BLOOMSBURY

I SWAPPED MY BROTHER ON THE INTERNET!







JO SIMMONS

Illustrated by NATHAN REED

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LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

CHAPTER ONE

CLICK!

CHANGE BROTHERS AND SWITCH SISTERS
TODAY WITH
www.siblingswap.com

The advert popped up in the corner of the screen. Jonny clicked on it instantly. The Sibling Swap website pinged open, showing smiling brothers and happy sisters, all playing and laughing and having a great time together.

What crazy alternative universe was this? Where were the big brothers teasing their little brothers about being rubbish at climbing and slow at everything? Where were the wedgies and ear flicks? What about the name-calling? This looked like a world

Jonny had never experienced, a world in which brothers and sisters actually *liked* each other!

'Oh sweet mangoes of heaven!' Jonny muttered.

It was pretty bonkers, but it was definitely tempting. No, scrap that: it was *essential*. Jonny couldn't believe his luck. Just think what Sibling Swap could offer him.



A new brother. A *better* brother. A brother who didn't put salt in his orange squash, who didn't call him a human sloth, who didn't burp in his ear. That kind of brother.

Jonny had to try it. He could always return the new brother if things didn't work out. It was a no-brainer.

He clicked on the application form.

What could go wrong?

CHAPTER TWO

FIGHT, FATE, FORMS

Only a little while before Jonny saw the Sibling Swap advert, he and his older brother, Ted, had had a fight. Another fight.

It was a particularly stupid fight, and it had started like all stupid fights do – over something stupid. This time, pants. But not just any pants. The Hanging Pants of Doom.

Jonny and Ted were walking their dog, Widget, on the nearby Common. They arrived at a patch of woodland, where an exceptionally large and colourful pair of men's pants had been hanging in a tree for ages. These pants had become legendary over the years the brothers had been playing here. There was a horrible glamour about them. The boys

were grossed out and slightly scared of them, but could never quite ignore them. And so the pants had become the Hanging Pants of Doom, and now, unfortunately, Jonny had just lobbed Widget's Frisbee into the tree. It was stuck in a branch, just below the mythical underwear.

'Oh swear word,' said Jonny.

'Nice one!' said Ted. 'You threw it up there, so you have to get it down.'

Jonny frowned. Two problems presented themselves. One was the fact that the Frisbee was very close to the pants, making the possibility of touching the revolting garment very real. Second, Jonny wasn't very good at climbing.

'Go on, Jonny, up you go,' teased Ted. 'Widget can't wait all day for his Frisbee. Climb up and get it … What's that? You're rubbish at climbing? Sorry, what? You would

prefer it if I went and got the Frisbee, as I'm truly excellent at climbing?'

'All RIGHT!' fumed Jonny, ripping off his jacket. 'I'll climb up and get it. Look after my coat.'

'Thanks!' said Ted. 'I might use it as a blanket. You're so slow, we could be here until midnight.'

Jonny began his climb slowly, as Ted had predicted, and rather shakily, as Ted had also predicted.

'I'm just taking my time, going carefully. Don't rush me!' said Jonny, as he reached for the next branch.

'Spare us the running commentary,' Ted said.

After several minutes, a tiny dog appeared below the tree, followed by its elderly owner, and it began yapping up at Jonny.

'That's my brother up there,' Ted said to the



lady, pointing up. 'He's thrown his pants into the tree again and has to go and get them.'

The lady squinted up. Her dog continued yip-yapping.

'Oh yes, I see,' she said. 'Well, they're rather splendid pants, aren't they? I can see why he wants to get them back. Are those spaceships on them?'

'Cars,' said Ted.

'Very fetching,' said the lady. 'But he shouldn't throw them into the trees again. A magpie might get them.'

'That's what I told him,' said Ted, trying not to laugh. 'Sorry, I better go and help or we'll be here until Christmas. He's like a human sloth!'

With that, Ted bounced up into the tree, pulling himself quickly up its branches and passing his brother, just as Jonny was within touching distance of the Frisbee.

'Got it!' said Ted, snatching the Frisbee and tossing it down to Widget, before swinging off a branch and landing neatly on his feet. 'You can come down now, bro. Unless you really do want to touch the Pants of Doom. You're pretty close, actually. Look! They're just there.'

Jonny made a noise in his throat – a bit like a growl – and felt his face burning bright red. He was shaking with anger and humiliation as he slowly began making his way down.

By the time the brothers banged back into the house, Jonny was speechless with fury. He ran upstairs. He could hear his mum telling him off for slamming the front door, but too bad. He smashed his bedroom door shut too. There! How's that? He was sick of Ted teasing him, sick of being the younger brother. And as for telling that old lady that the Hanging Pants of Doom were *his* …

Jonny flipped open his laptop and, miraculously, there was the Sibling Swap website telling him that all this could change. What perfect timing. Had the Sibling Swap team climbed into his head and read his thoughts? Who cared?

He read the home page:

Sometimes you don't get the brother or sister you deserve, but here at Sibling Swap, we aim to put that right. With so many brothers and sisters out there, we can match you to the perfect one!

His heart began to beat faster.

Swapping your brother or sister has never been easier with Sibling Swap! Simply fill out the application form

AND WE WILL SUPPLY YOU WITH A NEW BROTHER OR SISTER WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, CAREFULLY CHOSEN FROM OUR MASSIVE DATABASE OF POSSIBLE MATCHES. OUR DEDICATED TEAM OF SWAP OPERATIVES WORKS 24/7 TO FIND THE BEST MATCH FOR YOU, BUT IF YOU ARE NOT COMPLETELY HAPPY, YOU CAN RETURN YOUR REPLACEMENT SIBLING FOR A NEW MATCH OR YOUR ORIGINAL BROTHER OR SISTER.

Amazing! For the first time in his almost ten years, this website was offering Jonny power, choice, freedom! It felt good! He rubbed his hands together and began filling out the form.

First, there were two options:

ARE YOU SWAPPING A SIBLING?

ARE YOU PUTTING YOURSELF UP TO BE SWAPPED?

‘Easy,’ Jonny muttered. ‘I’m the one doing the swapping. Me. I have the power!’ He did a sort of evil genius laugh as he clicked on the top box. By Tic Tacs, this was exciting! Next, the form asked:

ARE YOU SWAPPING A BROTHER OR SISTER?

‘Also easy,’ muttered Jonny. ‘Brother.’

Then:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE A BROTHER OR A SISTER?

Jonny clicked the box marked ‘Brother’. Then he had to add some information about himself.

AGE: NINE.

HOBBIES: BIKING, SWIMMING, COMPUTER GAMES, DOUGHNUTS, MESSING ABOUT.

LEAST FAVOURITE THINGS:

- **MY BROTHER, TED (HE TEASES ME ALL**

THE TIME AND RECKONS HE'S COOL JUST BECAUSE HE GOES TO SECONDARY SCHOOL)

- BEING NINE (I *AM* NEARLY TEN, BUT CAN I HAVE A BROTHER WHO IS YOUNGER THAN ME OR MAYBE THE SAME AGE PLEASE?)
- SPROUTS
- CLIMBING
- BEING SICK

Then there was a whole page about the kind of brother Jonny might like. He quickly ticked the following boxes: fun; adventurous; enjoys food; enjoys sports and swimming; likes dogs. He didn't tick the box marked 'living' or the one marked 'human'. He just wanted a brother, so it was obvious, wasn't it?

That ought to do it, Jonny reckoned. His heart was galloping now. In just three

minutes it was ready to send. He sat back in his chair. 'Just one click,' he said, 'and I get a brother upgrade by this time tomorrow. Friday, in fact! Ready for the weekend!'

Jonny felt slightly dizzy. He giggled quietly to himself. He felt giddy with power! All he had to do was send off the form. Easy! But then he hesitated … Should he do this? Was it OK? Would he get into trouble? Jonny's dad no longer lived with him and Ted, so he might not notice, but what would his mum say? She'd be pleased, Jonny decided quickly. Yes! After all, she was fed up with Jonny and Ted arguing. This was the perfect solution. Then, with a tiny frown, he wondered how Ted might feel about being swapped, but before he could puzzle this out, there was his brother again, shouting up the stairs.

'Dinner, loser!' Ted yelled. 'Let me know if you need help climbing down the stairs.

They *are* quite steep. It could take you a while.'

That was it! For the second time that day, Jonny felt the anger bubbling up inside like a can of shaken Pixie Fizz. Enough! Double enough!

'So I'm the rubbish younger brother, am I? Well, here's one thing I can do really brilliantly,' he muttered and, jutting out his chin, hit the send button.

CLICK!

'Done!' he said, and slammed the laptop shut.

CHAPTER THREE

GONE

Jonny had a strange dream that night. The doorbell rang, and when he answered it there was a new brother on the doorstep. Only it wasn't a boy, it was a tiny squirrel wearing a green suit, eating a cheese sandwich.

Jonny woke with a start, sat up and rubbed his eyes. Then he remembered! He'd done it! He had swapped Ted, and today, hopefully, his new, improved extra-much-better-er brother would arrive.

'You look excited,' his best friend, George, said at school later. Jonny was tapping his pen feverishly on his desk. 'Like, massively excited. What's going on?'

'Just a bit of family improvement,' said Jonny. Then he leaned across so he was really

close to George. ‘You won’t believe this, but I’ve swapped Ted!’ he whispered.

‘Swapped him?’ asked George.

‘Yes! I’m getting a new brother today. Cool, eh?’

‘How? On a website?’

‘Yes, have you heard of it? There’s this Sibling Swap site where they match you up with a new brother or sister. I had to try it! He’s arriving after school.’



George stared hard at Jonny, his eyebrows raised, and was about to speak when their teacher, Mrs Flannery, told the boys to stop whispering and concentrate on their spellings.

As soon as the final bell rang, Jonny raced home. His hand trembled with excitement as he put his key in the door. Once inside, he stood still and listened.

'Ted?' he called out. 'You there?'

Silence.

Jonny looked in the living room.

'No Ted in here,' he whispered. 'I'm talking to myself, but never mind.'

He moved down the corridor. 'No Ted in the kitchen! So far, so good!'

Then he bounded upstairs.

'Bathroom?' he said, looking in. 'Ted-free! My bedroom? Yup, also no sign of an older brother.'

Finally, Jonny paused outside Ted's room. His lair, big brother headquarters, the inner sanctum. A sign on the door said BABY BROTHERS KEEP OUT. With a gulp, Jonny ignored it and stepped cautiously into the room.

Empty.

He sat down on Ted's bed and glanced around. He grinned and then put his hand over his mouth like he'd said a rude word. Then he began to bounce, just a little. Then a little more. Then he leaped up on to the bed, shoes on and everything, and jumped up and down wildly, slapping the ceiling and whooping with glee. Finally, he crashed back on to the bed, panting.

'There doesn't seem to be a single Ted in the house,' he said. 'Now, why is that, I wonder? Ooh, hang on, wait a minute. Is it because Ted was so annoying that his brother

decided to swap him on the internet? Yes, I think so. And is that same brother now waiting for a Ted replacement to arrive? Yes, that's right!'

BING BONG.

The doorbell rang.

'And here he is!' said Jonny. 'Let the fun brother times begin!'

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