

The Philadelphia

~~Directed by Andy Bock~~

By David Ives

Ever had one of those days? No matter what you order, they're out of it. No matter where you want to go, they can't take you there. No matter what you want to do, it can't get done. Don't panic, there's the signpost up ahead ... you're in a Philadelphia!

This one-act is probably the most paradoxically twisted of the five pieces. A restaurant patron falls into a Twilight-Zone state called a Philadelphia where nothing is as it seems. In fact, she constantly struggles within this world where everything exists in its complete opposite state, where inhabitants are stuck in different "cities" or states of mind.

The original text calls for the action to be played by two men who converse, who are encountered by a waitress, but I decided to switch the roles. Doing this, I explored a new way of playing with the comedy as I felt the rhythms flowed better if played by two women. I also felt it more appropriate, and also more fun, for the female characters to play with the "sir" references and also the blatant yelling of profanities. Through rehearsal process, I discovered my experiment seems to work as the relationships between the three characters felt much more comfortable as time progressed, especially playing the waiter as the only male in the scene.

Cast:

ALICE.....Kaliea Schutz

MARCY.....Jen Forsyth

WAITER.....Neil Truglio

ALICE rings call bell, but gets no answer. She rings twice to finally get service from the WAITER, who enter with a mug in one hand and a coffee pot in the other.

WAITER: Can I help me?

ALICE: Do you know that you would look fantastic on a wide screen?

WAITER: Uh-huh.

ALICE: Seventy millimeters.

WAITER: Look. Do you want to see a menu, or what?

ALICE: Let's negotiate, here. What's the soup du jour today?

WAITER: Soup of the day, you got your choice of Polish duck blood or cream of kidney.

ALICE: Beautiful. Beautiful! Kick me in a kidney.

WAITER: You got it.

ALICE: Any oyster crackers on that seabed?

WAITER: Nope. All out.

ALICE: Hope the specials today? Spread out your options.

WAITER: You got your deep-fried gizzards.

ALICE: Fabulous.

WAITER: Calves' brains with okra.

ALICE: You are a tease.

WAITER: And pickled pigs' feet.

ALICE: Pigs' feet. I love it. Put me down for a quadruped.

WAITER: If you say so.

ALICE: Any sprouts to go on those feet?

WAITER: Iceberg.

ALICE: So be it.

(Exit WAITER through kitchen. Enter ALICE, looking shaken and bedraggled.)

MARCY: Alice!

ALICE: Hey there, Marcy. What's up?

MARCY: Jesus!

ALICE: What's going on, buddy?

MARCY: Oh, man...!

ALICE: What's the matter? Sit down.

MARCY: I don't get it, Alice. I don't understand it.

ALICE: You want something? You want a drink? I'll call the waiter-

MARCY: No! No! Don't even try. I don't know what's going on today, Al. It's really weird.



ALICE: What, like...?

MARCY: Right from the time I got up.

ALICE: What is it? What's the story?

MARCY: Well-just for example. This morning I stopped off at a drugstore to buy some aspirin. This is a big drugstore, right?

ALICE: Yeah...

MARCY: I go up to the counter, the guy says what can I do for you, I say, Give me a bottle of aspirin. The guy gives me this funny look and he says, "Oh we don't have that, *sir*." I said to him, You're a drugstore and you don't have any aspirin?

ALICE: Did they have any Bufferin?

MARCY: Yeah!

ALICE: Advil?

MARCY: Yeah!

ALICE: Extra-strength Tylenol?

MARCY: Yeah!

ALICE: But no aspirin.

MARCY: No!

ALICE: Wow...

MARCY: And that's the kind of weird thing that's been happening all day. It's like, I go to a newsstand to buy the News, the guy never even heard of it.

ALICE: Could've been a misunderstanding.

MARCY: I asked everywhere-nobody had the News! I had to read the *Toronto*

Hairdresser. Or this, I go into a deli at lunchtime to buy a sandwich, the guy tells me they don't have any pastrami. How can they be a deli if they don't have any pastrami?

ALICE: Was this a Korean deli?

MARCY: This was a kosher-from-Jerusalem deli. "Oh, we don't carry that, *sir*," he says to me. "Have some tongue."

ALICE: Mmm.

MARCY: I just into a cab, the guy tells me he doesn't go to Sixteenth Street. He offers to take me to *La Junta* instead!

ALICE: Mm-hm.

MARCY: Looking at me like I'm an alien or something!

ALICE: Mark. Settle down.

MARCY: "Oh, I don't go there, *sir*."

ALICE: Settle down. Take a breath.

MARCY: Do you know what this is?

ALICE: Sure.

MARCY: What is it? What's happening to me?

ALICE: Don't panic. You're in a Philadelphia.

MARCY: I'm in a what?

ALICE: You're in a Philadelphia. That's all.

MARCY: But I'm in-

ALICE: Yes, physically you're in Denver. But metaphysically you're in a Philadelphia.

MARCY: I've never heard of this!

ALICE: You see, inside of what we know as reality there are these pockets, these black holes called Philadelphias. If you fall into one, you run up against exactly the kinda shit that's been happening to you all day.

MARCY: Why?



ALICE: Because in a Philadelphia, no matter what you ask for, you can't get it. You ask for something, they're not gonna have it. You want to do something, it aint gonna get done. You want to go somewhere, you can't get there from here.

MARCY: Good god. So this is very serious.

ALICE: Just remember, Marcy. This is a condition named for the town that invented the cheese steak. Something that nobody in their right mind would willingly ask for.

MARCY: And I thought I was just having a very bad day...

ALICE: Sure. Millions of people have spent entire lifetimes inside a Philadelphia and never even knew it. Look at the city of Philadelphia itself. Hopelessly trapped forever inside a Philadelphia. And do they know it?

MARCY: Well what can I do? Should I just kill myself now and get it over with?

ALICE: You try to kill yourself in a Philadelphia, you're only gonna get hurt, babe.

MARCY: So what do I do?

ALICE: Best thing to do is wait it out. Someday the great cosmic train will whisk you out of the city of Brotherly Love and off the someplace happier.

MARCY: You're pretty goddamned mellow today.

ALICE: Yeah well. Everybody has to be someplace.

(WAITER enters)

WAITER: Is your name Alice Chase?

ALICE: It is indeed.

WAITER: There was a phone call for you. Your boss?

ALICE: Okay.

WAITER: He says you're fired.

ALICE: Cool! Thanks. *(WAITER exits)* So anyway, you have this problem...

MARCY: Did he just say that you got fired?

ALICE: Yeah. I wonder what happened to my pigs' feet...

MARCY: AI-!? You loved your job!

ALICE: Hey. No sweat!

MARCY: How can you be so calm?

ALICE: Easy. You're in a Philadelphia? I woke up in a Los Angeles. And life is beautiful! You know Steve packed up and left me this morning.

MARCY: Steve left you?

ALICE: And frankly, Scarlett, I don't give a shit. I say, go and God bless and may your dating pool be Olympic-sized.



MARCY: But your job? The garment district was your life!

ALICE: So I'll turn it into a movie script and sell it to Paramount. Toss in a little sex, add a little emotional blah-blah-blah, pitch it to Jack and Dusty, you got a buddy movie with a garment background. Not relevant enough? We'll throw in the hole in

the ozone, make it E.C.

MARCY: EC?

ALICE: Environmentally correct. Have you about this hole in the ozone?

MARCY: Sure.

ALICE: Marcy, I love this concept. I embrace this ozone. Sure, some people are gonna get hurt in the process. Meantime, everybody else'll tan a little faster.

MARCY: So this is a Los Angeles...

ALICE: Well. Everybody has to be someplace.

MARCY: Wow.

ALICE: You want my advice? Enjoy your Philadelphia. Sit back and order yourself a beer and a burger and chill out for a while.

MARCY: But I can't order anything. Life is great for you out there on the cosmic beach. Whatever I ask for, I'll get a cheese steak or something.

ALICE: No. There's a very simple rule of thumb in a Philadelphia. Ask for the opposite.

MARCY: What?

ALICE: If you can't get what you ask for, ask for the opposite and you'll get what you want. You want the News, ask for the Times. You want pastrami, ask for tongue.

MARCY: Oh.

ALICE: Works great with men. What is more opposite than the opposite sex?

MARCY: Uh-huh .

ALICE: So. Would you like a Bud?

MARCY: I sure could use a-

ALICE: No. Stop. Do you want...a Bud?

MARCY: No. I don't want a Bud.

(Enter WAITER from kitchen to clean neighboring tables.)

ALICE: Good. Now there's the waiter. Order yourself a Bud and a burger. But don't ask for a Bud and a burger.

MARCY: Waiter!

ALICE: Don't call him. He won't come.

MARCY: Oh.

ALICE: You're in a Philadelphia, so just figure, fuck him.

MARCY: Fuck him.

ALICE: You don't need that waiter.

MARCY: Fuck that waiter.

ALICE: And everything to do with him.

MARCY: Hey, waiter! FUCK YOU!

(WAITER turns to her)

WAITER: Can I help you?

ALICE: That's how you get service in a Philadelphia.

WAITER: Can I help you?

MARCY: Uh-no thanks.

WAITER: Okay, what'll you have?

ALICE: Excellent.

MARCY: Well-how about some O.J.?

WAITER: Sorry. Squeezer's broken

MARCY: A glass of milk?

WAITER: Cow's dry.

MARCY: Egg nog?

WAITER: Just ran out.

MARCY: Cuppa coffee?

WAITER: Oh we don't have that, *sir*.

MARCY: Got any ale?

WAITER: Nope.

MARCY: Porter?

WAITER: Just beer.

MARCY: That's too bad. How about a Heineken?

WAITER: Heineken? Try again.

MARCY: Rolling Rock?

WAITER: Outta stock.

MARCY: Schlitz?

WAITER: Nix.

MARCY: Beck's?

WAITER: Next.

MARCY: Sapporo?

WAITER: Tomorrow.

MARCY: Lone Star?

WAITER: Hardy-har.

MARCY: Bud Lite?

WAITER: Just plain Bud is all we got.

MARCY: No thanks.

WAITER: *(calls)* Gimmie a Bud! *(To MARCY)* Anything to eat?

MARCY: Nope.

WAITER: Name it.

MARCY: Pork chops.

WAITER: Hamburger...

MARCY: Medium.

WAITER: Well done...

MARCY: Baked potato.

WAITER: Fries...

MARCY: And some zucchini.

WAITER: Slice of raw. *(Exits, calling)* Burn one!

ALICE: Marcy, that was excellent.

MARCY: Thank you.

ALICE: Excellent. You sure you've never done this before?

MARCY: I've spent so much of my life asking for the wrong thing without knowing it, doing it on purpose comes easy.

ALICE: I hear you.

MARCY: I could've saved myself a lot of trouble if I'd screwed up on purpose all those years. Maybe I was in a Philadelphia all along and never knew it!

ALICE: You might have been in a Baltimore. They're practically the same.

(WAITER enters with a bottle of beer and a plate)

WAITER: Okay. Here's your Bud. And one cheese steak. *(Starts to leave)*

ALICE: Excuse me. Hey. Wait a minute. What is that?

WAITER: It's a cheese steak.

ALICE: No. I ordered cream of kidney and two pairs of feet.

WAITER: Oh we don't have that, sir.

ALICE: I beg your pardon?

WAITER: We don't have that, sir.

ALICE: You son of a bitch! I'm in your Philadelphia!

MARCY: I'm sorry, Al.

ALICE: You brought me into your fucking Philadelphia!

MARCY: I don't know it was contagious.

ALICE: Oh God, please don't let me be in a Philadelphia! Don't let me be in a-

MARCY: Shouldn't you ask for the opposite? I mean, since you're in a Phila-

ALICE: Don't tell me about life in a Philadelphia!

MARCY: Maybe you're not really-

ALICE: I taught you everything you know about Philly, asshole! Don't tell me how to act in a Philadelphia.

MARCY: But maybe you're not really in a Philadelphia!

ALICE: Do you see the cheese on that steak? What do I need for proof? The fucking Liberty Bell? Waiter, bring me a glass of water.

WAITER: Water? Don't have that, sir.

ALICE: "We don't have water"-? What, do you think we're in a sudden drought or something? *(Suddenly realizes)* Holy shit, I just lost my job...! Steve left me! I gotta make some phone calls! *(To WAITER)* 'Scuse me, where's the payphone?

WAITER: Sorry, we don't have a payph-

ALICE: Of course you don't have a payphone, of course you don't! Oh shit, let me outta here! *(Exit ALICE)*

MARCY: I don't know. It's not that bad in a Philadelphia.

WAITER: Could be worse. I've been in a Cleveland all week.

MARCY: A Cleveland? What's that like?

WAITER: It's like death, without the advantages.

MARCY: Really. Care to stand?

WAITER: Don't mind if I do. *(He sits)*



MARCY: I hope you won't reveal your name.

WAITER: Mitch.

MARCY: Good-bye.

WAITER: Hello. *(They shake)*

MARCY: *(Indicating cheese steak)* Want to starve?

WAITER: Thanks. *(Picks up sandwich and starts to eat)*

MARCY: Yeah, everybody has to be someplace...So.

