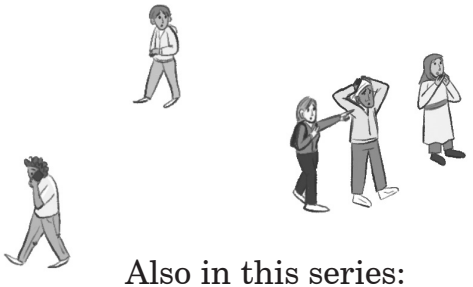
CALLY & JIMMY

TWINS TOGETHER





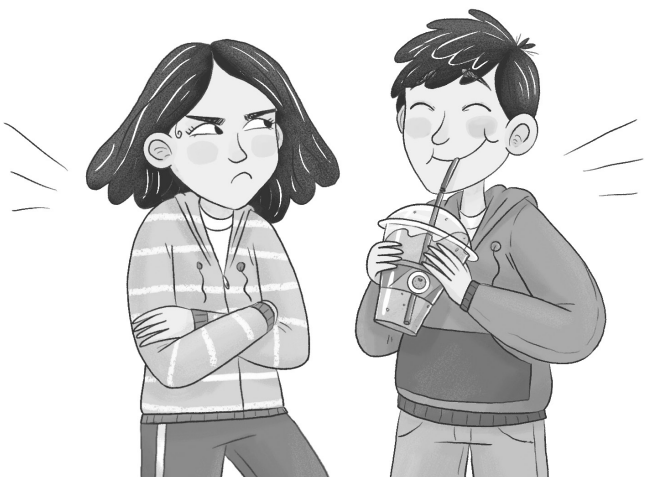
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Cally & Jimmy

Cally & Jimmy: Twintastic

CALLY & JIMMY

TWINS TOGETHER



ZOE ANTONIADES

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ANDERSEN PRESS

For George Hendle



First published in 2022 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 2SA, UK
Vijverlaan 48, 3062 HL Rotterdam, Nederland
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 128 8

Printed and bound in Great Britain
by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A..



TOGETHER IN CHARGE
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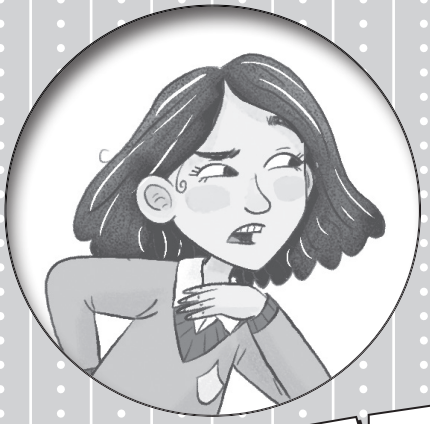
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TOGETHER IN CHARGE



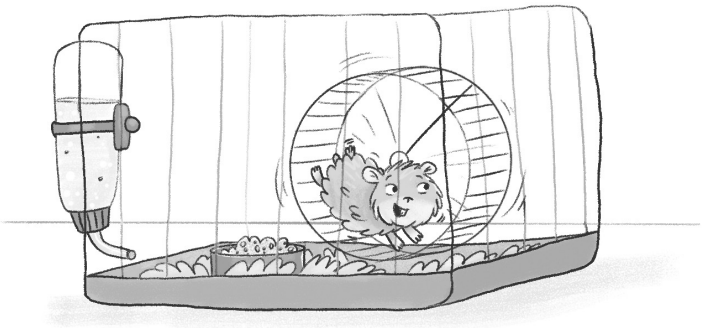


What's it like being a twin? Well, it's kind of a cool thing because people find it really interesting and a bit special. And it *would* be cool and special and it probably *is* for lots of *other* twins, but if your twin's anything like my twin Jimmy, then it can also be totally annoying.

Twins get compared to each other a lot. But there's no point doing that with me and Jimmy cos we're completely different. I don't want to sound big-headed or anything, but I'm sensible and he's silly. At school, I sit at the

'top table' but he has to be at the front with his teaching assistant, Miss Loretta. I get given responsibilities and get to be independent, when Jimmy, well, he just gets all the attention. To be fair to Jimmy, he's still good at lots of things, like running and gaming and using his imagination and making people laugh, and it's not all his fault that he finds some of the other stuff more difficult. He's got ADHD which makes it harder for him to stay focused, and so things like being calm, following the rules and passing tests don't come so easily to him. I'd feel sorry for him if only he didn't keep messing everything up for me too. Cos I'm his twin. And twins have to be in it together. So, whenever there's trouble for Jimmy, somehow there ends up being trouble for me too. Double trouble, that's what being twins is. Like the time when we really wanted to take our class's pet hamster home for half term . . .

Our class's pet hamster is called Lightning.



Mrs Wright got him for us at the beginning of Year Five. As soon as she introduced him to everyone, he bolted onto his hamster wheel and started racing about on it at a million miles per hour.

'Whoa. He's well speedy!'

'Watch him go!'

'Like lightning!'

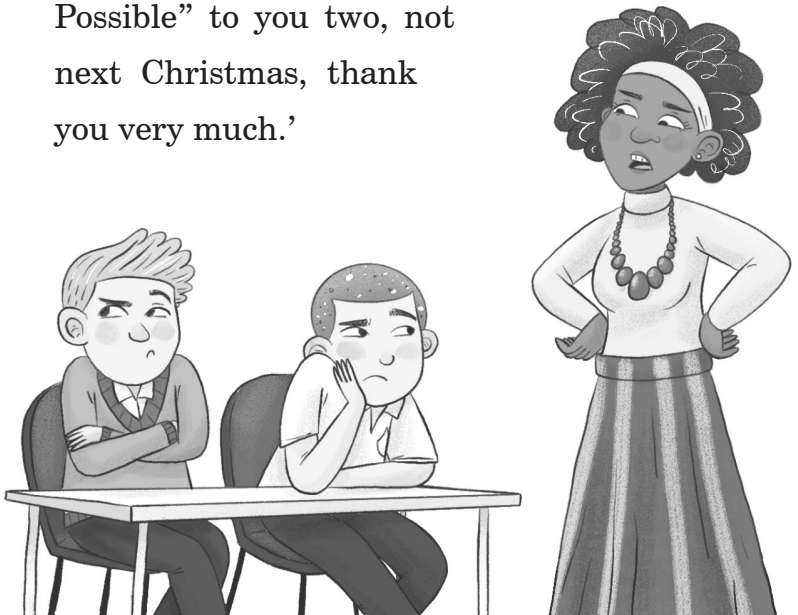
And that's how Lightning got his name.

When it gets to be the school holidays, someone in the class is allowed to take Lightning home to look after him. Half term break was coming up, and at home time, once we'd got all our bags and coats and were standing behind our chairs, Mrs Wright made her end-of-the-day announcements.

'We need to start getting ideas together for our charity fundraiser, so get your thinking caps on and see what you can come up with . . .'

Last term's bake sale hadn't gone according to plan, especially when Jimmy ended up pushing me headfirst into the entire table display sending everything flying and leaving me covered in icing sugar and buttercream. But that's another story.

'And anyone who hasn't returned their parents' evening slips needs to get those back to me ASAP – ' Mrs Wright glared at Mitch Moran and Jackson Boyle – 'that means "As Soon As Possible" to you two, not next Christmas, thank you very much.'





Jimmy couldn't help himself from sniggering and Mitch Moran muttered under his breath, 'At least the teachers will have something decent to say about me, not like you, Dimmy.'

'What was that you said, Mitch?' asked Mrs Wright.

Mrs Wright might not have heard him exactly. But Jimmy had. I could tell, because his ears had gone red.

'Nothing, Miss. Just, like, I'll get my mum to sign the letter, Miss,' Mitch shrugged.

I'd already got my parents' evening reply slip in. I was one of the first. Like I said, I'm responsible. Anyway, I have to be, cos sorting out the parents' evening appointments is a bit tricky in our family as Mum and Dad aren't together anymore. They still get on OK though. They don't row all the time like Lauren

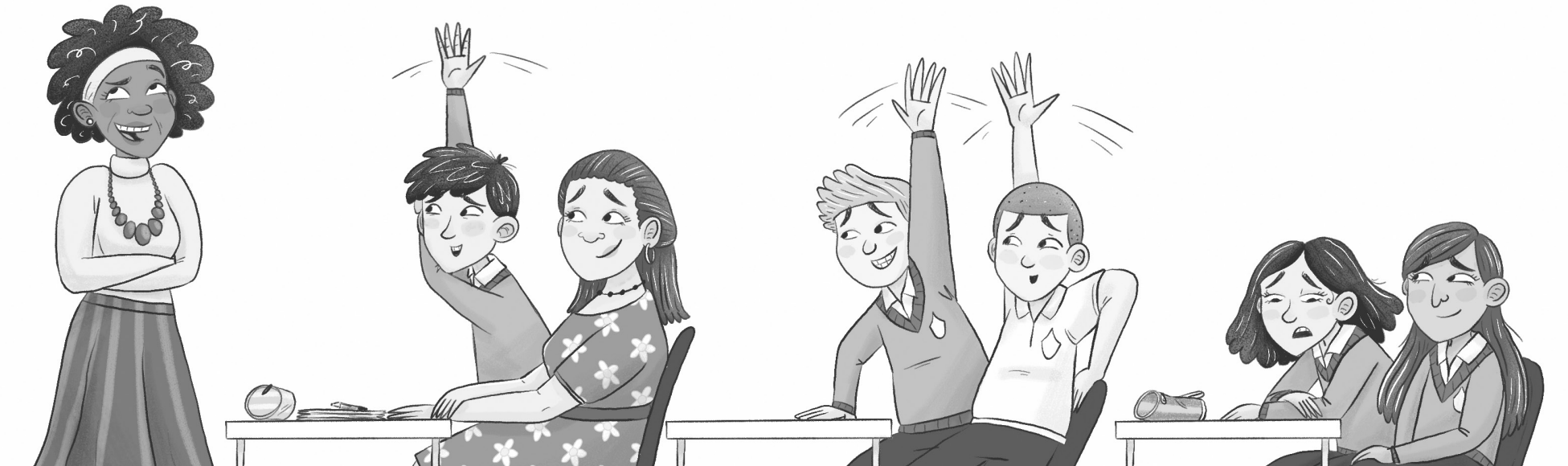
Bennett's parents or anything. In fact, Mum and Dad both usually come to all the school things, special assemblies and sports days and all. It just takes a bit more organising sometimes; like with parents' evening, you need to get the right time-slot before they all get snapped up.

Mrs Wright continued, 'And as half term is coming up, we need to see who'd like to take Lightning home to look after.'

Everyone put up their hands and cried, 'Me, me, me!' standing on their toes to see who could get their hand up the highest. Jimmy was doing that thing where he puts one hand under his other elbow so he can push his arm higher than anyone else's.

Mrs Wright rolled her eyes and laughed, 'Let me rephrase that. We need to see whose *parents* would like to have Lightning over the half term.'

That ruled us out then. Mum's never had time for pets. She says she's too busy.



And as for Yiayia, that's our Greek granny from Cyprus who lives with us, she thinks hamsters are pests. Me and Jimmy showed her pictures of some on the internet when our class first got Lightning and she couldn't believe it.

'What is this things? This things is pet? Is like mouse. Is like rat. This things is live where is the dustbins outside, not in house!' In Yiayia's opinion, all animals belong outside. That's how it is in Cyprus anyway. Like at Aunty Maria's house in Deftera – they keep their dog Hari in a kennel and they have chickens in the yard. But there was no way we could keep Lightning outside. He'd freeze.

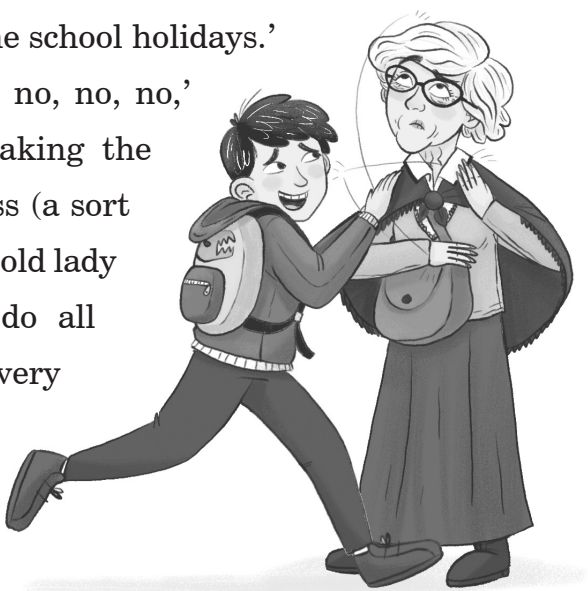
We wouldn't be able to keep Lightning at Dad's either because we only stay with him every other weekend. And his flat's too far away. In Clapham. It's still London, but London's big and there's loads of traffic, so it takes forever to get there.

But when Yiayia came to pick us up from school, Jimmy tried his luck anyway. He flew across the playground over to Yiayia and started bouncing around like Tigger times two-hundred. 'Yiayia, Yiayia, can we have Lightning for half term? Please, please, please, please, please?'

'What is you talking about, Jimmy mou?' asked Yiayia, scrabbling in her bag for our after-school snacks and pulling out two spanakopita wrapped in kitchen towel.

'He means our class's pet hamster,' I explained. 'You know. Like the ones I showed you pictures of. Someone always gets to take him home in the school holidays.'

'Oh no, no, no, no, no,' said Yiayia, making the sign of the cross (a sort of prayer thing old lady Greek people do all the time). 'Is every time you ask this, isn't it?'



We'd been through this before. At autumn half term and Christmas too. Now Yiayia realised what Jimmy was going on about, she wasn't having any of it. Yiayia usually is the one who spoils Jimmy the most, she's the one who always gives in to him, especially when he does this puppy-eyed thing that always works with Yiayia, cos Jimmy's secretly her favourite, even though you're not meant to have favourites with twins. But this time, all the pleading in the world would not make Yiayia cave in. This time 'no' really meant 'no'.

'Is like mouse. Is like rat. This things is live where is the dustbins outside, not in house,' she reminded us. Then she took each of us by the hand and marched us home. Jimmy sulked the whole way.

He was still miserable when we got in. He stayed that way all evening. When we were watching TV, he just stared at it and didn't even laugh at his favourite programmes. He huffed

and puffed through his homework (but to be honest, he always does that). And his face was like thunder when he played on his tablet, even though he loves StreetBrix. When it was dinner time and Mum had got back from work and joined us at the table, she looked at Jimmy and sighed, 'Why the long face?'

Jimmy was in such a mood, all he could say was, 'Hmph!'

Mum looked to me for answers. As usual.

'Mrs Wright asked who wanted to bring Lightning home for half term, and we reaaaaalllly want to,' I said.

Mum put her hand to her head and groaned, 'Oh not that daft hamster again.'

That's when Jimmy snapped out of his silent fury and exploded. Slamming his fists on the table, he yelled, 'He's not daft. He's the best. Why can't we have him? It's not fair.'

Yiayia made the sign of the cross and looked to the heavens.



‘Now, calm down, Jimmy,’ said Mum. ‘We’ve been through this before. I’ve got enough to do without having to worry about pets as well.’

‘But you won’t have to do anything, Mum,’ I pleaded. ‘We can look after it. We’re ten now. We can be responsible. We’ll clean out the cage and feed him and fill up his water bottle and everything.’

Mum looked at Jimmy. We all knew there was no ‘we’ about it. If we were to get a pet, the responsibility of looking after it would be all mine. But that was OK. I like responsibility. The teachers always choose me for jobs at school.

‘Please, Mum,’ I begged. ‘I can look after Lightning. I know I can.’

And then . . . I couldn’t believe it . . . but it really did look like Mum was softening. Yiayia noticed it too because she started shaking her head and saying, ‘Mana mou, mana mou.’

Jimmy clasped his hands under his chin and looked up at Mum with his puppy eyes. It’s amazing how he can go from face-of-thunder to Mr Angelic in the space of ten seconds. ‘Please, please, please, please, please, please, Mum. I’ll love you forever, my bestest bestest Mum in the whole entire universe.’

Mum looked at Yiayia who threw her hands up in the air in defeat. ‘Is still like mouse. Is still like rat. Is still should to be live in dustbin.’

Mum actually chuckled a bit at that, ‘Oh come on, Mama. They’re not so bad. They’re domestic. They’re really quite clean. They wouldn’t allow them in the classroom if they weren’t.’

Yiayia folded her arms. She had nothing more to say on the matter.

Now me and Jimmy were both gazing at Mum and saying, 'Please, please, please, please, please . . .' over and over again.

'Oh . . . well . . . OK . . . I suppose . . . What harm could it really do?' Mum smiled.

Me and Jimmy both leaped out of our seats and cheered, 'Yesssssssssssss!'

Jimmy danced around the kitchen then did a lap of victory around the living room and cartwheeled back over to the dining table. I ran over to Mum and gave her the biggest hug and said, 'Mum, you really are the best.'

Yiayia just gave a little snort. 'Come on, everybody. Eat. Eat. Is dinner is getting cold.'



★

Mum had to write a letter to school to say we were interested in taking Lightning home with us and then we had to wait till the middle of next week for Mrs Wright to make her decision. To us it felt like having to wait forever. Three other children in our class had also asked for permission too, so it could have been any of us.

'I'm gonna keep my fingers crossed the whole time until Mrs Wright chooses,' said Jimmy. I didn't think he actually meant it. It was a bit extreme. But then Jimmy *is* extreme. And when it came to Lightning, he was obsessed. So that's what he did. Whenever I looked at him, he had his fingers crossed – at breakfast, at school, when he was riding his bike, he even said he kept them crossed under his pillow at night. And when the time came for Mrs Wright to make her announcement, we both had absolutely everything crossed.

It was towards the end of the day on Wednesday. We were all sitting on the carpet and Mrs Wright had just finished reading to us from our Book of the Week. She makes sure we always have story time and it's my favourite part of lessons. Jimmy was on his own special cushion by Mrs Wright's feet. I was at the back with my best friend Aisha. Because we're both sensible, we can sit where we want. We don't need to be kept an eye on. Aisha whispered to me, 'Hope it's you.' She isn't allowed any pets. Her parents are a bit like Yiayia when it comes to having animals inside. But I'd promised her that if we did get to take Lightning home, she could come round to our house as much as she liked to play with him and help with feeding him and cleaning out the cage and everything.

'So . . .' said Mrs Wright.

The suspense was killing me.

'The children I have chosen to take Lightning home are . . .'



Children! She said children! It had to be us then. Cos we're twins and there are two of us. Jimmy hadn't cottoned on yet. He just sat there fidgeting with the Velcro on his shoes. with the Velcro on his shoes.

'. . . Cally and Jimmy.'

Me and Aisha hugged each other in celebration.

Jimmy leaped up from his cushion and cried, 'Woooooo hooooooo!' He almost trod on Nina Wilinska in his excitement and Miss Loretta was doing her best to shield everyone from his windmill arms. She couldn't get him to calm down and sit down again, so she took him off to collect his coat and bag for home time.

It was down to me to listen to the rest of the instructions of course as Mrs Wright explained, 'So, Cally, if you could let your mum and your grandma know that you will be able to take Lightning home with you on Friday, that would be great. The school will provide you with all the food and bedding you need for his cage, so you won't need to worry about any of that.' There'd be a book of instructions to go with it all too, so nothing could go wrong. Surely.

★

When it was finally Friday afternoon and we got to bring Lightning home there was a big argument over where we would put his cage. Yiayia sleeps in a special room we made for her next to the living room so there was no way we could keep him anywhere downstairs. She couldn't stand the racket Lightning made when he was running about on his hamster wheel. 'Is drive me crazy all this tikki-takka!' she said when we first put his cage down on the dining table. 'And you can't to be putting mouse here,' she shrieked, 'is where is people eat!'

'I think we'd better take Lightning upstairs,' said Mum.

So then there was the argument about who was going to get to have him in whose room.

'He has to stay in my bedroom of course,' I said. 'I *am* the oldest.' Only by seventeen minutes and forty-two seconds, but it still counts.

