



FOREVER FERNWOOD



EPISODE #389

by

KAREN JONES

*ROCK
p. 20*

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PRODUCTION

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

LORETTA	MARY KAY PLACE
CHARLIE	GRAHAM JARVIS
MARTHA	DODY GOODMAN
MERLE	DABNEY COLEMAN
WANDA	MARIAN MERCER
GRANDPA	VICTOR KILIAN
GEORGE	PHIL BRUNS
MEL	SHELLEY BERMAN
EVA BARNHART	
ROGER BUSHMILLER	

SETS

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HAGGERS LIVING ROOM - DAY
(Loretta and Charlie)

ACT II: SC. 1
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INT. MEL BEACHE'S BIDE-A-WEE ROOM - NIGHT
(Martha and Mel)

ACT II: SC 2
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SHUMWAY KITCHEN - NIGHT
(Martha, George, Granpa, and Eva Burnhart)

ACT III
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HAGGERS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
(Loretta, Charlie, and Roger Bushmiller)

ACT IV
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INT. JEETER MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT
(Merle and Wanda)

ACT TWO - SCENE TWOINT. SHUMWAY KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARTHA ENTERS CARRYING A BAG OF GROCERIES. SHE PUTS THEM ON THE SINK.

MARTHA

(CALLS) George, I'm home!

A BEAT, THEN GEORGE STICKS HIS HEAD IN THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM DOOR. HIS HAIR IS TOUSLED, AND HE ENTERS THE ROOM PULLING UP ONE SUSPENDER.

GEORGE

(FALSE BRAVADO) So you're home!

MARTHA

I just told you that. And in case you didn't believe me, I'm standing in front of you.

GEORGE

I thought you and Mel Beach would be parked in front of a fireplace somewhere, for a little romantic get together.

MARTHA

The Bide-A-Wee doesn't have any fireplaces, so you don't have to worry.

GEORGE

Ah ha!

MARTHA

Oh, stop with the "ah ha's". Nothing happened. I simply went over to see his new accommodations.

GEORGE

Did you happen to get anywhere near the bed?

MARTHA

George, you ruined his life. The least I can do is be nice to him. You're really getting to be terrible, suspecting me of affair after affair. I'd certainly give you the benefit of the doubt.

EVA BARNHART ENTERS FROM THE LIVING ROOM. SHE IS WEARING A BATHROBE, AND LOOKS VERY SEXY. AS SHE PASSES AN EMBARRASSED GEORGE ON HER WAY TO THE STOVE, SHE TWEAKS HIS CHEEK.

EVA

Hi, big guy. (LOOKING INTO A BOILING POT) How are the oysters doing?

MARTHA

Good evening, Dr. Barnhart.

EVA

Oh, hi there. Sorry, I didn't notice you.

MARTHA

(STILL FLABBERGASTED) That's all right.

GEORGE

(FEEBLE) Martha, it's this way, she was having a drink, and it spilled on her dress...

EVA

(SCOLDING) Oh, George! How I'd hoped you wouldn't be like all the others, dynamite in the love department, but with a yellow streak a mile wide. (SIGHS) Oh, well, being a realist, I've learned to love yellow...

MARTHA

(EXPLODES)

You, you home-wrecker!

EVA

Come now, Mrs. Shumway. From what I've heard of your adventures, this home is just a pit-stop for you.

MARTHA

(GOING CRAZY) I've got to get out of this house!

EVA

Going to Reno? It really is for the best, you know. George, you'll be a sport and spring for the ticket, won't you?

GEORGE

Now just a minute here...

EVA

All right, I'll pay. Even though I am in a higher earning bracket, this really galls me, but if that's what it's going to take...

GRANDPA ENTERS, AND MARTHA RUNS TO HIM, UPSET.

GRANDPA

I thought I heard some excitement. Did anybody slug George yet?

MARTHA

(UPSET) Pa, what's happening?

GRANDPA

Well, I didn't take notes, Martha, so I kinda forgot. But I think George and this dame were about to jump all over each other.

MARTHA

(DISTRAUGHT) But why, Pa, why?

GRANDPA

That's what I forgot. But if I remember, I'll let you know.

GRANDPA EXITS.

MARTHA

(BRAVELY) Dr. Barnhart, I'm going to ask you one question.

EVA

That seems fair, considering what I'm getting out of the deal.

MARTHA

Will you give George up?

EVA

No.

MARTHA

Then there's only one thing for me to do.

MARTHA FAINTS DEAD AWAY. GEORGE
BENDS DOWN TO HER.

EVA

(LOOKING DOWN AT MARTHA) Oh, please.

That ploy went out with lace doilies and
whale bone corset stays.

GEORGE

(PATTING HER HAND) Martha, can you hear
me?

EVA

(BENDING DOWN OVER GEORGE SO SHE'S
TALKING INTO HIS EAR) George, let's go
back into the living room. (BEAT) I'll
show you my appendectomy scar. (BEAT)
Again.

GEORGE

But Martha's out cold. I ought to at
least wait until she comes to.

EVA

But darling, there's only enough oysters
for you and me. And I know her type.
She's going to be a real wet blanket for
the rest of the evening.

EVA PULLS GEORGE AWAY FROM MARTHA
AND PUSHES HIM TOWARD THE LIVING
ROOM DOOR.

GEORGE

- You think she'll be okay?

EVA

Fainting is life's sedative, George.

Mother Nature knows best.

EVA PUSHES GEORGE THROUGH THE DOOR
AND LOOKS BACK AT MARTHA.

EVA (CONT'D)

And Dr. Barnhart knows better. (SINGS
AS SHE DISAPPEARS INTO THE LIVING ROOM)
... Are the stars out tonight..."

FADE OUT.

ACT THREEINT. HAGGARS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LORETTA IS SITTING ON THE COUCH AND
CHARLIE IS PACING.

LORETTA

Charlie, hon, calm down. It ain't nobody's fault we can't have a baby. I'm sorry for getting you all worked up about being a daddy before we talked to the Doc.

CHARLIE

Honey, I just feel so bad for you. I hear all them calls in your body crying out for motherhood. Ain't that the feeling you said you had?

LORETTA

I thought that's what it was. It could have been indigestion.

CHARLIE

You're so good, Loretta. Trying to be brave so's I won't worry too much about you.

LORETTA

Honest, Charlie, now that I've had some time to mull things over, I don't mind that we can't have a little one. I've still got you and my buddin' career.

CHARLIE

That's the right attitude, honey. A person shouldn't feel any less human just 'cause they can't conceive a child.

LORETTA

You really feel that way, Baby Boy?

CHARLIE

Of course.

LORETTA

In that case you ought to know the truth. It's you that's... well... tapped out in the hereditaries.

CHARLIE

(SHOCKED) What!!?

LORETTA

(SOOTHING) Now, honey, remember what you just told me. You ain't any less of a man.

CHARLIE

I was half a man before. I ain't too good with fractions, but I think that makes me a quarter man now.

LORETTA

(PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HIM COMFORTINGLY)
Baby Boy, a quarter of you is worth a
whole somebody else to me.

CHARLIE

(DISTRAUGHT) First my hearing and now
what's left of my manhood! Lord, ain't I
ever again going to have all my bodily
parts working together?

LORETTA

Charlie, if there was still some way we
could rustle up a baby you'd like that,
wouldn't you?

CHARLIE

Well, sure, honey, but how?

LORETTA

Well, I knew how your heart was set on this,
so I asked the adoption agency to send
someone over to interview us.

CHARLIE

(EXCITED) Loretta! You came through,
like always! (PICKS HER UP AND WHIRLS
HER AROUND) Do you think this adoption
person could tell us tonight who
we're gonna get? Maybe they've got a
group shot of the poor little orphans and
we can choose.

SFX: DOORBELL

LORETTA

This is it, hon. Now Charlie, we got to make a good impression. Straighten your collar.

CHARLIE STRAIGHTENS AND STANDS FOR INSPECTION. LORETTA APPROVES. CHARLIE GOES TO THE DOOR AND ADMITS ROGER BUSHMILLER, WHO IS CARRYING A BRIEFCASE.

ROGER

Hello, is this the Hagers residence?

CHARLIE

(SHAKING HIS HAND) That's us.

ROGER

I'm Roger Bushmiller from the state adoption agency.

LORETTA

Come right on in, Mr. Bushmiller. Set yourself down.

ROGER SITS ON THE COUCH.

CHARLIE

What do you want to know about us, Mr. Bushmiller? We're real nice folks.

ROGER

I'm sure you are, but we're not in the habit of giving children to father/daughter combinations.

LORETTA

No, I think you're a mite confused. I'm Loretta Haggars, and this is my lawful-wedded husband Charlie.

ROGER

(RAISED EYEBROWS) I see. I'm sorry, but we have a list of preferential customers. I'm afraid May/December relationships are right at the bottom with show business people, and those with arrest records.

CHARLIE

(ALARMED) Arrest records?

LORETTA

Show business people?

ROGER

You're kidding! A double whammie? Well, there's really no sense in my staying.

ROGER GETS UP TO LEAVE.

CHARLIE

Now wait, please, Roger. Them legal black marks against my good name ain't really nothing at all when you examine 'em.

ROGER

What exactly were you in for?

CHARLIE

Well, the first time was a mistaken case of cruelty to animals, and then I was public nuisancing. But it was for a good Christian cause.

ROGER

Cruelty to animals for a good Christian cause? Now that's one I haven't heard before.

LORETTA

And I'm going to be a semi-retired show business personality just as soon as I get a babe in my arms.

CHARLIE

It ain't as if we've never been parents at all. We had Johnny Doe.

ROGER

That's right. (OPENS HIS BRIEFCASE AND PULLS OUT A SHEET OF PAPER) Yes, here it is. For a short time you were foster parents to a feral child. Well, that certainly makes up for all those previous demerits.

CHARLIE AND LORETTA LOOK HOPEFUL.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Just for the record, where is the boy now?

LORETTA

(SADLY) Big Foot didn't send us no forwarding address.

ROGER

(SHOCKED) Did I understand you to say
Big Foot?

CHARLIE

There wasn't nothing else we could do.
We gave him back to the folks that raised
him so's he'd be happy.

ROGER

You what?

LORETTA

We turned him loose in the jungle.

ROGER

(GATHERING HIS PAPERS AND SHUTTING HIS
BRIEFCASE) Awfully nice meeting
you two.

ROGER GETS UP AND MAKES FOR THE
DOOR.

CHARLIE

But what about the child?

LORETTA

We want one so bad!

ROGER

I wouldn't trust you two with a
Betsy-Wetzy doll!

ROGER STORMS OUT AND SLAMS THE
DOOR BEHIND HIM. CHARLIE AND
LORETTA ARE DEJECTED.

LORETTA

Honey?

CHARLIE

What is it sweetheart?

LORETTA

What are baby dolls going for these
days?

CHARLIE AND LORETTA STAND
LOOKING AT EACH OTHER, DEFEATED
AS WE:

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURINT. JEETER MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

THE ROOM HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A NEWSPAPER OFFICE. BULLETIN BOARDS ADORN THE WALLS WITH CLIPPINGS TACKED UP HERE AND THERE. THERE IS A TYPEWRITER ON ONE TABLE, AND IN ONE CORNER, A UPI MACHINE IS CLICKING AWAY. ALSO, THERE IS AN OLD-FASHIONED MIMEOGRAPH MACHINE. WANDA IS SITTING AT THE TYPEWRITER. MERLE ENTERS WITH A CAMERA AROUND HIS NECK.

MERLE

Here it is, Wanda. Here's our human interest photo.

MERLE HANDS WANDA A SNAPSHOT.

WANDA

Merle, this is a picture of you standing in front of city hall.

MERLE

Yeah, I made sure I caught a piece of it. I wanted to establish an official tone for our first issue. Next time we'll maybe run a picture of a little kitty or puppy.

WANDA

You're too good to me, Merle. (BEAT)
Say, Merle, I'm concocting some really
spicy letters for my advice to the
lovelorn column.

MERLE

You want some help, is that it? I'll see
what I can tell ya in the love department.

WANDA

In one letter a woman writes that her
husband spent their wedding night in a
house of ill repute.

MERLE

Yeah?

WANDA

In another letter a woman writes that
she and her husband both had affairs with
their maid.

MERLE

So?

WANDA

Do those stories sound too far-fetched to
you?

MERLE

Boring, Wanda. People want some sparkle
brought to their drab lives. Don't give
them something they can find in their own
back yard.

WANDA

You're right. Maybe if I change the setting to Madagascar...

MERLE

Wanda, I can feel it in my bones. This one-page paper is going to be a publishing empire someday.

WANDA

We do have something for everyone. There's a crossword puzzle, an article about a breakthrough in finding a cure for bunions, and the first installment of "Me and Mr. Ed -- A Hollywood Starlet's Shocking Confessions".

MERLE

And then the local news. The quarantine, Mac Slattery's blindness, and the Mel Beach story.

WANDA

You know, Merle, I can't help thinking that tragic tale would make a terrific piece of cinema. Disaster movies are in, and I can't think of a bigger disaster than that man.

MERLE

Maybe he'd sign the rights over to me. Then I'd be a movie mogul, and a publishing giant. I'm just afraid I'm gonna wake up at age fifty with no new worlds to conquer.

WANDA

Merle, before you break into a chorus of "Is That All There Is," I think we'd better put this baby to bed.

MERLE

Wanda, for God's sake, is that all you can think about? We've got to get this paper to the presses over there in the corner.

WANDA

That's what I said, Merle. Only in Newspaperese. First, let's take a final look at the UPI machine that you borrowed from city hall.

MERLE AND WANDA GO OVER TO THE UPI MACHINE AND READ THE TAPE.

MERLE

(READS) Let's see here. The Red Chinese just exploded another nuclear bomb.

WANDA

A definite downer. Our message should be hopeful.

MERLE

What's this? (READS) Holy pendant stolen from the Emir of Abu Bhai is still missing. The Emir is threatening to break off diplomatic relations with Uncle Sam if it isn't returned. That must be some bauble.

WANDA

(THINKS) It is. It's a beautifully carved piece fashioned from a camel's rib.

MERLE

(READS) Those A-rabs are clever devils. Carved the thing from a camel's rib.
(STOPS) How did you know?

WANDA

That's the very pendant that Cathy Shumway showed me the other day.

MERLE

(SLAPS HIS HEAD) That's the trinket they put her in the slammer for trying to fence! What a scoop! It's grand larceny one.

WANDA

(A TRIFLE PUT OUT) Of course, she isn't the brains behind the operation. Using the word "brains" in connection with Cathy would be a contradiction in terms.

MERLE

Wanda, I don't care if she found it in the frozen foods department at the Kwikiee Mart. Can't you just see the headline? "Local Girl Makes Bad." It'll sell a million!

WANDA

I'm rather partial to the two-headed calf feature, but we of the fourth estate can't let our personal prejudices get in the way of selling copy. We'll go with the Cathy Shumway story.

MERLE

(FANTASIZING) A movie mogul, a publishing giant, and a police affairs expert.

Wanda, my life is finally starting to take shape.

THEY GO TO PRESS, AS WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #389

