

FINAL DRAFT  
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# FOREVER FERNWOOD

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EPISODE #422

by

JERRY ADELMAN

A  
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PRODUCTION

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TOM . . . . .	GREG MULLAVEY
CATHY . . . . .	DEBRALEE SCOTT
MERLE . . . . .	DABNEY COLEMAN
WANDA . . . . .	MARIAN MERCER
ELEANOR . . . . .	SHELLEY FABARES
MEL . . . . .	SHELLEY BERMAN
PIERSALL . . . . .	RONNIE SCHELL
VITO . . . . .	RALPH MANZA
POLICE OFFICER . . . . .	
GANGSTER . . . . .	

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ACT ONEJAIL CELL - DAY

MEL, SOLO, IS SITTING ON SIDE OF HIS BUNK, SUNK IN MISERY. MOMENT. TOM ENTERS, APPROACHING CELL. MEL SEES HIM AND RISES. MEL DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM TOM AND THERE IS A MOMENT OF UNCERTAINTY. MEL REACTS IN SOME SURPRISE, AS:

TOM

(FRIENDLY) How are you feeling, Mel?

MEL

Uh... Swell. Great. Are you going to hit me?

TOM

No, of course not.

MEL

Oh, that's nice.

TOM

You seem a little... out of sorts, Mel.

MEL

Me??? Nah.

TOM

I could sure understand if you were...

I've been here... The food is terrible.

MEL

I have been bothered by indigestion lately.

TOM

Yeah... It happens to everyone.

MEL

It sure is nice of you to drop by...  
Especially after all that's happened.

TOM

Yeah, well, I wanted to see how you are...  
And... maybe... talk... about... "that."

MEL

What?

TOM

"That." The black market organs... and  
the people they say you killed.

MEL

Could we maybe discuss my indigestion  
instead?

TOM

Sure, sure... just making conversation.

MEL

Well, what have you been doing lately?

TOM

The same... Oh, I've been worried about  
Heather, of course. None of her effects  
were found at the cabin.

MEL

Really?

TOM

You wouldn't know anything about that,  
would you?

MEL

I wish I was guilty so I could tell you  
what you need to know, but since I'm  
innocent, I don't think I can help you  
out.

TOM

But you were a part of the business...

MEL

Afraid not, Tom. Truss fooled me. See,  
black market organs aren't really up my  
alley... I get squeemish if someone eats  
liver around me.

TOM

Please, Mel. You were in that cabin with  
Truss. You must've known something! Just  
tell me. I won't testify against you.  
I'll be a character witness, in fact.  
Yeah, I'll lie... just tell me where  
Heather is... or, if she's not... uh...  
"together"... anymore, tell me. Tell me  
what happened to her, Mel... I'll still  
be your friend.

MEL

If you're my friend, then believe I didn't  
kill your daughter!

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

I may have thought she was occasionally  
a fresh kid, but I wouldn't kill her.

TOM

How could you have ever believed that  
Truss was from outer space.

MEL IS STUNG BY TOM'S COMMENT.

MEL

Well... it did sound better when Truss  
said it.

TOM

That's no excuse.

MEL

(BEAT)... I guess not. If I think of  
a better excuse will you listen to it?

CATHY ENTERS.

CATHY

(FRIENDLY, AS TOM WAS)... How are you  
feeling, Mel?

MEL

(FEARING A REPLAY)... Please! Don't start  
in on me!... I can't take any more.

CATHY

Hey, I was trying to be nice.

MEL

So was Tom. And thanks to his kindness,  
I've lost my will to live again.

CATHY

No, Mel! You've got to fight! We've all got to fight for you.

TOM

What're you talking about?! He made you a widow... I'm sorry, Mel, but it's true. We've lost a lot of loved ones because of you.

CATHY

It wasn't his fault! It was Truss and The DiVitos... They did this to us.

TOM

But Mel helped them!

CATHY

No!

MEL

Thanks a lot, Cathy. But I'm probably a killer.

CATHY

How could you do this, Tom?!

TOM

Me??? Mel practically tears this town apart, I lose my daughter, you lose your husband and your niece -- because of him! -- And I'm the one who's treated like a criminal! (STARTS TO EXIT) You call that justice?!

HE EXITS.

MEL

I never thought that trying to save mankind would land me in jail, but this is probably where I belong. (LOOKS AROUND) Home Sweet Home.

CATHY

Stop it! You'll never get out with that attitude.

MEL

How true.

CATHY

But, Mel! You'll be here for the rest of your life.

MEL

Probably.

CATHY

It's a fate worse than death!

MEL

Maybe so.

CATHY

Then you'll do something?

MEL

Yes... (BEAT)... I'll kill myself.

CATHY

No! You can't do that!

MEL

You're right... (BEAT)... I deserve to suffer forever.

CATHY

If anyone deserves to suffer, it's me!  
I forced Jeffrey into this business. He  
might be alive today if it wasn't for  
me. If you're a murderer, we both are.

MEL

You're very sweet... but I don't feel  
any better.

CATHY

What can I say then?

MEL

So long?

CATHY

My Mom loved you, Mel... You could've  
been my father!... Do you think I'll give  
up on you so easily?

MEL

I hope so. You're young yet. Go out and  
see the world. You've got a whole  
lifetime of suffering ahead of you.

CATHY

I'll get to that, but right now, I'm  
gonna fight for you, Mel... Because  
you're a decent, caring man... and  
Fernwood would be a poorer place if it  
lost you.

MEL

You mean that?

CATHY

Yes I do.

MEL

Gee, people have been so nice to me  
lately.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOMAJOR LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

MERLE IS LOUNGING ON THE COUCH,  
TRYING HIS HAND AT A CROSSWORD  
PUZZLE IN "JUNIOR SCHOLASTIC."

MERLE

Let's see... Two across... "Scarlett  
O'Hara's home... Four letters..."...  
That'd be the south... (PROUD)...  
S-O-U-T...

HE STOPS, STYMIED. ELEANOR ENTERS,  
DRESSED IN A NEGLIGEE, WHEELING A  
PRINTING PRESS.

ELEANOR

Merle, dear... I want to talk to you.

MERLE

Could you hold the phone there, Eleanor?  
I need a dictionary.

ELEANOR

I'll buy you lots of dictionaries,  
dearheart... as soon as you get to work  
on "The Flyer."

MERLE

Shoot, Missy... That is one dead issue --  
If you get that play on words.

ELEANOR

You'll have to bring it back to life then.

MERLE

Why?

ELEANOR

Well... it's a part of you.

MERLE

How?

ELEANOR

Don't you know, you silly genius, you?

"The Flyer" is to you what a canvas is to Van Gogh. You've got a talent that cries to be expressed... Let me help you.

MERLE

Maybe you can help me with this crossword puzzle...

ELEANOR

You're doing crossword puzzles! You see?! You're a true man of letters. Let's see how does one get this thing started.

(FUSSING WITH MACHINE)

MERLE

It's really not worth it. "The Flyer" is a heap of work, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

"A heap of work." -- How you do turn a phrase, Merle! It's positively magical.

MERLE

To tell you the truth, lately I been enjoying my leisure time here... And being both Mayor and editor of the newspaper might just rob me of some of that.

ELEANOR

What an idea! Merle! I feel as if a lightbulb just went on over my head. Listen to this...

MERLE

I'll tell you... When those lightbulbs go off in comic books, it always signals trouble. Believe me, I've caught on to those things, 'cause I've read "Little Dot," "Uncle Scrooge," -- All them good ones for years.

ELEANOR

And you love literature! Perfect for an editor!... Here's my idea, Merle. We'll do The Flyer together... side-by-side... Long into the night, if we have to.

MERLE

I'm a mess without my eight hours.

ELEANOR

All right! We'll work days.

MERLE

How come you're so hot on this all of a sudden?

ELEANOR

I sense your need, Merle. Something inside you is crying out for fulfillment. And I can give it to you, dear.

MERLE

Yeah?

ELEANOR

Don't you feel it?

MERLE

I was feeling pretty good till that puzzle stumped me.

ELEANOR

That only proves, sometimes a woman is more sensitive than a man. I know what you need better than you do.

MERLE

No kidding.

ELEANOR

And I know how to give it to you.

MERLE

How?

ELEANOR

Through this printing press. Today is St. Valentine's Day, isn't it?

MERLE

Wanda and I already gave "The Fernwood Flyer" our best shot, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

February fourteenth, it is, I believe.  
Wanda may have been the wrong partner  
for you.

MERLE

Always a possibility. There's another  
problem, too... What happens in Fernwood  
that anyone wants to read about?

ELEANOR

I thought you might ask... Didn't I  
say I was sensitive to you?

MERLE

Yeah, and if you keep anticipating any  
more of my questions, I'm going to start  
believing you.

ELEANOR

Good. Now, you want to know what's  
newsworthy in Fernwood.

MERLE

Doggone, you did it again!

ELEANOR

And my answer to your questions is:  
Mel Beach.

MERLE

Ah, nobody cares about that Mel Beach.  
Homicidal maniacs are a dime a dozen in  
big cities. Folks pick up the "Enquirer"  
to get that.

ELEANOR

Which means it sells!... And we can get  
an exclusive!

MERLE

That is true...

ELEANOR

Think of it: A Pulitzer prize for the  
Mel Beach Story.

MERLE

Not to mention. Maybe fifteen to twenty  
cents per issue.

ELEANOR

We'll do it together, Merle! Side by  
side. You and I. Printing up a storm:  
Into the night.

MERLE

All right! You got a deal... One thing  
we'd better iron out pronto, though.

ELEANOR

What's that, partner?

MERLE

Just how do we split the profits?

ELEANOR

You're so romantic.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREECATHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CATHY, SOLO, IS SADLY MAKING A BUNDLE OF JEFFREY'S CLOTHES. MOMENT. DOOR OPENS AND PIERSALL ENTERS.

CATHY

(ANGRY) Hey, come on, Piersall! Don't you have any respect for privacy?!

PIERSALL

Of course I do! If there wasn't any privacy, I'd be out of business.

(SUSPICIOUS) What are you doing with that underwear? They're Jeffrey's, aren't they? Admit it.

CATHY

None of your business... (BEAT)... But yes, they are Jeffrey's clothes and I'm getting them ready to return to his family.

PIERSALL

That sounds like you're in touch with the DiVitos.

CATHY

Good detective work. Now leave.

PIERSALL

Not quite yet, young lady. I'm amassing evidence on Mel Beach.

CATHY

Mel didn't murder those people and you know it. You just want to save your job.

PIERSALL

What's wrong with saving my job?! Do you know how many payments I've got left on those bugging devices!

CATHY

I don't care about your debts! What matters is Mel Beach's life. And I'm going to save him!

PIERSALL

Or die trying.

CATHY

That's a little dramatic, isn't it?

PIERSALL

Vito DiVito thinks Mel killed Jeffrey. He wants Mel to pay. If you value your health, you won't cross Vito.

VITO ENTERS ACCOMPANIED BY VERY HARD LOOKING GANGSTER TYPE WHO CARRIES VIOLIN CASE AND STANDS BY THE DOOR AS VITO COMES INTO THE ROOM.

VITO

(TO PIERSALL) I have personal matters to discuss with my daughter-in-law. Would you mind leaving?

PIERSALL

(TAKING NO OFFENSE) Not at all. In fact, I'd love to. I wouldn't dream of interfering with family visits.

CATHY

Wait, Piersall! We haven't finished about the underwear.

PIERSALL

We can do that later. You're with your family now.

PIERSALL EXITS.

VITO

(LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM) I think I will never come to this place again. It is too painful. Jeffrey's memory lives here.

CATHY

Yeah. And Howie's and Sal's and Mac's...

VITO

Somewhere out there Jeffrey is wandering. Wandering alone in the eternal night. All alone. But I will soon make sure that he has company. Whoever is responsible for Jeffrey's death will pay, pay with his own life. To this I must see. It is the DiVito code. Living by this code is the only thing that makes my life bearable in my terrible grief.

(MORE)

VITO (CONT'D)

The one who is responsible for Jeffrey's death must pay. (LOOKS AT CATHY FOR THE FIRST TIME) I have something for you.

CATHY

That's not necessary. Really. Jeffrey's memory is enough.

VITO NODS TO THE GANGSTER WHO BRINGS VIOLIN CASE TO TABLE AND STARTS TO OPEN IT. CATHY LETS OUT A LITTLE INVOLUNTARY SCREAM. VITO TAKES VIOLIN FROM THE CASE.

VITO (CONT'D)

This is a Stradivarius. The best. Very expensive, so it must be the best. I gave it to Jeffrey for his third birthday. But he never learned how to play. I was waiting to give it to his son. But now Jeffrey is gone and there will be no son. So I give it to his widow. I give it to you.

CATHY

I never learned to play either.

VITO

Take it. I want you to have it. I cannot bear to look at it anymore. It reminds me of Jeffrey. If you don't want to keep it, sell it. For this you can get a lot of money. Sell it.

CATHY

All right.

VITO

You see? This, too, is part of the DiVito code of honor. We take care of our own.

(MAKES "ALLSTATE INSURANCE" SIGN WITH HIS HANDS) You're in good hands with the DiVitos.

CATHY

Thank you.

VITO

Even though you weren't ever "one of our own." I know Jeffrey took to you a lot.

CATHY

Thank you... Maybe I will sell it. It kind of reminds me of Jeffrey, too.

VITO

Use the money well.

CATHY

(THINKING)... Yes... I have a friend in trouble...

VITO

Good, good... I have used millions that way... Now, it makes me ill to remain here any longer.

VITO STICKS OUT HIS CHEEK FOR CATHY TO KISS. SHE OBLIGES. VITO AND THE GANGSTER EXIT. CATHY APPRAISES THE VIOLIN EXCITEDLY.

CATHY

Stradivarius probably didn't have this in mind... But you are going to save a life... And Mel Beach is going to live to become a real music lover.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURJAIL CELL -- DAY

POLICE OFFICER IS LOCKING CELL DOOR AFTER ADMITTING MERLE AND ELEANOR TO VISIT MEL. ELEANOR CARRIES BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.

MERLE

Thank you, Warden... And if you're not a warden yet, you will be, if you keep up the good work.

POLICE OFFICER EXITS.

ELEANOR

(HANDING FLOWERS TO MEL) These are for you, Mr. Beach.

MEL

Oh, thank you very much. That's very kind of you.

ELEANOR

(GRACIOUSLY) Not at all. I hope the flowers will bring you some cheer. I know how awful it is to be in prison.

MEL

You've been in prison?

ELEANOR

A prison of sorts... I was confined to a wheelchair for years. So I know... The loneliness must be unbearable.

MEL

I do miss little things... happiness.

MERLE

Happiness isn't as much fun as it's cracked up to be.

MEL

And the guilt I feel is tremendous.

ELEANOR

I could understand that, a man of your religion.

MEL

All those people who were killed because of me.

MERLE

You can't take everything personal.

ELEANOR

Don't stop him, Merle. Let him go on.

MERLE

Yeah. Go, man, go.

MEL

Go where? I can't get out of this cell.

ELEANOR

Speak. Just speak, Mel. All the elements of fine drama are here! Torment, struggle, self-examination.

MERLE

Bunk beds.

MEL

What do you want me to speak about?

MERLE

Oh, anything that strikes your fancy.  
Truss, the UFO story, kidnappings,  
murder, black market organs...

MEL

But I don't have anything to tell.

ELEANOR

We'll be the judge of that.

MERLE

Just off the top of your head. We'll let  
you know if it's boring.

MEL

You're really interested in me, aren't  
you? It's wonderful. Wonderful! -- To  
have someone care about me as a human  
being. I feel all warm inside. I...

MERLE

Let's not get maudlin. We want to hear  
the important stuff.

ELEANOR

Like, what brought you here.

MEL

Okay! Where do I start? At birth?  
You're not really that interested?

MERLE

Tell us everything, man! You might start at two months ago.

ELEANOR

Oh, but first!... How about signing over the rights to this story.

MEL

What rights?

ELEANOR

The publishing rights... what else?

MERLE

It's so's we can have an exclusive. We need your autograph on this here contract.

HE TAKES A CONTRACT OUT OF HIS POCKET.

ELEANOR

Just think! You'll be famous. The world will know you, and cry along with you -- as we have.

MEL

I don't understand... I thought you were just here to chat -- about me.

ELEANOR

But while we're doing that, let's get something meaningful out of it...

MEL

Like closer ties between three people?

MERLE

More like an exclusive for "The Fernwood Flyer."

CATHY ENTERS SHOCKED AND APPROACHES  
CELL. MEL COMES TO BARS TO GREET  
CATHY.

CATHY

Mel, I just... Oh, I didn't know you  
had visitors.

MERLE

Hello, Cathy. Sign right here, Mel.

CATHY

(TO MEL) Listen, Mel, I just want to  
tell you that I'm going to hire the best  
lawyer I can find in Fernwood to defend  
you.

MEL

Won't that be expensive?

CATHY

Don't worry about that. I've just come  
into more than enough money to take  
care of the legal costs.

MERLE

(SOTTO TO ELEANOR) I can just see the  
headline. "Widow pays to defend  
husband's killer."

ELEANOR

(CATCHING HIS EXCITEMENT; SOTTO) Or "Mafia  
Bride Tries to Buy Freedom for UFO Killer".

ELEANOR APPROACHES CATHY.

## ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Darling, I think this is so noble of you.  
I want to help all I can. And instead  
of using some tacky local lawyer I think  
I can persuade my lawyer, Francis  
McCullough, to defend Mr. Beach.  
McCullough is nationally famous.

## CATHY

Then he can help Mel.

## MEL

Yes! He can help, Mel!

## ELEANOR

And he'll certainly get him a lot more  
publicity than any Fernwood shyster  
could. Before this is over I promise you  
that Mr. Beach is going to be more famous  
than Jack the Ripper.

MERLE HOLDS THE CONTRACT FOR MEL  
TO SIGN.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #422

