

THE PHILADELPHIA

By David ives

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CHARACTERS:

ALPHONSO: California Cool; 20s or 30s

MARK: Frazzled; 20s or 30s

SERVER: Weary; as you will

SETTING:

A restaurant.

A table, red-checkered cloth, two chairs and a specials board,

AL Is at the restaurant table, with the SERVER.

SERVER: Can help you?

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

SERVER: Uh-huh.

AL: Seventy millimeters.

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

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

SERVER: Soup of the day you got a choice of Polish duck blood
or cream of kidney.

AL: Beautiful.
Beautiful! Kick me in the kidney.

SERVER: *(Writes it down)*
You got it.

AL: Any oyster crackers on your seabed?

SERVER: Nope.
All out.

AL: How about the specials today.
Spread out your options.

SERVER: You got your deep fried gizzards.

AL: Fabulous.

SERVER: Calves' brains with okra.

AL: You are a temptress.

SERVER: And pickled pigs feet.

AL: Pigs feet hove it.
Put me down for a quadruped.

SERVER: If you say so.

AL: Any sprouts to go on those feet?

SERVER: Iceberg.

AL: So be it.

(SERVER EXITS)

(At Same time, MARK ENTERS, looking shaken and bedraggled.)

MARK: Al!

AL: Hey, there, Marcus.
What's up?

MARK: Jeez!

AL: What's going on, buddy?

MARK: I don't get it, Al.
I don't understand it.

AL: You want something?
Want a drink?
I'll call the SERVER...

MARK: NO. No.
Dont even try.
(Mark gets a breath.)
I don't know what's going on today, Al.
But it's weird.

AL: What, like...?

MARK: Right from the time I got up.

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

MARK: Well-Just for an example.
This morning I stopped off at a drug store to buy some Aspirin.
This is at a big drug store, right?

AL: Yeah...

MARK: 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 drug store and you don't have any aspirin?"

AL: Did they have Bufferin?

MARK: Yeah!

AL: Advil?

MARK: Yeah!

AL: Extra-strength Tylenol?

MARK: Yeah!

AL: But no aspirin.

MARK: No!

AL: Wow...

MARK: 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 DAILY NEWS, the guy never even heard of it.

AL: Could have been a misunderstanding.

MARK: I asked every place-nobody had the news!
I had to read the Toronto Hairdresser.
Or this.
I go into a Dell 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 Pastrami?

AL: Was this a Korean dell?

MARK: This was a Kosher from Jerusalem Deli.
"Oh we don't carry that, sir."
He says to me,
"Have some tongue.

AL: Mmm.

MARK: Just got into a cab.
The guy says he doesn't go to 56th street!
He offers to take me to Newark Instead!

AL: Mm-hm.

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

AL: Mark.
Settle down.

MARK: "Oh, we don't go there, sir."

AL: Settle down.
Take a breath.

MARK: Do you know what this IS?

AL: Sure.

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

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

MARK: I'm in a what?

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

MARK: But i'm in-

AL: Yes, physically you're in New York.
But, *mentally*, you're in a Philadelphia.

MARK: I've never heard of this!

AL: You see, inside of what we know reality
there are these pockets,
these "black-holes" are called Philadelphias
and you don't want to fall Into one.

MARK: Why?

AL: Because in a Philadelphia,
no matter what you ask for,
you can't get it.

MARK: Good God.
SO this IS very serious.

AL: Just remember, Marcus,
this is a condition named for the town that invented the
Philly Cheese Steak.
Something that nobody in his right-mind would willingly
ask for.

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

AL: Some people... have spent entire lifetimes inside a
Philadelphia.
And do they know it?
NO!

MARK: Well, what can I do?
How can I get out of this?

AL: You try to force your way out of a Philadelphia,
you're only gonna get hurt, brother.

MARK: So what do I do?

AL: You gotta be smooth.
It takes tenacity.
Tennessee.

MARK: .
You're pretty laid back among all this.

AL: Yeah, well. Everybody has to be someplace.

(SERVER ENTERS)

SERVER: Is your name Allen Chase?

AL: You're dog-gone Skippy right

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

AL: Hit me with it!

SERVER: This guy on the line,
 says you're fired.

AL: Alright, alright, alright.
 Thanks a million.

(SERVER EXITS.)

AL: (off phone continues to Mark):
 So anyway, you have this problem..

MARK: Did she say you got fired?

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

MARK: Aaaaa!lll?
 You loved your job!

AL: Hey.
 No sweat.

MARK: How can you be so calm?!

AL: Easy.

You're in a Philly...
... my mind is in a LA.
And life is beautiful!
You know Susie packed up and left me this morning.

MARK: Susie left you?
Also, your job!
The garment district is your life!

AL: So I'll turn it into a movie script and sell it to Warner
Brothers or MGM.
Toss in some espionage,
Add a little romance
blah, blah, blah,
pitch it to George Lucas.
Hove this idea.

MARK: So this is a Los Angeles...?
AL: Well.
Everybody has to be somewhere.

MARK: WOW.

AL: You want my advice?
Enjoy your mental Philly.
Sit back and order yourself a Dr. Pepper
and a burger
and chillax for a while.

MARK: But I can't order anything.
Life is great on your cosmic beach,
but whatever I ask for,
I'll get a Philly Cheese Bowl
or something.

AL: No.
There's only one rule in a mental Philadelphia.
Ask for the opposite.

MARK: What?

AL: If you can't get what you ask for,
ask for the opposite
and you'll get what you want.
You want the DAILY NEWS,
ask for the TIMES.
You want a panini,
ask for a whole wheat bagel.

MARK: Oh.

AL: So.
Would you like a Dr. Pepper?

MARK: I sure could use a---

AL: No.
Stop.
Do you want a . . . Dr. Pepper?

MARK: No.
 I don't want a Dr. Pepper.

(SERVER ENTERS and goes to the specials board.)

AL: Good.
 Now there's the SERVER.
 Order yourself a Dr. Pepper and a burger,
 but do not ask for a Dr. Pepper and a burger.

MARK: SERVER!

AL: Don't call her.
 She won't come.

MARK: Oh.

AL: You're in a Philadelphia,
 so just figure,
 she can get lost.

MARK: She can just get lost.

AL: You don't need that waitress.

MARK: That SERVER can get lost.
 Hey, waitress!
 Get lost.

(SERVER turns to him.)

SERVER: Can help you, sir?

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

SERVER: Can I Help you?

MARK: Uh--no thanks.

SERVER: Okay, what'll you have?

(SERVER takes out her notepad and pen.)

AL: Excellent.

MARK: Well--how about some O . . ?

SERVER: Sorry.
Squeezer's broken.

MARK: A glass of milk?

SERVER: Cow's dried.

MARK: Eggnog?

SERVER: Just ran out.

MARK: Cuppa coffee?

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

*(MARK and AL exchange a look and a nod
(the SERVER has spoken the magic words...)*

MARK: Got any Coke?

SERVER: Nope.

MARK: Sprite?

SERVER: Nope.

MARK: Rootbeer?

SERVER: Just roots.

MARK: That's too bad. How about a Fanta?

SERVER: Fanta, sorry try again.

MARK: Diet Dr. Pepper?

SERVER: Just Dr. Pepper is all we got.

MARK: No thanks?

SERVER: *(Calls to Kitchen)* Gimme a Dr. Pepper!

(To Mark) Anything to eat?

MARK: Nope?

SERVER: Name it.

MARK: Pork Chops.

SERVER: *(Writes down and says...) Hamburger...*

MARK: Medium.

SERVER: Well done.

MARK: Baked potato.

SERVER: Fries....

MARK: And some Zucchini.

SERVER: Slice onions thin and raw.

(SERVER EXITS calling out.)

Burn one!

AL: Marcus, that was excellent.

MARK: Thank you.

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

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

AL: I hear you.

MARK: I could have saved myself a lot of trouble
if I had screwed up on purpose all those years.
Maybe I was in a Philadelphia all along and never knew It!

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

(SERVER enters with a glass a beer and a plate.)

SERVER: Okay.
Here's your Club Soda.

(Sets that in front of Mark.)

And one cheese steak.

(Sets that in front of Al and starts to go.)

AL: Oh... ummm no.
I ordered Cream of Kidney and two pairs of pigs feet.

SERVER: Oh, we don't have that, Sir.

AL: I beg your pardon?

SERVER: We don't have that, Sir.

AL: *(Short pause.)*
(To Mark)
You jerk!!!
I'm in *your* Philadelphia.

MARK: I'm sorry, Al.

AL: You dragged me, heck pulled me into your Philadelphia!

MARK: I didn't know it was contagious.

AL: On, God!
Please don't let me be in a Philadelphia!
Don't let me be in a...

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

AL: Don't you tell me about life in a Philadelphia, Mark.

MARK: Maybe you're not really-

AL: I taught you everything you know about Philly!
Don't tell me how to act in a mental Philadelphia!

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

AL: Do you see the cheese on the steak?
What do I need for proof?
The liberty bell!?

SERVER, bring me a glass of water.

SERVER: Water?
Don't have that, Sir.

AL: *(To Mark)* "We don't have water"--?
What, you think we're in a sudden drought or something?
(Suddenly realizes)
Yikes, just lost my job....
Susie left me!
I gotta make some phone calls.

(To SERVER)

Excuse me, where's the pay phone?

SERVER: Sorry, we don't have a pay ph-

AL: Of course you don't have a pay phone,
of course you don't!
Let me outta here!

(MARK EXITS.)

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

SERVER: It could be worse.
I've been in a mental Cleveland all week.

MARK: A Cleveland?
What's that like?

SERVER: It's like death....
...without the advantages.

MARK: Really?
Care to stand?

SERVER: Don't mind if I do.

(SERVER sits at Mark's table)

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

SERVER: Sharon

MARK: *(MARK holds out his hand)*
Good bye.

SERVER: Hello.

(MARK and the SERVER shake hands.)

MARK: *(Gesturing to the Cheese Steak)*
Want to starve?

SERVER: Thanks!

(The SERVER picks up the Cheese Steak and starts eating.)

MARK: Yeah... everybody has to be someplace...

(MARK leans across the table with a smile.)

So.

SERVER: Oh, we don't have that, Sir. {BLACKOUT} {End of Play}