

REGULAR TWILIGHT

A ten-minute play by
David Skeele

Cast of Characters

Sandra:

A fifteen or sixteen year-old girl

John Jr.:

A ten or eleven year-old boy

Scene

A field in rural Nebraska

Time

Early 1970's

(Sandra, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, stands in fading sunlight in a field. She stares intently into the horizon for a long minute, maybe two. John Jr., a boy of ten or eleven, walks on, hauling a piglet in a cart behind him. She talks without turning to him.)

SANDRA

God damn it, don't you follow me, John, Jr.!

JOHN JR.

Stop calling me that. I told you, my name's Buck.

SANDRA

It is not.

JOHN JR.

From now on. What're you doing out here?

SANDRA

What does it look like I'm doing?

JOHN JR.

It looks like you're going to jump a freight car.

SANDRA

(Turning to look at him for the first time)

You always were a smart boy.

JOHN JR.

That's stupid. Nobody really does that.

SANDRA

You're from Marslow, Nebraska. How do you know what people really do?

JOHN JR.

So're you.

SANDRA

You wanna tell my Mom and Dad? Go ahead, John Jr. It's Tuesday. Dad's buying grain in Kearney—he won't be in the driveway 'til between five and fifteen minutes after nine. Mom and Grandma are at bingo—they're gone 'til ten. I'll be long gone by then.

JOHN JR.

It's *Buck*.

SANDRA

Will you stop it with that?

JOHN JR.

Why you want to jump a freight?

SANDRA

‘Cause it’s dangerous as shit. ‘Cause there’s all sorts of bad men in the trainyards. Women, too. There’s winos in the cars that’ll carve up your face with a broken bottle. I want to meet them.

JOHN JR.

That doesn’t make any sense.

(Sandra shrugs. Pause.)

SANDRA

I hate them. No, I don’t, but I can’t stand another minute of ‘em.

JOHN JR.

The winos?

SANDRA

NO! Mom and Dad and god damn Grandma!

JOHN JR.

Why?

SANDRA

Go away, John Jr.

JOHN JR.

It’s B...

SANDRA

Shut up!

(She closes her eyes for a moment)

It’s like...every morning at five a.m., he wakes up. *Exactly* five a.m. I can’t hear his alarm from my room, but I hear him swinging his big feet out of the bed and clomping them on the floor. *Clomp, clomp*. Always one at a time—never at the same time. God forbid. Then the floor creaks, he stands still for three seconds and then he’s off to the bathroom where he swishes Listerine around for between thirty and thirty-five seconds...

JOHN JR.

You count it?

SANDRA

I *have* to count it! I can't stop myself. And even when I stop myself, I've been listening to it so long I can recognize the time. And meantime, she's downstairs cooking bacon—it's always sizzling, it's always smelling up the house the exact same way, and when I come downstairs it's always two strips for her, two strips for grandma, two strips for me, three strips for him. One big slice of sourdough toast for each of us, no butter for her, no butter for grandma, extra butter for me and him. Every *day*. And Mom always looks out the window the second she finishes the bacon and says "You think the rain'll hold off?" And Dad says "It's gonna have to," and they both laugh like it's the funniest god damn joke in the world, even though he says it *every* morning. And Grandma just sits there making the same clicking noises while she sucks little pieces of bacon out of her dentures, and then I stand on the table and scream at the top of my lungs and stick two forks in my eyes and the blood pours out all over Dad's toast and splatters all over Grandma's white yarn!

JOHN JR.

(Giggles)

Cool.

SANDRA

I knew you wouldn't understand.

JOHN JR.

I do too understand! I...hate sourdough toast. And that black kind, too—sometimes my mother buys that.

SANDRA

John Jr., I would faint dead away from happiness if Mom ever thought to come home one day with pumpernickel bread! But she never has. And she never will. It's always going to be sourdough from Handy's Nutri-Mart, in a white plastic bag with an orange twisty. See? Now will you just go home?

(He doesn't move. Pause. They sit and stare out for a moment. Suddenly he points to something out in front of them.)

JOHN JR.

There. Look.

SANDRA

What?

JOHN JR.

The field's starting to glow. It always does that this time of night. I love that.

SANDRA

If you say so.

It's beautiful. So beautiful.

JOHN JR.

It's all right.

SANDRA

It's like...

JOHN JR.

It's ALL RIGHT! Fuck's sake, John Jr., it's just a stupid field! A regular field. It's what they look like at twilight.

SANDRA

(Pause)

You ever gonna tell me why you dragged that pig out here?

JOHN JR.

I wanted to see if he'd smile again.

SANDRA

What?

JOHN JR.

Last week, when you came over with your Ma—remember I let you feed him?

SANDRA

Yeah?

JOHN JR.

Right as you were leaving, he looked at you and he started to smile. Not just that happy look pigs sometimes get, but a real smile. Just like a person.

SANDRA

(Incredulous)

What? What horseshit are you talking?

JOHN JR.

I never saw a pig smile like that before. It was the weirdest thing. Then you left and after a while he just...stopped.

SANDRA

You are out of your little mind.

JOHN JR.

And then yesterday, you walked by and I was sitting on my porch with him and I waved and you said hi.

SANDRA

Yeah?

JOHN JR.

I looked down, and sure enough he was doing it again.

SANDRA

You are psychotic. You are having a psychotic breakdown right before my eyes.

JOHN JR.

I'll show you.

(He opens the cart and looks in)

I think he was sleeping. Were you sleeping? Were you sleeping, little guy?

(He picks it up and extends it to Sandra. She looks at them dubiously, then walks forward and strokes the pig on the head. The pig smiles. She recoils and runs away.)

SANDRA

Oh, that is weird!

JOHN JR.

Hold him.

SANDRA

I can't. It's too weird.

JOHN JR.

C'mon. He wants you to. I got a bottle in the cart.

SANDRA

Oh Christ.

(He continues to hold the pig out encouragingly. Finally, she sighs and takes the pig. He gets the bottle from the cart and she settles down and begins to feed him.)

JOHN JR.

He still smiling?

SANDRA

Looks like it. Even while he's eating.

(She smiles back at it, a little.)

Too weird for words.

(He stands up straight and looks off in the distance, then kneels and feels the ground.)

JOHN JR.

Train's coming.

SANDRA

I can't hear anything.

JOHN JR.

I got better ears than you. I'm like an Indian.

SANDRA

You better take this.

JOHN JR.

He's still eating. Look at him smiling at you.

SANDRA

Crap! Why does he do that?

JOHN JR.

My Pa says never try to get into the mind of a pig.

SANDRA

Wish my Dad would say that.

(The train can just be heard now, still far in the distance. They look in that direction.)

JOHN JR.

You getting on?

(She looks toward the train, then back at the pig, chewing her lip in thought. The train gets a little louder.)

SANDRA

Okay, here's the deal. You and me got to spend some time with this pig. Work with him. As soon as we get him smiling on his own—the exact *minute*—I'm outta here. You got that? And in the meantime you better not say a word to my Mom and Dad about it. Got it?

JOHN JR.

Doesn't sound like much of a deal to me. What do I get out of it?

SANDRA

What do you want?

JOHN JR.

You know what I want.

(Pause.)

SANDRA

Okay. You got a deal—*Buck*.

(He smiles contentedly.)

JOHN JR.

Well, we should get him home. It's past his bedtime.

SANDRA

(Taking one last look in the direction of the train.)

Yeah, okay. It is kind of pretty.

JOHN JR.

Yeah. You coming?

(He starts off, hauling the cart behind him. She turns and follows, still holding the pig. He looks up at the sky as he walks.)

Think the rain'll hold off?

SANDRA

(Calling after him.)

That's not funny!

(She looks down at the pig.)

It's not funny.

(She hurries off after John Jr., as the lights fade and the sound of the train grows louder and louder.)