



FOREVER FERNWOOD



EPISODE #390

by

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PRODUCTION

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TOM	GREG MULLAVEY
LORETTA	MARY KAY PLACE
CHARLIE	GRAHAM JARVIS
CATHY	DEBRALEE SCOTT
MERLE	DABNEY COLEMAN
WANDA	MARIAN MERCER
MAC	DENNIS BURKLEY
ELEANOR	SHELLEY FABARES
PENNY	JUDY KAHAN
JERRY	FRED WILLARD
JEFFREY	RANDALL CARVER
NAT DEARBORN	LOU FRIZZELL
BARTENDER	ROBERT STONEMAN
HAROLD CLEMONS	ARCHIE HAHN
MAN	
WOMAN	

SETS

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CAPRI LOUNGE - NEW DAY
(Tom, Charlie, Wanda, Mac, Penny,
Eleanor, Jerry and Bartender)

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TOWN SQUARE - MEANWHILE
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CATHY'S JAIL CELL - DAY
(Tom, Cathy, Merle, Wanda,
Jeffrey, Clemons and Nat Dearborn)

ACT ONE - SCENE 2TOWN SQUARE - MEANWHILE

MERLE, WELL-BUNDLED UP, IS HAWKING THE FERNWOOD FLYER FROM A PORTABLE NEWSSTAND. HE PITCHES TO TWO EXTRAS -- MAN AND WOMAN. THEY REACT TO PITCH WITH OOHS, AAHS, AND TSKS.

MERLE

You can't walk by this, folks -- this is your chance to read the truth. I'm talking to you two -- that's right. This is the Fernwood Flyer, the paper that runs the stories you really want to read. And you have the right to know, yessir. Like little Dorothy said when she clicked the heels of her red shoes together, "There's no place like home." And that's the truth. We don't need the Star or the Enquirer, we have scandal, tragedy, heartbreak, and fad diets right here in Fernwood. Read about Mad Dog Mel Beach who spent thirty-two years lusting after one woman while stranded in the wilds of Ohio, only to return to the town that spurned him and expose it to a deadly plague.

(MORE)

MERLE (CONT'D)

Or, of course, our lead story on Cathy Shumway, the local girl who in one week has gone from total obscurity to the top of the criminal world by stealing a royal jewel of the Emirate of Abu Bhai thereby jeopardising our relations with the entire OPEC block.

EXTRAS PAY UP AND TEAR THROUGH PAPER. TOM ENTERS ON THE RUN, LOOKING FOR MERLE. HE FINDS HIM.

TOM

What the hell do you think you're doing, Merle?

MERLE

(BEWILDERED) Selling the Fernwood Flyer, what's it look like?

TOM

Where do you get off printing that Cathy is a... (READS) ... "criminal mastermind who single-handedly stole a priceless relic from the collection of a visiting Arab leader"?!!

MERLE

Story's true, Tom. I got it off the news wire service. Same source used by the New York Times. It's my obligation as a responsible newsman to run the story. No matter how I personally feel, the public has a right to know.

TOM

Even if it is true, which I doubt, how can you run it? It's one great big invasion of privacy.

MERLE

This is news, Tom. The Fernwood Flyer is founded on the Bill of Rights which guarantees freedom of the press. I don't judge, I just report.

TOM

There's gotta be a limit, Merle.

MERLE

You can always sue, Tom. But, as sure as Larry Flynt's Hustler Magazine is still thriving, if ya sue, it'll just boost sales.

TOM

Look, one thing here isn't true at all -- Cathy didn't do this alone. She didn't even know what it was all about -- I'm sure of that. That boyfriend of hers, Jeffrey, he's the criminal.

MERLE

That's for the courts to decide. It's a better story if Cathy's the lone culprit. More like Rocky, y'know? Little nobody makes the big-time.

TOM

You don't care about the truth, all you care about is selling papers. I'm going to do something about this, if no one else will. (EXITS)

MERLE

(SELLS AGAIN) Get your paper! Flyer tells all! (BEAT. IDEA) Hold on here -- (HEADLINE) "Innocent Fernwood girl duped by mob into international crime". Maybe that does make a better story, and it's one helluva scoop. (TO EXTRAS, STILL HANGING AROUND) Pardon me, folks, but I've got me some Pulitzer Prize winning investigative reporting to do.

HE FOLDS UP NEWSSTAND AND EXITS,
AS WE:

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOHAGGERS LIVING ROOM - DAY

LORETTA IS TRYING TO CHEER UP
CHARLIE.

LORETTA

It really don't matter, hon.

CHARLIE

What do you mean it don't matter?! The Jeeters implied in that paper of theirs that you was addicted to drugs. Your reputation is at stake here, sweetheart. And your career. This is a serious accusation.

LORETTA

But, Babyboy, it's not like it was true.

CHARLIE

That won't stop them from saying it, Loretta. They'll blow it all up out of proportion. You know how the press has itself a field day whenever they think they've got the slightest bit of dirt on a previously untarnished star, like you.

LORETTA

I'm sure that my fans will not lose faith
in me.

CHARLIE

I hope so.

LORETTA

This here Fernwood Flyer isn't going to
get read by too many folks, anyhow. And
I'll bet not one single booking agent is
on Wanda's mailing list.

CHARLIE

Yeh, I suppose you're right. (GETS UP)
Want anything to eat?

LORETTA

No, thanks, I'm not hungry.

CHARLIE

You're still upset 'bout the adoption
folks turning us down, aren't you?

LORETTA

'Course I am. But I got faith, Charlie.
And anyhow, the reason I'm not hungry is
that I just ate me some Pop-Tarts. You
go get something.

CHARLIE EXITS. LORETTA PICKS UP
AND READS FARM TALK. CHARLIE
RE-ENTERS, EATING A DRUMSTICK.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Farm Talk was my Daddy's favorite
magazine. I always was partial to their
advice column -- nothing like reading
'bout heartsick pigs.

CHARLIE

Loretta, we got to talk. I have to know what you're feeling about us not being able to have a child.

LORETTA

I'm not happy about it, Babyboy, but if that's the way the Lord's planned it for us, that's the way it is.

CHARLIE

Are you sure you don't hold me bad for having got only one thingamajig left to put out the grade-A product, reproducing-wise.

LORETTA

Babyboy, I don't hold you bad for nothing at all.

CHARLIE

What about for not being able to adopt? I'm the one who was too old. And I was the one who thought we should give Johnny Doe back to Bigfoot.

LORETTA

Yeh -- but my bein' a risin' superstar counted agin us, too. Besides, I love you with or without children. So I guess the Lord must see me as a diabetic who's already got the sweetest cake in the world -- He prob'ly figures the icing'd be bad for me.

CHARLIE

You really think I'm the sweetest cake going?

LORETTA

Charlie, Sara Lee would sell her soul to know what recipe the Lord used to mix you up.

CHARLIE

You are Sara Lee, Loretta... whatever that means.

CHARLIE FEELS BETTER, EATS.
LORETTA READS. SHE READS
SOMETHING THAT GETS HER EXCITED.

LORETTA

Charlie! Don't lose hope, yet. I think we may be able to have a taste of that icing, after all!

CHARLIE

I wish we could, honey, but those tests were conclusive -- my you-know-what count is lower than a flea's belly and there ain't no way to raise it up.

LORETTA

There's another way.

CHARLIE

There ain't no way to come up with a baby without a healthy father, if you get my meaning.

LORETTA

I know that, Charlie -- but there's a way to come up with hearty you-know-what. Look here, read this article, here.

CHARLIE

(TAKES FARM TALK) I don't see what an article on prize-winning stud bulls has to do with us having a baby, Loretta.

LORETTA

Don't you -- they sell the you-know-what of those bulls to folks to make cows pregnant.

CHARLIE

We don't have a cow.

LORETTA

Look, Charlie, if they can do it with cows, they must be able to do it with people. I can get pregnanted artificially. Don't you see -- some other man'd supply the you-know-what, but I wouldn't have to have anything to do with him. I'd still be my pure, untouched self for you. And we'd have a baby.

CHARLIE

That's the worst thing I ever heard in my life! I'm not gonna let anyone treat you like some cow!

LORETTA

Don't think of it like a cow. Think of it like something scientified. Charlie, God granted people the brains to make all kinds of discoveries -- that's progress. We'd just be fools not to take advantage of progress -- it's not as if the Lord don't approve. Elseways, why'd he make some folks smart enough to figure these things out?

CHARLIE

But it wouldn't be my child!

LORETTA

But just a minute ago you were talkin' as if you were ready and willing to love a totally adopted baby. You wouldn't have no problem at all learning to love my baby, would you?

CHARLIE

Well, no -- 'course not. But I still can't abide the idea of some doctor putting some other guy's... (GESTURES HELPLESSLY, LOST FOR LESS STRONG WORDS) ... in the kinda spot I've always considered private!

LORETTA

I'll bet there's a way to make you feel better about this. I just got to think about it.

(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

(PRAYS) Lord, help me figure out how to sell my Babyboy on this idea. You gotta know it's a good idea, 'cause you gotta know that any baby what we brought into this world's gonna be about the biggest fan you got, on account of the way his folks feel about you.

CHARLIE

The whole notion just makes me squirm. That bull and cow stuff's a real bitter pill for me to swallow.

LORETTA

You just don't like the idea of it's being a stranger.

CHARLIE

You'd better believe I don't!

LORETTA

But it don't have to be a stranger, it could be someone we know.

CHARLIE

We don't know anybody strange enough to do anything like that.

LORETTA

(BEAT, INSPIRED) We do, too! Someone we love. Answer me this, Charlie, what man is there who you'd like more'n anyone 'cept yourself to have be the father of your child?

CHARLIE

What kind of question is that!

LORETTA

Who'd it be?

CHARLIE

(FRUSTRATED) I dunno -- Tom.

LORETTA

That's it! It'll be Tom. Charlie, this is gonna be a great thing for us. And great for cementing you and Tom's friendship.

CHARLIE

I guess so. It's sure a bigger thing than trading Scout knives, ain't it?

FADE OUT.

ACT THREECATHY'S JAIL CELL - DAYJEFFREY IS VISITING CATHY.

JEFFREY

Are you sure you're alright?

CATHY

Everything's fine. Nat Dearborn, that's my lawyer, he said that there won't be any problem at all. All they've got on me is simple possession of stolen property, and since I don't have any previous record he thinks the very worst I'll get is a fine and a suspended sentence.

JEFFREY

You're incredible. You're actually willing to take the rap for me. Nobody's ever done anything like this for me before.

CATHY

Then I guess nobody's ever loved you as much as I do.

THEY KISS. HE PULLS BACK, THINKS.

JEFFREY

And I guess I've never loved anybody as much as I love you. Which means I'd better do something about it, huh?

CATHY

I guess it depends what you had in mind doing.

JEFFREY

I don't know. What d'you think I should do?

CATHY

Well, usually when two people are in love they think maybe of something like getting married.

JEFFREY

Like getting married. Uh. Would you?

CATHY

Would I what?

JEFFREY

Would you like getting married?

CATHY

Probably. (REALIZES THIS IS A PROPOSAL)

I mean, would I? Would I ever!

JEFFREY

For the first time in my life, I think I would, too. Let's do it now.

CATHY

Let's.

MORE KISSES.

NAT DEARBORN ENTERS WITH FERNWOOD FLYER.

NAT

Excuse me, but I have a very important question for my client. Cathy, why didn't you tell me what that stolen pendant was?

CATHY

What was it?

NAT

You mean you didn't know that it's part of the royal jewels of the Emirate of Arab Bhai? You didn't know it has religious significance being a holy pendant fashioned from the rib of a camel Muhammed rode to Mecca on. You didn't know that it was stolen while the Emir was on a goodwill mission to the United States? You didn't know that because of the theft, Emir might break diplomatic relations and the United States may lose the oil the Emir controls?

CATHY

I didn't know any of that. What's an Emir?

NAT

An Emir's the guy who wants your hide.

CATHY

(TO JEFFREY) I won't be mad, so you can tell me the truth -- did you know about this?

JEFFREY

I didn't know a thing, I promise you.

CATHY

That's good -- because I lied when I said I wouldn't be mad. I probably would have tried to kill you. (HUGS HIM) Oh, now what do we do?

JEFFREY

I'll take care of everything -- all I have to do is what I should have done in the first place -- tell them I'm the one who's responsible for this whole thing.

CATHY

Oh no, you don't. I'd never see you again. They'd have you locked up for so long. Let's stay with the original plan. Who's going to believe that little Cathy Shumway ripped off some Arab big-shot?? No Fernwood jury is going to convict me.

NAT

You may be right about that -- the case is very confusing, to tell you the truth. The Federal authorities are investigating and I just don't know what's going to happen. They're really mad about the way this has alienated the Emir, that's for sure.

JEFFREY

I'm not going to let you go through with this, Cathy. I'm going to take this rap, and that's that.

NAT

Excuse me, but I have a feeling you two know something about this case I don't. I have to know everything I can if I'm going to help you, Cathy -- and even then I don't know if I'm going to be able to do all that much. The government is not happy about this at all.

JEFFREY

Look, here's what really happened...

CATHY

Don't pay any attention to him, Mr. Dearborn -- he's just trying to be noble.

JEFFREY

I'm trying to be noble...

ENTER WANDA, MERLE AND HAROLD CLEMENS IN MID-ARGUMENT.

MERLE

Look, Clemens, you go dig up your own front page story with international ramifications, Wanda and I have this one sewn up.

CLEMENS

You can't have an exclusive, Mayor Jeeter.

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

I have the greatest respect for you as a local politician, but you are new to the news biz.

WANDA

If the criminal in question grants us exclusive rights to her story, it's ours, right?

CLEMENS

Well, I suppose so.

WANDA

Good, then we'll just leave it up to Cathy.

CATHY

What is it, Wanda?

WANDA

We just thought you'd rest easier if you gave Merle and me the exclusive rights to your story of theft and international intrigue. You know you can trust old family friends to present your side fairly.

HAROLD

Oh yeh -- well I think you know you can trust me, Cathy. After all, we were once almost a romantic item, and I'm hardly the type to betray an old almost-girlfriend.

JEFFREY

Everybody wait!! I have a statement to make!

CATHY

No! Jeffrey!

MERLE

You'll have your turn, fella, first I just feel Cathy should understand that she owes us this story. After all, aren't we the ones who brought all this to light in the first place? I would think that just out of gratitude for the coverage we've already given you in the Fernwood Flyer you'd tell us the whole story.

JEFFREY

I'm trying to tell you -- it's my story you want.

MERLE

Then Tom was right? You really are the slimy underworld figure who seduced this poor innocent girl into a life of crime and degradation?

CATHY

No, he's not. I did it all by myself.
He's just trying to move in on all the
attention.

WANDA

Aha -- then you really are a master
criminal? Criminaless, ette?

CATHY

I suppose I am.

JEFFREY

Don't be stupid! Who's going to believe
that?

HAROLD

I do. And on behalf of the Courier I'm
authorized to offer you \$425 for the
exclusive rights to your story. That'll
help with all those legal fees, Cathy.

NAT

With a lot left over besides.

MERLE

\$430 will leave even more left over.

NAT

That's true.

JEFFREY

Wait! Would somebody listen to me?!

CATHY

Don't pay any attention to him. Merle,
I guess you've got the story.

HAROLD

That's not fair. My editor is going to kill me.

MERLE

Too bad, Clemens. If we make it as big with this story as I think we will, maybe there'll be a job for you over at the Flyer. Meanwhile, get out of here -- this is our story.

HAROLD

I'm not going anywhere! This is a story that needs to be told and I intend to tell it.

HAROLD, MERLE, WANDA BICKER ON,
APPEAL TO CATHY.

TOM ENTERS. HE PULLS JEFFREY
ASIDE.

TOM

Alright, you lousy two-bit little hood. What do you plan to do about all this? Because if you think I'm going to let you let Cathy go to jail for what you've done, you're mistaken.

JEFFREY

Thank God! I believe you -- now try to make Cathy and the rest of them understand.

TOM DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. MERLE
AND WANDA INTERVIEW CATHY. NAT
LISTENS IN. WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #390