

the beginning of

**I WISH THE VOICES IN MY HEAD
WOULD STOP YELLING LONG ENOUGH
FOR ME TO SAY "I LOVE YOU"**

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(from **SMALL WONDERS**)

Time: An afternoon in spring
Place: The administrative office of a high school
Characters: ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH, a school administrator
TODD, a high school senior*
DEBBIE, a high school senior*
BLINKY, a high school senior (male)*
(* The actors do not have to be this age as long
as they capture the essence of being this age.)

As the play begins, ASSISTANT PRINCIPLE ZAGGILPLEHHH (pronounced "Zaggil-plehhh") is at the front desk (or counter). The phone rings.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH
Buchanan Special High School for Exceptionally
Bright Weirdoes... Thank you for asking. There
are two main criteria for acceptance to our school.
One, is your child exceptionally bright? Two,
is your child exceptionally weird?... Great. Then
the first step is to fill out our on-line application,
which you can find at [www dot special-but-not-
"special"-dot com](http://www.dot.special-but-not-special-dot.com)... You're welcome.

Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh hangs up the phone as TODD enters.
He's bright and winning, once you get over the fact that he's incredibly
insecure and uncomfortable in his own body.

TODD
Hi, Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh.
I got a note you wanted to see me.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Yes I did, Todd. Across town, Harrison Unspecial High School for the Hopelessly Mainstream is hosting their annual "Let's Feign Interest in People Who Are Different Than We Are" Day. They asked us to send two seniors as representatives, and since you're a Grade A student, personable, and founder and sole member of the Student Association of Loners, Principal Clagwaffle and I agreed that this would be a great opportunity for you to be around people who need people. Are you interested?

TODD

(a high-strung response,
as is his style:)

Well, gee, I don't know what to say, that is, I can think of several things to say but I can't figure out which of those things are the most socially acceptable things to say and won't result in rejection, humiliation, and an increased resolve to stay in my room until I finish adolescence.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Will you think it over?

TODD

How can you ask me to do that?! Do you know how crowded my brain already is with ruthless examination of everything I think, say or do? Do you hate me? Do you want to destroy me? Do you have contempt for me as a human being?!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Actually, I have great respect for you, and I don't hate you, or want to destroy you, or have any contempt for you whatsoever.

TODD

You're just messing with my head now, aren't you?

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Principal Clagwaffle and I agreed you could do an excellent job representing our school, so just think it over. Please?

TODD

Well, if you're going to manipulate me with superficial compliments... you'll probably succeed.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

I'm glad to hear that.

TODD

(overlapping and highly anxious:)

Oh my god, look who's coming this way!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Oh, it's Debbie. You really like her, don't you?

TODD

Like her? I admire her, I respect her,
I worship the *ground* she walks on, and
if I owned a jackhammer, I'd take some of
that ground home and put it under my pillow!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Have you considered asking her
to the senior prom?

TODD

Oh my God no!!!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Why not?

TODD

Because every time I try to go near her, I move
away from her. The paradox is exhausting!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

I'm sure if you –

TODD

Oh my god! She's about to come into
the office. Let me hide behind this pencil.

Todd picks up a pencil, moves to the side of the office, and puts the pencil
vertically in front of his face. He becomes very still and hides behind it.
DEBBIE enters. She's sweet, perky, and terminally indecisive.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Hi, Debbie.

DEBBIE

Hi, Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh. I got a
note you wanted to see me, and just in case it
wasn't a forgery, I thought I should come in.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

I'm glad you did, Debbie. You see –

DEBBIE

Oh, and if it's okay to ask this, and *please* tell me if it's not, do you have any aluminum foil you can spare?

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Are you going to try out for the Tin Foil Hat Club?

DEBBIE

Oh, no. That's not me at all. At least I don't think it's me. Maybe I'm repressing that side of me. Maybe I'm repressing the side of me that knows I'm not that kind of person. Maybe I don't need to make such a big deal about this. I really need to think about that.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Then why do you need the tin foil?

DEBBIE

After lunch Betsy offered me a piece of gum, and I couldn't decide whether or not I wanted it, but then the bell rang, and my heart started to race and my upper lip began to sweat, and I figured that the only way I'd know if I wanted the gum or not was to take it, so Betsy gave me a piece of gum, but she wouldn't give me the foil wrapper! I think she's sadistic. Not that I judge sadistic people; without them, masochists will feel unloved. But now the gum is lodged in my mouth, and it turns out I really didn't want it, so can I *please* have some aluminum foil in which to wrap it?

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Why don't you just use a scrap of paper?

DEBBIE

There *are* some things that separate us from the animals, Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh.

Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh takes out a box of aluminum foil and starts to pull out a piece.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Okay, Debbie, here's a piece of foil.

(off Debbie's dubious look:)

More?... More?

DEBBIE

Thank you.

Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh hands Debbie a large piece of aluminum foil. As they continue their conversation, Debbie puts her piece of gum *exactly* in the center of the large piece of foil and then *very precisely* starts to fold it in increasingly small halves.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

So, Debbie, you know prom's coming up.

DEBBIE

I know. It's almost all I ever think about, not including the inevitability of death.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Have you considered asking a boy to go with you?

DEBBIE

But I'm a girl!

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

You can still –

DEBBIE

Assistant Principal Zaggilplehhh, I mean, really. One of the few perks of being a girl is that it makes being passive-aggressive socially acceptable.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

I think you'd have a great time with Todd.

Todd starts to shake his pencil.

DEBBIE

Oh, I don't know. I like him, but he's so high-strung.

Todd starts to try to stay behind his shaking pencil, which isn't easy.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Maybe if you –

DEBBIE

And every time he comes near me, he moves away. I'm not good with paradox.

Todd grabs the pencil with his second hand, trying to control its shaking.

DEBBIE (cont'd)

I mean, I do think he's nice. Very nice.

Todd and his pencil stop shaking. Todd peers his head out from behind the pencil to hear better.

DEBBIE (cont'd)

But is he *really* nice, or just pretending to be nice because he has compelling data that shows that being nice is more likely to win social acceptance than being *despicable*.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZABBILPLEHHH

Oh, I'm sure he's –

DEBBIE

The boy I really hope will ask me is Blinky.

Todd moves his head back behind the pencil. He's sad.

ASST. PRINCIPAL ZAGGILPLEHHH

Blinky?

DEBBIE

I think he's the coolest, not that my opinion holds much sway over me. But he's so, so socially responsible. I mean, sure, he wears an aluminum foil hat, but I love how he's added solar panels to it.

And the play continues.