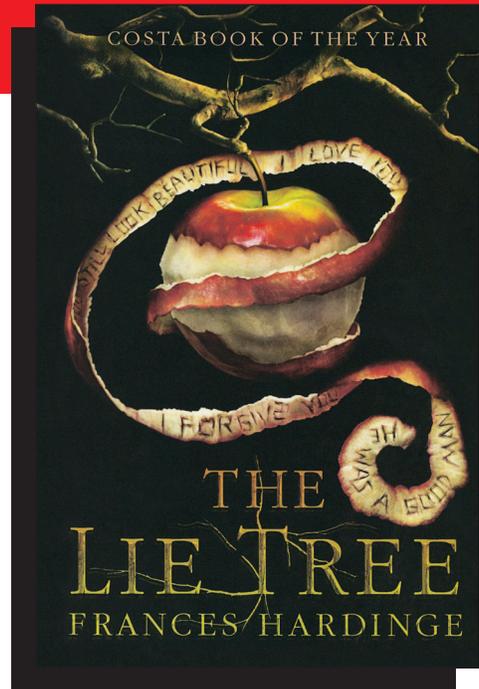


Booktalk!

The Lie Tree Script

For this Book Talk you will need

- 3 actors (Faith Sunderly & Paul Clay)
- Faith: long black skirt, black blouse, black short boots, fake snake around neck, locket
- Paul: black dress pants, shirt & shoes, vest, lantern lit up by fake candle, scissors
- Actor offstage: keys
- Additional props: two chairs with blanket draped over them & pillow at one end (to simulate bed), small animal cage, bench with long box set on top of it & covered with long grey, black or brown tablecloth/blanket (to simulate stone wall), 2 stools



- Faith:** *(Faith sitting on 'bed' mid-stage; Paul walking on & rattling lantern; Faith opening imaginary door & running towards sound, sneering at Paul as she speaks)* What are you doing here?
- Paul:** *(staring aghast at Faith & gazing at snake around her neck; speaking hesitantly/nervously)* It was a dare... *(taking a step back)*
- Faith:** *(hissing)* You thief! What did you steal?
- Paul:** *(innocently)* Nothing! *(glancing down at scissors in his hand)* I just wanted... some hair. *(speaking more quickly)* They dared me to bring back some hair. But I didn't want to prise open the coffin... *(pausing)* And then Dr. Jacklers took it away for coroner business. I thought there might be some in his room...
- Faith:** *(sounding livid)* How dare you! He is dead, and graveless. Is that not enough? Do you people have to cut him apart as well?
- Faith:** *(Paul flinching & glancing to the side with a look of panic on his face; sound of keys jangling offstage)* Hurry! Come with me! *(Faith grabbing Paul by the sleeve and pulling him to the other side of the stage, behind 'wall'; Paul looking surprised/startled)*

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- Faith:** *(sitting down on stool, peering over top of wall then ducking down; motioning to Paul to sit on other stool opposite her & hissing at him)* Get down or they will see you from below! *(continuing in a stage whispering back)* Who dared you to disturb a dead man?
- Paul:** *(sounding vague)* Some friends... *(hesitating then continuing)* People are saying your father's spirit is walking...
- Faith:** *(cutting off Paul mid-sentence, smirking slightly & speaking excitedly)* Who? Who says that?
- Paul:** Everybody, all over the island. *(pausing then continuing)* They knew I helped move his body for the photography, but they wagered I wouldn't come back and touch him again, with his ghost hanging over, watching. The hair was supposed to be proof.
- Paul:** *(hesitating momentarily then sounding somewhat bolder)* What was the doctor doing here?
- Faith:** He is the coroner. He came to investigate my father's death.
- Paul:** Did you tell him what you tried to tell me? Did you tell him that you think somebody murdered...
- Faith:** *(interrupting; sounding annoyed)* Do you mean my *(air quoting)* fantasies and phantasms? My *(air quoting again)* overheated imaginings brought on by too many novels?
- Paul:** *(eyes widening & looking surprised)* You *did* tell him! You believe it.
- Faith:** *(sounding bitter)* And you do not.
- Paul:** Nobody liked him. He nearly lamed my friend, and acted curmudgeonly to everyone, and then turned out to be a cheat and a hypocrite to boot. But you do not kill a man for that.
- Faith:** *(hesitating then snapping)* Well, somebody murdered him for some reason. *(pausing momentarily)* The morning he died, someone handed him an unsigned letter. It upset him. He would not talk about it. He burned it. Then in the middle of the night he went out into the darkness. I think he went to meet somebody. I think the letter forced him to do it. His pistol is missing. He did not shoot himself so, if he took it with him when he went out, it must have been for protection.
- Paul:** *(sounding somewhat skeptical)* If somebody attacked him, why didn't he shoot them?

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- Faith:** *(shaking her head slightly)* I do not know. But he had wounds to the back of his head as well as the front. I think he was struck from behind.
- Paul:** *(thinking for a moment then continuing)* Did anybody hear a carriage or a horse come by that night?
- Faith:** No. The wind was too loud.
- Paul:** And they might have stopped at a distance, then walked. Or maybe they came by boat or on foot. *(narrowing his eyes)* This house is miles from anywhere. Anyone who came out here would have been missing from their home for an hour or two, in the middle of the night. Unless they were in your house already, of course.
- Faith:** *(nodding slowly)* I want you to help me.
- Paul:** *(incredulously)* Help you? *(laughing)* Why would I?
- Faith:** We cannot leave the island until my father is buried properly. Help me find my father's killer. You know the island. You can talk to people. You can find out whether anybody was out that night for no good reason. You can go where you please.
- Paul:** *(pausing for a long time then continuing)* What do I gain from it? *(smirking slightly)*
- Faith:** What will your friends do if you come back without some of my father's hair? Will they tease you? Call you a coward? *(Paul's smirk changing to look of embarrassment)*
- Faith:** *(opening locket & pulling imaginary hair out of it; holding it towards Paul)* Come and take it...if you dare. *(smirking)*
- Paul:** *(turning to audience)* Is she completely mad...or is there any truth to what she believes? *(picking up copy of The Lie Tree that's on the floor underneath his stool & holding it up for the audience to see)* The only way to find out is by reading *The Lie Tree* – it's available at your Scholastic Book Fair...and it contains all the lies... and the truths.