

SWATCH!

By Jerry Rabushka

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SWATCH

A Full Length Comedy

By Jerry Rabushka

SYNOPSIS: Every color has a characteristic, but what if you were assigned a color and had to live like it? The Swatch kids have questionable pasts, but if they can live life one color at a time, it might prep them to return to society as functional human beings. It's not as easy as all that – once they get too used to a color, the authorities switch it up. Things change when the Gold kids inherit a fortune from a recently passed uncle who's still on stage saying his lines. They stand to pay an awful price for their greed unless the others care enough to save them. Your audience will laugh with these characters' odd humor, yet care about them enough to get involved with their deeply dramatic stories.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5-9 female, 5 male, 4-7 either, 0-1 extras; gender flexible, doubling possible)

SWATCHES: These characters are late teens but can be played a bit older or younger.

ODIN BLOGSTER (m) Blue, then Red, a foster care child five times over. (113 lines)

VALERIA BODOLAYOU (f)..... Red, then Blue, very very social. (94 lines)

MEERA WORTHINGTON (f)..... Yellow, claims to be misunderstood. (68 lines)

CURTIS KORVAN (m)..... Gray, then White, and likes Google. (57 lines)

THE GOLDS: All cousins in the Pluminium family, and a little too greedy.

GOLDIE (f)..... (38 lines)

MAX (m) (39 lines)

DELIA (f)..... (44 lines)

AUTHORITY:

HUEY (m/f)	The leader of the Swatches, best dressed in black. (70 lines)
JUDGE (m/f).....	aka judge justice Scary. (56 lines)
HORATIO PLUMINIUM (m).....	Deceased uncle to Goldie, Max, and Delia. (31 lines)
Q-LASH GENTEEL (m/f).....	Lawyer to Uncle Horatio. (52 lines)

CONQUISTADORES:

SEÑOR RAMON GOMEZ RODRIGUEZ (m)	A swashbuckling renaissance man. (20 lines)
SEÑORA ALBERTA MALAGASCA (f)	A renaissance woman with modern values. (14 lines)
ROBERTSON (m/f).....	A stage hand thrust into the role at the last minute. (16 lines)

CAMEO ROLES: These can be played by one female performer or any combination of players up to seven individual performers, as none of these characters are on stage at the same time.

NURSE (m/f)	Nurse to Horatio. (3 lines)
HODGE (m/f)	Foster parent to Odin (7 lines)
AUNTIE EMERALD (f)	Aunt to the Golds. (2 lines)
MRS. WORTHINGTON (f)	Mother to Meera. (6 lines)
GRETA (f)	Valeria's younger sister, age 10 or 11. (9 lines)
DIARY (m/f).....	Reader, (7 lines)
ANNABELLE BLOGSTER (f)	Mother to Odin. (17 lines)

EXTRA: A cellist can play offstage in act two and at curtain call, instead of using recorded music.

NOTE: some of the names are slightly unusual, but they aren't unusual to the characters in the play. Take the time to learn to pronounce them so everyone is consistent.

DURATION: 80 minutes

COSTUMES

Costumes are important, and there is a wide range of ideas that can work. The Swatch characters should be dressed somewhat in the color they represent. It can be “street clothes” or scrubs for example, or come up with something more stylish with a variety of hats, jackets, scarves, shoes, etc. The conquistadores can be glamorous and evoke an era of 500 years ago, or have a pirate movie look, if such costuming is available.

SETTING

This play doesn’t necessarily take place in a specific location. A set idea would be some acting blocks, each block painted all one color, a few chairs, and eventually a small set up for the “Judge” who could have a wooden chair and desk. Your backdrop can be large brightly colored sheets or painted flats, for example. Another smaller set, a white room, is needed for two short scenes in act two, or it can be done with lighting/bare stage, etc.

PROPS

- ☐ Color cards and pamphlets, these are usually available in a home improvement store paint department or paint store
- ☐ A shiny trinket
- ☐ Cell phone or other computer device
- ☐ Card table with snacks, drinks and cards
- ☐ Book
- ☐ Large scooper
- ☐ Cell phones
- ☐ A scroll
- ☐ Music book
- ☐ Football
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Small books that are diaries
- ☐ Stuffed hamster
- ☐ A will (legal document, use some sheets of paper stapled together)

SOUND EFFECTS

- ☐ Heavy Metal Music
- ☐ Trance Music
- ☐ Bach Unaccompanied Cello Music
- ☐ Other Music at Director's Discretion
- ☐ Boat Horn
- ☐ Cheering Crowd
- ☐ Hamster Running on Wheel

Do Not Copy

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

ODIN: *(Enters, calm and collected, facing front and addressing the audience.)* My name is Odin, and I'm blue. Blue is about loyalty and trust.

VALERIA: *(Enters, very upbeat and just about knocks ODIN over, but also addressing the audience.)* My name is Valeria, and I'm red. It's the color of passion and excitement!

After a short pause, ODIN gets up and back into place and VALERIA reluctantly settles down under his continued gaze.

ODIN: Chill, okay?

VALERIA: Can't.

ODIN: It's still my turn. Take your excitement somewhere else.

VALERIA: You should be dark purple with a touch of pastel grey, because you're depressing. *(Sits down.)*

ODIN: I've been through a lot in my life. They gave me blue so I would learn to lead and get people to believe in me. *(More to the audience than VALERIA.)* I became a leader, not because I wanted to, but because I had to. I need people to follow me. *(Includes VALERIA.)* People with passion and excitement. You can get in line behind me. *(Stands in a way that shows he expects her to follow him.)*

VALERIA: *(Not into it, and walks off the other way.)* I'm not that loyal. My kind of passion and excitement doesn't lend itself to loyalty. But we could meet in the middle and have a fine time at the coffee hut, with appropriately colored mugs for each of us.

ODIN: I would need a unique mocha blend in blue. I'm a leader.

VALERIA: I can find passion in a cup of red rose tea. Pour, stir, dip, steep. Oh, and *(To audience, with a gesture of spilling tea.)* spill that tea, girls! *[Slang for "tell me the gossip!"]* It's not what you do. It's the enthusiasm with which you perform the activity. Hence, I'm never bored. Even with algebra.

ODIN: *(To audience, realizing it might not know what's going on.)* I'm a Swatch. *(Explaining.)* We both are. A judge picks a color for us and we have to live it.

VALERIA: *(Disappointed.)* Yep.

ODIN: We're cast as opposites. I'm cool, she's hot. I'm iced coffee, she's hot tea.

VALERIA: I'm roasting. Like coffee beans over an open flame.

ODIN: We could use a little yellow around here. Kind of even things out.

MEERA: *(Enters, somewhat floating.)* My name's Meera Worthington. Yellow. Happiness, joy, without all the red blather or the blue pulldown. Odin, we should go out and party and get you out of your shell.

MEERA tries to pull ODIN offstage, but he resists and moves quickly away, with her following him closely.

ODIN: I like my shell. In my room, it's blue. It's dark blue here

ODIN goes to one side of the stage, MEERA is still tailing him.

and it's light blue here *(Goes to another.)* and then on the ceiling it's ocean blue.

He's had enough of being followed, so he sits her down and continues.

You might think it would be sky blue, but I wanted to have a sense of individuality, so the sky is on the floor.

VALERIA: *(A bit confused with his logic.)* But everyone should follow you?

MEERA: I don't think you like being followed.

ODIN: *(Approaches MEERA to explain.)* I'm innovative. Why follow someone who's doing something that's already being done?

MEERA: I'm happy either way.

VALERIA: That's what guys want in a girl. Blindly follow, happy either way, ocean on the ceiling, sky on the floor, *(Perhaps with a small yet sarcastic dance move.)* whatever you say makes me feel fine...

MEERA: *(Gets up and makes her own space.)* My room, it's bright yellow on the floor. The sun shines through my feet. It radiates out my eyes. And it gets lighter as we go up. It gives me a good sense of place!

CURTIS: *(Enters, carrying a small electronic device or cell phone, he speaks almost robotically.)* This is a verification system for your Google listing.

ODIN: You and that Google! Curtis, what are you doing?

CURTIS: *(Checks out the other three. CURTIS is inexplicably fascinated with Google, but it will serve him well later.)* I'm verifying you. I'm documenting the entire world, color by color. If we want blue, we go here. *(Presents ODIN to the audience.)* Red, here. *(Bows to VALERIA.)* Yellow, here. *(To MEERA, they do a quick twirl or dance move together, then CURTIS calms down.)* Gray stays with me. *(Goes to ODIN to explain himself.)* Once we know where you are, we can track you and your blue indefinitely.

CURTIS looks to VALERIA next for validation, but she walks away from him.

VALERIA: My room is red! Deep, deep red. I call one wall Beale Street Red. Another wall is Disney Princess Pink-Red. Another one's got a touch of orange. I don't know what to call it yet. It's very loud! I think I'll call it "Metallica Farewell-Tour Orange."

Loud "metal" music starts to play, but the other characters can't stand it.

ODIN: *(Yells to the tech booth.)* Stop it!

CURTIS: Turn it off!

Music goes off. Brushes himself off as if getting rid of the music.

I prefer Bach.

VALERIA: I like loud screechy metal! *(Gently.)* It's relaxing.

MEERA: How do you sleep at night?

VALERIA: I don't have to. It's a waste of time.

CURTIS: Here. *(Tags them all.)* Now, we'll know where you are and what you're doing at all times for the experiment of living in a single color. I'm gray. I'm quiet windswept New England beaches after a storm.

CURTIS stands next to ODIN and pulls him away from everyone else.

Us guys are kind of quiet and keep to ourselves. The gals over there are upbeat and fun. You might think it's gender stereotyping, but it just kind of fell out that way. It's not like that all around.

MEERA: *(Foreshadowing.)* You should see the Golds. I am, by comparison, a fuddy-duddy.

ODIN: Please, no.

MEERA: There's three Golds. I tried to have gold incorporated into yellow, but it was denied. Or I'd have it. Here they are now!

ODIN: *(To audience, almost a whisper.)* Hold on to your chairs!

Enter GOLDIE, MAX, and DELIA, very flamboyant, buoyant, and upbeat.

GOLDIE: I'm Goldie... *(She presents the others. If desired, choreograph this with a short twirl or other dance move.)* This is Max, and this is Delia. We're cousins!

MEERA: *(Presenting them to the audience and walking among them.)* Gold...stands for success, achievement, and triumph.

ODIN: *(To MEERA.)* None of that has anything to do with happiness. So that's why they didn't give it to you.

GOLDIE: *(Twirls around ODIN.)* Success IS happiness!

ODIN: No, happiness IS success. *(Walks away.)* I'll call you if I need you.

GOLDIE: Come on, folks! Let's get this party started!

MAX: *(Thumbs up!)* Achievement!

DELIA: Triumph!

They find a spot on stage and set up a party – they bring in a table full of snacks and drinks and go at it; perhaps play some cards, dance a bit, having a good ol' time, but largely pantomimed. The others watch for a short while, trying to take it in and figure out if this is appropriate or not. A little background music may be useful here.

VALERIA: *(Deciding it's okay to join in, she runs to them.)* I'm down!

MEERA: I'm a little nervous. They shouldn't be here. The Swatch people got carried away. It's hard to be happy when surrounded by this much greed.

CURTIS is tempted and moves towards them but ODIN steps in and pulls CURTIS away.

ODIN: Curtis, we need to keep to ourselves or we'll get in trouble for living outside our color.

VALERIA: Meera, let's party!

MEERA: Well... Okay! But no metal music. *(To the tech booth.)* Let's have some old school techno trance!

A dance tune comes on; MEERA and VALERIA pull CURTIS and ODIN to the party and everyone does a quick dance for a few seconds.

ODIN: *(After a while he flips out an arm towards the tech booth.)* Stop!

Music stops.

See, I can lead!

CURTIS: *(Explaining to audience, coming up front.)* You would think this is easy. We all have to live one characteristic. Gray is kind of...neutral and nebbish.

ODIN: *(Comes up near CURTIS, as they deliver a short lesson.)* We do this at the cost of everything else. It's hard.

CURTIS: It's hard for the writer. How can you create character depth when the characters can't have any depth?

ODIN: Writers are so often forced into creating well-rounded characters.

CURTIS: But in this case, we're shoved into two dimensional flats.

ODIN: I wonder if this is just his way out of having to work hard.

VALERIA: *(Joins them, with an answer!)* It's experimentation, and by nature impossible to criticize! It's a win-win and a great idea!

GOLDIE: *(Jumps up and slides into center stage.)* It's a marginally different idea, like that margin of one hundredth of a second that makes the difference between gold and silver in the swimming pool. Yet, it's the margin of victory! Just ask that guy from Suriname.

MAX: (*Falls in next to GOLDIE.*) Suriname. Only one gold medal for the whole country, ever.

MEERA comes between them and pushes them apart.

MEERA: But they're happy about it, unlike the United States which finds 108 medals paltry, humiliating and a national disgrace.

ODIN: I never won anything. (*Separating himself from the pack.*) I'm a foster care kid, by the way. I've had more parents than Carters has pills.

VALERIA: (*Fawning over ODIN.*) Oh, a touching story is about to come! We'll just have a little conflict which will be resolved when the achievement of introspection (*Motions to ODIN and CURTIS.*) triumphs over the psychobabble of unexamined happiness! (*Motions to the GOLDS.*)

ODIN: It's not introspection. It's leadership!

ODIN stands ready and waiting for everyone to get behind him, but they don't. VALERIA notices no one is following, so she moves him to a corner.

VALERIA: All by yourself in a corner. (*Twirls away.*) What is leadership without passion?

ODIN: Then come here, swatch-girl. We'll be a team. Apply yourself where you're useful. Stand behind me.

VALERIA: (*Goes to the table, has a snack.*) I'm the life of this party!

ODIN: Please. (*Sits on a block on a different part of the stage.*) Sit next to me. I need you to keep me interesting. (*To audience.*) I am Odin, and I am blue. I'm a foster care kid, and I make no excuses for anything. I wanted a home, and I found one here.

VALERIA: (*Looks at his seat.*) On a stage block?

ODIN: Yep.

VALERIA: How did you become a leader? Trust, loyalty, why did they give you that?

ODIN: They had to. No one would do it for me. First you learn to look out for yourself, then you learn to look out for other people. One of my foster mothers had thirteen of us. One kid had a feeding tube. The rest of us complained about Brussels sprouts. He never had to taste them. So who's the lucky one? *(Jumps up to stand on the block.)* I'm that guy who's all upset about not having shoes...

CURTIS: *(Walks in front of ODIN and sits on the stage.)* I'm the guy with no feet, for perspective.

ODIN: *(Calls down to CURTIS.)* And I'm the guy who's like "hey dude, if you got no feet, are you needin' those shoes?" *(Jumps down to sit again.)*

VALERIA: *(Offended.)* Who are your real parents? And where did they go wrong?

ODIN: I remember my mom a little bit. *(Wistful and not paying attention to himself.)* She was always frustrated. With me. Annabelle's her name. I miss her but I don't know her. I lay in bed at night and look up at ocean blue. I like ocean blue. My floor is sky blue. Oh, I already told you. Someone was being inventive, but my world is upside down.

VALERIA: So, Odin, we have to work together to get back to the normalcy of "all colors all the time." But you bring me down sometimes. Accept this for now. It's cool! Like blue, it's cool.

ODIN: I don't want to be a Swatch. I want us to be real people again. I've lost so much already, and now I've lost all the colors but one.

VALERIA: You should have been red!

ODIN: You took it!

VALERIA: I was given it.

ODIN: But you're naturally like that. Who ever heard of a Swatch Court anyway? This is the most bizarre discipline I've ever had, and I've had plenty.

VALERIA: I'm a natural! Red! Red... and red! More like fire engines and Beale Street, that kind of red. And, I'm missing the party! *(Goes to the GOLDS.)* Successful people party a lot!

Music comes on and VALERIA and the GOLDS dance a bit. ODIN sits and sulks. CURTIS joins him, they look at the party sadly and soon the dance stops.

ODIN: Just when I was about to get sympathy, a party starts.

MEERA: *(Comes up behind ODIN to present him to the audience.)*

Foster care. A boy says foster care and everyone goes “aaawww, poor thing.” It’s calculated to make you care about this character quickly, to assume he was discarded by uncaring parents unable to appreciate his good qualities, even though he might have been put in foster care due to his own incorrigibility. He might have locked his sister out of the house in the cold. Mixed Strawberry and Chocolate Nestlé’s Quik together at a birthday party and laughed at the results. Don’t buy his plea for sympathy. Now he gets blue; now he gets to lead, now we get to follow and be happy. I don’t buy it.

MAX: *(Still having a good old time, perhaps downing a bit of a soda.)*

What’s your story, Meera?

Offers MEERA something bright and shiny and she declines as if it’s off limits.

Everyone has a story. Every Swatch has a watch. You’re stuck in a single characteristic until you can prove yourself. Then we get it all back. That’s how this works. Right now, there’s no proof and no pudding, though I’d like vanilla.

DELIA: *(Gathers GOLDIE and MAX together.)* We, however, are shining examples of what it means to have it all! I’ve accomplished so much! More homework than a barrel of math nerds!

GOLDIE: More goals than a champion field hockey squad!

MAX: Everything to the Max! That would be me. Max. Like Maximum, Maximize, max a million...nothing can stop us!

They all cheer, but when they stop, VALERIA has an idea.

VALERIA: *(Prepares herself for a doozy, she comes to a commanding position on stage and says slowly.)* Moisture!

Everyone freaks out. Panicking as all the GOLDS back away.

MAX: Who said that?

VALERIA: *(Gets a sense of power! Approaches them, takes a deeeeeeep breath and says slowly.)* Moisture!

MAX: Stop it!

Everyone is squeamish, some cover their ears, double over in pain, etc.

(Talks to audience.) We hate that word.

VALERIA: Moisture.

MAX: It gives us hives. You might as well yell fire in a crowded theater.

VALERIA: *(Reliving the horror.)* My teacher used to punish our class by making us sit down and saying “moisture” over and over again. For a while we were scared straight, but the system wanted a punishment that could eventually lead to rehabilitation. So *this* happened. The Swatch evaluation. *(Reciting the reasons she was disciplined.)* I wasn’t getting into my homework. I needed more passion for my schoolwork. More excitement for my studies. So I’m red.

MEERA: Have a book!

VALERIA: I’m *red*, not *well-read*. But, now, as a Swatch, there’s hope. *(Doesn’t quite believe this.)* If I put my trust in Odin.

CURTIS: I want to get out of my swatch. I’m tired of Google following me around.

ODIN: Google isn’t that interested in you.

CURTIS: Google is *always* calling to verify my listing. Always. Every time I pick up the phone.

ODIN: We have to come to terms with the truth.

VALERIA: What does that mean? Long boring monologues about how your upbringing scarred you for life?

ODIN: Mine did.

MAX: Mine did.

VALERIA: That doesn’t mean anyone wants to hear you talk about it.

DELIA: Mine did too, but now I’m successful. I no longer spar with the scar. Things happen and they change for the better and that’s the story of my life. Be jealous of me! Come on, you know you want to...

CURTIS: *(Shaking his head.)* Frivolous. You’re frivolous and superficial.

DELIA: You don’t know that.

CURTIS: Based on your listing, location and swatch. Gold mask.

DELIA: Gold through and through. But you, Curtis...Gray. Washed up. (*Condescendingly complains about things gray.*) Gray hair. Gray day. Wants to pray the gray away. (*Like a preacher.*) Dear friends, we gather together to revile those more fortunate, those who have a better swatch. The girls who chose success and wealth won after all. If you have to be stuck with something, be stuck with gold.

MEERA: I'm stuck being happy. It could be worse.

ODIN: I'd miss my ocean.

CURTIS: Your ocean leaks, Odin. Blue falls on your head at night.

DELIA: You need to gain our loyalty to lead us out of here. I don't think you can do it.

GOLDIE: (*Looks offstage.*) Ooo look, here comes the Swatch Watch. Our leader!

DELIA: More like our caseworker! He'll make everything better!

CURTIS: (*Loud, to DELIA, still on his block.*) Nothing is better and you're not helping! (*To the others.*) They want to keep us this way.

HUEY enters, older and an "authority figure," dressed mainly in black.

ALL: (*Bowing, scraping, curtsying, etc.*) All hail, Huey!

HUEY: (*More upbeat than anyone else can stand.*) Ok folks, time for the Swatch Jubilee! Celebrate your color. Even you, Curtis. (*Passes out some pamphlets.*) Here is some literature for you to learn more about your color.

Everyone looks it over briefly.

ODIN: (*Looking it over.*) I know all this. I can't celebrate. I need to ponder.

MEERA: I can celebrate!

ODIN: Your happiness is a façade, Meera Worthington. It's assigned, not natural.

MEERA: (*Peeved.*) You're not better than me because you're not happy.

ODIN: I can get happy. You're just stuck with it.

HUEY takes pamphlets from ODIN and VALERIA and gives each to the other.

HUEY: We're going to swap. Odin and Valeria, we're going to change it up a bit.

ODIN: Oh, no. I gotta get us out of here. I can't do it red... *(Distraught.)*
Huey, no.

HUEY: You need the passion. You're too content. No one can have a regular life, thanks to you.

GOLDIE: We don't want one. We're triumphant and spectacular. *(Slides into HUEY on one knee.)* Don't make us regular, I beg of you!

HUEY walks off and GOLDIE tips over.

CURTIS: *(Making fun.)* We're triumpher and spectaculant! You're annoying.

GOLDIE: *(Gets up, brushes herself off.)* It's all how you look at it.

HUEY: All of you were given colors because you wouldn't take on the responsibility of an entire personality. This was the best way to keep you functional. You only have to do one thing at a time. When you learn that, you can return to the wholeness of humanity.

ODIN: I can't do it with passion. I need to do it with strength, trust, and leadership. That's my-

HUEY: It is what I say it is. It'll make you well rounded.

ODIN and HUEY share a look of mutual mistrust.

MEERA: *(After a short pause, to audience.)* You're probably wondering how we got this way.

HUEY: But rather than give you a long boring monologue that puts you to sleep while we provide necessary information...

CURTIS: *(Imitating a worried audience member.)* Oh no, I dozed off during the exposition and now I don't understand anything that's going on!

HUEY: We're just going to re-enact.

MAX: Time for a...*Dramatic Reenactment!*

ODIN: Good. For a while, I can be the whole me.

HUEY: You rejected the whole you. All of you did. That's why you're a Swatch. You'll learn to see society one color at a time. You rejected the idea of being a well-rounded person, so now you get the chance to focus on a single personality trait. You're lucky you got blue, Odin. You could have had aquamarine or burnt umber or some kind of accent color that has very limited and in some cases unwelcome characteristics. You got the whole of blue, but you have yet to demonstrate its qualities. *(Claps his hands and motions to the audience.)* Show them what happened, because they're obviously confused.

ODIN: Set up court!

HUEY: Bench!

MAX: Bench!

ODIN, CURTIS, and MAX get a desk and chair for the JUDGE while VALERIA, MEERA, GOLDIE and DELIA get some chairs for the defendants. If available, DELIA can bring in an American flag on a pole and set it by the JUDGE'S desk. Choreograph this so it looks organized and fun.

DELIA: Done! Perfect! *(Close to rapping her next line.)* Teach me a lesson because court is in session!

HUEY: All rise for Judge Justice Scary.

ODIN: The judge's name is Justice!

JUDGE: *(Enters, joking.)* Yep! I was almost stillborn but that would have been a miscarriage of Justice! *(Stern.)* Odin Blogster, approach the bench! All others, be seated.

They sit in the new chairs or on acting blocks, very haphazard and not rigidly at attention, like bored students in the classroom.

ODIN: *(Obnoxious, not quite the ODIN we've come to know, but the annoying ODIN that everyone is tired of.)* What up, Judge Justice? Be nice to me, I'm in foster care.

JUDGE: *(Hands ODIN a book.)* Here's a list of reasons from your foster parents as to why they've asked to be relieved of their duties.

ODIN: They're not my real parents. I've had five sets of parents in the last ten years. You tell me.

JUDGE: Tell you what?

ODIN: Why I should care what they think.

JUDGE: Oh, I see. Well then... from now on, you don't have to care.
Valeria Bodolayou!

VALERIA: (*Doing a cheer.*) V-A-L-E-R-I-A! That's my name and cheerleading is my-

JUDGE: (*Finishes for her, which stops her movement, make sure this word is clear!*) Bane. You've neglected your studies, your friends, and your... OMG, LOL and SMH... You haven't even been on Facebook in six months! What are you doing with your life?

VALERIA: I'm cheering! The grownups have taken over Facebook. Teenagers just use it for bullying the less fortunate.

JUDGE: But you haven't been to school either. Who exactly are you cheering for...Huckleberry Finn?

VALERIA: Whoever needs a boost. I'm like that.

HUEY: You see where this is going...

ODIN: Where is it going?

MAX: (*Jumps up and interrupts them, to everyone's dismay.*) Student achievement! That's where it's going! Best in class! Like a dog at a show but without the dog and without the show! Just... max. Like "to the max." Blue max, black max...

VALERIA: (*Jumps up.*) Maxed out.

JUDGE: Gold, Max!

MAX: All about it!

JUDGE: (*Taking control.*) All of you, sit. All of you have a problem.

ODIN: (*With attitude.*) Yeah, it's called parents. I had 12, all told.

VALERIA: It's called school. 12 years, all told.

MEERA: It's called sadness. Since I was 12, all told.

CURTIS: It's called... (*Can't think of anything.*) I don't know, nor care, but I'll get back to you when my ignorance and apathy subsides.

JUDGE: We're going to play Swatch. It's been very successful lately in turning ridiculous people to right. Teaching people responsibility. (*To audience.*) You wish you could try this at home, but you can't. You have neither the costume nor the capacity. Nor the knowledge of color psychology.

HUEY: If you give someone the wrong swatch...

JUDGE: (*Stern.*) Watch it! No off-color humor! This is serious. Odin, you're blue! Valeria, you're red.

CURTIS: (*Steps away, talks to the audience.*) And, it went downhill from there.

DELIA: Speak for yourself! It's a world of color and I am its queen! Gold, like a lion, like a tiger, like-

CURTIS: Like King Midas, you refrigerate everything you touch.

ODIN: I don't want to change. I always had to change. Change school, change parents, I can't get used to anything before I lose it.

HUEY: You didn't appreciate it enough to keep it! Nobody thought you wanted to stay around. Even foster parents want to be appreciated. Now...

ODIN: Now what?

JUDGE: Now you need to learn to accept responsibility. One color at a time. You didn't want to follow anyone's directions, so we made you a leader. You didn't like that either, so figure something out and focus!

HUEY: Focus! It should be easy.

ODIN: (*Runs to HUEY distraught.*) I can't focus! And now you made me red and it's that much harder.

VALERIA: (*Depressed.*) What do we do? Me and him, you just took away all we are and swapped swatches. I was so used to living high.

HUEY: Perhaps you will appreciate your potential only when you are deprived of achieving it.

VALERIA: This, potentially, is horrifying.

MEERA: It won't be so bad. Be optimistic!

HUEY: You can't merely accept your lot in life when that lot is vacant. As blue, you do. As red, we'll see.

DELIA: We're very happy. No need to be a complete human being when you only have the good parts.

GOLDIE: All good no bad. You should try it. Odin, Curtis, you can change.

HUEY: Odin! Valeria! Off. Hence. Away. Go forth and contemplate.

ODIN: Okay, but... I don't like this. I don't trust you, Huey. I don't trust this scary justice, capitalized (*As in JUDGE.*) or not.

VALERIA: Me either. I was happy being what I was. That should count for something.

HUEY: Oh, it does. Just not here.

ODIN: (*Short pause.*) I'm not wearing her outfit.

After a pause, during which HUEY is unyielding to their genuinely pleading looks and gestures, ODIN and VALERIA exit. Enter Q-LASH and UNCLE HORATIO. Q-LASH, a lawyer, is wearing a nice suit, HORATIO is portly and dressed fancy but sloppy, for example his tie is backwards or too short, his suit doesn't fit quite right. A large bushy mustache, real or no, would complete his look.

Q-LASH: Goldie, Delia, Max, come ye hither!

MAX: What? I don't know wither hither is.

Q-LASH: (*Beckons.*) Come ye hither.

MEERA: I think he means get over there.

They approach him.

Q-LASH: I am Q-Lash Genteel, a lawyer for the deceased. Your Uncle Horatio has passed away, and hence hath left his thrice-cousined nieces and nephew a Shakespearean fortune!

GOLDIE: A Shakespearean fortune? What does that mean?

Q-LASH: A wealth of words. An abundance of antonyms. A plethora of pronouncement, and to go with it, a mountain of money!

GOLDIE, MAX, and DELIA: (*After processing this, they jump in the air.*) We're rich!

MAX: (*Almost sympathetic.*) Uncle Horatio. Better dead than alive.

Q-LASH: And here he is to read the will!

MEERA: But you just said he's dead.

CURTIS: (*A little tired of backstage issues trumping the action.*) They just brought him on to put an extra person in the show.

Q-LASH: That we did. As a lawyer, it saves me and the drama director the trouble of dealing with difficult parents. (*Mocking some parents.*) Why didn't you cast Franny? Why didn't you cast Zooey? So, (*Presenting HORATIO.*) I now present you *Franny and Zooey*.

CURTIS: I wouldn't be so happy about it, publican, it takes lines away from you.

Q-LASH: I'm too busy counting money to learn lines! Uncle Horatio has time on his hands. He composed his will, prior to decomposing, which he will now read, *a posteriori*.

DELIA: What does his posterior have to do with it?

Q-LASH: A lot, as he's leaving his money behind. Horatio, recite please.

HORATIO: I, Uncle Horatio Pluminium, being of sound mind, but really really out of shape and on my deathbed, do hereby bequeath my fortune as follows:

DELIA: *(As all the GOLDS jump up and down.)* We're gonna be rich!

HORATIO: One million florins each to Delia, Max, and Goldie, my nieces and nephew who loved and cared for me throughout their lives, unlike the rest of the family that stood next to me with outstretched hands and outstretched demands, or as that branch of the household called it... love. However, Delia, Max and Goldie were also a bit flighty and greedy. By giving them the moola, perhaps I'll encourage them to take on some responsibility.

GOLDIE: A million dollars? What kind of responsibility? Other than shopping, LOL! *(Starts to laugh.)*

HORATIO: *(Stern, GOLDIE stops in her tracks.)* Taxes. Relatives asking for money. Not knowing who your friends are. Not knowing who you can trust. I was rich, but miserable. Now, it's your turn.

DELIA: We can't afford to be miserable.

Q-LASH: Now you can, you have a million bucks. Each. Minus a small fee to the "Q," that would be the me.

MAX: A million dollars is not really a lot of money these days.

HORATIO: Make it two, then! The remaining amount goes to the Color Marketing Group to continue its excellent research into the influence of color on high school students! Can anyone learn in a purple classroom? That's important information! Finally, I leave four million to my dog.

CURTIS: That's a lot of money for a dog.

HORATIO: It's a large dog. Oh, and here. *(Hands DELIA a big scoop which he pulls out from the judge's desk.)*

DELIA: What's this?

HORATIO: To keep the millions, you scoop the poop. You, Max, have to give her insulin three times a day, and Goldie, you need to keep her groomed. She's very picky, very diabetic, and-

MAX: *(Doesn't want to deal.)* Can't it just die?

HORATIO: No, that was up to me. I left her high and dry, but now thanks to you, she'll be fine! Oh, and I expect some mourning for my death.

DELIA: Mourning? But it's two in the afternoon!

Q-LASH: *(Tries to cut everyone off.)* Can I talk now? Horatio, it was my idea to give you some lines and now you're taking everything from me.

HORATIO: I'll give you another million to shut up!

Q-LASH: No thanks. My words are worth their weight in gold.

HORATIO: How did you get the name Genteel, Q-Lash?

Q-LASH: I bribed a judge. With my eyes.

ODIN and VALERIA come back in, though now ODIN is red and VALERIA is blue. If possible, they should have the same outfit they wore initially but in the other color.

Q-LASH: In any case, you each have a couple million dollars, or some such insane amount of money.

MAX: *(Celebrating, spinning around, perhaps.)* I'm down with that! Two million, two, too, to, however you spell two, the million is the same!

CURTIS: *(Stops MAX in the middle of a spin.)* Aren't you going to mourn him?

HORATIO: Yep. Mourn me, or I'll rewrite my will.

MAX: *(Spins around to face HORATIO.)* Kinda late for that, since you're already dead.

HORATIO: No one appreciates you until you're dead. And that's only if you have money.

GOLDIE: *(Approaches HORATIO.)* But we appreciate you now, Uncle H.

DELIA: *(To audience.)* When our Auntie Emerald died, she was broke. We had to pay for her funeral. Then we were broke. It almost killed us, but not as bad as it killed her.

MEERA: How's that?

DELIA: She had to pay for her mother's funeral, and after that she couldn't afford her own. We told her "it won't kill you to bury your mom in style," but we were wrong. It costs too much to die. Our great-great-grandmother refuses.

GOLDIE: But we should pay some respects to Uncle Horatio. (*To HORATIO.*) If we ever ignored you and didn't mind you, we're sorry. We were just naturally obstreperous. Now we have enough money so we can pay respect, pay attention and even pay the piper.

GOLDIE, MAX and DELIA kneel on the ground, synchronized. They clasp hands and bow heads, again synchronized, and start to pray.

HUEY: (*Stops them, one at a time pushes them back to their feet.*) You can't. Gold doesn't mourn, it celebrates!

GOLDIE: (*Backing up.*) Can't it serve both? Respectful, yet classy.

HUEY: That's not what your swatch is about. If so, every color could represent everything in one shade or other.

ODIN: Yes! Exactly!

MEERA: With the right designer, it can.

HUEY: But, we're not set up for that. So... (*To ODIN, uncomfortably close.*) passion, boy!

GOLDIE: (*Thinks it over.*) Well, OK. But... Uncle Horatio was nice to me. He took us to the zoo.

MAX: Bowling.

DELIA: Cross country skiing. Maine to Montana.

HORATIO: That's what did me in. Should have stopped in North Dakota.

DELIA: We'd pay respects, but... we're not allowed.

HORATIO: (*Not impressed.*) You didn't want to pay respects when you had the chance. Remember? That cold, cold winter in Miles City, Montana. All alone, taking my last labored breaths...

A NURSE, dressed in scrubs, enters, concerned, and speaks to the GOLDS.

NURSE: Your uncle is very ill. (*HORATIO acts really sick and makes over the top gestures like he is in a silent movie.*) You should see him one last time.

GOLDIE: But there's a sale at the cell phone store! Smart phones at stupid prices! Only good 'til cell o'clock.

NURSE: But... Uncle Horatio won't be around when the store closes. He sent me here to come get you. He's asking for all of you. (*HORATIO is down on his knees begging silently and urgently with outstretched arms.*) You're his favorite nieces and nephews. His own children won't-

GOLDIE: Then why would we? We told him not to go skiing at his age. He insisted. "You're only as old as you feel."

NURSE: So you won't see him? (*The GOLDS take out phones and text, or pantomime doing so.*) He's going to die with no one by him but Mr. Isaac, the catering associate. His last meal is eggs benedict. Fitting, since his family has turned on him.

NURSE turns and makes an exit, HORATIO waves goodbye and falls over. Q-LASH and HUEY help HORATIO up and sit him on a chair or acting block. HUEY then goes over to the GOLDS and gives them a rap to stop playing with their phones.

MAX: (*Feeling guilty.*) I don't remember any of that. I guess I was too self-absorbed.

GOLDIE: Yeah, me too. But I got a great deal on my phone!

Q-LASH: Lawyers are too often portrayed as selfish and money hungry, but it looks like I have lost that battle in this play. Finally a writer who can throw off stereotypes and depict a lawyer who has integrity! I can't wait to bill him for my time!

DELIA: I feel duped. I was sold on gold, but the sale grew stale. Now we're being ordered to throw away our acquisitive natures while at the same time inheriting a fortune. We're being forced into hypocrisy! How do we throw off the swatch?

GOLDIE: I want purple, so I can be depressed. Just for a bit.

Q-LASH: (*Gathers the GOLDS together.*) I can work out a deal. I'm a lawyer you know. Q-Lash Genteel at your service.

HUEY: (*Pulls him away.*) You need a color, Q-Lash. You're greedy! You want more money, and worse, you want a bigger part in this play. You need pink. Pastel pink. It'll calm you down.

Q-LASH: It'll embarrass everyone. I'll sue thee, Huey!

JUDGE: (*To Q-LASH.*) You shan't sue Huey, Q-uey. I'll throw out your case. You are hereby sentenced to pastel pink!

Q-LASH: Where's the jury! You're already judge and executioner!

JUDGE: You bought the jury, remember? So they're tainted. And they're all against capital punishment, so execution? I don't think so. *(It's final!)* Pastel Pink.

Q-LASH: *(Thinks fast, then takes a few steps towards JUDGE and gets a bit smug.)* I bought you the judgeship too. Remember? *(Leans over the bench into the JUDGE.)* And I can take that purchase back. *(JUDGE realizes this and through gestures, relents. Q-LASH is still smug.)* So I'll just stay out of the swatch patch. You're not the only one who can fling the sludge, judge.

CURTIS: *(To JUDGE.)* Through the luck of his bucks, your bench has a stench.

ODIN: *(Walks among Q-LASH, JUDGE and HUEY.)* Just when you think things are bad, someone has it worse. But *(Presents Q-LASH to the audience.)* it's someone you don't like, so it's all right.

VALERIA: I hate this color. I can't be me. It's part of me, but not all of me.

ODIN: *(To HUEY, bitter.)* What did you switch us up for? We were just learning to adjust.

HUEY: Most people would consider it an honor to be given another color. Plus, you didn't use the one you had. You didn't get the trust and leadership blue deserves. You complained. You played the foster care card. But you forgot, foster care was your fault.

Enter HODGE, a foster parent, to stand in front of JUDGE

JUDGE: Mr. (Mrs.) Hodge, what is your complaint about Odin Blogster?

HODGE: Take him away, Judge Justice! I can't take anymore. I can't take all the take take take of this young man! I've tried everything. Even loving him. He didn't want it. He keeps throwing oatmeal at the dog.

JUDGE: *(Scandalized.)* Oatmeal! At the dog! I love dogs.

HODGE: Me too. More than this hateful child. It was steel cut Irish oatmeal to boot. *(As if this is of grave importance.)* I cooked it for 30 minutes! Take him away.

HUEY: *(Breaking in.)* So that was you. Own it, Odin. Maybe we'll let you out.

ODIN: Own it. Passionately! My name is Odin, and I'm an oatmeal tosser! I didn't like oatmeal. (*Far too angry, to HODGE.*) Every day you made me eat it.

HODGE: Every day you threw it.

ODIN: (*Like a spoiled out of control kid, so we can see why people didn't like him.*) But you couldn't figure out that I don't like it! I hate it. Passionately! (*Pouting.*) I'd rather have cream of wheat.

HODGE: (*Unmoved; ODIN, in a way, finally sees how he affected people.*) Cry me a river. The Missouri, the Mississippi, or the Monongahela. Name it, then cry it. You're in my charge and you'll eat what I put in front of you. (*Pantomimes giving ODIN oatmeal.*)

ODIN: (*Pantomimes taking a bite, then throwing the oatmeal.*) It tastes like dog food, so that's who should have it. Stop telling me what to do!

HODGE: (*After a stare down with ODIN, pantomimes getting down and cleaning the floor. After a few seconds, when it is apparent ODIN won't help, HODGE looks up.*) Fine. I won't anymore. (*Gets up and pushes ODIN in front of the judge.*) Maybe the court will.

Exits, in a huff. If HODGE is doubling AUNTIE EMERALD be prepared for a quick costume change.

ODIN: (*Emotionally exhausted.*) See what I had to go through?

JUDGE: What you threw, not what you *went* through. There are people in Cambodia who don't have oatmeal. You threw it at a dog who did nothing to you. You punished a puppy. So I don't want to hear about your poor life. Red it is. Get over yourselves, all of you, then we'll see about releasing the swatch. If you want to be human, you have to prove it to me. But you can't go back to the way you were.

VALERIA: Well, I'll be your leader. Trust me.

MEERA: That's a laugh. See, I'm happy. "That's a laugh." I like that. Sometimes derision is the best path to happiness.

VALERIA: Be that as it may, you'll have to trust me.

CURTIS: I trusted my girlfriend once, and that's why I'm here now.

GOLDIE: I trusted Horatio-

HORATIO: You didn't trust me. You just wanted my money.

GOLDIE: (*Finally admitting it.*) You're right. When we went to the zoo, you bought me stuffed bears and ice cream. I still have the bears. Auntie Emerald couldn't afford all that, so she took me to the park and gave me potato salad. I liked ice cream better, so I left Auntie Emerald and her potato salad and went to the zoo instead. Now I miss you both. If you give her some lines, we can reconnect.

Q-LASH: She doesn't want lines. Listen. Her last will and testament.

AUNTIE EMERALD: (*An elderly and classy lady, she enters, reading from a scroll.*) I leave all my lines to Horatio Pluminium. I only went to plays to see my darling nieces and nephews. They never got many lines, so they can have mine while they're young enough to enjoy them. I don't want the burden of memorization. So, don't worry about Auntie Emerald. Oh, and there's potato salad in the fridge, but....

MAX: Eat it within three days.

DELIA: It's been longer than that now.

ODIN: (*Guilty over the oatmeal.*) I'm sure it's fine! I'll have some! I'm sure it's great!

MEERA: Me too! Potato salad's a real upper! I need that now. To keep the faith. Faith in Valeria. Faith, because of Auntie Emerald's potato salad! (*AUNTIE has an approving smile on her face.*)

MAX: No. It's really not very good.

AUNTIE EMERALD: (*Withering look at MAX.*) I made great potato salad, but only for *other* children who appreciated it. (*Exit.*)

JUDGE: I sentence you all to a bowl! Or do I have to say "moisture?"

ODIN: We'll be fine, judge. Valeria, it's decided. You've got to get us out of here!

VALERIA: (*Announces.*) Leadership is not in my nature.

JUDGE: (*With an evil smile.*) Moisture...

ODIN: Get there.

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

ODIN, VALERIA, MEERA, CURTIS, HUEY, JUDGE, Q-LASH onstage. MEERA is the center of attention for awhile, addressing the audience as well as the others. The Swtach kids can be seated on blocks, while the others are clustered around the JUDGE'S bench.

MEERA: My story is simple.

VALERIA: Bore us, please.

MEERA: I was a depressed young lady.

HUEY: Nowwww she's a lady, before she was more like a teenage tarantula.

MEERA: *(Yelling at someone we can't see.)* Leave me alone! You don't understand me, you'll never understand me.

VALERIA: We've all had that fight with our parents.

MEERA: That was my French teacher. She didn't speak English, so I was, in a sense, telling her the truth.

HUEY: Continue...

MEERA: I was so successful with that argument that I used it on my parents, repeatedly. In French. And I embellished. Once, I spent a week in my room, with only bathroom breaks and the occasional shopping trip. Other than that, I was depressed and angry.

VALERIA: Why?

MEERA: First because I got dumped. Then because I got used to it. I started to enjoy it, and soon I realized I didn't know what else to do. I was imprisoned by my own coping mechanism. So it was like this...

MRS. WORTHINGTON: *(Enters, cheerful.)* Meera, how was school today!

MEERA: *(Hostile.)* You don't understand me and you'll never understand me!

MRS. WORTHINGTON: *(Aggravated, sighs with frustration.)* Just a simple question.

MEERA: *(Imitating her mother's delivery.)* Just a simple answer!

MRS. WORTHINGTON: Meera, I do understand. You're my fourth daughter and you've all made that same bogus claim.

MEERA: My issues are different!

MRS. WORTHINGTON: Perhaps, but I refuse to spend another five years dealing with your unwillingness to communicate.

MEERA: *(To VALERIA.)* And that's how I wound up here.

MRS. WORTHINGTON: *(Forces MEERA in front of the JUDGE.)* If you refuse to try happiness on your own, we're going to force it upon you.

MEERA: Hence, whence, and thence, I was turned into a Swatch.

JUDGE: I sentence you to yellow. Be happy.

MEERA: Happy? I don't know how.

JUDGE: Then learn. And fast. We have a reeducation camp for difficult Swatches, but I suggest you don't force us to make that move.

MEERA: I can't believe you're doing this to me.

MRS. WORTHINGTON: *I want to be happy, Meera. After four teenage girls I get the game. (To audience.)* She thinks I don't understand her. But what's to understand about just being nice? *(To MEERA, resigned.)* How hard would that be, Meera? *(Sarcastic.)* Oh I forgot. Very, very, hard for you. Fortunately for me, happiness starts with a manicure. *(Waves, emphasizing her nails.)* Good bye. "May the court be with you." *(Exit.)*

CURTIS: *(Figures things out.)* You weren't unhappy because you got dumped. You got dumped because you were unhappy. It was your choice of music. You wanted to become unhappy to fit in with the indie band of the week. But now you're yellow to explore the bright side.

MEERA: Which no teenager wants to do, hence...

HUEY: Hence, you have a deeper persona than all of your melancholy compatriots. Cheer up, Meera.

VALERIA: I haven't had a chance to tell my story. But I can't tell it blue. I could have told it red.

HUEY: *(Explaining to the audience and the rest of the cast.)* She was jealous and possessive. She was passionate and excitable in the worst of ways.

Q-LASH: *(To the audience.)* See... what we're doing here is making you like the characters at the beginning of the play, then dragging them through the mud. You thought they were wonderful but confused young people that just got a swatch of bad luck. No, the bad luck was with the adults who had to bear their ill will. It's just like with celebrities. You liked them at first... Britney Spears, Justin Bieber, but now even Thomas Jefferson is coated with the mud of Monticello. Oh yeah, Thomas, after 200 years of hero worship you are smudged with the sludge of slavery and tarred with the war you bequeathed to James Madison... So, Valeria, you're our celeb of the day. Yet no one knows who you are.

VALERIA: So I can keep it a secret.

Q-LASH: Not anymore!

JUDGE, Q-LASH, and HUEY surround VALERIA, almost ganging up on her, presenting her unwillingly to the audience like a court exhibit.

JUDGE: Meet Valeria Bodolayou.

HUEY: If she liked a boy no girl could look at him.

JUDGE: If she wanted an outfit, no one else could have it.

HUEY: Not to mention that coveted position of first violin.

Q-LASH: Ooo first violin. *(Plays "air violin".)* But you had to play second fiddle to Debbie Thomas.

VALERIA: She got the solo. I got to look pretty.

Q-LASH: And Debbie still has the solo.

JUDGE: Then, there was the incident in French class.

MEERA: French class is a problem for most of us.

VALERIA: Meera knew a bigger word than I did. So... I...

MEERA: What? Even I don't know this.

VALERIA: When you got caught cheating it was my fault. I framed you. Then I said... *moi? Je ne c'est pas!* I got an A, and you were out on your sweet patootie. Which meant...

MEERA: You had more access to Hayward Jennings...

VALERIA: The quarterback, the pitcher, and... first cellist. Oh how he could throw *(Pretends to throw a football as she says it.)*, and how he could bow. *(Pretends to play a cello as she says it.)*

JUDGE: So... *(Goes to get VALERIA.)*

Q-LASH: (*Aside, to audience.*) And there's an even bigger problem you'll find out later...

JUDGE: (*Moves VALERIA to the side, as if being done with her.*) Swatch.

CURTIS: I'm just sad. This isn't news. This isn't new. This isn't...well whatever it is, it isn't. Why waste my personality on characteristics I'll never have nor want? So you, Valeria, need to lead us out of this darkness.

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