

FINAL DRAFT
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FOREVER FERNWOOD



EPISODE #421

by

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A
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PRODUCTION

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

TOWN SQUARE/GAZEBO - NIGHT

CONTINUATION OF 420 ACT II. TOM,
GEORGE, MEL AND PIERSALL WAIT FOR
THE ARRIVAL OF THE UFO.

GEORGE

What the hell are we waiting for! Beach
has been lying to us from the start.
Men from outer space, indeed!

MEL

See, here's the way I feel about lying --

TOM

Maybe they had engine trouble.

MEL

Possibly.

GEORGE

Maybe they stopped at a Howard Johnson's!

PIERSALL

Cool off, Mr. Shumway. Let's give
it another hour.

MEL

Or a week.

GEORGE

(TO PIERSALL) Don't tell me you really believe a flying saucer is gonna land here. In Fernwood? You're a government man.

TOM

George, I saw it. Remember?

GEORGE

Yes. I also remember you still believed in the good tooth fairy well into your teens. (NOT MOLLIFIED) Four grown men sitting in a gazebo waiting for a flying saucer. And its gonna come swooping down Main Street and all the missing people are gonna come tumbling out like peas from a pod. Sure bet!

TOM

(TO MEL) Mel, show them the artifacts.

MEL

Uh... I don't really think that's a good idea.

PIERSALL

What artifacts?

TOM PICKS UP BAG NEXT TO MEL, HOLDS IT OUT TO OTHERS. PIERSALL TAKES IT.

TOM

You want evidence of an advanced civilization?

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

There it is. Mel got these things
straight from the beings themselves.

MEL

(TO PIERSALL) On it might've been a case
of mistaken identity.

PIERSALL LOOKS AT TRANSISTOR.

PIERSALL

This is an ordinary transistor.

TOM

Now wait a second...

GEORGE TAKES OUT A FLANGE.

GEORGE

It's a flange. An ordinary flange...
What kind of evidence do you call this?

MEL

Weak evidence. Weak, at best.

TOM GRABS THE BAG.

TOM

It doesn't matter. I saw the space
craft.

MEL

(SOTTO) Tom, could I maybe have a small
talk with you.

TOM

Not now, Mel. (TO ALL) You just
wait.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

In five minutes my little girl is gonna come bouncing out of that nose cone and you'll all be singing a different tune. (BEAT) You surprise me, Mr. Piersall. As a representative of the government, can you afford to be wrong on something like this?

PIERSALL

Good point.

REACHES INTO HIS POCKET PULLS OUT A NUMBER OF SMALL BOOKLETS WHICH HE DISTRIBUTES TO ALL PRESENT)

I want you to peruse these at your liesure -- better make that right this very minute -- it's a little compendium of intergalactic diplomacy.

GEORGE

Diplomacy?

PIERSALL

Well, it just gives a few pointers on how to conduct yourself in case of extra-terrestrial contact. It was compiled by the CIA in collaboration with Emily Post. Or was it Amy Vanderbilt?

TOM

(READING) "Identify yourself as an American."

PIERSALL

Self-explanatory, don't you think? We want these creatures on our side.

TOM

That makes sense.

GEORGE

(READING) "Be pleasant with the creature, but do not shake hands with him."
That's assuming he has hands, right?

PIERSALL

We're trying to avoid the possible transfer of deadly bacteria.

GEORGE

Piersall, don't you realize the only deadly bacteria around here is Mel Beach.
Arrest this man!

MEL PUTS OUT HIS HANDS TO BE CUFFED.

PIERSALL

Above all, remember rule three. (READS)
"Assumption is the mother of all screw-ups." In other words. Be prepared for any contingency. God only knows what they might look like. They could be giants, dwarfs, they could have hair all over their bodies and have one gigantic eyeball...

MEL CLEARS HIS THROAT.

PIERSALL (CONT'D)

Something, Mr. Beach?

MEL

Well... I don't know how to say this...

GEORGE

At last! Coming clean!

MEL

Tom, about your little girl... and the others... I... I...

GEORGE

Tell the truth, Mel. It'll go easier on you!

MEL

There are no men from outer space.

GEORGE

(SCREAMING) String him up!

HE GRABS MEL.

PIERSALL

Hold on. He's my prisoner.

TOM

Mel, you didn't mean that did you?

MEL

Tom, I'm sorry. It was all a big mistake.

A silly mistake really. (TRYING FOR LIGHTNESS) That's why they put erasers on pencils.

GEORGE

And heads in nooses.

PIERSALL

We don't have any concrete evidence of complicity, Mr. Shumway.

JUST THEN PENNY AND CATHY RUSH INTO SCENE. CATHY HOLDS JEFFREY'S PISTACHIO SUIT. PENNY HAS A BIBLE AND POLO SHIRT, AND SHORT PANTS.

CATHY

I think we have some evidence.

PENNY

(HOLDING BIBLE AND SHIRT) Recognize these? We found them under the floor boards in Mel's cabin! Martha's E.S.P. finally hit pay dirt.

PIERSALL

A Bible... and a polo shirt... short pants... a kid's polo shirt... Hmmm. King James Bible isn't it?

PENNY

Mr. Piersall, don't you see what this adds up to?

PIERSALL

A Polo shirt, a pair of shorts, and a Bible. (SEEING THE LIGHT) Ah! Somewhere in Fernwood is a naked boy who has fallen away from the Protestant faith. Or...

CATHY

Or... a dead little boy, by the name of Tubby Purley.

PENNY

And remember that Bible salesman who disappeared?

GEORGE

Sent to his maker by one Mel Beach.

CATHY

And I guess it's no mystery where this pistachio suit came from. Mel, how could you.

GEORGE

(PUTS ARM AROUND CATHY) You wanted proof, Mr. Piersall.

MEL

I like people! All kinds of people!

PIERSALL

Let's go, Beach.

GEORGE AND PIERSALL GRAB MEL AND START LEADING HIM OFF. AS THEY DO, MEL PAUSES BY CATHY.

MEL

Is your mother very disappointed in me...?

THEIR EYES MEET AND THEN MEL IS TAKEN AWAY. CATHY FOLLOWS. PENNY STANDS ALONE. SHE SEES TOM HAS MOVED TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE GAZEBO, HIS EYES STILL SEARCHING THE NIGHT SKY.

PENNY

Tom?

AT NO RESPONSE.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Tom, it's all over. We can go home.

TOM

I'm waiting for the space ship.

PENNY

But Tom... didn't you hear?

SHE SITS NEXT TO HIM.

TOM

My little girl is on that space ship.
I know it. She's due in any minute
now. And if I'm not here to meet her
she'll be very disappointed.

PENNY

There's no space ship, Tom. Mel was lying.

TOM

No.

PENNY

Tom, for God's sake...

TOM

Leave me alone. Heather's coming!

PENNY

Tom!

TOM

No!

PENNY SLAPS HIM ACROSS THE FACE.
THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER, STUNNED.

PENNY

(OVERCOME) Tom... honey...

TOM

(IN SHOCK) Penny...

PENNY

I'm sorry...

TOM

No... No... I guess I needed that.

PENNY

Let's go home now.

TOM

I'd better stay here.

PENNY

Why?

TOM

I'm waiting for the space ship.

HE FLINCHES, SHUTTING HIS EYES
READY TO BE SLAPPED AGAIN. WHEN
HE IS NOT SLAPPED AGAIN, HE SLOWLY
OPENS HIS EYES.

Penny. There is no space ship, is
there?

PENNY

No, Tom.

TOM LOOKS TO THE SKIES AGAIN.

TOM

Then... where's my little girl?

PENNY PUTS HER ARM AROUND HIM,
AS WE:

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

INT. BIDE A WEE - EAST - DAY

WANDA SITS CROSS LEGGED ON THE FLOOR AS SHE TEARS STRIPS OF CLOTH FROM A LARGE BOLT. SHE IS SINGING.

WANDA

(IN RYTHYM TO TEARING) "Nobody knows
the trouble I've seen..."

THE PHONE RINGS. SHE ANSWERS
IT EXCITEDLY.

WANDA (CONT'D)

(INTO PHONE) Hello! Merle, Big Guy!
(BEAT, CRESFALLEN) Oh. Hello, Front
Desk. Merle is my husband and it just
seems a bit odd that he hasn't called.
We haven't been separated for more than
a day since our wedding and... (BEAT)
Well, excuse me. I guess I just felt
that since I give the Bide-a-wee chain
so much of my business... they wouldn't
mind exchanging a little banter with a
lonely woman. A man? Mr. Marcharelli?
Send him up... Oh, you already have.
Well, goodbye... (INTO PHONE) Oh... yes,
one more thing.

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT'D)

Next time I come to New York, I'm
pitching a tent!

SHE SLAMS DOWN THE PHONE AS THERE
IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

WANDA (CONT'D)

Come in.

MR. MARCHARELLI ENTERS. HE'S
FORTYISH, BALDING, TALKS IN THE
QUIET, FAKE CADENCES OF THE CONFIDENT
HUSTLER.

ANGELO

Wanda, Wanda, Wanda. You look beat,
honey.

WANDA

Mr. Marcharelli, I am beat. Strung out.
In a word, frazzled.

ANGELO

Not happy?

WANDA

I have been sitting here for three days,
tearing yard after yard from these bolts
of fabric. I tell you, Mr. Marcharelli,
I am meant for better things.

ANGELO

Agreed. Hey, I was sold on you a long
time ago. What do you want? An office?
You got it. Your own personal secretary?
Say no more.

WANDA

Excuse my sharp intake of breath, Angelo.

ANGELO

You suspect me to be in jest?

WANDA

I hate the word "lying."

ANGELO TAKES WANDA'S SKETCHES,
LOOKS AT THEM BRIEFLY, TAKES OUT
A CIGARETTE LIGHTER AND SETS THEM
ABLAZE, DUMPS THEM IN A METAL TRASH
CAN.

ANGELO

I hope you don't find all of this
confusing.

WANDA

Only enough to make me cry.

ANGELO

Lemme explain. I'm walking down
Forty-Second Street, Wanda, and guess
what I see comin' down the pike?

WANDA

My integrity?

ANGELO

I see this chick. Fourteen years old,
green hair, crazy make-up... and a Wanda
Jeeter Original around her little
teen-age shoulders.

WANDA

... But, you haven't even marketed my
stuff yet!

ANGELO

Keerect. Somebody ripped us off, Wanda. Broke into your room when you were out, took some little micro-film pictures of your sketches and went into business for himself, the lousy crook.

WANDA

You almost seem pleased.

ANGELO

Pleased! My God! Wanda, we got the competitors breakin' into apartments just to get a look at your stuff. (EXCITED) How about that!

WANDA

(IMPRESSED) Well, they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

ANGELO

(DOWN AGAIN) Also the sincerest form of bankruptsy. If we don't get the lead out.

WANDA

Mon plaisir. But if they've already stolen our designs --

ANGELO

(INTERRUPTS) Let 'em have the stuff. Wanda, we're on the brink of some major marketing brainstorm.

(MORE)

ANGELO (CONT'D)

We're gonna expand the whole concept.
Punk doesn't have to mean just clothes,
y'know.

WANDA

True, true.

ANGELO

Punk towels!

RIPS OFF A HUNK FROM THE BOLT.
HOLDS IT UP.

What's that?

WANDA

A punk towel?

HE RIPS OFF ANOTHER ONE.

ANGELO

And what's that?

WANDA

Another punk towel?

ANGELO

You got it, honey. As you can see,
production cost is at a minimum. And I
got the campaign all laid out. (BEAT)
"Dry up with Punk."

HE WAITS FOR REACTION. THEN:

Just an honest gut reaction.

WANDA

Dry up with punk... You know I'd like to
give you my honest gut reaction, but
I lack the guts.

ANGELO

Well, it sure looks like we got our work cut out for us.

WANDA

Naturally, I'll want just a little hiatus before throwing myself into a high-pressure production schedule. You can understand how I feel, having never been separated from my husband before...

ANGELO

Lonely?

WANDA

You only know me as an artist, Angelo. There's a part of me that is a woman... and a woman needs her man sometimes.

ANGELO

Oh, I gotcha. (HE STARTS TO EMBRACE HER)

WANDA

(KNEEING HIM) Not exactly what I was hinting at.

ANGELO

(IN PAIN) Oh. Want me to fix you up?

WANDA

Hardly.

ANGELO

Well, what do you want?

WANDA

You wouldn't understand.

ANGELO

Oh, then it is more money.

WANDA

The pay is fine.

ANGELO

Wait till you see your office. We're locking you away where nobody will have access. It's a big hermetically sealed studio with an iron door and absolutely no windows. Talk about privacy...! By the way, ever do anything in terrycloth?

WANDA

(MUSING) My own studio. A sealed room. A place where I can be alone with my muse.

ANGELO

Or I can get a separate room for your muse.

WANDA

A sealed room. I like that. Perhaps it reminds me of Marcel Proust... He worked in a cork lined room most of his life and was extremely prolific. Of course in his case it was a necessity. Did you know he was an asthmatic?

ANGELO

Proust?

WANDA

You wouldn't know him. He never did anything in terrycloth. (BEAT) Forgive me for spacing out on you, Angelo, it's just that things are moving very fast. And I really should talk to my husband.

ANGELO JUST SHRUGS.

ANGELO

And maybe go home to him.

WANDA

Just a short visit. We could still be in business together.

ANGELO

Listen, you made the deal with Eleanor Major, and if you wanna crap out on her that's up to you. (BEAT) I could probably pull it off without you. Sure. I could set up an assembly line process. Maybe I could lay my hands on a few more cutting machines.

WANDA

Cutting machines would be out of the question.

ANGELO

Why?

WANDA

A straight machine cut would compromise the whole line.

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT'D)

Remember the idee fixe of punk fashions
is the primal jagged rip...

ANGELO

Says you.

WANDA

But I'm the creator.

ANGELO

But you won't be here.

WANDA

But I can keep in touch long distance.

ANGELO

... long distance is the next best thing
to being totally out of the picture.

WANDA

You're not trying to blackmail me,
Angelo.

ANGELO

Blackmail is such an ugly word. Let's
say "extortion."

WANDA

But I would lose the job?

ANGELO

And your self-respect as a woman,
probably.

WANDA

Angelo, let's come to a compromise.
I will work exclusively for Angelo
Marcarelli.

ANGELO

I'll accept that.

WANDA

My heart may be at home with my husband --
but my work is here.

ANGELO

(RISING) I'll go make arrangements for
your studio. You won't regret this.

WANDA

I hope not.

ANGELO EXITS AS WANDA PICKS UP
A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH OF MERLE.

WANDA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna miss you, you big punk
you.

SADLY, WE:

FADE OUT.

ACT THREEINT. JAIL CELL

MEL SITS, STARING OUT OF THE BARS OF HIS CELL, SHOUTING TO THE O.S. GUARD.

MEL

Guard! Guard! One tiny favor! All I ask is for my service revolver and one lousey bullet. Don't worry, I won't miss. (BEAT) I can't live like this. My sense of honor is telling me I must end it in the manner of an officer. I don't even know what I did wrong, but I probably deserve to be punished. And remember in helping me kill myself, you save the government thousands of taxdollars, a costly trial, and tiresome appeals to ever more costly higher courts... Don't do it for me, man. Do it for your country...

AT NO RESPONSE, HE TURNS AWAY. JUST THEN PENNY ENTERS AND LOOKS THROUGH THE BARS AT MEL. HE LOOKS UP AND SEES HER.

MEL

Penny.

PENNY

(UNCHARACTERISTICALLY CREEPY) After
what you did, you probably deserve this.

AT NO RESPONSE.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Mel?

MEL

What are you waiting for? A rebuttal?
I agree with you a hundred percent.

PENNY

And they say our prison system fails to
rehabilitate hard core criminals.

MEL

Penny, would you happen to have something
sharp in your purse?

PENNY LOOKS THROUGH HER PURSE,
PULLS OUT A FINGERNAIL FILE.

PENNY

A fingernail file. Will that do?

MEL

Perfect.

PENNY

Seems like a strange time to be doing
your nails, Mr. Beach.

MEL

Just hand it through the bars, would you.

SHE DOES, BUT AS HE REACHES FOR
IT, SHE SNAPS IT BACK.

PENNY

Oh my God. You don't want to do your nails at all!

MEL

Please...

PENNY

No, Mel.

MEL

Don't deny my last request. If you really hate me, and Lord knows, you have every reason to hate me, as does everybody, you'll be doing yourself and your town a valuable service by helping me shuffle off this mortal coil.

PENNY

Tell me the truth, Mel. Are you guilty?

MEL

Guilty of being stupid, yes. Guilty of being a fool, yes. Guilty of being hoodwinked just like the rest of you, yes. Guilty of letting my appliance store go to pot, definitely. (BEAT) But guilty of killing those innocent people...? No, Penny.

PENNY

But they are dead, right?

MEL

I... I never actually saw any bodies.

PENNY

But you know what happened, don't you?
Tell me, Mel. No matter how grisly the
truth is... I can take it. (AT NO
ANSWER) We never found Heather's clothing,
Mel. You can imagine how upset Tom is.
If you could just give him the smallest
ray of hope.

MEL

You really love him, don't you?

SHE AVERTS HER EYES AND MEL JUMPS
UP, GRABS THE FILE FROM HER HANDS.

PENNY

Mel, don't do it!

MEL

There's no other way, Penny. Tell Martha
I'll be waiting for her. Tell everyone
that I admit everything, I alone am
guilty and let it be upon my head!

PENNY

(GRABS HIS HAND) Don't.

MEL

Why not?

PENNY

Because we need you.

MEL

Need me -- Mel Beach? Nobody needs Mel Beach, except the hangman.

PENNY

All right, then -- he needs you.

MEL

You're right. I shouldn't kill myself. He needs the work. (PUTS DOWN NAIL FILE) Thanks, Penny.

PENNY

You're welcome, hey.

MEL

I have been having a run of bad luck these last thirty or forty years.

PENNY

Oh, it'll turn around.

MEL

I hope so.

PENNY

And don't forget -- you're not the only one who fell for that story about the space ship, Mel. What about me? I'm the one who convinced Tom that his daughter was in the flying saucer safe and sound as a bug in a rug. That makes me an accessory... in a somewhat strained metaphorical sense.

(MORE)

PENNY (CONT'D)

You see, it's not just you who's on trial here... but everyone who ever had a little imagination and who dared to look beyond their own narrow, parochial horizon.

MEL

You're a great comfort, Penny.

PENNY

I wanted to believe in that outer space yarn as much as you did.

MEL

The only difference is... I'm gonna be executed.

PENNY REACTS. MEL SURE IS RIGHT.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURINT. CATHY'S APARTMENT

GEORGE, TOM, CATHY, WHO IS DRESSED
IN ALL BLACK, SIT WHILE VITO DI VITO
MEMORIALIZES HIS SON. NEXT TO VITO,
WHO IS STANDING, IS A VACANT CHAIR.
A RATHER ORNATE CHAIR.

VITO

Perhaps we shall never know what became
of my son, Jeffrey DiVito. God knows
his disappearance leaves us all a little
sadder. Especially his dear wife, Cathy
Shumway...

CATHY

We were just getting to know each
other...

TOM

I think I could have really learned to
like him.

VITO

Most of all, his loss brings us all a
little closer together.

(MORE)

VITO (CONT'D)

Though we are different people, from different walks of life, though there isn't a decent Fettucini in town, and though you people have asked me time and again what the D in DiVito stands for... even so... we now stand united and I suppose we must assume he is dead. Now... if you would all join me in the famous dirge "The Vacant Chair."

VITO POINTS TO THE OBVIOUSLY VACANT CHAIR.

CATHY

(SOTTO TO GEORGE) That's always been one of my favorite dirges.

VITO

(LEADING THE SONG) We shall meet, but we shall miss him... There will be one vacant chair.

AS THE OTHERS JOIN IN, PENNY ENTERS, DRESSED AS SHE WAS IN THE JAIL CELL. SHE IMMEDIATELY SITS DOWN IN THE VACANT CHAIR. THE SINGING SORT OF HALTS EXCEPT FOR PENNY WHO'S LOUDLY SINGING, "THE VACANT CHAIR."

PENNY

(SINGING) We shall meet, but we shall miss him... there will be one... vacant... chair. (THEN, REALIZES) Oh, my.

SHE STANDS, SMILING SHYLY. THEN, TO CHAIR...

Sorry, Jeffrey.

TOM

That's the vacant chair, Penny.

PENNY

I gathered that.

GEORGE

(SAVING THE MOMENT) Well, I know one chair that ain't gonna be vacant for long. The electric chair.

VITO

I admire the sentiment, George.

GEORGE

Mel's had it. All we need is some conclusive evidence.

PIERSALL'S VOICE

I think I can supply that.

THEY ALL TURN TO SEE PIERSALL
STANDING THERE.

VITO

Piersall, I don't remember inviting any G-men to my son's memorial.

PIERSALL

Look, Vito. We're on the same side of the fence now. We both want revenge on Mel Beach and I think I have enough on him to send him away for life. Or longer.

VITO

Then let's hear it.

CATHY

But let's keep an open mind.

PIERSALL

I have evidence that Mel Beach was involved in a black market organ business. Yes, that's right. He cut his victims into little, highly commercial tidbits and sold them on the market. It's like the car parts business only gamier.

CATHY

Let's kill Mel Beach.

VITO

(OVERWHELMED) God! My son, Jeffrey!
What a horrible fate.

TOM

Yech! That is horrible. (BEAT)

PIERSALL

I have reason to believe that some of his organs were sold to a truant officer in Flagstaff.

VITO

Horrible, horrible. I hate that town.

PENNY

Wait a minute, everybody. I just came from Mel's cell and I know nobody wants to hear this but... I think he was duped just like the rest of us.

VITO

Duped? I wasn't duped. I've never been duped.

CATHY

She may be right. (TO VITO) Grandfather, I saw the look in Mel Beach's eyes. It wasn't the look of a bloodthirsty killer, or a used organs salesman.

VITO

(TENDERLY TO CATHY) My dear girl... you have been under a terrible strain and are not thinking clearly. (THEN A PERSONAL THOUGHT) You know... many Italians have red hair. It's true. Northern Italians.

HE LIFTS HER VEIL, LOOKS AT HER.

VITO

Freckles, no.

HE DROPS HER VEIL AGAIN.

What are we waiting for?

PIERSALL

I'm on my way to the D.A.'s right now.

VITO

Want some company?

PIERSALL

Of course.

TOM

What about my daughter! Did you find
any of her clothing?

PIERSALL AND VITO EXIT TOGETHER,
OBLIVIOUS.

CATHY

Maybe Mel was insane. I mean,
thirty-three years alone in a log
cabin could, at the very least, make
a person highly neurotic.

GEORGE

Now don't start that! Mel will probably
plead insanity and God knows he could get
a lot of witnesses to back him up all the
way... but that's just a little too easy.

TOM

(SHOUTING OUT WINDOW) Come back here and
tell me about my daughter! (TURNS TO
REST OF THEM) All I ask for is some good
news. Is that so very much to ask? Even
if it's a lie.

PIERSALL RE-ENTERS.

PIERSALL

Mr. Hartman, I have some news for you.
Well, more precicely, I have no news for
you, but in this case, no news is
good news.

TOM

Yes?

PIERSALL

We did rip that cabin apart and couldn't find a trace of your daughter's clothing. See what I meant by no news?

TOM

Then... then there's a chance she's alive! Isn't that the logical conclusion?

PIERSALL

Only to a cock-eyed optimist.

TOM

Well, call me a cock-eyed optimist, but I just don't believe my little Heather is dead. She had too much to live for.

PENNY

And we'll find her. Together.

PIERSALL

Well, good luck, Mr. Hartman. I hope nothing happens to burst your bubble.

PIERSALL EXITS.

TOM

If there's one chance in a million I'll find her. We'll find her. And let skeptics say what they will. Something in my heart tells me she's out there somewhere.

PENNY

Oh, Tom...

SHE SITS DOWN IN THE VACANT CHAIR
AND IMMEDIATELY JUMPS OUT OF IT.

PENNY

(SAME INFLECTION) Oh, Tom...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #421

