

TWITCHER

By JJ Jonas

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Two males are seated back to back. FRIEND is tossing a coin in the air. As HE catches the "coin," HE closes his fingers tightly over it and slaps it to his forearm. COLTON cannot see the toss, but HE calls out "heads" each time the toss is made.

COLTON is afflicted with an occasional and sporadic twitching of his head, jerking to the left side during intervals throughout the monologue. This should be apparent before HE begins to speak.

FRIEND: Tails! Oh, yeah, ***(to the tune of The Jeffersons)*** "Well, I'm moving on up..." ***(as HE does a little victory dance on his own)*** "to the top..." Here we go again! Here we go! ***(HE tosses the "coin.")***

COLTON: Heads.

FRIEND: Heads it is! The man is climbing out of the basement. What's that? Twenty-three-twenty-one? ***(HE tosses the "coin" again.)***

COLTON: Heads.

FRIEND: Okaaaaaay, iiiiiiit's... HEADS! Twenty-three-twenty-two! Oh, no, he's about to tie the score. Here it goes, folks. For all the money, now...

(Another toss and FRIEND mimes disappointment, leaving the inferred score at twenty-three-twenty-three.)

COLTON: ***(to audience as coin toss ends)*** My grandfather once told me a story. It seems there was this bear that somehow got lost as a cub and grew up among a pack of wolves. He learned to hunt like a wolf... ***(FRIEND is down on all fours, sniffing the air like an animal.)***... howl at the moon like a wolf... ***(FRIEND howls while still on all fours.)*** ...and even pick his teeth like a wolf. ***(FRIEND stands and begins to pick his teeth.)***

FRIEND: ***(in a Red Riding Hood style)*** Oh, my, what clean teeth I have!

COLTON: ***(giving a skeptical sideways glance to FRIEND as HE stands up)*** Anyway, one day the cub, who was almost full-grown, was standing by the water's edge of a smooth, calm river and he saw his reflection. He looked at his wolf brother to the side of him ***(looks to FRIEND)*** and asked, "Why am I different from you?" His wolf brother just shrugged and said...

FRIEND: I don't know. I just figured you were the special one in the family.

(silence)

COLTON: I guess you noticed that I have this kind of a twitch.

FRIEND: It's kind of hard to ignore.

COLTON: It's hard for me to ignore.

FRIEND: **(teasingly)** Yeah, it's a little annoying to watch too.

COLTON: **(glares mockingly)** You should see it from this side!

(HE forcibly and comically twitches, exaggerating its motion and speed.)

FRIEND: **(staring)** Dude. You're gonna break something.

COLTON: I'd like to see you try it.

FRIEND: No, thanks. I think you have it down to an art now.

(They both stare forward, trying not to be the first to laugh)

FRIEND: **(in a low voice, barely moving his lips)** Twitcher.

(They continue to stare forward, neither breaking)

FRIEND: **(still staring forward, barely moving his lips, in a sing-song, mocking tone)** Twiiiiitcheeeeerrrrr.

(They both finally crack up and then they face one another and suddenly change expression to one of serious and devoted loyalty as they clasp in a unique, personalized handshake.)

TOGETHER: No surrender.

(They hold the moment with eye contact.)

COLTON: Sometimes you just gotta face life forward and stare it straight in the eyes...

FRIEND: ...no matter what it deals you...

COLTON: It started a while back, slowly at first. We thought it was a muscle spasm. That's what the doctor at the clinic said.

DOCTOR: **(with flamboyant demeanor)** Oh, it's nothing, just a pinched nerve. Just a muscle spasm. Put a heating pad on it and he'll be back in the game in no time at all.

COLTON: And then it got so bad one day that my mom had to take me to the hospital. They didn't think it was that simple. They ran all kinds of tests on me.

NEW DOCTOR: **(FRIEND becomes NEW DOCTOR, almost overlapping in dialogue at a quick pace as HE circles COLTON, examining him, Groucho Marx style.)** Get this boy an MRI, an EKG, a UFO, a GI-Joe, run the works, run the works!

(NEW DOCTOR continues to examine COLTON, lifting his limbs at random, listening to heart, miming a flashlight to the eyes and ears, as COLTON continues to comically cooperate and continue speaking.)

COLTON: I was in the hospital for about ten days. I remember it well because it was the week of the city championship football game. **(FRIEND begins to march in background, humming a fight song, playing the trombone.)** Our team had been undefeated all year and we had made it to the playoffs two weeks earlier. **(COLTON smiles.)** I recovered a fumble that day and ran it in for the winning touchdown. That was cool. I felt on top of the world.

(FRIEND pauses, changes to serious tone and steps up beside COLTON and looks him in the eye proudly.)

FRIEND: You were on top of the world.

(pause)

COLTON: It was to be my last game.

FRIEND: They dedicated the pep rally to him the next week and the whole team and coach came by the hospital to see him.

COLTON: They told me a bunch of the teachers were crying.

FRIEND: **(miming a swooning female)** Why do bad things happen to good people? He was such a good boy...

COLTON: Even some of the girls were crying.

FRIEND: Even Sally Jacobs. **(teasingly to COLTON)** Saaaally Jaaaacobs.

(COLTON ducks his head in blush, while FRIEND pokes him playfully and then rolls his eyes and mimes a gag.)

(While COLTON delivers next line, FRIEND is singing in background, "Sally and Colton sitting in a tree...")

COLTON: At first that made me feel pretty good. Everyone worried about me and all, but then I started thinking, man, I'm not dying...

(FRIEND stops singing, changes gently to more supportive posture, steps up and places a hand on COLTON'S shoulder.)

COLTON: ...I've just got this twitch. ***(pause)*** Everyone was walking on eggshells all of a sudden and my mom was really stressed out. They started giving her these brochures on epilepsy and stress seizures...

DOCTOR: ***(aside to invisible mother)*** Contact sport is just something that he shouldn't be involved in anymore. It's questionable at this point whether he will even be able to get a driver's license.

(pause)

COLTON: Okay, so it had gotten worse than just a twitch. Sometimes it was like I blacked out for a while and my body just went out of control. I guess I just didn't want to admit that it was any worse.

FRIEND: ***(to audience)*** The team went on to win the city championship and we brought the trophy to the hospital to leave in his room for a while. We played our hearts out that day... ***(slight pause)*** for him.

(to each other)

COLTON: I'll be back next season.

FRIEND: Sure, man, I know.

(to audience)

TOGETHER: We both lied.

(beat)

COLTON: I tried to go back to school.

FRIEND: Everyone was really nervous around him.

(Both face slightly stage left and speak as school officials, observing an invisible COLTON in the distance.)

SCHOOL OFFICIAL 1: ***(FRIEND)*** I don't know what our boundaries of liability are.

SCHOOL OFFICIAL 2: ***(COLTON)*** We could put him in the special ed unit.

