

Edge of Town

By Kyle J McCloskey

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CHARACTER LIST

Josephine "Joe" Kelly - early 50's, Carhartt Shirts and her husband's old boots

Andi Kelly - Mid 20's, butch, Sous Chef's Vest and Sketcher's Non-Slips, Teagan and Sara T Underneath

Vanessa Parks - Early 20's, Spaghetti Straps and Air Jordan 1's with holes in them.

A man - any race and any age, but preferably younger-ish - can play all of the other roles in this play.

Playwright's Note

(Words and phrases in parenthesis are not spoken)

I'd like to evoke the words of Martyna Majok regarding language in this play:

Self-pity has little currency in these characters' words. Humor, however, has much.

For the (Philly) mouth, the word "fuckin" is often used like a comma, or as a vocalized pause akin to the word "like." It's a word with extra purpose. It's not necessarily just a container for anger.

Scene 1

*Philadelphia, PA
A government office.*

*JOSEPHINE "JO" KELLY
50's
Perennial Dirty Fingernails
Carhartt and Boots
Fidgets with a pen she swiped from intake*

*A SOCIAL WORKER
Is fumbling through papers*

*Each flip of the script is another tiny lil knife into Jo's
Already stretched-thin patience*

SOCIAL WORKER

Ok

Jo

Jo

Jo....

JO

Josephine.

My name is Josephine.

SOCIAL WORKER

Right.

Yes.

I know.

JO

Ok.

Just making sure

Because well,

If you're lookin' for Jo

And it's Josephine, you know...

That's Josephine Kelly

Or Kelly, Josephine

Or Josephine Suzanne O'Neill Kelly.

Real Catholic Mick Bullshit.

Even though -

Uh -

JO (cont'd)

If it's a government name thing
It'll be Josephine Suzanne O'Neill Kelly -

SOCIAL WORKER

Uh huh.
Right
Okay
One second

Jo taps her foot to the rhythm of frustration

*The Social worker switches from
Paper to electronic and back again
A wee bureaucratic dance*

SOCIAL WORKER

Did you update your file?

JO

What file?

SOCIAL WORKER

Online?
If you go to the
Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Website
File a notice with the Bureau of Disability Determination
And then -

JO

Oh, no, we did that already.

SOCIAL WORKER

When?

JO

With my husband.
27 months ago.

SOCIAL WORKER

Oh, so you need to reapply -

JO

No I did.
I applied.

SOCIAL WORKER

Again?

JO

I think so.

SOCIAL WORKER

It's not showing up in our system -

JO

No, my kid

Well, she's like, 23 or -

Not the point

We did the forms

And she told me to come today

And that youse all would get my disability straight.

SOCIAL WORKER

Alright, one moment please.

More tapping.

More waiting.

More dancing.

JO

Is this what you're looking for?

My papers?

The print out or whatever -

SOCIAL WORKER

Uhhh...

No....

You've collected before?

JO

Yeah, a while ago.

But when I stopped there was still

A bit of money -

Not much.

I got a few bucks when my husband died.

SOCIAL WORKER

Sorry to hear that.

JO

Oh.

Thanks.

Yeah.

Wasn't pretty

He was a -

SOCIAL WORKER

If it's a disability extension

It should probably

Already

Be

Done

And

Saved.

New address maybe?

JO

Oh, maybe -

I just moved into my kid's place

Now I'm ah -

Josephine Kelly

1609 S. 16th Street

Philadelphia -

SOCIAL WORKER

Ah

Okay

Uhm, let's see

JO

Before it was

725 West Elm

Centralia -

SOCIAL WORKER

One second.

(A beat)

Found it!

JO

Yes!

Alright.

Thank God.

The Social Worker scans the document

SOCIAL WORKER

It says you've exhausted your claim.
Well, it expired, rather -

JO

Yeah, my leg never healed right
And that last check with the heart thing
I just gotta get it back goin', you know?

SOCIAL WORKER

Okay, well your original claim
Had a 24 month balance on it.
So, even then -

JO

Well, I want to extend it.

SOCIAL WORKER

You can't.

JO

What do you mean I can't?
I'm disabled
Or whatever the fuck
You all want to call it.

SOCIAL WORKER

I hear that,
Uhm - Ma'am -
So, here' the -
OK.
Your former employer has stopped paying
Their disability insurance -

JO

My former employer doesn't exist anymore;
Off to Mexico with the rest of those wealthy fucks
Sippin' Pina Coladas and Smokin' Reefer,
Relaxin' on their keister while -

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, because of that,
There is no money to extend your disability.
And the state exhausted the programs during
The Pandemic
So, why don't we -

JO

I uhm -
I'm sorry
I'm sorry
I can't get it at all?

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, no.
You could appeal, say that you're still eligible
Because of your physical condition -

JO

Okay, but -

SOCIAL WORKER

The assessment claims
You should be able to perform some work activity now

JO

That was some random kid two years ago.
They can't see my fucking leg now

SOCIAL WORKER

Did you keep up the PT?

JO

I walk like a one legged pit bull
What do you think?

SOCIAL WORKER

If you go back to the doctors,
Have them run an assessment,
Then we can -

JO

No, no -
What about the appeal?
Could I just do that or something?

SOCIAL WORKER

You'd still have to go/ to the doctors -

JO

I really can't do that -
I'm still payin' off my husband's chemo.
Those fuckin' credit dudes

JO (cont'd)

Always callin' my phone
Emptied my retirement.
Seriously, they just keep fuckin' takin' everything -

SOCIAL WORKER

Alright, alright.

JO

I got shit insurance
Fuckin' Obamacare basically gets me
A slap on the ass and a Tylenol.

SOCIAL WORKER

We can find a clinic to do
A check up on the cheap.

JO

How much is "cheap"?

SOCIAL WORKER

Like, \$60?
You get that, then -
We can set up a hearing,
And go from there.
Look, you get a doctor deem you
Unfit for work,
It's only going to help you, right?
Pay a little to get what you need.

JO

Ugh.
Okay.
A hearing?
Like with a judge
And the robe
And all that shit?

SOCIAL WORKER

Yes.

JO

And they're gonna, what?
Sue the state?

SOCIAL WORKER

No.
They'll hear your case
And decide if you qualify
For the Extension

JO

Yeah, alright, I want the hearing.

SOCIAL WORKER

OK
We can
Set that
Up for
You...

*Tap tap tap
The Social Worker looks at Jo
Playing with their fingernails
Fidgeting in her chair*

Were you receiving unemployment benefits, too?
At all?
Did you get them?

JO

Okay -
I... Was.
Yes, I think I got -
During the Pandemic, yes.
And I think there was an extension?
Again?
I never collected the last few months.

SOCIAL WORKER

Okay.

JO

Do I -
Can I get that?

SOCIAL WORKER

You do still -
Actually let me check -

Well, nevertheless,

Tap tap tap

SOCIAL WORKER (cont'd)

You'd have to prove you were
Looking for work
The last few weeks.

JO

I was!

SOCIAL WORKER

Okay but the issue:
There's no paper trail of where you
Applied in the last week -

JO

Wait, i -

SOCIAL WORKER

In fact,
There has not been a certification of benefits in almost a year, so -
The Benefit Year has expired.
You have to either refile

JO

Oh for, fuck's sake.

SOCIAL WORKER

Or
We get you to a doctors and get on
With the Disability Extension.
Do you have an old letter from your job
Proving worker's comp from the original injury?

JO

Somewhere.
I don't know
Lot of stuff was lost in the move.

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, I suggest finding it.

JO

Okay, and what about all the
Unemployment I didn't collect?

SOCIAL WORKER

Realistically the only thing available to you even
Is like, a month, maybe.

SOCIAL WORKER (cont'd)

Do you have proof of a job search?
 If we have that,
 We should be able to get you back up and running.

JO

(Shuffling through their papers)

Okay
 Look
 Hold on
 Wait
 Here, ok, look -
 See?

*Jo produces a crumpled piece of paper
 With haphazard, violent looking handwriting*

SOCIAL WORKER

This is a piece of loose leaf?

JO

It's a job search.

SOCIAL WORKER

"June 6th: Harassed me About work"
 And then.... Is this a signature?

JO

"Harassed" -
 I didn't "harass" anyone
 I walked my fuckin' bum leg
 From 2nd to 16th
 Old City to South Philly down Passyunk
 Talkin' to every god damn
 Tom, Dick, or Sally -
 Even the fucking vegans.
 5 hours and 17 minutes
 Round trip
 Up and down with my leg
 All in the same day.
 All of them frowning at me
 Like I'm Tiny Fuckin' Tim.

(A moment)

Come on, Dude.

JO (cont'd)

Please.
Help an old bitch out here.

SOCIAL WORKER

I do wish I could do more for you, but -
It is the responsibility of the involved
In this case, yourself
To go online, and -

JO

But I have it right here.

SOCIAL WORKER

I understand.

JO

Well, if you understand,
Then just take it.
Put it in somewhere.
Put it in online,
Let them know I'm looking -

SOCIAL WORKER

I can't -

JO

Yes you can i -

SOCIAL WORKER

Ms. Kelly, I can't -

JO

Why?

SOCIAL WORKER

It is departmental policy
That we instruct you to go online
To the Department of Labor and Industry Website
Finish your claim,
File your Job Search requirements electronically,
And then you can get going.
Once you do that,
Then you can come back in and we can set up a hearing.

JO

Ugh, c'mon.
Seriously?
Why even have the form then?
My daughter picked them up
Directly from this office
And then I filled it out -
Why have them
If you won't collect them?

SOCIAL WORKER

See, normally we would -

JO

What's changed?
Forget how to fuckin' read?

SOCIAL WORKER

Notices were put out a year ago
During the COVID-19 pandemic,
That all Pennsylvania Agencies made the switch
To electronic filing exclusively.
It saves time and headache
And makes the process run smoother.
It also limits any possibility of racial discrimination
Or other forms of unbiased discrimination.
Now it's first come, first serve.

JO

What are you here for then?
What are these papers then either?

SOCIAL WORKER

These papers are guides for you.
It's so that you know the
Expectations of the online form.

JO

You've gotta be fucking jerking me, dude

SOCIAL WORKER

I'm sorry ma'am

JO

Nah, nah.
It's all "good"

SOCIAL WORKER

Ma'am -

JO

Hey you know what -
 Hold on -
 For one second
 Why don't you
 Shut the fuck
 And find a fucking soul?

*The Social worker picks up the phone
 They begin to dial*

SOCIAL WORKER

Security?

JO

Shit.
 Alright, forget all that for a second -
 I lost my temper,
 I'm sorry.

(a beat)

Look
 I'm a tired old bitch
 With a bum fuckin' leg
 And a crusty heart
 That could go plop
 Any second now.
 I got these forms
 From your office
 I filled them out
 I even went to "Kin-kos"
 And made copies
 Of every single last piece of
 Government Blackmail I've got
 And made you this packet
 So that maybe -
 Just maybe -
 You'd give me the benefit of the fucking doubt;
 You'd get me my fuckin' \$327 a week check
 For my fuckin' bum-ass-bullshit
 So I might not starve.
 Please, sir.

JO (cont'd)

Could you open your cold fuckin heart
And -

*The Social Worker makes eye contact with the Security Officer
And motions to them to come to Jo*

SOCIAL WORKER

You've got two options:
You can walk out that door up there
With the heap of your life under your arm
And a scoop of dignity left in you step
Or you can have my friend Hector here
Drag you out like the last dog left at the shelter.
Now, c'mon -
What'll it be?

*Jo thinks for a moment
She then gathers up all her materials*

JO

So, I'm a dog?

SOCIAL WORKER

No.

JO

Well excuse me.
I thought my taxes-

SOCIAL WORKER

What taxes?

Jo drops her papers and clenches the table

*The Social Worker goes into their drawer
Grasping for something to protect themself with*

A beat

*Jo then lets go
Picks up their materials
And as they do:*

JO

You know,
I was happier

JO (cont'd)

Roaming around Central Pennsylvania
Planting tomatoes for New Yorker's summer homes
Sweatin' like - like -

SOCIAL WORKER

A dog?

JO

Yeah. Like a dog.
They might have less teeth
Less Manners
And less fancy ties than you've got here in
"Philadelphia"
But at least they gave a flying shit
About who I was.

SOCIAL WORKER

Thank you for coming in, Ma'am
Sorry we couldn't help you today.

JO

I want my fuckin' hearing.

SOCIAL WORKER

As soon as you file the necessary documents
I would be happy to help you

JO

Yeah, eat shit and shove it up your cunt,
You fucking prick

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