



FOREVER FERNWOOD



EPISODE #424

by

MITCH MARKOWITZ

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PRODUCTION

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TOM	GREG MULLAVEY
CATHY	DEBRALEE SCOTT
MERLE	DABNEY COLEMAN
WANDA	MARIAN MERCER
PENNY	JUDY KAHAN
ELEANOR	SHELLEY FABARES
GEORGE	PHIL BRUNS
MEL	SHELLEY BERMAN
FRANCIS McCULLOUGH	
GUARD	
EXTRA	

SETS

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JAIL CELL - DAY
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McCullough, Guard and Extra)

ACT II
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ACT IV
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HARTMAN KITCHEN - DAY
(Tom and Penny)

ACT ONEINT. JAIL CELL - DAY

MEL IS SITTING IN HIS CELL TRYING TO PLAY A GAME OF CHECKERS BY HIMSELF.

MEL

Boy, is this stupid. (CALLS OUT) Guard!
This is stupid!! (TO HIMSELF) I wanna
write a book about prison life. It's
not pleasant at all.

A BEAT. THE GUARD ENTERS, ESCORTING
FRANCIS MCCULLOUGH. LETS HIM INTO
MEL'S CELL. THE GUARD LEAVES. MEL
IS PUZZLED AND ANNOYED BY THE
INTRUSION.

FRANCIS

(SETTING DOWN ATTACHE CASE) You don't
write a book about prison before your
trial. You write it after you're
convicted. You have more time that way.

MEL

(ANNOYED) Fine. Who are you?

FRANCIS

Francis McCullough. Council for your
defense.

MEL

I didn't ask for a lawyer.

FRANCIS

You know, that's always the first thing
a lawyer hears when he steps into a cell
without calling first.

SUDDENLY MERLE AND AN EXTRA ENTER.
MERLE IS CARRYING A NOTE PAD, THE
EXTRA CARRIES A SMALL TV CAMERA,
A FLOODLIGHT MOUNTED ON TOP OF IT,
AND A COUPLE OF NECK MIKES WHICH
HE PLACES AROUND FRANCIS' AND
MERLE'S NECKS. THE GUARD LETS
THEM INTO THE CELL. THE FLOOD-
LIGHTS GO ON. THE GUARD STAYS.

MEL

What the hell is this?!

FRANCIS

Pre-trial press conference. Forget about
a fair trial without it.

FRANCIS STARTS TAKING OFF HIS COAT,
ROLLING UP HIS SLEEVES, AND MUSSING
UP HIS HAIR. HE LOOSENS HIS TIE
AND WHEN THE CAMERA MAN PUTS HIS
ARM UP, ABOUT TO START, FRANCIS'
FACE TAKES ON A TRAGIC LOOK.

MERLE

(SOTTO VOCE) Look sad, Beach! Sadder,
you could get the chair.

MEL'S EXPRESSION DOES CHANGE.

MEL

I don't understand this.

THE CAMERA MAN LETS HIS HAND DOWN.
MERLE STEPS INTO THE PICTURE.

MERLE

Ladies and Gentlemen. This is your Mayor and editor of your Fernwood Flyer and moderator for today's press conference here at the Fernwood county jail. In what might prove to be one of the most controversial type cases in history, defense lawyer Francis McCullough has agreed to defend Mel Beach now being held on several counts of conspiracy and misuse of a cabin. Mr. McCullough.

FRANCIS

(VERY SERIOUS) Mayor. The indictments have come down as a result of the disappearances and subsequent organ removals of Tubby Purley, Jack Tillman, Leonora Washington, etc., who had heretofore been considered missing and are now considered dead.

MERLE

(WHO HAS BEEN JOTTING ALL THIS DOWN)
Right. And how will Mr. Beach plead?

MEL

I'll tell you how I'm gonna plead...!

THE GUARD SUBDUES AND HOLDS MEL.

FRANCIS

The charges against Mr. Beach reflect the government's inability to cope with its current internal difficulties.

MEL

That doesn't make any sense!

MERLE

(TURNS AROUND; SOTTO VOCE) Mel, bear with us, buddy -- We'll be done in a second.

FRANCIS

Thank you, Mayor. Mel Beach is a political scapegoat. What he did was not wrong. Case in point: Tubby Purley was a lousy kid. When he was alive, even his mother was the first to say "he's a lousy kid".

MEL

Really?

FRANCIS

But Tubby's heart saved the life of a crippled professor of Solar Research at the University of Dayton.

MERLE

Now Jack Tillman...?

FRANCIS

(REFERS TO NOTES) Tillman was an obsessive gambler who used to beat neighbors' kids. But now his kidneys cleanse the blood of a social worker in New Jersey. I call that more than a fair trade.

THE CAMERA MAN HOLDS HIS HAND UP,
MAKING A CUT-OFF SIGNAL.

MERLE

Mr. McCullough, I could literally listen to you talk forever, but we gotta wrap it up here in about fifteen seconds.

FRANCIS

Mayor -- Mel Beach is an asset to this society. He's a pioneer. What Mel did was right! And we're going to prove it in court, even if Mel has to wait it out in uncomfortable prison cells for the rest of his life.

MERLE

Great. This is Mayor Jeeter and Francis McCullough from the county jail.

FRANCIS

Good afternoon.

THEY STAND THERE FOR A MOMENT
SMILING UNTIL THE LIGHTS GO OUT.

MERLE

This is going to make incredible headlines for the Flyer. Thanks, Francis.

FRANCIS

You bet.

MEL RUSHES OVER TO FRANCIS,
BREAKING AWAY FROM GUARD.

MEL

Uh, excuse me, but, I didn't do any of the organ transplant stuff. See, I'm basically... innocent.

FRANCIS

(UNDERSTANDING) That's not always the most important legal consideration, Mr. Beach.

MEL

You don't care about legal?

FRANCIS

Not an awful lot. Cathy Shumway originally consulted me on your behalf, but I decided to take the case on for ethical reasons and a book deal. See, what you did, Mr. Beach, was not wrong.

MEL

(LOSING PATIENCE) What I did was I didn't do nothing!

SUDDENLY:

SFX: CHANTING SOUND HEARD OUTSIDE

AND IT GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER.
GEORGE ENTERS IN A HUFF.

GEORGE

You people hear that? That's the citizens' militia out there, Jeeter. They didn't buy your little press conference, and neither did I.

MERLE

George, it's kind of you to come in here and tell us how some of the townfolk feel about the case, because their voices, as you know, echo our own...

GEORGE

You can wipe that stuff, Jeeter. We're gonna get some justice in this town, you hear that, Beach!?

MEL

(NERVOUS, FEEBLE) Didn't miss a word.

GEORGE

Good! And remember, if you try anything funny -- They lynch without a permit.

(EXITS)

MEL

I'm finished.

MERLE

Mel, I wish you'd have more faith in God and defense attorneys.

FRANCIS

(TO MEL) Let me assure you, the defense is doing all it can.

MEL

Yeah? Well why don't you first get me out of jail?

FRANCIS

That's not always the smartest move. I prefer a media blitz. I got a guy in Dayton -- he did the public relations work for Dr. Sam Shepherd...

MEL

(WORRIED) Who's Dr. Sam Shepherd?

MERLE

(EXPLAINING TO FRANCIS) Mel was stuck out in the woods for thirty-three years, until last month. Nobody told him World War II was over.

FRANCIS

Really?

MEL NODS.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Common mistake. Anyway, don't worry. We're not asking you to be a martyr. We're merely asking you to let us experiment with you a little... for the good of the country.

MERLE

And it won't cost you a dime.

MEL

Except maybe my life. Listen, all this media stuff and good for the country is great, but who you guys really should be dealing with is Bob Truss. He's the one who engineered that whole organ transplant business. I didn't even know he was doing it. I thought he was storing good cuts of steak in that freezer. I'm being honest!

FRANCIS

We're not really dealing with honesty in this case, Mr. Beach. We're dealing with issues.

SFX: CHANTING OUTSIDE BECOMES LOUDER

MERLE

(EXCITED) This could be big, Mel. We're talkin' public interest here. New York Times editorials -- maybe even added revenues to the town if this thing really blows up! Tourists!

MEL

I just want to get out of jail!

FRANCIS

(SHRUGS) Normal response.

MEL

(SCREAMING) I want a normal lawyer that gets people out of jail!!

FRANCIS

I'm afraid I've already been retained as defense council. I'm sorry. I'll do the best I can. If you do get sent to prison, at least a lot of people will know about it... That's the price of fame in this country.

MEL FALLS INTO HIS BUNK, HEAD IN HANDS, AS WE:

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT - DAY

CATHY IS SITTING, DAYDREAMING.
SHE SIPS FROM A CUP OF COFFEE AND
TAKES A BITE OUT OF A DOUGHNUT.
SHE CONTINUES DAYDREAMING.

SFX: KNOCK ON DOOR

PENNY ENTERS TENTATIVELY, DISTURBED.

PENNY

Cathy? Are you busy now?

CATHY

(RECANTS) I'm just chewing a doughnut
and staring. I could spare a minute.

PENNY ENTERS A BIT MORE RESOLUTELY.

PENNY

(TENSE) Cathy, I don't want to take up
a lot of your time so I'll get right to
the point.

CATHY NODS. TAKES ANOTHER BITE, A
SIP. BEAT.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Don't you at least want to hear a little
preliminary information first?

CATHY

Preliminary information about what?

PENNY

About what it is that I want to get right
to the point about.

CATHY IS PUZZLED, ABOUT TO SAY
SOMETHING.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Okay, never mind. I'll get right to the
point.

CATHY

Great.

PENNY

Are you sure you want to hear this?

CATHY

Do you want this cup of coffee in your
face?

PENNY

Okay, well, I'm moving out on Tom Hartman
tonight.

CATHY

(SHOCKED) What?? Why?! I thought you
loved each other.

PENNY

I think we do. But I'm just tired of
getting in his way all the time.

CATHY

You can stay out of his way without leaving
him. Can't you just step aside or take a
walk or something once in a while?

PENNY

I don't mean it like that. It's much more involved.

CATHY

(SYMPATHETICALLY) I've got time. I don't have to be anyplace until next Tuesday.

IT APPEARS AS THOUGH PENNY IS ABOUT TO CRY.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Hey -- You want some coffee or something?

PENNY

(SAD, ABOUT TO CRY, SNIFFS, BUT DOESN'T) No...

CATHY

(STALLING) I could put some bourbon into it if you think that would make it go down easier.

PENNY

I don't think a late morning drunken stupor would necessarily solve my problems.

CATHY

True.

CATHY GETS UP TO MAKE COFFEE, ANYWAY.

CATHY (CONT'D)

I'll make coffee anyway, just so that way I can think of the right things to say to you. (GETS JAR AND SPOON) It's freeze dried, so there may not be enough time to figure out something profound.

(MORE)

CATHY (CONT'D)

(POURS SOME WATER INTO A GLASS) Gee, I've been so busy lately following this Mel Beach case I didn't even know you and Tom were having a tough time.

PENNY

Oh, but we're not. It's just that I've caused so many problems around the house and around town lately. Besides, now that Heather's disappeared, Tom probably feels obligated to love me since I'm the only one left. I don't like that.

CATHY

(HANDING PENNY COFFEE) But that happens when loved ones disappear, Penny. The ones who are left get a little more attention.

PENNY

(TAKING A SIP) Well, I don't want to be in love with someone who loves me because I'm the only one left. And anyway, he's been giving me those empty looks lately, so I think I'll just leave tonight.

CATHY

But that's ridiculous! He wants you around. I'm sure of it.

SFX: SHARP RAP ON DOOR

CATHY (CONT'D)

Come in.

TOM ENTERS QUICKLY, TALKING.

TOM

Cathy, what the heck do you mean by taking sides with Mel Beach and causing your... Oh hi, Pen. (TO PENNY) Listen, would you mind if I talk to my sister-in-law alone for a few minutes? We have some family stuff to talk about.

PENNY REMAINS EXPRESSIONLESS. SHE MECHANICALLY GETS UP, ALMOST COLDLY, CASTS CATHY AN "I TOLD YOU SO" LOOK AND LEAVES.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, what's wrong with her?

CATHY

Let's take care of one piece of bad news at a time.

TOM

What's that supposed to mean.

CATHY

You're the one who's mad: You talk first. Have a seat.

TOM

(JARRED, SITS) Okay, what was I going to say. Oh, yeah. (PULLS IT TOGETHER)

Cathy! You're busting up your family, you don't talk to your father, and since you and your mother are on good terms, your father won't talk to your mother...

CATHY

So what's so unusual?

TOM

What's unusual is that it's all because you're defending that lousy Mel Beach. Cathy, don't you realize? -- He's accused of transplanting organs from live people to dying people, and the formerly live people are now dead! Why the hell are you coming out for his defense?

CATHY

Because I think he's innocent, okay?

TOM

Yeah, I guess that's legitimate.

CATHY

Now you want some coffee or not?!

TOM

Huh? Oh, yeah, sure.

CATHY PUSHES PENNY'S CUP IN HIS DIRECTION.

TOM (CONT'D)

(QUIETER) A lot of people just happen to think you're wrong, that's all. (PICKS THE CUP UP) Hey, what was your bad news?

CATHY

It has to do with Penny, who a) Thinks she's in your way. b) Thinks you don't love her any more, or if you do it's because, c) she's the only one left since Heather disappeared.

TOM

She told you that?

CATHY

Yeah. She didn't do it with letters.

I added the letters.

TOM

But that's crazy! I mean, it just so happens she is the only one left, but that's not my fault...

CATHY

Wait a minute. I didn't get to the bad news yet. That was the mediocre news. Here's the bad: Ready?

TOM NODS.

CATHY (CONT'D)

She's moving out.

AT FIRST TOM IS TOO STUNNED TO TALK.

TOM

(VERY QUIET) Moving... out...?

CATHY

As in "Hey, honey, why're you packing up those suitcases?"

TOM

(STUNNED) Jesus. She didn't say a thing about it.

CATHY

That's the way it's done in real life sometimes.

TOM

But... I love that girl, Cathy.

CATHY

I think maybe she missed that part,
especially when you kicked her out just
now.

TOM

(PONDERING) Of course, I've been miserable
lately since Heather's disappearance and
everything...

CATHY

Tom, I know how much you miss Heather,
but disappearances are supposed to bring
the remaining people together. It's one
of the few virtues of tragedy.

TOM

Yeah... I guess I let it get the best of
me. (REALIZING) Of course I let it get
the best of me. I lost my only daughter!
Of my only wife, who I also lost!

CATHY

You want to lose your only girlfriend,
too?

A BEFUDDLED TOM SHAKES HIS HEAD
NO.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Then if I were you, I'd get back on the
track. (LOOKS AT WATCH) Like right now,
before the last pair of panty hose goes
into the valise.

TOM

(JUMPING UP) What, what'll I do? I mean, what can I say?

CATHY

"I'm sorry" is a great starting line. After that start sharing your problems with her. There's probably plenty to go around.

TOM

(RESOLUTE) Okay...

TOM HEADS FOR THE DOOR.

TOM (CONT'D)

I hope it's not too late. I gotta find something to share with her that would convince her to stay. Probably, besides grief.

CATHY

Grief is good. But maybe you could find something bigger. Like maybe the rest of your life.

TOM

(EXCITED) You really think she'd...
Cathy! Do you think that would do it?!

CATHY

Marriage does have a way of bringing people closer together.

TOM

... Could work... Christ. Why didn't I think of that. I should have asked her to marry me weeks ago. Thanks. Thanks a lot.

TOM GRABS HIS COAT, KISSES CATHY
AND EXITS QUICKLY.

TOM (O.S.; CONT'D)

I'll let you know what happens!

CATHY

I hope they have better luck at marriage than I did. I couldn't take another funeral.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREEINT MAJOR LIVING ROOM - DAY

WANDA AND MERLE ARE SITTING ON THE SOFA. WANDA IS SHOWING MERLE POST-CARDS OF NEW YORK CITY. MERLE IS SOMEWHAT PREOCCUPIED, BUT TRYING TO FOCUS HIS ATTENTION ON WANDA.

WANDA

Now this one here is the World Trade Center. It's two hundred, seventeen stories high. Roughly two hundred and fifteen higher than Fernwood's tallest building.

MERLE

(TAKING PHOTO) Nice. Very nice.

WANDA SNUGGLES UP TO HIM, NIBBLING AT HIS EAR.

WANDA

Honey... hubby... I've missed you...

MERLE

(PULLING BACK SLIGHTLY) And hey I've missed you.

WANDA

And yet despite that, last night you chose eating a bowl of raisin bran and reading aloud the third chapter of Looking Out for Number One to making love with me.

MERLE

(DEFENSIVE) Hey, darlin', I thought you were having fun.

WANDA

(MOVING CLOSER AGAIN) The fun is just beginning. Let's do some fairly liberated things to each other, huh?

WANDA STARTS KISSING MERLE.
SUDDENLY ELEANOR ENTERS.

ELEANOR

Hi, you two lovebirds. Oh, Wanda, may I please see some of the sketches you did in New York. I'll need them before we start cutting the new punk patterns.

WANDA GIVES AN "I SUPPOSE SO" LOOK TO ELEANOR AND LEAVES THE ROOM. AS SOON AS SHE DOES, ELEANOR PULLS MERLE CLOSE TO HER. MERLE RESISTS.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(BREAKS) Have you told her about us yet?

MERLE

Us? There ain't no "us"!

ELEANOR

Don't you think I know that, Merle? Perhaps, though, I should explain that very fact to your wife...

MERLE PULLS HER ASIDE.

MERLE

(ALARMED) Hey, why bother doing something like that?

ELEANOR

Oh, just to clear up the record between us. Perhaps stir up a bit of marital tension in the bargain. On second thought, maybe I'll just fib a bit and tell Wanda that we went the full fifteen rounds.

MERLE APPEARS TERROR-STRICKEN.

MERLE

Please, Eleanor. Not so loud. Couldn't we talk about this another time?

ELEANOR

How about another place.

MERLE

Fine by me.

ELEANOR

The Bide-A-Wee.

MERLE

No, no, I don't think so.

ELEANOR

All we'll do is talk.

MERLE

No... I...

WANDA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Here are most of the sketches, Eleanor. I'm not sure where I put the rest...

ELEANOR

(TO MERLE) Fine. Then we'll talk about it right now.

MERLE

No! Ixnay on the alk-tay!

WANDA ENTERS WITH SKETCHES. SHE
HANDS THEM TO ELEANOR.

MERLE (CONT'D)

Sure, sure, I can see what you mean,
Eleanor. The Reds have always been a
great ball club, but that infield...

WANDA

These are the pre-teen punk ideas we
spoke of. A kind of "punk for tots,"
if you will. Broken bicycle chains and...

ELEANOR

(INTERRUPTS) Wanda, there's something
I've got to confess...

MERLE

Hey, before you confess, Eleanor, I've
got a confession to make. This here
printing press is really getting in the
way here. So I'm gonna bring it back to
the Bide-A-Wee where it belongs, and
where I can finish that editorial about
Mel Beach being indicted on three counts
of conspiracy.

ELEANOR

(FEIGNING CONCERN) Oh? Do you think you
can set up the type on your press, finish
the editorial, print it, run it, and
proofread it all by yourself?

MERLE

Sure.

ELEANOR GIVES HIM A LOOK.

MERLE (CONT'D)

Uh, good point. Probably not.

WANDA

I'd be glad to go down there and set up,
Merle.

MERLE

And I'd be glad to have you come down,
but, uh, you're right in the middle of
these sketches. They're good ones, too.

ELEANOR

(TO WANDA) Yes, and I'd like to have these
(GESTURES TO WANDA'S SKETCHES) completed no
later than an hour or so from now.

MERLE

(TO WANDA) Hell, what would happen if
every big lady designer was distracted
by their husband's printing press.
Ordinary people would never have anything
to wear.

WANDA NODS, AND STARTS WORKING.
MERLE PUTS ON HIS COAT AND HAT.
ELEANOR PUTS ON HERS, HER GLOVES.

ELEANOR

(TO WANDA) I'll be glad to take care of
his dirty work, dear. See you soon.

WANDA

By the way, Eleanor, what was your confession?

ELEANOR

I hate kids.

MERLE AND ELEANOR EXIT.

WANDA

If I were a touch less trusting, I'd say that episode appeared a notch or two short of total credulity.

SHE STARTS PUTTING HER DRAWINGS TOGETHER.

WANDA (CONT'D)

On the other hand, Merle has been working awfully hard lately, poor trouper and maybe it's about time I did something unselfish for him.

WANDA CROSSES TO PHONE, DIALS.

WANDA (CONT'D)

Hello? Chez Armand? Hello, Armand. This is Wanda Jeeter. I'd like you to prepare one superb, heady yet delicate example of the finest in contemporary French cuisine... ah -- for three... yes, to go. (BEAT) Fifteen minutes? Merci, au revoir.

SHE HANGS UP, GRABS HER COAT.

WANDA (CONT'D)

Well, if Merle has been edgy lately,
perhaps a dinner a la Francais brought
to his office will cheer him up. What
a good wife I am.

WANDA LEAVES.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOURHARTMAN KITCHEN - DAYTIGHT SHOT OF PENNY, SHE IS UPSET.

PENNY

(EMOTIONAL, FIRM) Tom, I'm... I'm sorry
I have to be the one to tell you this,
but I'm... leaving you. (HEAD DOWN) For
good, more or less.

BEAT. PENNY STARES STRAIGHT AHEAD .
AS THOUGH WAITING FOR AN ANSWER.
CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL THAT
SHE IS ALONE, CARRYING COAT, NEAR
A SUITCASE.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I have to be more direct. (MORE FORCEFUL)
"Tom! I'm not bringing this up to annoy
you, but I think we'd better break up for
a while because I'm leaving"... No!
(THINKS) It's "so" I'm leaving. I think
we better break up, "so" I'm leaving.

TOM ENTERS IN A GOOD MOOD. PENNY,
HORRIFIED, STANDS RIGID.

PENNY (CONT'D)

(BLURTS) Tom-I-hate-to-be-the-one-to-
tell-you-this-but-we're-leaving-because-
I'm-breaking-and-annoying.

TOM

(BEFUDDLED) Huh?

PENNY

(STARTING AGAIN) Tom, I hate to be...

TOM

Penny, will you marry me?

SHE JUST STANDS THERE, STUNNED.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh, I mean "please." Will you "please" marry me?

PENNY

(QUIET, AFTER A BEAT) This comes at a fairly inconvenient time, Tom. I was just on my way out to leave you forever.

TOM

(NOT NOTICING BAGGAGE) Oh, well instead of leaving me forever, will you marry me forever?

PENNY

Are you feeling okay?

TOM

Hell, sure I'm okay. I'm very okay.

(SUBDUED) Why wouldn't I be okay?

PENNY

You've been under a lot of strain.

TOM

I've never felt better in my life. (THINKS)
Maybe once. Twice... Hey, Penny, marry me,
huh...

PENNY

Why do you suddenly want to get married?
I can't fill the hole that Heather left
when she disappeared.

TOM

I know. But we could share the grief
together. And we could share other
things, too. Like love, life, my Vega
hatchback...

PENNY

I could have married you before, Tom, but
things have changed so much. (BEAT) I'm
sorry.

PENNY DROPS HER HEAD, PICKS UP
HER SUITCASE AND STANDS THERE
FOR A SECOND STARING AT A VERY
VULNERABLE TOM. FINALLY SHE
DROPS THE VALISE AND RUNS INTO
HIS ARMS. THEY KISS.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh, Tom, don't you realize how much I've
loved you?

TOM NODS PAINFULLY IN HER ARMS.

PENNY (CONT'D)

And yet you still want me?

TOM

(NODS) Yeah, that's the thing. I need
you. I needed you when Heather was here
and I still need you.

PENNY

And Heather...?

TOM

Even if Heather walked in the room this minute, I'd still say "let's get married".

To you, not to her. What do you say, huh?

PENNY PULLS AWAY PAINFULLY.

PENNY

Well, I'll have to weigh the pros and cons.

TOM

But there are no pros and cons. Either you want to marry me or you don't.

PENNY NODS, APPARENTLY ABOUT TO UTTER A POSITIVE RESPONSE.

PENNY

(NODDING AND STAMMERING) Well, uh, yuh, uh...

SFX: PHONE RINGS

PENNY DIVES FOR IT.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Hartman residence... no, Heather has disapp... what?! What kind of job reference. That can't be. She's been missing... and before that she was only fourteen.

TOM TAKES THE PHONE.

TOM

Hello? Hey, hello?! (HANGS UP) They hung up.

PENNY

(STUNNED) He said he was the personnel manager at the El Coyote Hotel in Las Vegas.

TOM

Oh, a wrong number...

PENNY

(TRANCE-LIKE) He said a perspective go-go dancer named Heather left this number as a reference.

TOM

Go-go dancer? Heather??

TOM GRADUALLY BUILDS UP TO THE POINT OF BEING ECSTATIC AND LETS GO. HUGS PENNY AND JUMPS AROUND.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh my God! That means she's alive. My baby's alive!! And dancing in Las Vegas.

PENNY

Great. Let's go get her.

TOM

First I gotta tell that Justice Department Piersall guy he can stop looking for her.

(TOM HEADS OUT) Don't go away!

PENNY

(RUNNING AFTER HIM) What about the marriage proposal.

TOM

(FROM DOORWAY) What about what?

PENNY

The marriage proposal. The one you just used to ask me if I'd get married to you...?

TOM

(CATCHING ON) Oh, yeah, right. Hold off on that a little while. I'll get right back to you...

BUT TOM IS ALREADY GONE. PENNY IS LEFT STANDING THERE HOLDING THE TOWEL.

PENNY

(SOUR GRAPES) I didn't want to get married anyway. Too intimate.

PENNY SITS ON HER SUITCASE, PUTS HER HEAD IN HER HANDS AS WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #424

