

the beginning of

**A WOMB WITH A VIEW** (from **FEMALE PERSUASION**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

adapted from the short comedy  
"Last-Minute Adjustments" by Rich Orloff

*Place:* A warm, comfortable place

*Time:* The present

*Characters:* THE NEW KID  
THE SUPERVISOR  
ASSISTANT A  
ASSISTANT B  
THE TECHNICIAN\*

*Note: All of the characters are female, but their age can vary.*

*\*If played with a cast of four, the Technician can be a voice-over.*

The SUPERVISOR and her two ASSISTANTS are speedily but not frantically doing a last-minute review before the NEW KID is about to go on a big journey. The new kid has a huge tube attached to her navel. The TECHNICIAN faces a computer. She wears a headset with a microphone, and most of her comments are made into it, as if speaking to workers in a different department.

Ears? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. A

Nose? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. B

Chin? SUPERVISOR

Check. ASST. A

TECHNICIAN  
Increase frequency and intensity of contractions.

NEW KID

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

ASST. B

In and out.

NEW KID

Food, do I swallow it or spit it back out?

ASST. A

(pinching the new kid's cheek:)

That depends on how fussy you'll be.

TECHNICIAN

Increase sweating 12 per cent.

SUPERVISOR

Tongue?

ASST. A

Check.

SUPERVISOR

Nostrils?

ASST. B

Two.

NEW KID

What am I going to look like out there?

ASST. A

Well, first you'll be cute and cuddly.

ASST. B

Then you'll be awkward and gawky.

ASST. A

And then you'll look like this.

Assistant A holds a mirror in front of the New Kid.

NEW KID

Hmm. Could I have more here and less there?\*

(\*The New Kid points to two parts of her face and body. The actress playing the role can alter the line to so that both references are "less" or "more".)

SUPERVISOR

Sorry. Our goal is to make you real, not perfect.

NEW KID

That seems so limiting.

TECHNICIAN

Increasing frequency and intensity of  
contractions another 8 per cent.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, let's do the final check. Heart?

ASST. A

Check.

SUPERVISOR

Brain?

ASST. B

(looks in an ear:)

Check.

SUPERVISOR

Soul?

Both assistants look in the ear, see nothing.

SUPERVISOR (cont'd)

Soul?

The assistants look all around for the soul.

SUPERVISOR (cont'd)

All right. Who was supposed to put in the soul?

ASSTS. A and B

(simultaneously pointing at the other:)

She was!

ASST. A

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

ASST. B

No, I was in charge of appendix.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, how many appendices does our little friend have?

ASST. B  
(checks, then:)

Two.

SUPERVISOR  
Well, that'll give medical science something  
to write papers about. And how many souls?

ASST. A  
(checks, then:)

Um, none.

SUPERVISOR  
Hold!

TECHNICIAN  
We've got a hold.  
(responding to something she's hearing:)  
Yes, continue contractions.  
(responding to something she's hearing:)  
Well, if that's what she thinks,  
she should've stayed on the pill.

SUPERVISOR  
Prepare the soul transfer.

The assistants hook up the soul transferring machine to the new kid.

NEW KID  
Why do I need a soul?

SUPERVISOR  
Because life is complex.

NEW KID  
So? I have a brain, don't I?

SUPERVISOR  
It's not enough.

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

ASST. B  
And menopause.

SUPERVISOR  
Please, you'll spoil all the surprises.

ASST. A

The soul helps you stay connected to wisdom.

NEW KID

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.

NEW KID

I won't remember this?

ASST. A

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

NEW KID

My mother, will I like her?

SUPERVISOR

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

NEW KID

Will she like me?

ASST. A

She'll think you're the greatest person ever born.

NEW KID

Oh, good.

ASST. B

As long as you don't disappoint her, disobey her, or disregard *any* of her mixed messages.

NEW KID

But that's not possible.

SUPERVISOR

See? Wisdom.

ASST. B

You'll find life is filled with mixed messages.

ASST. A

You can have it all!

ASST. B

Don't rock the boat!

ASST. A

Get ahead!

ASST. B

Get me coffee!

ASST. A

Trust yourself!

SUPERVISOR

Be yourself!

ASST. B

(like a magazine cover line:)

"Fifty Sure-Fire Ways to Snare Men!"

NEW KID

What are men?

ASST. B

Men are designed to put you on a pedestal –  
and try their best to knock you off it.

NEW KID

They sound terrible.

ASST. A

They actually have many lovely qualities.

ASST. B

In fact, the longer you know them,  
the more you'll feel sorry for them.

SUPERVISOR

They're also useful if you want to have a baby.

NEW KID

(enthused)

You mean, I'll get to create an exact replica of myself?

SUPERVISOR

Oh, your daughter will come up with plenty  
of answers to that one.

ASST. A

You'll also need a soul to cope with those people who are relentlessly cruel and mean to you.

ASST. B

They're called siblings.

SUPERVISOR

Also certain classmates, co-workers, colleagues and occasionally your spouse.

NEW KID

What's a spouse? Is that like a cross between a sperm and a louse?

ASST. B

You'll often think that when you're menstruating.

ASST. A

Ready for soul transmission.

NEW KID

This really feels unnecessary.

SUPERVISOR

Okay, now just relax.

NEW KID

Getting a soul, will it hurt?

ASST. A

Just for an instant.

ASST. B

A lifetime at most.

TECHNICIAN

Contractions, two minutes apart.

SUPERVISOR

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

The soul is transmitted into the new kid.