

Stephen Sondheim, How I Saved Roosevelt

(RADIO ANNOUNCER)

That was President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt,
ladies and gentlemen, speaking to a crowd
of supporters here in Miami's beautiful Bayfront Park.
A group of notables are pressing in around
the President-elect's car.

There's Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago, and-

There's been a shot! I can't see-wait!
Mr. Roosevelt is waving! He's all right!
But Mayor Cermak has been hit!
The police have somebody in custody. An immigrant.
Giuseppe Zangara.
We take you now to a group of eyewitnesses
who will tell us what they saw!

(BYSTANDER #1)

We're crowded up close,
And I see this guy,
He's squeezing by,
I catch his eye,
I say to him, "Where do you
Think you are trying to go, boy?
Whoa, boy!"
I say, "Listen, you runt,
You're not pulling that stunt,
No gentleman pushes his way to the front."
I say, "Move to the back!"; which he does
with a grunt-
Which is how I saved Roosevelt!

(BYSTANDER #2)

Then-
Well, I'm in my seat,
I get up to clap,
I feel this tap,
I turn-this sap,
He says he can't see,
I say, "Find a lap
And go sit on it!"
Which is how I saved-

(BYSTANDER #3)

Then-
He started to swear
And he climbed on a chair,
He was aiming a gun-I was standing right there-
So I pushed it as hard as I could in the air,
Which is how I saved Roosevelt!

(ALL THREE)

Lucky I was there-

(BYSTANDER #1)

That's why he was standing back so far-!

(BYSTANDER #3)

That's why when he aimed, He missed the car-!

(ALL THREE)

Just lucky I was there,
Or we'd have been left
Bereft of F.D.R.!

(ZANGARA)
You think that I scare?
No scare.
You think that I care?
No care.
I look at the world-
No good. No fair. Nowhere.

When I am boy,
No school.
I work in a ditch,
No chance.
The smart and the rich
Ride by,
Don't give no glance.

Ever since then, because of them,
I have the sickness in the stomach,
Which is the way I make my idea
To go out and kill Roosevelt.

First I was figure I kill Hoover,
I get even for the Stomach.
Only Hoover up in Washington.
Is wintertime in Washington,
Too cold for the stomach in Washington-
I go down to Miami Kill Roosevelt.

No laugh!
No funny!
Men with the money,
they control everything.

Roosevelt, Hoover-
No make no difference.

You think I care who I kill?
I no care who I kill,
Long as it's King!

(BYSTANDER #4 (MAN))
The crowd's breaking up
And I hear these shots,
And I mean lots-

(BYSTANDER #5 (HIS WIFE))
I thought I'd plotz-

(MAN)
I spotted hi-

(WIFE)
My stomach was tied in knots-

(MAN)
So I barrelled-

(WIFE)
Harold-!
No, happened was this:
He was blowing a kiss-

(MAN)
She means Roosevelt-

(WIFE)

I was saying to Harold, "This weather is bliss!"

(MAN)

When you think that we might have missed seeing
Him miss-!

(BOTH)

Lucky we were there!

(WIFE)

It was a historical event-!

(MAN)

Worth every penny that we spent!

(BYSTANDERS)

Just lucky we were there!

(BYSTANDER #1)

To think, if I let him get up closer-!

(BYSTANDER #3)

I saw right away he was insane
Oh, this is my husband, we're from Maine-

(BYSTANDER #2)

He told me to sit, but I said, "No, Sir!"

(BYSTANDER #4)

This makes our vacation a real success!

(BYSTANDER #5)

Are you with the press?

(PHOTOGRAPHER)

Yes.

(BYSTANDER #5)

Oh God, I'm a mess...

(BYSTANDER #1)

Some left wing foreigner, that's my guess-

(ZANGARA)

No left!

You think I am left?

No left, no right,

No anything!

Only American!

Zangara have nothing,

No luck, no girl,

Zangara no smart, no school,

But Zangara no foreign tool,

Zangara American!

American nothing!

And why there no photographers?

For Zangara no photographers!

Only capitalists get photographers!

No

(BYSTANDERS)

Right!

Lucky
No fair
I was there!
Nowhere!
So what?
I'm on the front page-
Is that bizarre?
No sorry!
And all of those pictures,
Like a star!
And soon no
Just lucky I was there!
Zangara!
We might have been left
Who care?
Bereft of F.
Pull switch!
No care,
D.
No more,
No-
R.