Then they fan a bit

Someone bangs a fist

Someone knocks

Now there was a pause

Then they argue it:

"But we want—"
"No, you can't
And we won't—"
"But we need it
And we want—"
"Will you grant —"
"If you don't—"
"We concede it" And they sat
Through the night
And they lit
Yellow tapers
I was
There
Then

If I
Weren't, who's to
Say
Things would
Happen here the
Way
That they're
Happening? I can hear
Them

I'm a
Fragment of the
Day

If I
Weren't, who's to
Say

Things would
Happen here the
Way
That they're
Happening?
And they
Chat
And they fight
And they sit
Signing papers
I am
There
Still
If I
Weren't who's to
Say
That they're
Happening?

It's the fragment, not the day
It's the pebble, not the stream
It's the ripple, not the sea
That is happening
Not the building but the beam
Not the garden but the stone
Only cups of tea
And history
And someone in a tree