

Marty, Parte II

Delbert Mann, Dir. (1955)

Marty gets up slowly from the table. He leaves the dining room and enters the room with the phone. He slides all the doors closed, peeking first to make sure no one is around. He turns on the lamp and pulls out his little phone book.

As Marty looks through the little book, he sits down, puts the phone on the arm of the chair, and dials the number.

At the other end, someone answers and Marty asks, "Could I speak to Miss Mary Feeney?" He listens and then: "Just tell her 'an old friend'." When Mary comes to the phone, Marty reminds her of who he is: "I'm Marty Piletti. I wonder if you recall me. I'm kind of a stocky guy. The last time we met, we were at the movies, at the RKO Chester. You was with a friend of yours and I was with a friend of mine named Angie. It was about a month ago."

She can't remember, so he gives her more details. "You was sitting in front of us and we was annoying you and you got mad and... I'm the fella who works in the butcher shop," he explains, putting his hand on his chest as if she's there in the room with him. He seems more animated than at any instant so far. His face is alive with feeling. "Oh, come on," he says, after a brief silence. "You know who I am." Pause.

"That's right. And then we went to Howard Johnson and had hamburgers. You had a milkshake." He waits for a moment. "That's right. I'm the stocky one, the heavysset fella." Pause. "Well, I'm glad you recall me because I had a pretty nice time that night and I was wondering how everything was with you." Apparently she doesn't respond, so he tries again, "How's everything?" Pause. "That's swell."

The camera slowly zooms in on Marty as he finally gets to the point, "Yeah, well, I'll tell you why I called. I was figuring on taking in a movie tonight. And I was wondering if you and your friend would care to see a movie tonight with me and *my* friend." Marty waits a moment. "Yeah, tonight."

He closes his eyes as if in pain. "Well, I know it's a little late to call for a date, but I didn't know myself until –" She cuts him off. He seems to be in pain. He keeps his eyes closed through the rest of the conversation, as if warding off the truth. "Yeah, I know. Are you free next Saturday night?" Pause. "What about the Saturday after that?" But it seems like Mary is never available for him.

The call ends and it's a dark moment for Marty. He slowly puts down the receiver, he sighs, looks back at his little phone book, closes it, and gets up from his chair.

A dissolve brings us to the kitchen, where Marty's mother is at the stove, ladling pasta into a dish. She gives a smile of satisfaction and turns to enter the dining room.

Marty is there, already having his dinner. He puts aside the plate he's eating on to make room for the pasta that his mother brought him. He sprinkles parmesan on the food as she watches, smiling.

She asks him, "So, what are you going to do tonight, Marty?"

"I don't know, Ma. I'm all knocked out. I may just hang around the house."

But she has an idea for him! "Why don't you go to the Stardust Ballroom?"

He looks at her. "Whaaat...?"

"I say, why don't you go to the Stardust Ballroom. It's loaded with tomatoes." His mother looks at him encouragingly, wearing her dark dress and the crucifix suspended on a gold chain around her neck.

"It's loaded with what?"

"Tomatoes?"

He laughs quietly. "Who told you about the Stardust Ballroom, Ma?"

"Tommy. He say it's very nice place."

"Oh, Thomas," he replies, smiling, "Ma, it's just a big dance hall. That's all it is. I've been there a hundred times."

He stirs the food in the dish, chuckling. "Loaded with tomatoes! Oh, you're funny, Ma!"

She looks concerned, though. "I don't want you hanging around the house tonight. I want you take a shave and go dance."

Marty replies good-naturedly, "Ma, when are you gonna give up? You got a bachelor on your hands. I ain't never gonna get married."

"You gonna get married!"

"Sooner or later, there comes a point in a man's life when he's gotta face some facts. And one fact I gotta face is: whatever it is that women like, I ain't got it. I chased after enough girls in my life. I went to enough dances. I got hurt enough. I don't want to get hurt no more."

To prove his point, he explains, “I just called up a girl this afternoon. I got a real brush-off, boy. I figured I was past the point of being hurt, but that hurt... Some stupid woman who I didn’t even want to call up. She gave me the brush. No, Ma, I don’t want to go to the Stardust Ballroom. Because all that ever happened to me there was that girls made me feel like I was a... a bug. Ma, I got feelings, you know. I had enough pain. No thanks, Ma.” He takes a bite of his pasta.

“Marty –”

“No! I’m gonna stay home tonight and watch the Hit Parade.”

“You’re gonna die without a son!”

“So I’ll die without a son.”

“Marty, put on the blue suit, eh?”

Marty has had it. “Blue suit, gray suit. I’m just a fat, little man. A fat, ugly man!”

“You not ugly,” insists his mother, a pained expression on her face.

“I’m ugly! I’m ugly, I’m ugly!”

“Marty!”

“Ma, leave me alone!” he cries as he rushes away from the table.

Then he turns back to her, leaning in close to her face and asking, “Ma, what do you want from me?! What do you want from me? I’m miserable enough as it is. All right, so I’ll go to the Stardust Ballroom. I’ll put on a blue suit and I’ll go. And you know what I’m gonna get for my trouble? Heartache, a big night of heartache.”

He sits back down to eat. After a moment, he reaches out and pats his mother’s hand, to let her know it’s okay.

Then he remembers and says to himself, smiling, “Loaded with tomatoes! That’s a good one!”

While he eats, his mother looks down at the table with a pained expression, her hands folded.

At the Stardust Ballroom, big band music is playing. Couples dance on a packed dance floor.

Overhead, a glittering ball revolves.

The camera pans the stag line: men talking, smoking, and looking at women. They all wear jackets, and most wear ties. Marty and Angie are at the end of the line.

“Not a bad crowd tonight, you know?” Angie comments.

“Yeah,” Marty agrees. “There’s a nice-lookin’ one over there with the black dress and the beads on. But she’s dancin’.”

Angie leans over to Marty, saying, “There’s a nice-looking little short one for you right down there.”

“Where?”

“Down there. Whaddya say? Wanna ask ‘em? I’ll take the one with the flowers on her dress.”

Marty isn’t convinced. “I think this music’s a little fast. Just a minute.” He steps back discreetly and tries out some dance steps.

He tells Angie nervously, “Yeah, I think it’s all right. They still over there?”

With Angie leading the way, they walk around the edge of the dance floor, past the dancing couples, until they reach a group of three women who are talking and watching the dancers. Angie approaches one with a pearl necklace and earrings, who’s chewing gum. “Whaddya say? You wanna dance?”

She nods without saying a word and off they go, leaving Marty on his own.

He asks one of the other women if she’d like to dance. She stops talking to her friend, looks him up and down and replies, not unkindly, “I’m sorry. I don’t feel like dancing just yet.”

Marty nods and leaves them, walking back to the spot where the single guys are gathered. He stands there, hardly disguising his dismay, and watches the couples dance and have fun.

Meanwhile, downstairs at the entrance, a young woman, Clara, (Betsy Blair) comes in with her sister Millie, and their dates. She’s dressed a little like a schoolmarm, her collar securely fastened with a black ribbon; she’s not wearing jewelry or makeup. Millie, looks a little more fashionable. Tonight her boyfriend Andy arranged a blind date for Clara with Herb, a friend of his. She asks, “Clara, have you made up your mind about tomorrow afternoon?”

“Millie, you know I always go to the movies with Papa on Sunday afternoons.”

“But you could have a lot of fun,” says Millie, as they start to climb the stairs.

Both the men are wearing suits and ties. Herb tells his friend, “I wanna get some cigarettes.”

The women wait for them on the stairs.

At the cigarette machine, Andy says, “Herb, I told you she wasn’t especially attractive, but that she had a good deal of charm. She’s really a nice girl.”

“She’s all right, Andy,” Herb replies. “It’s just that I only get one Saturday night off every three weeks. I was expecting something better, that’s all.”

Up on the stairs, the women are talking. Millie asks, “Do you like him, Clara?”

“Yes, he seems very nice.”

Back to the fellas:

“Millie’s been asking me to fix her up –”

“All right! I’m having a fair time. It’s just that I get one Saturday night off in three weeks. I wanted to wind up with something tonight.” He glances at his friend with a disgruntled expression.

“Okay, so I’m sorry.”

“Forget it!” Herb cuts him off and walks away.

The group proceeds up the stairs. While Andy is buying the tickets, a petite woman with a low-cut black dress walks by.

“Hey!” Herb calls out to her.

The woman stops and looks back. “Herbie! What are you doing here?”

“I came up to dance. What do you think?” He steps away from the group and, with his back to them, he asks her, “You here with somebody?”

She replies, “I’m just here with another girl...”

“Where you going now?”

“I’m going to get some cigarettes. I left them in my coat.”

“I’ll see you around,” he says, with a seductive smile.

“Yeah,” she says, smiling, “I’ll see you.” And she goes on her way.

As he returns to his group, Millie shoots him a disapproving look.

“That was a girl I used to know,” he says.

Herb takes Clara by the arm and leads her into the ballroom. Millie and Andy follow, holding hands.

The dancing in full swing. Andy bounces a little on his heels; he is ready to dance!

“Boy, it’s sure packed in here, huh?” he exclaims.

Millie observes, “These kids are awfully young! Aren’t you afraid you’ll run into one of your students?”

“No, I wouldn’t think so,” replies Clara. “I teach out in Brooklyn.”

“You been here before, Clara?” Andy asks.

“Yes, twice.”

Millie asks, “You want to try and get a table and something to drink or you just want to start dancing?”

Herb is chewing gum and looking around the dance floor. Andy tries to get his attention. “Herb? Herb!

What d’ya say, grab a table and have a drink before we dance?”

“Listen, you people go grab a table. I’ll be back in a minute. I’ll be right back.” He walks away quickly.

Clara follows him, sadly with her eyes.

“Whaddya say, Clara?” says Andy. “Let’s grab a table.” As they walk, he takes Millie’s coat, which she’s been carrying on her arm. Then he helps Clara off with hers and holds that, too.

Meanwhile, Herb is walking along the stag line.

He approaches Marty and asks, “You here stag or with a girl?”

“I’m stag.”

“Well, I’ll tell ya. I got stuck on a blind date with a dog. I just met a girl I used to know. I’m just wondering how I’m gonna get rid of the girl I’m with. I need to find somebody to take her home. Know what I mean? I’d be glad to pay you five bucks if you take her home for me.”

“What?!” Marty asks, disbelieving.

“I’ll take you over and introduce you as an old army buddy of mine, then I’ll leave, ‘cause I got this other girl waiting for me out by the hat check. And I’ll pay you five bucks.”

“Are you kiddin’?”

“No, I’m not kiddin’.”

“You can’t just walk off on a girl like that,” Marty reproaches him.

Herb walks away from him without another word. Marty watches him go.

He leans against a column for a moment, but then he gets curious. He walks over and observes as Herb talks to another fellow on the line. After a brief conversation, Herb hands the fellow some cash.

Marty follows the men as they go to Clara so that Herb can dump her.

When they reach her, she’s sitting alone at a small round table. Millie and Andy must be dancing.

Marty observes from a distance as Herb introduces the man to Clara. After a few minutes, the men walk away from the table, leaving Clara alone. She looks quite forlorn as the music plays on and groups of people celebrate at tables around her.

Standing close to Marty, Herb tells the man, “In that case, as long as she’s goin’ home alone, why don’t you give me the five bucks back?”

“You paid me the five bucks, the five bucks is mine!” the man retorts.

Marty looks at Clara in alarm.

The music stops. As the crowd applauds, Clara stands and haltingly walks forward. A new song comes on, a fast one. Clara looks around for her friends, uncertain what to do. Abruptly, she runs through a door and out of the room.

In a tracking shot, we see Marty follow her, walking toward the door.