

the beginning of

LAST-MINUTE ADJUSTMENTS (from **OY!**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

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(**LAST-MINUTE ADJUSTMENTS** is also in Playscripts' anthology **NOTHING SERIOUS.**)

Place: A warm, comfortable place.

Time: The present.

Characters: THE PROTAGONIST
THE SUPERVISOR
ASSISTANT A
ASSISTANT B
RADIO TECHNICIAN

The SUPERVISOR and his/her two ASSISTANTS are speedily but not frantically doing a last-minute review before the PROTAGONIST is about to go on a big journey. The protagonist has a huge tube attached to his/her navel. The RADIO TECHNICIAN sits at a table with a kind of shortwave radio apparatus on it. He/she wears a headset.

Ears? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. A

Nose? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. B

Chin? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. A

PROTAGONIST
Why can't I become an aardvark?

SUPERVISOR

I told you. It wasn't our decision. Dimples?

ASST. B

One, on the left.

PROTAGONIST

I think I could do aardvark really well.

SUPERVISOR

Maybe next time. Tongue?

ASST. A

Check.

PROTAGONIST

Can't I at least have some feathers?
Feathers sound so cute.

ASST. B

You'll have enough to deal with without
having to worry about molting.

RADIO TECHNICIAN

She's just entered the hospital.

PROTAGONIST

Okay, let me make sure I've got this:
Breathing, left to right.

ASST. A

In and out.

PROTAGONIST

The mouth, food goes in or out?

ASST. B

(pinching the protagonist's cheek:)
That depends on how fussy you'll be.

RADIO TECHNICIAN

Contractions are three minutes apart.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, let's finish this sucker. Eyebrows?

ASST. A

Check.

Eyelashes?
SUPERVISOR

Check.
ASST. B

Brains?
SUPERVISOR

Check.
ASST. A
(looks in an ear:)

Soul?
SUPERVISOR

Both assistants look in the ear, see nothing.

Soul?
SUPERVISOR (cont'd)

The assistants look all around for the soul.

All right. Who was supposed to put in the soul?
SUPERVISOR (cont'd)

He was! *
ASSTS. A and B
(simultaneously pointing
at the other:)

(*Or "She was", as appropriate, in this and all references.)

I remember distinctly. I was in charge
of appendix; you got soul.
ASST. A

No, I was in charge of appendix.
ASST. B

Okay, how many appendices does
our little friend have?
SUPERVISOR

Two.
ASST. B
(checks, then:)

SUPERVISOR

Well, that'll give medical science something to have fun with. Okay, let's give our pal a soul before it's too late.

The assistants hook up the soul transferring machine to the protagonist.

PROTAGONIST

Why do I need a soul?

SUPERVISOR

You won't be complete without one.

PROTAGONIST

I feel complete as I am. Completely complete. Fully equipped to have a rich, full life.

SUPERVISOR

You need a soul.

PROTAGONIST

I'd prefer feathers.

ASST. A

You need a soul to cope with disappointment, rejection, humiliation, cruelty –

ASST. B

And all the other perks of a full life.

SUPERVISOR

Please, you'll spoil all the surprises.

ASST. A

The soul connects you to wisdom.

PROTAGONIST

What's wisdom?

ASST. B

That's the knowledge you'll have where you'll have no idea where it comes from.

ASST. A

Like the stuff we're telling you now.

PROTAGONIST

I won't remember this?

ASST. A

In the beginning, you'll remember what your mother smells like, and that's about it.

PROTAGONIST

My mother, will I like her?

SUPERVISOR

Oh, you'll come up with plenty of answers to that one.

ASST. A

Ready for soul transmission.

PROTAGONIST

This really feels unnecessary.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, now just relax.

PROTAGONIST

Getting a soul, will it hurt?

ASST. A

Just for an instant.

ASST. B

A lifetime at most.

RADIO TECHNICIAN

Contractions, two minutes apart.

SUPERVISOR

Let's do it... Five, four, three, two, one.

The soul is transmitted into the protagonist.

SUPERVISOR (cont'd)

How do you feel?

PROTAGONIST

Vulnerable.

ASST. B

Soul successfully attached.