

## THE TWILIGHT ZONE: EPISODE “THE SILENCE” (SEASON 2, EPISODE 25)

Characters:

Tennyson, Jim  
Archie, Colonel Taylor  
Alfred, his Lawyer  
Franklin, the club steward

**Narrator:** You're traveling through another dimension. A dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind. A journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. That's the signpost up ahead. Your next stop, The Twilight Zone.

[Scene: A men's club]

**Tennyson:** [Talking incessantly] I can tell you, gentlemen, the most idiotic thing occurred in the market today. Just idiotic. I've been doing a little dabbling in the syndicate. It has some oil holdings in the western part of Texas. Jack Brewer handles our New York operation for us. Anyway, he came on the floor today. I just happened to be there. This was about 10:00, 10:30 this morning. He has a sheaf of papers in his hand he waves to me. Now, I can assure you if there is anybody that I don't want to see before noon on any given hand, it is Jack Brewer. He's a raucous sort, a little crude, nouveau riche. You know the type...[moving across the club to a member]. Charlie, old man, you don't mind if I sit here, do you, boy?...Well, well, where was I? Oh, yes, Jack Brewer. He, uh, walks across the floor to me and with an intense voice, a voice absolutely shaking with intensity. He sidles up to me and he whispers, he's got the most miserable habit of whispering *sotto voce*, so that everyone in the world can hear him. Anyway, he says to me, “Jim, I gotta scrape up a quarter of a *million*, and you're the only one that can handle it for me.” This is Brewer speaking to me. A quarter of a million dollars! And I am supposed to scrape it up for him. I mean, I am *supposed* to scrape it up as though it were some kind of residue that could be literally scooped up off a floor! To make a long story short, he arrives at the busiest time of the morning, absolutely the busiest time, and he says to me, “Jim, I've got an opportunity to corner...”

[Alfred enters the club, approaches Archie]

**Alfred:** I just got your letter.

**Archie:** Sh! Our young friend is discoursing again. [Motioning to Tennyson]

**Tennyson:** I looked a little askance at him because the boor wouldn't know a corner of the market from a railroad roundhouse!

**Archie:** The only thing worse than his talking so much is his transparency. In about 30 seconds, Alfred, he will very nonchalantly ask for a loan from anybody within earshot. As a matter of fact, just last week he asked me for the loan of a quarter of a million dollars.

**Alfred:** The letter you sent me is the most incredible thing I have ever read. Archie, we're old friends. I must tell you that...

**Archie:** My communication to you, Alfred, was not as an old friend, but as my lawyer. Is the wager I have in mind legal?

**Alfred:** No wager is legal in this state.

**Archie:** Well, is it against the law, then? Anything criminal in it?

**Alfred:** I don't see anything criminal in it, no.

**Archie:** Alfred, that is exactly what I wanted to hear from you. [Ringing for Franklin] Franklin, would you take this note across the room to young Mr. Tennyson over there. You tell him it's from me. Ask him to read it immediately.

**Franklin:** Why, yes, sir.

**Narrator:** The note that this man is carrying across a club room is in the form of a proposed wager, but it's the kind of wager that comes without precedent. It stands alone in the annals of bet-making as the strangest game of chance ever offered by one man to another. In just a moment, we'll see the terms of the wager and what young Mr. Tennyson does about it. And in the process, we'll witness all parties spin a wheel of chance in a very bizarre casino called The Twilight Zone.

**Tennyson:** Do you know what I could do with a quarter of a million dollars in a deal like this? Well, I can tell you this. I could treble it, quadruple it. With an initial investment of a quarter of a million dollars, I could take this plastics...

**Franklin:** Excuse me, Mr. Tennyson. A note for you from Colonel Taylor [Archie].

**Tennyson:** Just put it down somewhere, Franklin.

**Franklin:** Excuse me, Mr. Tennyson, his instructions are that you read it immediately.

**Tennyson:** I beg your pardon?

[Reads note. Acts like he has seen a ghost.]

**Tennyson:** This is...this is absolute nonsense.

**Archie:** What about it, Tennyson?

**Tennyson:** Is this some kind of a joke? I mean, really, Colonel, if it is a joke, it suggests a sense of humor quite beyond me.

**Archie:** It is not a joke. You know me reasonably well, Tennyson. You know that humor is perhaps the least developed aspect of my character. I am quite serious. Would you mind terribly, Tennyson, if I acquainted the members with my proposition?

**Tennyson:** Well, that's your business, Colonel, quite your business. But I do believe that you will make yourself highly suspect.

**Archie:** I'll take that risk. I propose a wager to Mr. Tennyson here. The wager is to take the following form. I will bet him \$500,000 that he cannot remain silent for one year. The wager carries with it the following conditions: He will be placed in a room for observation by me or by anyone of us, at our discretion. He will be furnished with anything he desires by way of diversion. But he will not be able to speak one single word for 12 months. Not one single word. He will make his wants known in writing, not by voice. What about it, Tennyson?

**Tennyson:** Well, may I ask what is the reason for this wager?

**Archie:** What I'm about to say might horrify the average person, but to someone as insensitive as you it probably won't mean a thing. I dislike you intensely, Tennyson. It goes much beyond the ordinary distaste I feel for someone without breeding, without principles, without manners. Your voice has become intolerable. I sit here each night and the sound of it makes me wince! I cannot ask you to resign from the club. I haven't got that right. So, it occurred to me that I'd be willing to offer a large sum of money just to have some quiet. You see, Tennyson, you could not possibly remain silent for a year. It's not in your nature. You're a shallow, talkative, empty-headed ne'er-do-well. And to remain silent would destroy you. So, what I assume will happen, you will perhaps withstand the pressures for three or four weeks, maybe a couple of months, and then you will succumb. That's, again, your nature. In the meantime, I will derive, oh, several months of exquisite silence. Well, Tennyson, does it appeal to your sporting blood?

**Tennyson:** Oddly enough, it does appeal to my sporting blood.

**Archie:** Now, that, too, is patently ridiculous. There's nothing sporting about you, Tennyson. I happen to know that you're delivering your nightly financial folderol because you're in desperate straits. You've run through your inheritance, your debts are insurmountable, and you'd do practically anything for money. Except, perhaps, to remain silent for a year.

**Tennyson:** If this were Europe, Colonel, or the company were a bit more sophisticated, I should be forced to invite you out for the things you've said to me. The ground rules here, however,

are just a little bit different. I can either ignore you or call your bluff. Well, I choose to do the latter. I accept your wager. Uh, just a few questions. Where am I to be incarcerated?

**Archie:** Well, in the old game room downstairs. It isn't being used. With the permission of the board of governors, I'll have some work done on it. You'll be in a glass-enclosed living room and bedroom. There will be microphones placed all around the room which you are to leave untouched. Your every movement will be recorded and so will your voice when you decide to give up. You will permit me or any one of us to observe you at any time.

**Tennyson:** When, uh, is this supposed to start?

**Archie:** Well, the room could be prepared by tomorrow night. I've made all the necessary inquiries. You could enter any time after 10:00 p.m. And so, at 10:00 p.m., June 3, 1962, you may leave the room. At that time, I will have a check for \$500,000 waiting for you, assuming, of course, that the impossible happens and you're able to remain silent for those 12 months.

**Tennyson:** I'll be back tomorrow night...Uh, Colonel, I would like to have that check certified and placed on deposit in my name. A photostat of it available and witnessed by every member of this club.

**Archie:** That might be the usual procedure in a fish market or a pawn shop. But not in this club and not with me. My credit is well-known so is my honor, as every member here will vouch for. There will be no check placed on deposit. You'll have to take my word.

**Tennyson:** I see. It's my courage against your credit. Well, a year from tomorrow night both can be proved. Franklin, get me my coat.

**Franklin:** Yes, sir.

**Alfred:** [Striding over to Tennyson]. Tennyson, I've known Colonel Archie Taylor for a long time. This is not a capricious man. I warn you, he is in deadly earnest.

**Tennyson:** Do you know my wife, sir? Her name is Doris. She's a lovely thing. Frail, beautiful, fragile. Like a cameo brooch, but her tastes run to unfragile things. Sizable baubles to sizable price tags. She shops at Tiffany's the way other women enter a supermarket. My miserable misfortune is that I happen to be very much in love with her. I am also desperate in need of money. I may sound melodramatic, but it happens to be true. [Music]

[Scene: The old game room of the club, glass encased]

**Archie:** [Checking watch.] Any time now, Mr. Tennyson. Any time. [To Franklin]. Oh, Mr. Tennyson's dinner, hm?

**Franklin:** Yes, sir.

**Archie:** Is he eating well, appetite good?

**Franklin:** Not very much up to a week ago, sir, but he's eating very well now.

**Archie:** Well, that's nice. And I hope he stays in perfect health. I wouldn't want this experience to damage him in any way.

**Franklin:** Quite the contrary, sir. He seems in excellent spirits. And it's nine weeks now, sir. Nine weeks today that he's been in there.

**Archie:** Nine weeks?...Well, that's really quite incredible. I gave him four weeks possibly, to hold out, six at the outside. Nine weeks! There's a little bit more gristle there than I gave him credit for.

[Franklin goes into the glass-encased game room.]

**Franklin:** [to Tennyson] Will there be anything else, sir?

[Swinging pendulum. Calendar of months: August, September, October.]

[Scene: Upstairs in the club]

**Archie:** Oh, hello, Alfred. Franklin told me you were waiting.

**Alfred:** Only to pose this question to you. Very succinct, Archie, very brief. How long?

**Archie:** How long what?

**Alfred:** How long are you gonna keep on with this...this prolonged practical joke?

**Archie:** Well, not much longer. [taking his from Franklin]. Thank you, Franklin. You should see our boy down there. Four and a half months, not a sound out of him. It's incredible. That fop won't take it for another month. This I'll guarantee you.

**Alfred:** For your sake, I hope that's the case.

**Archie:** My sake?

**Alfred:** You have the money, archie?

**Archie:** I find that insulting, Alfred.

**Alfred:** I'm sorry if it is. I think he's gonna beat you,archie. I think that boy down there is gonna remain silent for the entire year. And I think you're gonna owe him \$500,000. I just hope you've got it.

[Scene: The old game room of the club, glass encased. Calendar: March]

**Archie:** You can hear me, Tennyson, can't you? I've been giving this considerable thought. You fulfilled your part of the bargain admirably. As a matter of fact, you have completely surprised me, Tennyson. But the fact is I feel the whole thing has gone too far. It's becoming inhuman. I'm prepared to offer you \$1,000 dollars and you may walk out today. Right this moment, if you choose...It's going to be an early spring this year, Tennyson. You ought to see it. In that time of the year a young man's fancy lightly turns...Well, you know that better than I do.

[Taunting.] And young ladies, too. For example, your wife. She must be lonely for you, Tennyson. Desperately lonely. As a matter of fact, she...she has been seen with other young men. It's odd she hasn't paid you a visit, isn't it? Don't you think it's odd? I happen to know you've written her many notes requesting a visit. She hasn't responded, even to the notes. You may lose your wife, Tennyson. I hope you're fully aware of that. While you stay here behind glass, the very reason for all your agony may be slipping away from you. Why don't you leave, Tennyson? Why don't you leave right now? It still might be possible to save your marriage.

Tennyson, I saw your wife again. She was getting into a little European sports car. There was a, you know, a nice young fellow driving it. Your wife, wife, wife, wife, wife, wife, wife.

Today is April Fools' Day, Tennyson. You remember April Fools' Day. I think it was named for you, for only a fool would stay in there as long as you have knowing precisely what's happening on the outside.

[Pendulum swinging]

Your wife, I mean, Tennyson, your wife, wife, wife...Tennyson, this nonsense must cease! You've got to get out of there. You really do. Why, I could tell you some stories about your wife. How about it, Tennyson? I might see my way clear to giving you \$5,000. That would pay off a lot of your debts. And a little bracelet for your wife. Something to compensate for the of loneliness. How about it, Tennyson? \$5,000? \$6,000, Tennyson. You're an idiot, you know that, Tennyson? You're going out of your mind in there. I know you are. You're ready to crawl up the walls. Listen, Tennyson, you cannot stay in there one more hour. Not another half hour.

[Scene: Upstairs at the club, full of members]

**Club Members:** I wouldn't have believed it. A year in that room and not one word out of him. Two minutes is all the poor devil has got now. Two more minutes. Look at Archie. Not the face of a happy man, would you say?

**Alfred:** A rather monumental occasion, isn't it, Archie? Twelve months ago to the moment you destroyed yourself much as I told you you would.

**Archie:** Your little reminders are gratuitous, Alfred. Besides, it's not yet 10:00.

**Alfred:** Whether it is or whether it isn't, the destruction I'm talking about has already taken place. There have been ugly rumors, Archie, things you've done to him. Like little asides innuendos, suggestions, gossip about his wife. You place such a premium on honor, Archie, but you haven't acted like an honorable man. Please, don't go to the trouble of denying it. I'm sure much of it is true. But the ugly affair has proved two things hasn't it, Archie? That, that boy down there is stronger than you gave him credit for, and you are considerably weaker.

**Archie:** How could he have done it? How could he have done it? It's impossible!

[Clock strikes 10:00 p.m.] [Tennyson enters]

**Archie:** You, uh, have me at a disadvantage, Mr. Tennyson. In a rather compromising situation. You force me into a position of rather distasteful candor. The truth is I am a fraud. I haven't any money. I offered you \$1,000. Then \$5,000. I would have had to go out into the street to beg even that amount, let alone a half a million dollars. It's true that I have pride, bearing, taste, exceptional breeding, but I lost most of my money some years ago. Now you have forced me to uncover the situation, proving, Mr. Tennyson, proving that of the two of us, you are by far the more substantial. And I will naturally resign. I will not ask you to suffer my presence any longer.

**Alfred:** Tennyson, you can talk, your time is up. You can talk, gurgle, sing, chortle, anything you want.

[Tennyson begins writing a note.]

**Club Members:** What's he writing? What is he doing? Why doesn't he talk? What does it say, Archie? What did he write? Why didn't he say something?

[Archie reads from the note Tennyson has written]: "I knew I would not be able to keep my part of the bargain, so one year ago! Had the nerves to my vocal chords severed."

[Camera reveals the scar on Tennyson's neck]

**Narrator:** Mr. Jim Tennyson, who almost won a bet, but who discovered somewhat belatedly that gambling can be a most unproductive pursuit even with loaded dice, marked cards, or, as

in his case, some severed vocal chords. For somewhere beyond him, a wheel was turned and his number came up "black 13." If you don't believe it, ask the croupier, the very special one who handles roulette in the Twilight Zone.