

the beginning of

**LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION
(or THE IMMEASURABLE DISTANCE
BETWEEN HERE AND THERE)**

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(from **SMALL WONDERS**)

Time: Late evening

Place: A hotel room

Characters: MICHELLE, probably in her fifties but not one to bring it up
ROGER, probably in his fifties but not one to bring it up

A hotel room. Nothing fancy, just an average room in one of those bland hotels that host a lot of conferences. There are a few signs that a woman is staying in the room: some toiletries on a table, a pair of woman's shoes on the floor. On the nightstand is the kind of mildly interesting book one reads to help fall asleep.

MICHELLE opens the door, and she and ROGER enter. They're both at the high end of middle age. They're dressed as if they're coming from one of those company socials where one is forced to be social with company. There's a slight discomfort in the air, partially because they've never been alone with each other before, and partially because they're not the kind of people who casually do what they both eagerly hope they're about to do.

MICHELLE

So... how does this compare to your room?

ROGER

Pretty much the same.

(looks out a window:)

Oh, you have a much better view
of the parking lot.

MICHELLE

I'm just grateful any time I'm in a hotel room
that's not opposite the ice machine.

ROGER

I *always* get the room opposite the ice machine.
I think it's my destiny.

(a beat then:)

You know, you... you look really great.

MICHELLE

(who has a bit of a defensive edge:)

Wow, that sounds so... practiced.

ROGER

It's not, honest.

(a short beat:)

Okay, a bit. I was in the car a *long* time today driving from Scranton. And knowing I'd end up in Buffalo made the trip feel even longer. But I do think you look great. Always.

MICHELLE

I enjoyed exchanging glances with you early at the party, even *before* we started drinking.

ROGER

Me too.

MICHELLE

And I got that special feeling of – he's not about to start drinking so that I'll look attractive, he's about to start drinking because he *already* thinks I'm attractive.

ROGER

Oh definitely. When I, when I was driving here, knowing you'd be at the conference, I, well I have to admit, I started thinking –

MICHELLE

About me?

ROGER

Well, about how many drinks it'd take for me to finally um um um –

MICHELLE

"Proposition"?

ROGER

Yeah, that's the word.

MICHELLE

You came close at the last conference.

ROGER

I think they watered down the vodka.

MICHELLE

If it helps, I've been tempted to proposition you, too.

ROGER

What's stopped you?

MICHELLE

I don't know. I think I hold my liquor too well.

Roger approaches. They kiss. It starts shy but builds, as if they're both revved up to go but still have their parking brakes on.

ROGER

Michelle –

MICHELLE

Roger, before we, um –

ROGER

Oh sure, whatever. If you're not comfortable –

MICHELLE

If I limited myself to things I was comfortable with, I would've never left the womb.

ROGER

What I mean is –

MICHELLE

(overlapping a bit:)

I just need to, I mean, I may not need to tell you this, but just in case you hear this from someone else, well I I want to tell you first, and and you may not get it, which is okay, because I know you've never been to New York City, which I actually find kind of adorable, but well, just hear me out, okay?

ROGER

Do I detect some subtle bias against people who don't live in New York?

MICHELLE

Have you ever lived anywhere *but* Scranton?

ROGER

Does college count?

MICHELLE

As an adult.

ROGER

No. As an adult, have you ever lived anywhere but New York City?

MICHELLE

You can't equate the two.

ROGER

Of course. Scranton is livable.

MICHELLE

Just hear me out.

ROGER

Okay.

MICHELLE

I just, well... I'm married.

A beat, as Roger takes this in.

ROGER

You think only a New Yorker would be okay with that?

MICHELLE

No no no. It's not that, it's... You see, my husband is 93 and in bad health.

ROGER

So you have needs he's not meeting. I'll be glad to um pinch-hit.

MICHELLE

No no no. You see... we've lived together for about a dozen years and –

ROGER

The physical thing has waned.

MICHELLE

(losing her patience a bit,
but then reeling it back in:)

There never was... I sublet his second bedroom.

ROGER

Well, that must shorten the commute on date night.

MICHELLE

There have been no date nights!

ROGER

You just go straight to –

MICHELLE

Please. Just listen. And try to understand.

ROGER

I'll do my best.

MICHELLE

He's been renting this absolutely gorgeous two-bedroom apartment in Greenwich Village for over forty years. And it's rent-controlled. So when he knew he didn't have many years left, we got married so I could be added to the lease.

ROGER

What?

MICHELLE

See, this is the part where you not being from New York comes in. You see, in New York City, rents are ridiculous. Nobody who isn't rich can afford a decent apartment in New York City, especially Greenwich Village. But if you've lived in a rent-controlled apartment for many years, then the rent's actually manageable.

ROGER

So you married him so that when he dies you can stay on the lease and save some money?

MICHELLE

No, I married him so that when he dies I won't have to move to the Bronx. Manhattan apartments are *very* –

ROGER

I get it, I get it.

MICHELLE

I'll have two bedrooms. One person. A dining room. I mean, in New York, a room *just* for dining. Not an alcove, not a nook, a whole room. Not a dining room used as a study or converted into another bedroom. A dining room just used for eating food! Half my friends will dump me out of envy, but it'll be worth it.

ROGER

Oh. But what, just hypothetically, what if, if you meet someone you fall in love with?

MICHELLE

Two bedrooms, and a walk-in kitchen.

ROGER

I gather that's rare.

MICHELLE

Twice I've been married to men I love. Neither time did I have enough closet space.

ROGER

I see.

MICHELLE

Do you?

ROGER

Well, as best as I can, given that I own a home. I mean, I like my house, I just don't lust after it.

MICHELLE

I don't – well, I guess I do. It's just... it's security.

ROGER

I'm not judging.

MICHELLE

Thank you.

ROGER

So you're allowed to see other apartments.

MICHELLE

Definitely.

ROGER

But even if you fell in love with someone, you wouldn't move.

MICHELLE

Um, you're still being hypothetical, right?

And the play continues.