

the beginning of

DEFENDERS OF THE TENDER GENDER BENDER

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(from **SMALL WONDERS**)

Time: Bedtime

Place: Roberta and Carl's living room

Characters: CARL, 30's – 40's, Roberta's husband*

ROBERTA, 30's – 40's, Carl's wife*

SANDY, about 8, their child (*to be played by an adult*)

*The roles of CARL and ROBERTA are gender-neutral and can also be CARLA and ROBERT. If so, just change their names and pronouns in the script.

As the play begins, CARL and ROBERTA are in the middle of a conversation.

ROBERTA

We can't put this conversation off any longer, Carl.

CARL

I know, I know.

ROBERTA

So we'll have the conversation tonight, right?

CARL

Umm

ROBERTA

You just agreed we can't put it off any longer.

CARL

And I really tried to mean it as I was saying it.

ROBERTA

It's not fair to our child to delay any more.

CARL

I know, but.....

ROBERTA

But what?

CARL

(a pause, then:)

I was hoping you'd interrupt me and
I wouldn't have to think of a reason.

ROBERTA

School starts in a few days. Sandy needs
to be able to make a decision.

CARL

But they're so vulnerable, Roberta.

ROBERTA

They've adjusted quickly to the new
neighborhood; they'll do fine.

CARL

Okay, okay. I'm ready. Let's do this.

ROBERTA

I'm sure you'll do great. Just great.

CARL

You mean that?

ROBERTA

Well, I really tried to mean it as I was saying it.

Carl walks to the door.

CARL

(calling out:)

Sandy!

SANDY

(from off-stage:)

Be there in a minute, Daddy!

ROBERTA

And we're going to frame this as a positive, right?

CARL

I'll do my best.

SANDY enters. Sandy, about eight, is adorable, precocious, androgynous, and has an unusual quality we'll soon learn about. Sandy carries a stuffed animal.

SANDY

Hi, Mommy. Hi, Daddy. I got ready for bedtime.

ROBERTA

Good job.

SANDY

I started reading Bobo a bedtime story,
but Bobo's mind kept wandering.

CARL

Well, maybe Bobo's tired.

SANDY

I think Bobo has A.D.H.D.

ROBERTA

Darling, are you excited to start your new
school year at your new school next week?

SANDY

I think Bobo needs a prescription.

CARL

Bobo will be fine.

ROBERTA

So we met with your school's principal and
guidance counselor and your new teacher, and
they were all open-minded, accepting people.

CARL

Very open-minded, *very* accepting.

ROBERTA

For example, one of their students is transgender,
and the school is *completely* accepting of it.

SANDY

You two sure are using the word "accepting" a lot.

CARL

And we explained your situation.

SANDY

That I'm a hermaphrodite!

ROBERTA

Right. The school actually prefers the
more contemporary term "intersex".

SANDY

But I like "hermaphrodite". I'm cool. Like the Greek gods!

ROBERTA

Right. Now as we said, the school is very open-minded.

CARLA

But they've never had a student before who's *intersex*.

SANDY

Should I show them my genitalia?

ROBERTA

That's not necessary. They believed us.

CARL

Eventually.

ROBERTA

But you see, honey, as accepting as they are –

SANDY

I think we've established that!

CARL

They've never dealt with this situation before.

SANDY

Does that make me – special?

ROBERTA

Everyone is special, honey.

Sandy listens to Bobo, then:

SANDY

Bobo thinks somebody just took the "special" out of "special".

ROBERTA

So when it came to discussing bathroom use, they –

SANDY

They're not going to make me use a porta-potty outside like the last school did, are they?

ROBERTA

No.

SANDY

I hated that. Especially on rainy days.

CARL

We know.

SANDY

I just want to be like every other kid – but special!

ROBERTA

So the new school has a policy that...
and I wrote this down...

SANDY

Should Bobo listen?

CARL

Yes.

SANDY

Pay attention, Bobo. Focus!

ROBERTA

"Gender diversity is welcomed at our school.
We encourage our students to choose the
bathroom that *best* fits their gender identity."

SANDY

I'll choose..... "special"!

ROBERTA

The school wants you to choose if you
identify *primarily* as male... or female.
Either is *completely* fine with them.

SANDY

But I'm both. Why can't I use both bathrooms?

ROBERTA

They need you to choose male *or* female.

CARL

But *either* is fine with them.

SANDY

Oh. Okay. Then I'd like to be a boy on
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and I'll be
a girl on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

CARL

And what will you be on Sunday?

SANDY

I'll be Norwegian!

CARL

Honey, if you need to think about this awhile –

SANDY

But what do I have to think about? I'm both.

A beat. Carl and Roberta look at each other.

ROBERTA

(to Sandy:)

That's true. And you know how we want everyone to be accepting of you? Well, sometimes we need to... accept... that it takes other people a while to get used to new concepts. So we need to become patient to show acceptance of *them*.

SANDY

I think Bobo has issues with this.

ROBERTA

Darling, I know this is difficult.

SANDY

I'm fine. Bobo's the one with issues. Grow up, Bobo!

ROBERTA

Look, honey. It's an old building. The people who built it, they didn't understand that some kids are gender-fluid.

SANDY

I hate the term "gender-fluid."
It sounds like a lubricant for a robot.

ROBERTA

Honey –

And the play continues.