

THE COLORING BOOK

A one-act dramedy by
Bradley Walton

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

WORDS. The words at the bottoms of the coloring book pages; occupies all pages simultaneously and can tell characters on one page what is happening on other pages. May be played by two or even three actors, with the dialogue split up between them. (The character's references to himself as "I" should be changed to "we.")

BENNY/BETTY THE CALF. A young animal who really wants to be colored someday.

PAUL/PAULINA THE POLAR BEAR. A good friend of Benny.

NEVE/NATHAN THE RABBIT. Thinks that looking good is more important than anything else.

ARTHUR/ALICE THE MONKEY, whose self-worth plunges after being colored green and rejected by some of the other animals.

DIANA/DANIEL THE CAT. Torn between wanting to be accepted by the realistically colored animals and staying loyal to her friends who have been wildly colored.

JACQUES/JEANNINE THE PIG. Arrogant and self-absorbed; speaks with a fake French accent.

SALLY/SAM THE VETERINARIAN. A sensible medical professional; one of the first to be colored.

EDDIE/EDIE THE GUINEA PIG. Sally's sidekick.

MOTHER/FATHER. A visitor at the zoo.

CHILD 1. A visitor at the zoo.

CHILD 2. A visitor at the zoo.

FISH 1. Lives on a page that has been nicely colored.

FISH 2. Lives on a page that has been nicely colored.

ADDITIONAL ANIMALS (anywhere from 1 to 10) may enter with Diana, Arthur, and Neve in Scene 1, and may also be present in Scene 7 and the end of Scene 9.

All characters may be of either gender, with names listed first here used in the play text. Update pronouns and use the [bracketed] text as needed when using the alternate gender.

TO ACCOMMODATE A CAST OF 9-13 PERFORMERS

Any of the actors playing Mother, Child 1, Child 2, Sally, Eddie, Paul, or Jacques can double as Fish 1 and Fish 2.

Child 1 and Child 2 can be combined with appropriate changes to the dialogue.

Fish 1 and Fish 2 can be combined with appropriate changes to the dialogue. (If combined, the single fish should be named Heather or Henry.)

Mother, Child 1, and Child 2 may be omitted and Words' opening line in Scene 3 changed to "Paul the Polar Bear plays in the zoo."

TO ACCOMMODATE A CAST OF 8 PERFORMERS

Omit Mother, Child 1, and Child 2 as stated above. Omit Eddie and, with appropriate changes, combine his dialogue with Sally and the other characters. Combine Fish 1 and Fish 2, and then double the single Fish with one of the other performers as stated above.

SCENES

Scene 1: The farm on page 26 of a coloring book titled *Animals*.

Scene 2: The farm on page 3, three days later.

Scene 3: The polar bear habitat in the zoo on page 28, later that day.

Scene 4: The forest on page 14, later that day.

Scene 5: The pond on page 8, the next day.

Scene 6: The farm on page 26, later that day.

Scene 7: The monkey habitat in the zoo on page 10, a few seconds later.

Scene 8: The monkey habitat in the zoo on page 10, the next day.

Scene 9: The forest on page 14, a minute later.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Coloring Book premiered as *The Coloring Book Play* April 24-25, 2015 at Harrisonburg High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It was produced by Stanley Swartz, directed by Bradley Walton, stage managed by Anna Dick with Emily Holmes and Rachel Walton on crew, and featured the following cast:

THE NARRATOR	Winston Jeffries
BETTY THE CALF	Hiesun Ho
PAULINA THE POLAR BEAR	Deja Gentry
DIANA THE CAT	Lauren McKenzie
ALICE THE MONKEY	Annaka Reich
NEVE THE RABBIT	Talah Garout
SALLY THE VETERINARIAN	Anna Dick
EDIE THE GUINEA PIG	Ehrlica Orbera-Ortiz
JEANNINE THE PIG	Analidia Hunter-Nickels
HEATHER THE FISH	Heather Whetzel

SCENE 1

(The farm on page 26. The setting suggests an uncolored page in a coloring book. BENNY THE CALF stands DL, basking in the glory of the day. Benny is costumed completely in white. WORDS, dressed in black, sits on a black stool DR.)

WORDS: Benny the calf enjoys a beautiful day on the farm.

(Benny smiles and sighs contentedly. Words speaks again in a more melodic voice.)

Benny the calf...enjoys a beautiful day...on the farm.

(Smiling, Benny extends his arms, twirls, and then sighs contentedly. Words stands and speaks again, this time in a dramatic voice as if doing a voiceover for a movie trailer.)

Benny the calf enjoys a beautiful day — *on the farm!*

(Benny jumps and raises both arms triumphantly.)

BENNY: Yeah!

WORDS: What did you think of that last one?

BENNY: I *liked* it! It sounded really dramatic!

WORDS: Thank you.

BENNY: *(Deflating a little:)* It's too bad nothing dramatic ever happens in coloring books about animals.

WORDS: Have patience, Benny. Any day now, a child could open this book and spur his or her artistic development onward to new levels by coloring everyone who lives here. And the act of coloring combined with looking at the captions on each page will not only help the child learn to read, but also to form cognitive connections on the subject of animal life. *(Gestures grandly.)* It would be incredibly dramatic.

BENNY: Cognit-what?

WORDS: The kid would learn about animals.

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BENNY: Why didn't you just say so?

WORDS: Because I'm the words on the page. And words like to express big ideas... (*Dramatically:*) ...profound and impressive ideas!

BENNY: Too bad a coloring book really isn't the place for that.

WORDS: (*Deflating:*) No, it really isn't.

BENNY: Do you really think we'll get colored someday?

WORDS: Hopefully you will. Since I'm just the words at the bottom of each page, it's not something I have to think about. After all, words are for reading, not coloring.

(*PAUL THE POLAR BEAR enters from L.*)

PAUL: Hi, Benny!

BENNY: Hi, Paul.

PAUL: How are things here on page 26 today?

BENNY: They're good. It's a beautiful day.

PAUL: That's great.

BENNY: How are things on page 28?

WORDS: The polar bear habitat in the zoo is pretty much the same as usual.

BENNY: I know you're on every page, but I was talking to Paul.

WORDS: Right. Sorry.

PAUL: Well, the (*Modify as necessary to match actual casting:*) mom with the two girls stopped by to see me this morning like they always do. The words and I talked about the weather for a while. And I played with my ball and swam, and then I decided to come over here.

BENNY: The words and I were just talking about whether

we'll all get colored someday.

PAUL: (*Slightly disappointed:*) I'll probably never get colored. (*Shrugging it off:*) I mean, I'm a polar bear. I'm supposed to be white.

BENNY: Do *you* think someone will buy our coloring book and give it to a little kid to color?

PAUL: I don't know. I think it'd be really nice.

BENNY: The thing that I worry about is...what if a little kid does get our coloring book, but then never colors it?

WORDS: (*Gently:*) Then none of you will ever get colored.

BENNY: But I want to get colored more than anything.

WORDS: I know. We'll all just have to wait and see.

BENNY: But how long will we have to wait? It already seems like it's been forever.

WORDS: You'll just have to be patient, Benny... (*Looks upwards.*) ...but maybe not for too much longer.

BENNY: What is it? Is something happening on another page?

WORDS: Someone just opened the coloring book to page 30.

PAUL: (*Gasps.*) That's just two pages away from me! I'd better get back!

(*Paul exits L.*)

BENNY: Can you see who opened the book?

WORDS: It's a little boy.

BENNY: A boy?! Can you tell how old he is?

WORDS: He looks to be about five.

BENNY: A five-year-old boy?! Is he going to color the page?

WORDS: I'm not sure yet.

BENNY: (*Forgetting in his excitement:*) Who lives on page 30?

WORDS: Sally the veterinarian and Eddie the guinea pig.

BENNY: (*Jumping up and down:*) Oh my gosh oh my gosh oh my gosh!

WORDS: I think he's picking up a crayon...

BENNY: This could finally be it!

WORDS: And he's starting to color.

BENNY: Yes yes yes!

(DIANA THE CAT, ARTHUR THE MONKEY, and NEVE THE RABBIT enter from R excitedly. They are all costumed completely in white.)

DIANA: Benny! Sally the veterinarian is getting colored on page 30!

ARTHUR: The words told us!

BENNY: The words told me, too, Arthur!

ARTHUR: I love Sally! She's so nice! I'm glad she gets to be first!

NEVE: Remember that day when somebody flipped through our pages and we saw all the colors outside? They were so pretty! I can't believe we're finally getting them in here!

DIANA: This is so exciting!

(Diana hugs Arthur.)

ARTHUR: It really is!

BENNY: What color is the boy using?

WORDS: Green.

DIANA: (*Dreamily:*) Green...

NEVE: I love green!

ARTHUR: What's the little boy coloring with the green?

WORDS: Sally's hair.

BENNY: Oooh...green hair! That's neat!

WORDS: Now he's using orange and purple.

ARTHUR: (*Full of wonder:*) Orange and purple.

DIANA: What's he using the orange and purple on?

WORDS: Sally's lab jacket.

NEVE: I wonder what he's going to do next?

WORDS: He's coloring Sally's shirt and pants. And he's drawing a pirate sword onto Sally.

BENNY: Cool!

WORDS: And now he's coloring Eddie the guinea pig.

BENNY: What color?

WORDS: Blue and red.

DIANA: I love blue and red.

NEVE: So do I!

BENNY: We're the luckiest coloring book in the whole world!

WORDS: And now he's drawing a space helmet onto Eddie.

ARTHUR: Eddie has a space helmet? He's so lucky!

WORDS: It looks like the boy is done now. Yes...he's closing the coloring book.

DIANA: We just had our first page colored!

NEVE: Yay!

ARTHUR: A little boy is going to color us all!

WORDS: (*Trying to gently temper expectations:*) Well...hopefully he will.

(SALLY THE VETERINARIAN and EDDIE THE GUINEA PIG enter from L, followed by Paul.)

EDDIE: Hey, everybody. Guess what?

SALLY: We got colored!

PAUL: Don't they look neat?

BENNY: What was it like? Did it tickle?

SALLY: No, it was like getting a nice massage.

EDDIE: It felt really good.

NEVE: Oh, I wanna get colored!

DIANA: *(To Sally:)* I love your pirate sword!

ARTHUR: *(To Eddie:)* I love your space helmet!

NEVE: *(To Sally:)* I love your hair!

DIANA: *(To Eddie:)* I love your blue fur!

SALLY: Thank you!

EDDIE: Yeah! Thanks!

BENNY: Who do you all think will be next?

DIANA: If he colored page 30 first, that means he's skipping around. It could be anybody!

BENNY: I bet it'll be Arthur! Boys like monkeys!

ARTHUR: I don't know...there are a lot of really neat animals in here.

NEVE: But...it'll be somebody, right? He's not going to color just one page and forget about the rest of us? That would be terrible.

BENNY: He'll do the whole book. I know he will.

WORDS: Hang on...

DIANA: What?

WORDS: The coloring book's been opened to page 3.

SALLY: We need to get back to our pages!

(Diana, Arthur, and Neve begin to exit R. Sally, Eddie, and Paul begin to exit L. They all stop on Words' next line.)

WORDS: No, I think it's okay. She's already got a crayon in her hand, and she's not flipping through the book.

NEVE: "She"?

WORDS: Yes. It's someone different. A girl. Older than the boy. I'm guessing she's about 7 or 8.

ARTHUR: And she's going to color page 3?

WORDS: I think she is.

EDDIE: Page 3...that's...

WORDS: Jacques the pig.

BENNY: Jacques?! Why does Jacques get to be colored next? He's so full of himself. And he pretends to be French! Why does he do that?

PAUL: You just said it. He's full of himself.

BENNY: He's such a...a pig!

PAUL: He is a pig.

BENNY: That's true.

NEVE: *(To Words:)* What color is she going to make him?

EDDIE: Is it blue?

DIANA: Is it brown?

WORDS: Red. She's using red.

ARTHUR: I love red!

NEVE: Do you all realize what this means? Our coloring book is in a home with two kids! Our chances of all getting colored just went way, way up!

BENNY: This is the best day ever!

WORDS: Now she's using a peach crayon.

NEVE: Oooh...peach.

WORDS: And some black.

BENNY: Black is good. I wouldn't mind some black myself.

DIANA: I can't wait to see what Jacques looks like!

WORDS: The girl is finished.

NEVE: She is?

WORDS: She's admiring her work and...she's closing the book.

EDDIE: How did Jacques' colors turn out?

WORDS: They're...very interesting.

SALLY: What do you mean by "interesting"?

WORDS: The girl's coloring style is very different from the boy's.

SALLY: Different how?

WORDS: You'll see for yourself in just a second. Jacques is headed this way.

(JACQUES enters from R and twirls dramatically for everyone to see. He is beautifully and realistically colored. He speaks with an exaggerated French accent.)

JACQUES: *(Gesturing to himself:)* Everybody look at me!

(Jacques snorts.)

DIANA: Jacques!

JACQUES: Am I zee most fabulous-looking peeg you have ever seen, or what?

ARTHUR: You're the only pig I've ever seen. But you do look pretty great.

BENNY: The words said that you were getting colored with red and peach and black and...how is it that you look...like that?

JACQUES: Ze leetle girl...she colored with short, soft, geentel strokes, and she used zee red of zee crayon weeth zee white of zee paper to create pink. And zen she used just a leetle of zee peach here and zere to vary zee color, and lightly shaded zee undersides of my belly, chin and legs weeth zee black to create shadows. C'est magnifique! Do you not think?

DIANA: I hope the little girl colors me!

ARTHUR: I hope she colors me!

BENNY: I wanna be colored by her, too!

NEVE: I know she'll color me. Girls love cute bunny rabbits.

SALLY: You look good, Jacques.

EDDIE: Yeah. Congratulations.

JACQUES: (*Condescendingly:*) Zank you. Congratulations to you, too, on...you know... (*Snorts.*) ...getting colored.

EDDIE: Um...yeah.

(Benny, Paul, Diana, Arthur, and Neve look back and forth from Jacques to Eddie and Sally.)

ARTHUR: The two kids don't color much alike, do they?

PAUL: Well, the girl is a little older.

NEVE: She's really talented.

DIANA: Yeah.

PAUL: But the boy's got a lot of imagination. I mean...he gave Eddie a space helmet.

NEVE: But look at how Jacques' colors are blended together. He looks so...real.

BENNY: Not that Sally and Eddie don't. They look like...like a different type of real.

NEVE: That's one way to put it.

DIANA: Neve!

NEVE: What?

DIANA: Don't be mean.

NEVE: I'm not being mean. I'm just being honest. Sally and Eddie got colored, and that's great. But Jacques...Jacques *looks* great. Sally and Eddie, well, compared to Jacques...maybe not so much.

DIANA: You said you like how they look.

NEVE: That was before I saw how Jacques turned out.

ARTHUR: How can you say something like that?

SALLY: It's okay. I get what she means.

EDDIE: Yeah. Totally. Who ever heard of a blue and red guinea pig, you know? But at least I got a cool space helmet. Not that I ever plan on going into space.

SALLY: Well, I guess Eddie and I will head back to page 30. If you need me for anything, come on by.

NEVE: Sally?

SALLY: Yes, Neve?

NEVE: Before you go...I'm due for my checkup next week.

SALLY: Sure. I'll see you then.

NEVE: Can I cancel that?

SALLY: Okay. Do you want to reschedule?

NEVE: No.

SALLY: Okay...

NEVE: No offense, but...I think you look too silly to be a veterinarian.

(Benny, Diana, Arthur, Paul, and Eddie gasp in unison.)

DIANA: Neve!

SALLY: Who else would you go to? I'm the only veterinarian in the coloring book.

NEVE: I was thinking maybe Jacques could do it.

EDDIE: Jacques?

JACQUES: *(Snorts.)* Me?

NEVE: Yeah.

SALLY: Jacques doesn't know the first thing about being a veterinarian.

JACQUES: Sally ees right. She may not look as fabulous as I do, but she ees right.

NEVE: Jacques can learn on the internet.

ARTHUR: We get internet in the coloring book?

JACQUES: Do you really think I could do zees? Be a veterinarian?

NEVE: I know you could.

JACQUES: Okay zen...I weel try.

SALLY: Jacques...Neve...you're talking nonsense.

JACQUES: You're looking like nonsense.

(Offended, Eddie lurches towards Jacques, but Sally holds Eddie back. Jacques takes a step or two away from Eddie.)

Weech ees worse? *(Snorts.)*

SALLY: *(Diplomatically:)* All right. We're going. If anyone needs me, they know where to find me.

(Sally puts her hands on Eddie's shoulders to gently push/steer him, and the two of them begin to exit L.)

JACQUES: They weel only come to you if zey end up looking like you.

(Eddie tries to get at Jacques again, but Sally holds Eddie in place, her hands still on his shoulders.)

SALLY: And that will be just fine.

JACQUES: *(Calling after Sally and Eddie:)* Eet weel be funny. Ze silly pirate vet and her silly patients.

(Eddie tries unsuccessfully to make another run at Jacques, but Sally keeps slowly pushing Eddie L.)

SALLY: Goodbye, Jacques.

EDDIE: *(Angrily:)* Yeah. Later.

(Sally and Eddie exit L.)

PAUL: I think Sally and Eddie are really upset.

JACQUES: Did you hear zee way she talked to me?

BENNY: You weren't exactly nice to her, either.

JACQUES: She looks stupid weeth her green hair and orange lab coat and her pirate sword. Who ever heard of a vet weeth a pirate sword?

BENNY: It's not her fault.

JACQUES: And eet ees not my fault I look zee way zat I do. Eet just worked out zat way. I look better zan her, and so I *am*

better zan her. And I weel prove eet. I am off to learn how to be a veterinarian.

WORDS: Jacques, will your hours be the same as Sally's?

JACQUES: I do not know. What are Sally's hours?

WORDS: She's always open.

JACQUES: No, no. Zat weel never do. I theenk...Tuesdays from teen to eleven weel be my office hours. I like zat much better.

BENNY: That's it?

JACQUES: I need to have a life outside of work.

PAUL: Doing what?

JACQUES: I weel be very busy looking fabulous.

BENNY: But what if we need a vet and it's not Tuesday?

JACQUES: Zeen you weel have to wait unteel Tuesday. (*Begins to exit R, then stops.*) Or you can go see zee silly vet. (*Snorts.*)

(Jacques exits R. Everyone looks at Neve.)

NEVE: What? Sally and Eddie got colored, and that was great until we knew the girl was out there. But really...a veterinarian with a pirate sword and a guinea pig with a space helmet? Come on! This is a coloring book. (*Begins crossing R to exit:*) Getting colored is why we're here. How we look is more important than anything else.

(Neve exits R.)

BENNY: None of you are really going to go to Jacques, are you?

ARTHUR: I hate to admit it, but I don't completely disagree with Neve.

BENNY: What?

ARTHUR: Benny...Sally has green hair, an orange and purple coat, and a pirate sword.

BENNY: So?

ARTHUR: If the way we look is the most important thing about us, then I don't want to go to Sally. I'd rather go to Jacques.

BENNY: Diana...Paul...please tell me that you don't agree.

DIANA: (*Looking from Arthur to Benny:*) I...I don't know.

(Diana exits. Ideally, she should exit R, but if need be, she may exit L to facilitate her quick costume change and entrance from L at the beginning of the next scene.)

PAUL: (*As if trying to convince himself:*) I'm a polar bear. I'm white. I'm not supposed to get colored.

WORDS: Benny, if I may...this is a coloring book. It's not like anyone ever gets sick. You all only see Sally for checkups, and you're always healthy.

BENNY: Are you siding with Jacques and Neve?

WORDS: I'm not taking anyone's side. I don't have a stake in this. I'm just stating a fact. (*Looks up:*) Oh, my! Someone's starting to flip through the coloring book! You'd better get back to your pages!

(Hurriedly, Paul exits L while Arthur exits R. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(The farm on page 3, three days later. The farm scene is different from the previous one, but again suggesting a cartoon drawing in a coloring book. This farm, however, has been nicely colored. Jacques is eating from a two-dimensional cartoon trough UL. Words sits on a black stool DR.)

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WORDS: Jack [(With an American pronunciation:) Janine] the pig eats his breakfast.

JACQUES: Eet ees pronounced "Jacques." ["Zhuh-noon."]

WORDS: Fine. *Jacques* the pig eats his breakfast.

JACQUES: I think you mean to say... "Jacques the handsome [beautiful] peeg eats his breakfast."

WORDS: That's not what the caption says.

JACQUES: Eet ees such a pity. (*The following is optional and intended to provide additional time to cover for Diana's costume change if needed:*) And my food looks almost as good as I do. Oh, my goodness! Eet ees so tasty and yummy! Who would have zought zat color would add so much flavor? Hmm...I wonder if crayons contain preservatives? Because I only wish to eat zings zat are organic. Now zat I look so wonderful, I want to stay zat way, and so I must eat healthy! Only zee best for me!

(*Diana enters from L. She has been colored gray by the girl.*)

DIANA: Hi, Jacques.

JACQUES: Diana! What a lovely shade of gray for a cat! You look so good! Not as good as me, but very nice indeed. Congratulations!

DIANA: Thank you.

JACQUES: I bet you are relieved, no?

DIANA: Well, I'm a cat. Girls tend to like cats, so I thought there was a pretty good chance she'd pick me.

JACQUES: Admeet it...you were worried zere for a while.

DIANA: A little.

JACQUES: Well, zat ees behind you now. Welcome to zee club of zee handsome and zee beautiful.

DIANA: How many of us are there now?

JACQUES: Zere ees Frank zee horse, Ralph zee meerkat, Barbara zee rhinoceros, some feeshes whose names I do not know, and Henrietta zee komodo dragon.

DIANA: I heard that Gunther the peacock got colored by the little boy this morning.

JACQUES: (*Sighing sadly:*) Ah, yes. He could have been so beautiful, but now he just looks like an elephant ate a box of crayons and zen sneezed on heem. Eet ees very sad. He told funny jokes and I enjoyed hees company. I weel meese heem.

DIANA: It's not like we have to stop talking to everybody who gets colored by the boy.

JACQUES: No, no. Of course not. We all leeve in zee same coloring book together. We are a community and we should acknowledge one another when we pass each other on zee page. (*Melodramatically:*) But zee old days, I fear zey are over. Gunther ees not like us now. He does not belong weeth us. Truly, eet ees our loss, but zees ees zee price of our...greatness. (*Snorts.*)

WORDS: You might be overstating things a little.

JACQUES: We look great, do we not?

WORDS: You do, but...

JACQUES: Zen we have achieved greatness! Eet ees a no-brainer! (*Poses dramatically.*)

DIANA: (*Not sure how serious Jacques really is, but moving on:*) Right. So. Anyway, I'm due for my checkup, and since you're the vet now...

JACQUES: (*Dropping the pose:*) Ees today Tuesday?

DIANA: Yeah. And it's 10:15. You have office hours right

now.

JACQUES: Oh, silly me, did I say Tuesday? I meant Thursday.

DIANA: Could we go ahead and do it, since you told everyone Tuesday and I'm here now?

JACQUES: Well... (*Shrugs.*) ...oh, how hard can eet be?

DIANA: What? Didn't you learn how to be a veterinarian from the internet like you were planning?

WORDS: You should have told me why you were coming here, Diana. I could have saved you the trip.

JACQUES: (*Snorts.*) Hey! I'm working on eet!

DIANA: You've had three whole days.

JACQUES: My connection has been spotty.

WORDS: What connection?

JACQUES: Egnore zee words. (*Waves Words off.*) So...are you feeling healthy today?

(During the following exchange, Words looks up with mild alarm, then looks at Jacques and Diana as if about to say something, but decides not to, then stares off into space as if watching something.)

DIANA: Yeah.

JACQUES: Great. (*Crosses behind Diana, checking her over:*) Obviously, you are awake and breathing. You are not dead at all. I thenk you are in great shape. See you for your next checkup in a year.

DIANA: Aren't you going to give me any shots?

JACQUES: Shots? What diseases ees anyone going to get een a coloring book?

DIANA: I don't know. But Sally always gave me shots. It's

what veterinarians in coloring books do.

JACQUES: Eh... *(Trying to bluff his way out of not knowing what he's talking about:)* ...a doctor geeves you shots to make you theenk zey are doing somezeng. Zey look at you and talk at you and you are not sure zey are reely doing any zeng. But zey geeve you a shot and you zink to yourself—hey! Zees doctor ees doing somezing! Because zat hurt! And you zink eet ees good for you because zengs zat are good for you are not pleasant. Like exercise. So by doing somezeng zat you do not like, zee doctor ees making you zink she ees doing somezeng to keep you healthy. So here, I weel peench you... *(Pinches Diana.)*

DIANA: Ow!

JACQUES: ...and we are all done.

(Diana crosses to Words.)

You have gone to zee vet, zee vet has caused you pain, and you are good to go.

DIANA: If you say so. *(To Words:)* Did that make any sense to you?

WORDS: None whatsoever.

(Arthur enters from L. He has been colored green with dark blotches, and has a yellow tail.)

ARTHUR: *(Nervously:)* Hi, guys.

JACQUES: *(Snorts.)* A green monkey? Oh, my!

DIANA: Arthur, is that you?

ARTHUR: Yep. It's me. How's it going?

DIANA: Uh...

ARTHUR: Yeah. Well...guess what?

DIANA: You look...

ARTHUR: Yeah. I know.

DIANA: When did this happen?

ARTHUR: A few minutes ago.

DIANA: The words didn't tell us.

WORDS: You were busy playing veterinarian.

DIANA: Oh, Arthur...

ARTHUR: It's okay. This is...y'know...this is what we're here for. To be colored.

JACQUES: (*Snorts.*) You just keep telling yourself zat.

ARTHUR: I will. Probably a lot.

DIANA: Arthur, I'm so sorry.

(Diana starts to give Arthur a hug. Jacques clears his throat. Diana stops.)

What?

JACQUES: You should not do zat.

DIANA: I can't give Arthur a hug? You said that we all need to be nice to each other!

JACQUES: I said we need to acknowledge each other. I said we need to say bonjour. I deeadn't say anyzeng about hugging.

DIANA: What's wrong with hugging?

JACQUES: Look at zose colors on heem. Look at how forceful zee crayon strokes are.

ARTHUR: I think they're very expressive.

JACQUES: Oh, zey are expressive all right. Eet ees as eef zee child attacked weeth zee crayon and colored weeth all hees might. Zere ees no beauty een attacking your art weeth a

crayon!

ARTHUR: It felt like a nice massage.

JACQUES: Zat ees not my point! Zere ees no subtlety. Eet ees so...excessive. You look like zere ees more crayon on you zan zere was een zee whole box to begin weeth.

DIANA: I can still give him a hug.

(Diana moves to hug Arthur.)

JACQUES: He looks like he might rub off on you.

(Diana stops in her tracks.)

DIANA: Oh.

JACQUES: And zen you would no longer be beautiful.

DIANA: Arthur...I...I don't...

ARTHUR: It's okay.

DIANA: No, it's not okay.

ARTHUR: Don't worry about it.

DIANA: It shouldn't matter.

ARTHUR: I get it.

(Pause. Diana looks guiltily at Arthur. Arthur meets her gaze for a moment, then looks away, ashamed.)

JACQUES: Arthur, was zere somezeng zat you wanted?

ARTHUR: Well, I was hoping that since you've got office hours right now, that maybe you could check me and make sure that I'm still...

JACQUES: Steel what?

ARTHUR: ...okay.

JACQUES: No, Arthur, you are not okay.

ARTHUR: I don't mean just the colors. See, I know what I look like. And I just...I know, okay? But there's more to me than what I look like. And I wanted to make sure *that* part of me was still okay. And since you're the vet, and especially since you're...not like me...I was hoping that if you could tell me that the part of me that didn't get colored...you know...who I am, inside...if you could tell me that part of me was still okay, then...it would make things seem not quite so bad.

JACQUES: I cannot tell you zat.

DIANA: Jacques.

JACQUES: I said eet already. You are not okay. I can tell you thees just by looking at you.

WORDS: Jacques, I think that's enough.

JACQUES: If Arthur had wanted your opinion, he would have asked you for eet on hees own page. But he deed not. He came to thees page for my opinion. I have geeven eet. Eef he does not like eet, he can go and see zee other vet. Zee one who does not look like a real vet. Or a real anyzeng, for zat matter.

ARTHUR: (*Desperately craving Jacques' acceptance and affirmation:*) I don't want to go to her.

JACQUES: Zen just go away. We weesh you well, but we do not want you here.

ARTHUR: (*Crushed:*) Oh.

DIANA: Arthur...

ARTHUR: (*Trying not to cry:*) It's okay. I'll see you around. (*Exits L.*)

DIANA: Jacques, that was...

JACQUES: I know. (*Dramatically:*) Eet can be a sad and lonely zeeng to be beautiful creatures like us.

(Words slowly shakes his head. Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(The zoo polar bear habitat on page 28, later that day. It is suggested by large, square, cartoonish rocks which are uncolored. A MOTHER or FATHER with two CHILDREN watch as Paul the Polar Bear plays with a ball. The family is costumed in white, and Paul's ball is white. Words sits on a black stool DR.)

WORDS: A mother and her children watch Paul the polar bear play at the zoo.

CHILD 1: I like the polar bear!

CHILD 2: I like how he plays with his ball!

CHILD 1: I want a stuffed animal polar bear!

(Benny and Arthur enter from R.)

BENNY: Hey, Paul.

PAUL: Hey, Benny. Hi, Arthur. *(Fully taking in Arthur's appearance:)* Whoa.

CHILD 2: Mommy, what are the cow and the monkey doing with the polar bear?

MOTHER: They're all friends.

CHILD 1: The monkey looks really strange now.

MOTHER: Shh...he might hear you.

CHILD 1: Well, he does.

MOTHER: Why don't we go to another page?

CHILD 2: Let's go see the rhinoceros!

CHILD 1: Yeah!

CHILD 2: She's really pretty since she got colored by the girl.

(Mother and Children exit L.)

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PAUL: How're you doing, Arthur?

ARTHUR: Okay, I guess.

WORDS & BENNY: He's lying.

PAUL: (*Pointing at Arthur:*) You're lying.

ARTHUR: Are you really going to believe them over me?

PAUL: Yes.

ARTHUR: What tipped you off?

PAUL: (*Looking at Words:*) I heard about what happened with Diana and Jacques.

ARTHUR: (*Looking at Words, slightly annoyed:*) Yeah. That was kind of rough.

(Sally and Eddie enter from L.)

SALLY: You doing okay, Arthur?

EDDIE: We heard what happened with Diana and Jacques.

ARTHUR: (*To Words:*) Did you tell everybody?

WORDS: Um...

ARTHUR: Do you have any concept of privacy?

WORDS: Not really, no. I probably need to work on that.

ARTHUR: (*Sighs.*) No, I'm not okay. That was kind of soul-crushing.

SALLY: You shouldn't have gone to Jacques.

ARTHUR: I know.

SALLY: So why did you?

ARTHUR: Because I liked the way he looked.

EDDIE: That was a really stupid reason.

ARTHUR: I know.

SALLY: You're okay, Arthur. Deep down inside, you're okay. Or does it still not matter what I think because I don't look like Jacques?

ARTHUR: *(To Words:)* Did you tell everybody *everything*?

BENNY: You really are okay, Arthur.

PAUL: We all think you're okay.

ARTHUR: Thanks. I just wanted to hear it from Jacques.

SALLY: What about Diana? Would it help to hear it from Diana?

ARTHUR: I don't want to hear it from Diana. Diana thinks I'm gonna rub off on her.

WORDS: Diana thinks that because Jacques put the idea in her head.

ARTHUR: She let him do it. She went right along with it.

WORDS: Diana is confused. She wants to fit in with Jacques even though she thinks he and Neve are wrong.

ARTHUR: Why?

WORDS: She wants to feel special.

ARTHUR: But she already got colored by the girl. Why does she need Jacques to tell her she's special?

WORDS: She's not existentially fulfilled.

BENNY, ARTHUR, SALLY, EDDIE & PAUL: What?

WORDS: She believes what other people tell her about herself because she doesn't believe in herself. *(To Benny:)* Was that better?

BENNY, ARTHUR, SALLY, EDDIE & PAUL: No.

WORDS: She doesn't believe in herself, so she believes Jacques because Jacques looks amazing.

ARTHUR: Even though Diana looks amazing, too?

WORDS: Yes!

ARTHUR: That is so messed up.

WORDS: You went to him for exactly the same reason!

ARTHUR: Yeah, but I look like this.

WORDS: It's still the same thing! You didn't believe in yourself. You still don't!

ARTHUR: Right. Because I look like this.

WORDS: That only matters because you think it does.

ARTHUR: *(To Sally and Eddie, indicating Words:)* Do you think that's true?

SALLY: Are you going to listen to anything either of us has to say?

ARTHUR: Not really, no.

(Sally and Eddie sigh and look at each other in exasperation. Arthur looks at Benny and Paul.)

Is that true?

BENNY: I don't know.

PAUL: I don't either.

ARTHUR: Wow. You both sound about as stressed out as I feel.

WORDS: They are.

ARTHUR: How come?

BENNY: You don't want to hear it.

ARTHUR: No, it's okay. Really. I've unloaded my problems on you guys. Fair's fair.

BENNY: I'm really anxious about who's going to color me.

WORDS: Especially when you look at Arthur, Sally, and Eddie.

BENNY: You're not supposed to say that in front of them!

WORDS: But that's what you told me.

BENNY: Because you're not them!

WORDS: Oh. Sorry.

ARTHUR: It's okay. If you looked like me, it'd freak me out to look at you.

SALLY: Arthur, does it freak you out to look at Eddie and me?

ARTHUR: Not anymore. And it didn't in the beginning. So just for a while in the middle. (*Beat.*) Maybe still just a tiny little bit, I guess.

EDDIE: You're very difficult to be around sometimes, you know that?

ARTHUR: Don't you care what you look like?

SALLY: I care, but I don't obsess over it.

EDDIE: Me neither.

ARTHUR: Why not?

SALLY: I'm a medical professional. I don't have time to obsess over how I look.

EDDIE: I spend all day around her. It rubs off, I guess. The not obsessing part.

ARTHUR: So what you're saying is...I should become a veterinarian?

WORDS: Please no. I don't think I can stand any more of what we've got with Jacques.

SALLY: Arthur, just accept yourself for who you are and don't worry about what anybody else thinks. *(Beat.)* You're still not really listening to anything I have to say, are you?

ARTHUR: What? Oh...nope. So, Benny...why are you anxious about who's going to color you? I thought you didn't agree with Jacques and Neve.

(Sally and Eddie throw up their hands in frustration.)

BENNY: I don't.

WORDS: He's just insecure, too. It's a really common thing.

ARTHUR: Paul, how about you?

PAUL: I'm anxious about getting colored, too. But for a different reason.

ARTHUR: What's that?

PAUL: Well, I'm a polar bear. And polar bears are white. If I get colored brown, am I still going to be a polar bear? Or will I be a brown bear instead? Am I still going to be me?

ARTHUR: You just totally blew my mind.

EDDIE: Yup.

WORDS: I'm *so* glad I don't have to worry about getting colored.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(The forest on page 14, later that day. It is suggested by uncolored cartoon trees and bushes. Neve the rabbit, still uncolored, is walking through the forest from R to DL. Words sits on a black stool DR.)

WORDS: Neve the rabbit hops happily through the forest.

(Neve stops, gives Words an exasperated look, hops three times,

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and resumes walking. Diana bounds onto the stage from R, runs up behind Neve, and taps Neve on the shoulder.)

DIANA: Neve!

NEVE: *(Turning around and seeing Diana, startled:)* Ah!

DIANA: What?

NEVE: You scared me.

DIANA: Why?

NEVE: I guess I'm not used to you looking like that yet.

WORDS: It may have something to do with the fact that Diana now more closely resembles a real cat, and if this was the real world, you would be her dinner now. Fortunately, this is a coloring book, and the animals don't eat each other here.

NEVE: I'm really glad.

DIANA: Me, too. That would be gross.

WORDS: Did you know that if the animals in this coloring book were real, most of them wouldn't be able to see colors?

NEVE: Really? That's kind of weird.

DIANA: It would make things a lot less complicated.

NEVE: What's that supposed to mean?

DIANA: I don't like what you started, Neve.

NEVE: I didn't start anything. The kids coloring us are the ones who started it.

DIANA: It wouldn't have mattered nearly so much if you hadn't made such a big deal out of it.

NEVE: It is a big deal. This is a coloring book. Appearance is everything.

DIANA: Jacques is getting carried away.

NEVE: You too?

DIANA: What do you mean?

NEVE: The words complained to me about Jacques earlier this morning.

WORDS: (*To Diana:*) And she didn't listen to a thing I said.

DIANA: Neve, I did something terrible. I let Jacques talk me out of hugging Arthur.

NEVE: Before Arthur got colored?

DIANA: No, after.

NEVE: Why would you want to hug Arthur after he got colored?

DIANA: Because he's my friend and he was upset.

NEVE: Diana, I thought you'd figured this out already, but things have changed.

DIANA: Actually, I did catch that. But we're talking about not being able to hug a friend.

NEVE: I'm confused. You said you let Jacques talk you out of it. (*To Words:*) That's what she said, right?

WORDS: That is what she said.

NEVE: Is that what happened?

WORDS: That is an accurate representation.

NEVE: Does that mean "yes"?

WORDS: Yes.

NEVE: Thank you. Okay, so Diana, if you're laying the blame on yourself, why are you bringing Jacques into this?

DIANA: It wasn't just the hug. Jacques said some terrible things to Arthur, and I let him. I feel like Jacques is sort

of...controlling me. I wouldn't have acted the way I did if it weren't for him.

NEVE: Seriously?

DIANA: Yes!

NEVE: What do you want me to do?

DIANA: Talk to Jacques.

NEVE: And say what?

DIANA: I don't know. That you changed your mind.

NEVE: About what?

DIANA: All of this. Tell him it doesn't matter.

NEVE: It does.

DIANA: What happens if you get colored by the boy?

NEVE: I'm a bunny. Girls love bunnies. She'll color me. Diana, if you don't like what Jacques does or says, don't go along with it. But don't stand here and complain to me. Do what you want! If you want to go and hug Arthur, then hug Arthur.

DIANA: You don't think that I should.

NEVE: Are you listening to yourself? What do *you* think you should do?

DIANA: Do you think, if I hug Arthur, that his color would rub off on me?

NEVE: And what, stain you? Is that what Jacques told you?

DIANA: Yes.

NEVE: I don't know. Maybe. I really hadn't thought about it, but I'm not going to hug Arthur to find out. Why don't you do it, especially if you're so upset?

DIANA: I don't know if I can.

NEVE: Why?

DIANA: Because I'm not like Arthur anymore.

NEVE: So you *do* agree with me and Jacques.

DIANA: No. It's different. I feel bad about it. Things shouldn't be like this. We should be happy about getting colored. We should be celebrating together, not losing our friends over it.

NEVE: If you're not going to actually *do* something, it doesn't matter how bad you feel. So either do something or stop complaining.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 5

(The pond on page 8, the next day. There is a small waterfall and some rocks and bushes, all nicely colored. Two FISH swim around on the pond. Words sits on a black stool DR.)

WORDS: Two fish swim in a pond by a waterfall.

FISH 1: And we look awesome doing it!

FISH 2: I love the girl's coloring!

(Arthur enters from L and pauses sadly, not looking in the direction of the Fish or the waterfall.)

FISH 1: Hey, look. There's Arthur.

FISH 2: Do you think he's coming to visit, or just passing through?

FISH 1: *(To Words:)* Psst! Hey, words!

WORDS: I'm not a mind reader. Ask him yourself.

FISH 1: *(To Fish 2, gesturing at Arthur:)* Do you wanna...

FISH 2: No way. Let's just hide 'til he leaves.

(The Fish exit behind the waterfall. Arthur crosses to the pond,

looks around, and slouches sadly.)

ARTHUR: You know, this used to be one of my favorite pages in the coloring book.

WORDS: It's not anymore?

ARTHUR: I don't know. It's even more beautiful now than it used to be. And I...I don't feel like I belong here anymore.

WORDS: I'm sorry.

ARTHUR: Where are the fish?

WORDS: Around.

ARTHUR: They're hiding, aren't they? They don't want to talk to me.

WORDS: Well...

ARTHUR: It's okay. You don't have to say anything.

(Diana enters from R and crosses to Arthur.)

DIANA: Arthur...

ARTHUR: What?

DIANA: Hi.

ARTHUR: Yeah. Hi. Don't let me hold you up. You can go on to wherever you're going.

DIANA: I was coming to see you.

ARTHUR: How'd you know I was here?

DIANA: Well...actually...I have to cross this page to get to the monkey habitat on page 10.

ARTHUR: The words told you, right?

(Words hums awkwardly.)

I don't want to see you.

DIANA: I really want to talk.

ARTHUR: I don't.

DIANA: I'm sorry.

ARTHUR: Okay.

DIANA: Really. I mean it. I'm sorry.

ARTHUR: I said okay.

DIANA: "Okay" like you heard me okay? Or "okay" like things between you and me are okay?

ARTHUR: I heard you okay.

DIANA: Arthur, please.

ARTHUR: Go back to page 5 and play with your cat toys.

WORDS: Arthur, you really should at least hear her out.

ARTHUR: Look, I know you mean well, but just stay out of it, okay? What happened to me...what's going on in this coloring book...none of it applies to you. You're just words on the page, so mind your own business.

WORDS: Right. Sorry.

ARTHUR: Goodbye, Diana.

DIANA: Right. Bye.

(Diana exits R. Arthur sighs, then crosses to the water and bends down to get a drink. Fish 1 and 2 enter from behind the waterfall.)

FISH 1: What're you doing?

ARTHUR: Getting a drink.

FISH 2: You've got your own water on page 10. Why are you getting a drink here?

ARTHUR: Because I'm thirsty.

FISH 1: But you're just two pages away from home.

ARTHUR: I've drank here lots of times.

FISH 2: Yeah, but that was before.

ARTHUR: Look, I know—I really, *really* know—that things are not the way they used to be, but all I want is a drink of water. (*Reaches towards water.*)

FISH 1: Don't touch it, Arthur. You might make it dirty.

ARTHUR: (*Standing.*) Dirty?

FISH 2: Well, look at you. You might.

ARTHUR: I'm not dirty. This is the way I look.

FISH 1: We just want a clean pond to swim in, Arthur. That's all.

ARTHUR: You really think I'm dirty?

FISH 2: We didn't say that.

ARTHUR: But that's what you mean.

(Arthur exits L. Blackout.)

SCENE 6

(The farm on page 26, later that day. The same as Scene 1, but now nicely colored by the girl. Words sits DR on a black stool. Benny, who has been colored a nice shade of brown by the girl, stands nearby.)

WORDS: I feel terrible. I see everything that's going on, but I can't step in and do anything because I don't have any stake in what's happening.

BENNY: You live here the same as everyone else. Heck, you're on every single page. I'd say what happens here affects you more than anybody. If you think you can do something to bring everybody back together, then you should do it.

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WORDS: But no one has any reason to care what I think. I can't be colored. I'm just—

BENNY: You're just words on the page. I know. You say that a lot. But maybe since you're outside of what's going on, you understand the best how hurtful it is for the realistically colored animals to act like they do.

WORDS: Do you really think they'd listen to me?

BENNY: Of course they'd listen to you. You're the words.

WORDS: You look very nice, by the way.

BENNY: Thanks.

WORDS: I'm sorry. This is probably a very big occasion for you and I'm just sitting here going on about my problems.

BENNY: They're everybody's problems. I understand.

WORDS: Are you happy that you got colored by the girl?

BENNY: I'm happy, yeah. But at the same time, I feel kind of guilty.

WORDS: Why is that?

BENNY: Because some of the others are unhappy.

WORDS: Quite a few, actually.

BENNY: How many of us are left who haven't been colored now?

WORDS: Not many.

BENNY: I guess I should go and see Arthur. Show him what I look like. Unless you told him already?

WORDS: No. I'm learning not to say quite so much.

BENNY: Okay, well, I'll see you on his page.

(Benny begins to exit R, but Words stands and stops him.)

WORDS: Benny, Arthur is feeling very angry at the moment. It's probably not a good time to talk to him. Actually, it's definitely not a good time to talk to him. In fact...oh dear.

BENNY: What?

WORDS: Jacques is trying to get to Neve's forest on page 14, but Arthur won't let him through the monkey habitat on page 10. I think they might have a fight.

BENNY: But coloring book animals can't really hurt each other.

WORDS: There could still be cartoon violence.

(Paul, Sally, and Eddie enter from L, all jogging, with Paul in the lead.)

PAUL: The words just told us what's happening on page 10! *(Slowing down:)* Oh, wow. You look great, Benny.

BENNY: Thanks.

(Sally and Eddie pass Paul.)

SALLY: We can talk about Benny's colors later. Come on, let's go!

(Benny begins jogging behind Eddie, and Paul resumes jogging.)

EDDIE: *(To Words:)* We'll see you on the way there.

(Sally, Eddie, Benny, and Paul exit R. Blackout.)

SCENE 7

(The monkey habitat in the zoo on page 10, a few seconds later. It is suggested by cartoon rocks and trees with vines. The scenery has been wildly colored by the boy. Jacques and Arthur are yelling at each other DC while Diana, Neve, and Words watch. Diana is URC, Neve is ULC, and Words is standing beside a black stool DR.)

JACQUES: Let me pass, you color-clashing abomination!
(*Snorts.*)

ARTHUR: No! This is my page, and if I don't want you going through, then you aren't going through!

JACQUES: We have always passed through each other's pages. Eet ees zee only way to get from one end of zee coloring book to zee other. Zees ees madness!

ARTHUR: You made it really clear what you think about me the other day, and I don't feel like doing you any favors.

JACQUES: I am not asking you for a favor. I am telling you to let me through! I must get to Neve's page.

NEVE: Jacques, I'm right here. I'll come to your page.

ARTHUR: No, you're not passing through here either! You started this!

NEVE: Back in the beginning, you said you agreed with me!

ARTHUR: I said I didn't completely disagree! That's not the same thing! And anyway, I was being an idiot!

NEVE: No, you weren't! Some of us are different now, and there are new social circles. But that's all it is. Social circles. Cliques. Just because you don't hang out with somebody anymore doesn't mean you stop cooperating with them.

ARTHUR: Yeah, well I tried to get a drink from the pond on page 8 this morning and do you know what the fish said to me? The fish who had been colored by the girl? They said, "Don't touch the water. You'll make it dirty."

NEVE: You have water here in the monkey habitat.

ARTHUR: That doesn't matter! I just wanted a drink of water, and I couldn't get it because the fish thought I was dirty! We don't have cliques here. We don't have social circles. We have

a—a—

WORDS: A caste system.

ARTHUR: (*Looking in Words' direction:*) Huh?

WORDS: A caste system. You're divided into groups that you didn't choose, you're stuck in those groups, and the way you live and how you're treated depends on the group you're in.

ARTHUR: What the words said! Exactly what the words said! Everybody colored by the girl is the good and wonderful group at the top, and everybody colored by the boy is the dirty, nasty—

WORDS: Untouchable.

ARTHUR: Yeah! The untouchable group at the bottom. Well, if that's the way it's gonna be, then I only want my kind on my page. So both of you, get out of here and go back the way you came.

(Benny, Paul, Eddie, and Sally enter from L. Sally crosses R and gets between Jacques and Arthur. Eddie, Benny, and Paul stay at L.)

JACQUES: I do not take orders from zee likes of you. (*Snorts.*)

SALLY: Everybody, let's just calm down, okay?

JACQUES: I just said zat I do not take orders from zee likes of heem, and you are like heem! Zerefore, I do not take orders from zee likes of you, either! Why ees zees so hard to understand?

SALLY: From what the words told us on the way here, I think Arthur's got a right to be upset.

JACQUES: Of course you would zink zat! You are one of hees kind!

SALLY: But I also think that Arthur's going a little too far.

ARTHUR: I shouldn't have to have their kind on my page if I don't want them here.

BENNY: Um, Arthur...

ARTHUR: (*Noticing Benny for the first time:*) You, too? You're with them now?

BENNY: It wasn't my choice.

SALLY: Arthur, if everyone did this, some of us would be trapped on our pages! Maybe even you—pages 9 and 11 haven't been colored yet.

ARTHUR: That doesn't matter. Jacques and Neve need to go and not come back. And I don't want to see Diana anymore, either. Or Benny.

JACQUES: Are you going to *make* me leave, monkey?

ARTHUR: Yeah. I am.

JACQUES: How are you going to do thees? I weigh more zan you. I am stronger zan you. I can wrestle you to zee ground, and I can seet on you. And I can stay zere for a very long time. (*Snorts.*)

ARTHUR: Go ahead.

JACQUES: What?

SALLY: Arthur—

EDDIE: No, don't stop him. I think I know what he's up to.

ARTHUR: Go ahead, Jacques. Wrestle me to the ground. Neve can help you if she wants. So can Diana. Or any of you.

JACQUES: You are out of your mind.

ARTHUR: Here. Let me make it easy for you. I'll lie down on the ground. (*Lies down.*) Now all you have to do is sit on me.

JACQUES: Zee monkey, he ees not right een hees head.

ARTHUR: (*Standing:*) Oh, that's right. I might rub off on you. So you can't sit on me. Or wrestle me. Or push me out of your way. "Untouchable" really is a good word to describe us, Jacques, because you're actually afraid to touch us. (*Beat.*) You know what? I changed my mind. If anybody colored by the girl comes this way, that's fine. I won't try to stop them from passing by. I'll welcome them. I'll give them a hug. And if any of us untouchables want to go across a page and one of the girl's animals tries to stop us, we can give them a hug, too. (*Takes a step towards Jacques, who backs away a step to maintain the distance between them.*) So, Jacques, do you still want to go across my page?

JACQUES: Geet away from me.

NEVE: What did you want anyway, Jacques?

JACQUES: I have not been able to find a computer or a smartphone anywhere een zis coloring book. Do you know where zere ees one?

SALLY: There's one in my office. You're welcome to come use it any time. I'd be happy to see you. (*Taking a step towards Jacques:*) I might even give you a hug.

JACQUES: You zink zees ees funny?

SALLY: I think the joke's on you, and you don't have anyone to blame but yourself.

ARTHUR: Now get off this page, or else we're going to start hugging.

(Diana runs up to Arthur, pauses to take a deep breath, and hugs him. Arthur is shocked. Everyone gasps. Benny quickly crosses to Words.)

BENNY: (*Nudging:*) If you've got something to say, I think you need to say it now.

WORDS: May I have everyone's attention, please?

(Everyone looks at Words, except for Diana, who is squeezing Arthur as if for dear life.)

As the words on your pages, I think I have a unique and objective perspective on the events that have been transpiring here of late.

BENNY: Keep it simple!

WORDS: What I mean to say is that I...I...

BENNY: What?

WORDS: I'm being colored!

BENNY: What?!?

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