

the beginning of

**THE TOTAL SPIRITUAL**

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(from **SMALL WONDERS**)

*Time:* The present

*Place:* Above and beyond

*Characters:* THE INTERVIEWER  
THE APPLICANT

A member(s) of the BUCKET BRIGADE\*

(\*This can be one person, or someone different with each entrance.)

A simple set: a table or desk, a couple of chairs, a swimming pool.

As the play begins, the INTERVIEWER is making notes at his/her desk.

A member of the BUCKET BRIGADE enters, carrying a large bucket of water.

INTERVIEWER

Need any help?

BUCKET BRIGADE

No, I got it.

INTERVIEWER

Looks like a heavy one.

BUCKET BRIGADE

Yeah, well, there's been a slew of people  
hearing bad medical news, and a couple  
of natural disasters, and a lot of people  
touched by unexpected acts of kindness.

The BUCKET BRIGADE pours the bucket into the pool.

INTERVIEWER

Send the next one in, okay?

BUCKET BRIGADE

Will do.

The BUCKET BRIGADE exits. A moment later, the APPLICANT enters.

INTERVIEWER

Have a seat.

APPLICANT

Wow, this is, this is – I didn't expect it to be so –

INTERVIEWER

Don't be nervous.

APPLICANT

It's just all so –

INTERVIEWER

I know. It's a big adjustment. Have a seat.

APPLICANT

I mean, it's not every day –

INTERVIEWER

Relax. Breathe. And have a seat.

APPLICANT

Are, uh, are you –

INTERVIEWER

I just help out.

APPLICANT

How long have you been helping out?

INTERVIEWER

Not long. About 800 years.

APPLICANT

Wow.

INTERVIEWER

I'm one of the new kids.

APPLICANT

I see.

INTERVIEWER

So... how was the funeral?

APPLICANT

It was, it was – good, I guess. Huge turnout.

INTERVIEWER

I'm glad.

APPLICANT

I was amazed at some of the things people said.  
I never realized people liked me so much.

INTERVIEWER

I know. Sometimes I think we'd enjoy  
funerals more if we had them before we  
dropped dead. Now then, about your life –

APPLICANT

I know I made a lot of mistakes.

INTERVIEWER

Everybod—

APPLICANT

I was selfish, and I coveted a few things  
I should've never coveted—

INTERVIEWER

Relax.

APPLICANT

I know it's late, but I swear I'm willing  
to atone for anything and everything –

INTERVIEWER

If people were angels when alive,  
then heaven would be a rerun.

APPLICANT

It's just, if I could only –

INTERVIEWER

Relax.

APPLICANT

But –

INTERVIEWER

Inhale... exhale.

APPLICANT

It's –

INTERVIEWER

We have all the time in the world.

APPLICANT

I just –

INTERVIEWER

One of the best parts of heaven  
is that nobody's in a hurry.



INTERVIEWER

It's not like that.

APPLICANT

I really planned to pay that money back.

INTERVIEWER

You should've lived so long.

A member of the BUCKET BRIGADE enters, carrying a bucket.

BUCKET BRIGADE

Coming through.

INTERVIEWER

Looks pretty full.

BUCKET BRIGADE

A whole bunch of people just fell in love;  
there was a new outbreak of violence somewhere;  
and a bunch of five year-olds got screamed  
at for acting like five year-olds.

INTERVIEWER

Too bad.

BUCKET BRIGADE

That's life.

The BUCKET BRIGADE pours the bucket into the pool and exits.

INTERVIEWER

So where were we? Oh, yes, you were blabbing like  
a nutcase. From what I've read in your file, I think  
there's an excellent chance you'll be admitted here.

APPLICANT

Whew.

INTERVIEWER

However, we want to know you'll fit in.

APPLICANT

Well, I don't know how to play golf,  
but I'm a great bowler.

INTERVIEWER

In deeper ways. You know how before  
an insurance plan will accept you,  
you have to get a total physical?

APPLICANT

Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER

Well, before you can be accepted into heaven, you have to get a total spiritual.

APPLICANT

A what?

INTERVIEWER

We want to make sure you don't pollute the atmosphere here with immature or corrupted karma.

APPLICANT

You're concerned about karma here?

INTERVIEWER

Definitely.

APPLICANT

Is this a Judeo-Christian heaven,  
or did I end up in the Buddhist wing?

INTERVIEWER

I'm so sick of that question. Look, it's like this:  
You take a pie, and you divide it into sections.  
Each section is a different religion. But it's all *one pie*.

(becoming furious for a moment:)

*And you idiots down there keep having  
wars over whose piece of pie is best!!!!*

(calms down)

Sorry. I died in the Crusades. I'm still working  
it through. So are you ready for your spiritual?

APPLICANT

I guess so.

INTERVIEWER

Let's start with a simple spiritual history.

APPLICANT

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any history of: impatience, jealousy,  
greed, hostility, hypocrisy, cruelty, grandiosity,  
immaturity, maliciousness, deceit, pettiness,  
petulance, prejudice, puerility, procrastination,  
pugnaciousness, pomposity, paranoia or sloth?

APPLICANT

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Which ones?

APPLICANT

All of them... on occasion.

INTERVIEWER

I see.

(writes on a form:)

"Honest and self-aware." Excellent.

Have you ever – uh-oh.

APPLICANT

What?

INTERVIEWER

I didn't see this page when I was – *Holy* –...

Look at all these sins. Whoa. You're going to hell.

APPLICANT

What?!

INTERVIEWER

Yep, you're going to hell.

APPLICANT

No! No! *No!!!!!!!!!!!!*

INTERVIEWER

(just looks at the  
applicant, then:)

Just kidding.

(writes:)

"Handles shock reasonably well."... Of course,  
given your sins, if you *are* accepted here,  
you won't be able to enjoy its pleasures  
until you work off all your misdeeds.

APPLICANT

How long will that take?

INTERVIEWER

(using calculator:)

Let's see... not calling your mother often enough,  
refusing to recycle aluminum, saying "I love  
you" just because you felt horny, saying  
"I love you" just because you felt guilty,  
saying "I love you" just because you felt sleepy...  
and then we got the deadlies... the venals...  
the misdemeanors... 43,324 years.

APPLICANT

43,324 years?!

INTERVIEWER

Only 10,831 of them are leap years.

APPLICANT

Um, I think you made a mistake.

INTERVIEWER

Never have, never will.

APPLICANT

I know I was no saint, but I wasn't *that* bad.

INTERVIEWER

That's not your decision.

APPLICANT

This isn't fair.

INTERVIEWER

That's not your decision, either.

APPLICANT

It's not fair, damn it! *It's not fair!!!*

INTERVIEWER

(writes:)

"Capacity for anger, excellent."

And the play continues.