

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 158: What if everyone wore the same color clothes?](#)

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Transcription by Keffy

[Rising harp scales followed by the What If World theme song.]

Lyrics: What if kittens played the glockenspiel? And what if unicorns were real? What if you could fly or travel back in time, we welcome you to What If World. What If World. This is What If World.

[Gentle bell music.]

Mr. Eric: Hey there, folks, and welcome back to What If World, the show where your questions and ideas inspire off-the-cuff stories. I'm Mr. Eric, your host and today—

Dracomax: We have got a shout out from Dracomax to Julian.

Mr. Eric: Hey, Dracomax.

Dracomax: Julian is six, almost seven, and he is from Minneapolis, Minnesota. He loves Legos.

Mr. Eric: Cool. Great hobby, Julian!

Fred the Dog: Oh, I do have one quick shout out for Holden. He's eight years old and he's from Asheville, North Carolina.

Mr. Eric: Nice work, Fred, and thank you, Holden.

JF Kitty: Meow, I need to give a purrty big shout out to [Erin], who loves my punny jokes, and is from Merrimack, New Hampshire. [Erin] just turned five years old.

Mr. Eric: Happy belated birthday, Erin. And I have my own shout out for Emily who is six years old and lives in Milton Keynes in the United Kingdom. She loves to bake and go to school and work really hard. Those are things I love, too, Emily. So a big thanks to Emily, Erin, Holden, and Julian.

Now we're gonna meet our special guest today, a very talented artist, illustrator, and storyteller, Niki Smith.

Niki: Hi, I'm Niki. Thanks, Eric.

Mr. Eric: Hi, Niki! Now, you've got a graphic novel that just came out, right?

Niki: Yeah, my graphic novel, *The Deep and Dark Blue* just came out this spring.

Mr. Eric: And I know that with the state of the world right now, did you have a book tour coming up, was that right?

Niki: Yeah, I was supposed to travel all over the US and Canada and visit kids and stuff like that, but I had to cancel it all.

Mr. Eric: Ugh, I am so sorry to hear that. I have read *The Deep and Dark Blue*, I loved it. We're going to talk about it more at the end. And it inspired me to go digging around for some color-based what if questions. And we're gonna play the first for you folks right now. This is from a listener named Jada.

Jada: Hi, my name is Jada. I like zebras and my what if question is what if everyone wore the same color clothes?

Mr. Eric: Nice, Jada. Zebras are wonderful and everyone wearing the same clothes, that gives us a really fun way to start off this story, I think.

Now, we usually do two questions, or sometimes we do a question and a character as you might be familiar. And this is a character from Reese. Reese wrote in a character called "Ragged the Dragon" who horks up black slime and says he's mean because he fell in black lava once and his favorite color is black, of course, and his worst enemy is the unicorns.

Okay, so we've got lots of different kinds of horse-like creatures. Niki, do you want to just get right into the story?

Niki: Let's do it.

Mr. Eric: All right, let's go! We'll find out what if everyone wore the same color clothes.

[Rising harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Jade was a purple and green striped horse and she was so excited to be an exchange student. She was about to head to Horse High for her very first day of school and Jade's host family was a bunch of blue unicorns. The eldest of these unicorn siblings was named Reese, and Reese had

already been acting like a big brother to Jade for a few weeks now, and she was feeling a little bit nervous about starting school.

Reese: Jade, what's wrong? We gotta head out the door or we'll be late.

Jade: I don't know, this is my first time at this new school and I'm not sure. Do you think people will like me?

Reese: Oh, of course they will, but you know, I could tell you're feeling a little nervous and, well, the school colors are blue, just like us bluenicorns, so I took the liberty, I hope you don't mind, but I got one of your old sweaters and I dyed it blue. You know how I love playing with dyes.

Mr. Eric: And Reese took out a big blue sweater and handed it to Jade.

Reese: Do you like it?

Jade: Does it go okay with my green and my purple stripes? I don't ... do you think it'll be okay? They'll really think I fit in?

Reese: Oh, of course. You're just showing school pride. If they have any problem with this sweater and my awesome dye abilities, well, then maybe they aren't our friends, huh? Let's trot off to school, we're gonna be late.

Mr. Eric: And off they went, trotting all the way down to Hoof High where pegasi flew through the sky and little Shetland ponies trotted around. There was even...

Reese: I'm not so good at my horses sometimes, and I should be because I go to a horse school, but is that an appaloosa, is that how you say that?

Jade: Yeah, the one with all the spots?

Reese: Oh, wow.

Mr. Eric: Reese and Jade trotted into the school yard, which was really just a big, big fenced-in grazing area where all these different horse creatures played and frolicked, and all of the horses suddenly started to look towards Jade and Reese.

Jade: Do they always stare like that.

Reese: Um... maybe—you know, I didn't think, but maybe we should have dyed your mane blue, as well, oh boy. Oh boy.

Jade: Oh...

Mr. Eric: And the few bluenicorns galloped up.

Bluenicorn: Oh, who is the new kid?

Jade: My name is Jade. I'm just here for a few months. I'm staying here with Reese. Hi.

Bluenicorn: Hi. So, Jade. You're some kind of purple and green striped horse, is that even a thing?

Jade: That's me.

Reese: Listen, can we all just agree to be nice... regardless of what color sweaters we're wearing, or...

[Distant roaring sound]

Mr. Eric: They suddenly heard a distant roar and the flapping of wings.

Reese: That's not a horse of any kind. Is that one of the new teachers?

Jade: Doesn't look like a pegasus...

Mr. Eric: The winged thing landed in the middle of the field of horses and zebras and appaloosas and pegasi and roared loudly as it spat black goo up into the sky.

Ragged: [Evil laugh] I am Ragged the Dragon and I don't like bluenicorns or pinkacorns or purple pegasi, either.

Jade: Hey, why would you say something so mean? They didn't do anything to you.

Ragged: Well, you see, I fell in a vat of black lava and so I hork up black slime and so that means that I need to be mean, I think.

Jade: That doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

Ragged: Well, listen. I don't have it all worked out, yet. [HORK]

Mr. Eric: And he spat even more black slime across an entire field of ponies and horses and horse-like creatures. And all of them had their manes dyed black and their sweaters dyed black, and their cute little horse-y leg-warmers dyed black.

Reese: Wow, he's really good at dyeing things. I should take some notes, here.

Ragged: No, no notes.

Mr. Eric: And Ragged flew off before anyone could object.

Reese: Well, I could dye our sweaters blue again, if you want, or whatever. I don't know.

Jade: If you think that's a good idea.

Reese: I'm not sure. I actually kind of like this color, too, but I liked blue as well. Oh, this is tricky.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: So the next day they came to school and Reese brought his whole kit full of dyes, thinking he'd be the hero of the day, dyeing everyone's sweaters back to blue or any other color.

Reese: Any takers? No? Any... any color. I'm really good at changing colors. No? Oh, okay.

Mr. Eric: But now, every horse seemed to be dyeing everything they had black like it was the new cool color. And those same unicorns who were deep blue, except for their black manes and their black sweaters trotted back up to Jade.

Bluenicorns: I thought our new school colors were very clearly black, now.

Jade: Oh, do you always just wear the same things? Everybody?

Bluenicorns: Yeah, we all wear the same clothes all the time. I mean, it's not an official uniform, but it's um... wait, why do we do this?

Mr. Eric: No sooner could they discuss why they were all wearing the exact same colors, then Ragged the Dragon landed in their midst once more.

Ragged: Yes, I am back and I will dye everything black. Today, even the school will be black. I'll get all your fence posts and your grass as well.

Bluenicorns: [Cheer]

Ragged: No, no no no no. I thought you didn't like this color, and now you do? I'm really confused.

Mr. Eric: And Jade walked up to the confused dragon and tried to give him a little help.

Jade: I guess everybody at this school likes to wear the same thing so they really love black now and so you're the hero, I guess.

Ragged: Oh, but I was trying to be the villain.

Mr. Eric: Reese bravely walked up to the dragon.

Reese: I don't think you're much of a hero. I think that your color is great but I also like blue and pink and purple—

Jade: And green.

Reese: And green. Yeah.

Ragged: Finally, a proper nemesis.

Mr. Eric: And Ragged picked up the bluenicorn and flew off towards his towering volcano in the distance.

Reese: No... I didn't mean to... ooh!

Jade: Reese!

Bluenicorn: Oh no. Reese got captured. But black wasn't his favorite color, hmm, so I don't really know if we should do anything.

Jade: Just because he doesn't wear the same clothes as you or the same colors doesn't make him any less important to me!

Bluenicorn: Oh, good good good! So you can go save him. We're just gonna trot around and talk about what else we might dye black around here.

Jade: Really?

Mr. Eric: And the bluenicorns trotted off, and the zebras weren't much help, either. Nor the Shetland ponies, nor the Appaloosas, so Jade went off all on her own.

[Time skip noise.]

The green and purple striped pony finally reached the foot of a massive volcano and she heard Ragged the Dragon soothing himself in a refreshing lava bath.

Which, by the way, kids at home, don't bathe in lava, it's a dragon thing, okay?

Jade climbed up into the mountain, into the cavern, and found her friend Reese all tied up.

Reese: [Muffled yelling]

Jade: Oh no, Reese!

Mr. Eric: And she saw Reese's bag full of dyes sitting right next to him.

Jade: Oh, his dyes. Maybe... could I do something?

Mr. Eric: Jade picked up the dye and snuck over to a massive pool of lava where Ragged the Dragon was bathing with his eyes closed.

Ragged: Ah, it's so good to be villainous.

Jade: I guess he's bathing in that awful black lava that he talked about that made him spit up black slime all the time. But what would happen if I poured all of Reese's different dyes in there?

Mr. Eric: And that's just what Jade did, opening up cover after cover and pouring color after color into the lava, which became a swirl of rainbow colors. Every color you can imagine!

Ragged: Hang on a second, what's happening to my lava?

Mr. Eric: Ragged looked down to see he was no longer bathing in black lava, he was bathing in a rainbow!

Ragged: Oh, oh! What do I do! I gotta get out of here! [Coughs]

Mr. Eric: And as he was flapping and splashing to get out, he choked up some of the lava and horked up rainbow colors.

Ragged: Oh!

Mr. Eric: He flew up and out of the mouth of the volcano or whatever the fancy science term for the mouth of a volcano is and off he went.

Reese: Thanks, Jade!

Jade: Reese! I'm so glad you're okay.

Reese: Oh, no thanks to the rest of those horses. Sheesh, and I was gonna let them use my dyes.

Jade: I know, that was so nice of you. But look, I used your dyes and look at what it did.

Reese: Whoa.

Mr. Eric: They could see rainbow rain falling over all the fields far and wide. And as they walked back towards Hoof High, they saw all the unicorns and the bluenicorns, and the zebras, and the Shetland ponies, and the miniature horses and the pegasi, dancing around in a rainbow of colors.

Reese: Now I don't know what our school colors are.

Jade: That's great! Everybody gets to wear whatever they want.

Mr. Eric: And the bluenicorns that had been a little rude to Jade earlier trotted back up again.

Bluenicorn: You saved him? Even though he didn't like the same colors as you?

Jade: Yeah, of course. He's my friend.

Bluenicorn: Oh, you know, that was actually really nice. Would you want to maybe like, braid our tails and our manes together?

Jade: That sounds like lots of fun.

Mr. Eric: And then one last time... Ragged the Dragon landed in their midst.

Ragged: Hey, horses and horse creatures and zebras, etc... I'm coughing up this rainbow slime now and I just don't know what I'm supposed to be. I thought I was supposed to be mean and I'm just really confused.

Jade: It's okay, Ragged. No one's supposed to be mean. You don't have to act that way just because you look a certain way. You can act however you want.

Ragged: Really? You know, this is the problem with dragons that live alone in mountains. We really don't have a lot of social interaction to teach us these things. Oh, boy. You know what, hang on right here, I got an idea.

Jade: Okay.

Mr. Eric: Ragged flew off to one edge of the school and breathed out a breath so big and strong that it created a permanent rainbow of colors, reaching from one end of the massive field all the way to the other.

Ragged: See, this will stay here. I think maybe forever. Like a fountain of rainbow colors and then if you kids want to dye your manes or dye your tails or your sweaters or your leg warmers, all you gotta do is trot through the color. Pretty cool, huh?

Jade: Whoa. Thank you, Ragged.

Ragged: My pleasure. I'm just gonna go back to being my own beautiful self, now.

Mr. Eric: And the dragon flew off, his scales shining in the sky, as he went back to rest in his volcano lair.

Reese: Hey, you know, I was actually thinking it would be really cool to have a green and purple striped mane. Would that be okay, Jade?

Jade: Yeah, let's do it!

Reese: All right!

Mr. Eric: So Reese dyed his mane green and purple. And some of the bluenicorns decided to have black sweaters, some decided to have pink sweaters, some to have green and brown and orange and blue...

Bluenicorn: Hey, Jade, does this mean that these are our new colors forever, or...?

Jade: I don't think so. I mean, Ragged gave us a rainbow that we can splash through every day and change. You could do polka dots today and stripes tomorrow.

Bluenicorn: Cool!

Reese: This is so much fun. I think maybe I can even dye my carrot purple, and... you know what, I think this is a clothes only thing. This tastes really bad. Do you want to try some?

Jade: Oh, no, that's okay, Reese. Thanks, though.

Reese: Okay, okay. Maybe the blue tastes better and—

Jade: Reese!

Reese: It doesn't taste better, nope. Nope.

Mr. Eric: The end.

[Falling harp scale.]

Hey, Niki! We did it!

Niki: We did it. That was a lot of fun.

Mr. Eric: Thank you. Thank you so much for joining me for this story. And you know what, I have to thank you even more for the story that you have already told and illustrated. This is a pretty big graphic novel. For kids, right?

Niki: Yeah, it's like 250 pages. But I really like to draw.

Mr. Eric: That's so beautiful. A lot of the reviews compare it to *Avatar: The Legend of Korra*. Why don't you tell us your own impression of *The Deep and Dark Blue*.

Niki: Sure. So my graphic novel is *The Deep and Dark Blue* and it's about two twins who have to go into hiding and disguise themselves as girls to keep their identities secret, but for one of them, getting to live as a girl is all she's ever really wanted and so it's a book about magic and adventure and being true to yourself.

Mr. Eric: Oh, ever since I've become a dad, I feel like I'm just even more emotional, but it really chokes me up in parts and it's just, it's so good. Thank you again, Niki, and have a great day.

Niki: Thanks!

Mr. Eric: All right, bye.

Niki: Bye.

Mr. Eric: I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, and all you kids out there who like to color, paint, draw, and dress with every color under the rainbow.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What if World theme plays.]