

COVER by Jeffrey Sweet
with Stephen Johnson and Sandra Hastie

1st Production December 15, 1986

Director. Larry Deckel
Sets. John Saari
Lights. John Ebbert
Costumes. Kim Brown

CAST

MARTY. PHILIP HINCH
FRANK. DAVID GARCIA
DIANE. AMANDA RAMBO

SETTING

An office.

All programs and publicity materials for this play must carry the following notice:

FIRST PRODUCED BY ACTORS
THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

Cover

AT RISE: An office. FRANK is working at his desk. MARTY enters.

MARTY. Work, work, work.

FRANK. Oh, Marty.

MARTY. I'm early.

FRANK. You're early.

MARTY. If I'm interrupting . . .

FRANK. No, this is nothing. Just odds and ends.

MARTY. Nice office.

FRANK. Oh, that's right—you've never been up here, have you?

MARTY. No, this is the first time.

FRANK. Well, you've got to take a look out this window. I've got a view that will knock your eyes out. My big status symbol.

MARTY. You've got to be good, they give you a window like this. They've got to like you.

FRANK. See Jersey over there?

MARTY. I'll be [redacted] Jersey.

FRANK. What's great is to watch thunderstorms come over the Hudson. Hell of a show. Lightning and huge gothic clouds.

MARTY. Always said that was the best thing that could happen to New Jersey.

FRANK. Well, OK.

Start MARTY. No, I'm impressed. I really am. This is very nice.

FRANK. Yes, I'm very . . .

MARTY. So, you all set and ready to go?

FRANK. Just let me put this stuff away.

MARTY. Take your time.

FRANK. Where's Diane?

MARTY. Oh, she'll be along in a few minutes. I told her to meet me here. She had an appointment crosstown, so I figured . . .

FRANK. Sure.

MARTY. Actually, I'm glad I got here a little earlier. There's a favor I want to ask of you.

FRANK. Ask away.

MARTY. OK. Well, see, as a topic of conversation, it may come up during the evening where I was last night. And it would make it a lot easier if we could decide between us that I was with you.

FRANK. To say that?

MARTY. Not to say necessarily, but to sort of give the impression that we were together. It would make things a lot simpler for me. I mean, if it comes up.

FRANK. You want me to say . . .

MARTY. Just to say . . .

FRANK. That you and I . . .

MARTY. That we were . . .

FRANK. Together . . .

MARTY. Together . . .

FRANK. Last night.

MARTY. Yeah.

FRANK. You want me to lie.

MARTY. Well . . .

FRANK. Not "well." You want me to lie.

MARTY. Well . . .

FRANK. That's what you're asking.

MARTY. I wouldn't put it . . .

FRANK. Is that what you're asking?

MARTY. Well, yes.

FRANK. To lie?

MARTY. A little bit. Just to give the impression so that Diane won't worry. To avoid confusion and upset for her.

FRANK. I see. You want me to do a favor for you for her.

MARTY. I couldn't have said it better myself.

FRANK. Where were you last night? I mean, I have to know.

MARTY. It doesn't matter.

FRANK. Well, yes, it does. I have to know whether you're wanting me to tell a white lie or a black lie.

MARTY. It's a white lie.

FRANK. How white? I mean, where were you?

MARTY. I was out.

FRANK. Alone? With someone?

MARTY. With someone.

FRANK. Yeah?

MARTY. Diane wouldn't understand.

FRANK. A woman?

MARTY. She'd take it the wrong way.

FRANK. You were out with another woman.

MARTY. Yes, I was out with another woman.

FRANK. I see. And that's a white lie?

MARTY. It's no big deal.

end

FRANK. I'm sorry, I can't do it.

MARTY. Hey, really, it's no big deal.

FRANK. No, I wouldn't feel good about it.

MARTY. Why not? It's just a little favor.

FRANK. It's not a little . . . You're asking me to lie to her. You don't understand. She's my friend.

MARTY. Aren't I your friend?

FRANK. You're my friend and she's my friend. But she's not my friend because you're my friend. I mean, it's not that you and I have a primary friendship and she's a secondary friend by extension. You're both primary friends.

MARTY. I understand that.

FRANK. You don't break that trust.

MARTY. I'm not asking you to break that trust. I'm asking you to spare her confusion and upset.

FRANK. You're asking me to lie to her.

MARTY. To give a different impression of the truth.

FRANK. A false impression, which is a lie.

MARTY. You've never told a lie in your life?

FRANK. That's not the issue.

MARTY. Of course it's the issue. You're saying you don't tell lies.

FRANK. I'm saying I will not tell *this* lie.

MARTY. How do you decide when you will or will not tell a lie?

FRANK. I try not to lie.

MARTY. But what makes you decide if you'll tell a given lie? Say that an opportunity for a lie presents itself—how do you decide if you'll tell it?

FRANK. This is not the issue.

MARTY. You have told lies, haven't you? You've told lies in the past.

FRANK. I have, but that has nothing to do with this.

MARTY. You just won't tell a lie for me.

FRANK. I don't want to tell an active lie, no.

MARTY. Well, are you going to tell her that I was out with another woman last night?

FRANK. No, of course not.

MARTY. Then isn't that creating a false impression? Isn't that, in fact, a lie?

FRANK. That's a passive lie, my not telling something.

MARTY. Ah, that's different.

FRANK. It is.

MARTY. A difference in kind, right? Active versus passive.

FRANK. There *is* a difference, whether you see it or not.

MARTY. Would you care to elaborate?

FRANK. What do you mean?

MARTY. On the distinction. Active, passive.

FRANK. What does this have to do with . . . ?

MARTY. If we correlate an active lie as being a lie you won't tell and a passive lie as a lie you will, then perhaps we can find that point in the grey area between where we can come to an understanding.

FRANK. Look, I don't want to lie to her.

MARTY. I'm not asking you to *want* to.

FRANK. You're just asking me to do it.

MARTY. Yes, as a favor to a friend.

FRANK. No, I don't want to.

MARTY. You do lots of things you don't want to do. Everybody does.

FRANK. The things that I sometimes do that I don't want to do are things that I have to do. I don't have to do this. I don't have to break that trust.

MARTY. No, and we don't have to be friends, either.

FRANK. Oh, come on. Are you saying if I won't lie for you we won't be friends any more?

MARTY. Of course not. I'm just asking you for a favor.

FRANK. I can't do it.

MARTY. Can't means won't.

FRANK. Can't means can't.

MARTY. Can't means won't.

FRANK. Can't means can't.

MARTY. No, you could.

FRANK. I couldn't.

MARTY. You *could*.

FRANK. I couldn't.

MARTY. Your mouth could say the words. Physically, your mouth could say the words.

FRANK. I couldn't do it.

MARTY. Of course you could.

FRANK. No, I couldn't.

MARTY. You could, but what you're saying is you won't.

FRANK. I'm saying I can't.

MARTY. You're saying you won't.

FRANK. I'm saying . . . OK, I'm saying I won't because I can't.

MARTY. But you *could*.

FRANK. I wouldn't if I could, but I can't so I won't. Anyway, you don't want me to lie for you.

MARTY. Yes, I do.

FRANK. I'm a terrible liar. She'd see right through me.

MARTY. How do you know until you try?

FRANK. Look, I'm not going to tell her where you were. I mean, I couldn't because I don't know.

MARTY. I was at Marvin Gardens. That's on the West Side.

FRANK. I don't want to know. Don't tell me any more.

MARTY. Barbara Schaeffer.

FRANK. I don't want to know who.

MARTY. Barbara Schaeffer.

FRANK. Barbara Schaeffer?

MARTY. See, now you know.


FRANK. I wish you hadn't told me.

MARTY. But you know, and if you don't tell Diane that means you've already lied. Passive-shmassive, it's a lie, and if you've gone that far, why not go a little farther for a friend?

FRANK. Look, you can argue rings around me, but I'm not going to.

MARTY. OK, sorry I asked.

FRANK. I wish you'd understand.

MARTY. It really is a  nice office. You should be very proud. (A beat. DIANE Enters.)

DIANE. I've found you at last.

FRANK. You have trouble?

DIANE. You could've at least left a trail of breadcrumbs. So, you guys ready to go?

FRANK. In a second.

DIANE. Hey, nice view.

FRANK. You like it?

DIANE. That's Jersey, isn't it?

MARTY. You can see thunderstorms, Frank says.

DIANE. Oh really? That must be exciting.

FRANK. What, I don't get a kiss?

DIANE. Absolutely! (She kisses Frank.)

FRANK. Hey, you look swell.

DIANE. In contrast to . . . ?

FRANK. No, of course not.

DIANE. Thank you.

FRANK. That's a nice outfit.

DIANE. I'm glad you like it.

FRANK. It really is. I really do. (*FRANK goes offstage with a file.*)

DIANE. (*To MARTY:*) So, how was your day?

MARTY. Fine.

DIANE. You and Jacobs get that thing cleared up?

MARTY. No big problem.

DIANE. I thought you were worried.

MARTY. Not seriously. We sat down, we talked.

DIANE. You compromised.

MARTY. I didn't have to.

DIANE. It must be a relief.

MARTY. And your interview?

DIANE. Nothing definite.

MARTY. But there's interest?

DIANE. They didn't say no.

MARTY. That's half the battle.

DIANE. Yeah.

MARTY. Fingers crossed. (*FRANK returns.*)

DIANE. You got here early, hunh?

MARTY. Just a few minutes ago.

DIANE. You've got a lot of papers on your desk, Frank. You must work awfully hard.

FRANK. It just looks that way. Gives the impression I'm earning my money, which, of course, I'm not.

DIANE. Oh, no, I know you. Industrious. Kind, loyal, honest, brave. You're the only person I know who lives up to . . . what is it?

MARTY. (*a little dig*) The Boy Scout code.

DIANE. (*an immediate echo*) The Boy Scout code.

FRANK. I wouldn't know. I wasn't a Scout.

DIANE. I can see you loaded down with merit badges.

FRANK. Yes, well now, *Touch of Evil* starts at 7:10 at the museum, so that means we should figure out what restaurant in the area . . .

MARTY. We should be pushing along, right.

FRANK. There's not a big hurry, but if we want to have a few drinks first . . .

DIANE. (*To MARTY:*) Hey . . .

MARTY. How are ya?

DIANE. What are you doing?

MARTY. Just saying hi to you. (*a beat*)

DIANE. We have to be at the museum at what?

FRANK. Well, by seven at least.

DIANE. So, where shall we eat?

FRANK. How does Italian sound, or are you on a diet and don't want that, or what? Chinese?

DIANE. Do you think I should be on a diet?

FRANK. Women always seem to be on diets. Men, too. People in general.

DIANE. Women aren't always on diets. Some women diet. The heavy variety. They tend to diet.

FRANK. I can remember you being on some pretty screwy diets.

DIANE. You think I'm screwy?

FRANK. No, of course not. I didn't say that.

DIANE. I'm sorry. I'm a little weird tonight. The ozone or something.

FRANK. Sure, I mean, air quality does . . .

DIANE. (*Interrupting; to MARTY:*) You didn't get home till really late last night.

MARTY. I know.

DIANE. I wasn't even awake when you got home.

MARTY. I know. I didn't want to disturb you.

DIANE. Listen to the man! My favorite thing in the world is to wrap my arms around him in bed and he says he doesn't want to disturb me. And you got up and left early this morning, too.

MARTY. I know. I had to get out.

DIANE. Away from me?

MARTY. No, no, of course not. I just had to leave.

DIANE. Why?

MARTY. I had someplace to be.

DIANE. Oh.

MARTY. Preparing for the Jacobs thing, you know.

DIANE. Yeah.

FRANK. Do you want me to leave? Would you rather be alone or . . . ?

DIANE. (*interrupting*) I promised myself I wasn't going to ask this question. I mean, I was in the bathroom and I combed my hair and I looked in the mirror and I said to myself, "You're looking good, Diane. You're looking very good."

FRANK. You look terrific.

DIANE. (*quiet, intense*) Where were you last night? Where were you till so late?

MARTY. (*a beat, then—*) I was with Frank all night long. Isn't that right, Frank? (*a beat*)

FRANK. Yeah, that's right. He was. With me. We were . . .

DIANE. With Frank?

MARTY. Yes. Is that what you were so worried about?

DIANE. Yes, I'm sorry. It's stupid.

FRANK. We were playing . . .

MARTY. Playing . . .

FRANK. Poker.

MARTY. Cards. I didn't want to tell you because, well, I know you don't like me gambling.

DIANE. No.

MARTY. And I lost a little last night.

FRANK. Yeah, I zapped him for a little.

DIANE. How much?

FRANK. Forty-something. He made me promise not to tell.

DIANE. I see. Well . . .

FRANK. Tell you what, dinner's on me tonight, OK?

DIANE. *(She knows they've been lying now. She looks at FRANK very directly and says—)* Why not? *(a beat)*

MARTY. I guess we'd better get going, hunh?

(DIANE nods. She exits first. FRANK and MARTY exchange a look before Exiting. Lights fade out.)

The Duck Pond

by

Ara Watson