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Opening extract from

S.W.I.T.C.H. 2
Fly Frenzy

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Published by

Oxford University Press

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Horror at the Hedge

'Buzz off, you revolting little pest!' Jenny thwacked Danny on the head with her rolled-up magazine.

Josh tried not to giggle. His sister had been reading peacefully for five minutes, unaware that Danny was crouched on the back of the sofa behind her, rubbing the backs of his hands together, poking out his tongue and rolling his eyes madly. A half eaten biscuit in her hand, Jenny hadn't even noticed Josh standing in the doorway, taking pictures with his little digital camera.

It was only when Danny started buzzing that things turned ugly.

'Go and play outside, you creepy little horrors!' yelled Jenny, who was fourteen, so

thought she could boss them around. She whacked Danny again and he fell off the sofa and rolled across the sitting room floor, laughing and buzzing.

Josh tucked his camera into his pocket and strolled out towards the front garden with his twin brother. 'Of course, if you *really* wanted to be a fly, you should have spat stomach acid on her Jammy Dodger, walked all over it until it was mush and *then* eaten it.'

Danny biffed the back of Josh's neat fair head as they went down the hallway. 'And Mum says *I'm* the disgusting one!'

'It's just nature,' shrugged Josh, biffing Danny back on his spiky fair head. 'Flies are amazing—I can show you one under my microscope if you like.'

'Yuck! I *don't* like!' shuddered Danny. It was one thing pretending to be an insect to annoy Jenny, but he hated the real thing.

'You ate one quite happily a couple of weeks ago,' Josh reminded him.

Danny stopped dead on the front doorstep. 'I thought we agreed never to talk about that again!'

'Well, yeah, but—'

'NEVER!' said Danny.

Outside, Mum was by the front hedge, talking to Mrs Sharpe from down the road. The garden looked fantastic—carefully trimmed and mown and full of flowers, bushes, and little trees, all overflowing with colourful blossom. The hedge, though, was her real pride and joy. For years she had trimmed and trained it into three little bird shapes along the top. It was a special skill called 'topiary', she had explained to Josh and Danny. She called them her 'hedge birds'.



'Come to help with the weeding, boys?' she asked, when she saw them. Mum had gone in for the Best Garden competition in their village. Last year she'd come third, and this year she was determined to win. Piddle, their terrier dog, had been banned from going anywhere near the front garden. He was shut in the back garden today, out of harm's way.'Can't see any weeds!' said Josh.

'There are some there,' said Mrs Sharpe, pointing at the rose bed. 'And over by the marigolds. Quite a few really. Of course, my garden is completely weed free now—with only one day to go before judging, I couldn't possibly allow anything wild to start messing it up.' She smiled smugly at them all. 'Have to make sure I keep the cup again this year, don't I, Tarquin?'

A thin, pale boy of about Josh and Danny's age slithered around from behind his mother, and gave their garden a look of great disdain. 'I think your trophy is *quite* safe, Mother,' he said, in a high-pitched voice.

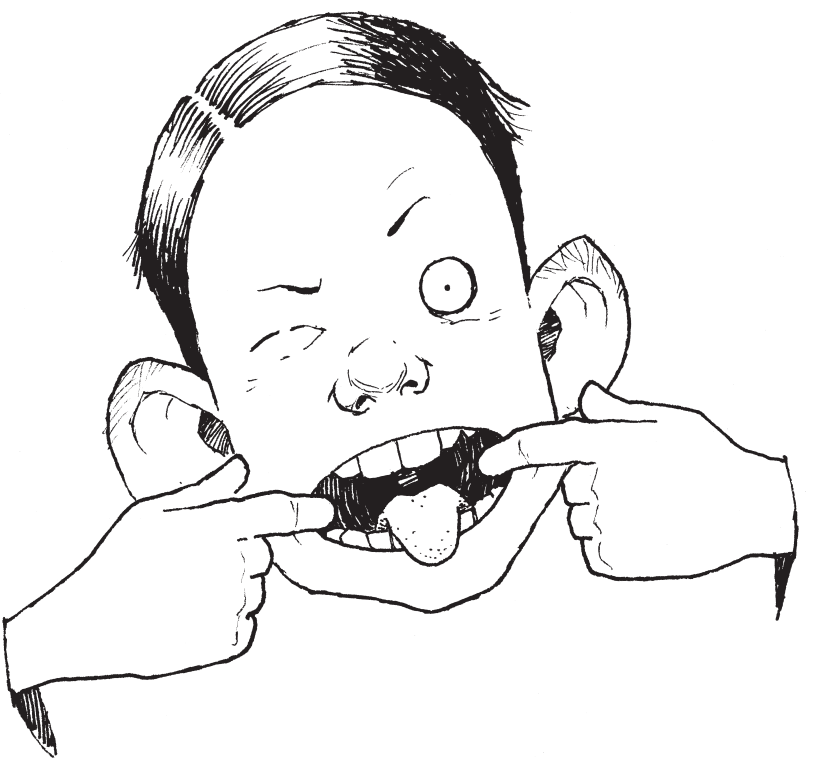
'Well,' said Mum, twisting a dead rose bloom off its stalk with some force. 'How nice to have such a

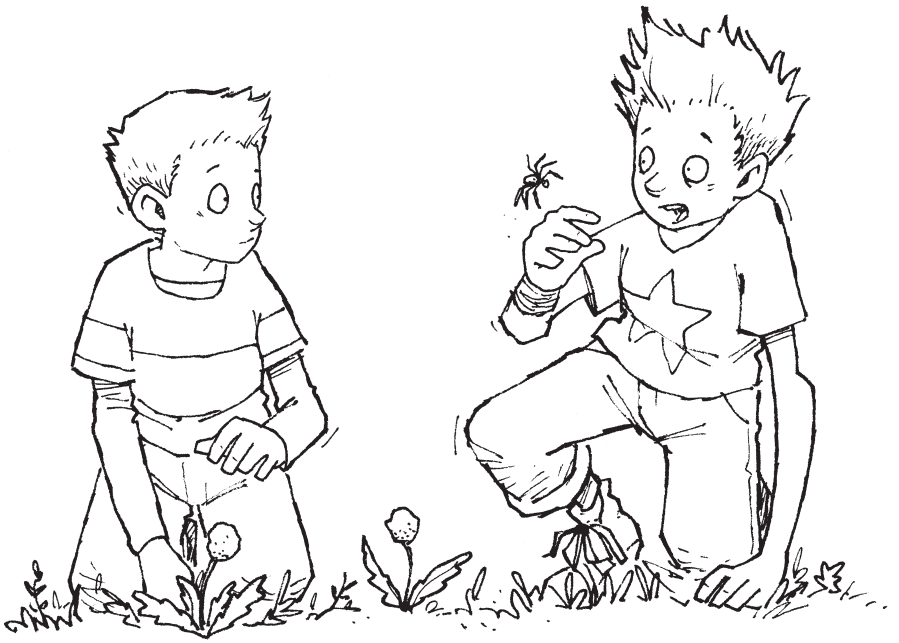


supportive son, Mrs Sharpe.'

'He *is* a darling,' sighed Mrs Sharpe. 'And did I tell you that he scored top in his whole school for maths this week? He's Mummy's little genius!' She patted Tarquin's neatly parted dark hair. 'Of course, not every child can be a genius, can they?' She smiled pityingly at Josh and Danny. 'But that doesn't matter, *does it*?'

Danny made 'being sick' noises and Tarquin pulled ugly faces at them.





'Well, must get on!' Mum knelt down and drove her trowel viciously into the soil. 'We never know *who* might win this year, do we?'

'Don't we?' smirked Mrs Sharpe. 'Well, have fun trying. It really is quite a *nice* little garden . . . ' And she stalked off with her son who was still poking his tongue out at Josh and Danny.

'Come on, you two,' said Mum. 'Pay no attention to the genius! Weeding, please!'

Josh and Danny worked their way along the wall, pulling out very tiny weeds and throwing them into Mum's wheelbarrow. 'Weee-aaargh!' shrieked Danny, wildly flapping his hand. A small spider dropped off it and scuttled away.

'You know, I'm surprised you haven't got over your fear of spiders,' said Josh, quietly. 'Considering you've *been* a spider.'

'*DON'T* remind me!' Danny looked around warily for more eight-legged foes. 'I'm trying to forget it ever happened.'

'What—that we got hit by Miss Potts's SWITCH spray? And we got changed into spiders, fell down the bathplug, got rescued by rats, nearly eaten by a toad and a blackbird and then got made human again—all before tea?' Josh grinned as Danny narrowed his eyes at him.

'I don't know *how* you can be so calm about it!' grunted Danny, brutally pulling up a dandelion.

'I'm not!' said Josh. 'It gives me the shivers just to think about Petty Potts, hidden away in her secret lab behind the shed, turning all kinds of poor creatures into bugs just for fun. But it *was*

kind of exciting, too—wasn't it? And she *did* turn us back again.'

'Exciting? It was *terrifying*! I was a *spider*! A spider! I was scared of my *own legs*!'

Josh chucked another handful of weeds into the wheelbarrow. 'Well, don't worry. It's all in the past now. We haven't even seen Petty Potts since. And we're *never* going next door again!'

'Ah!' said their mum, to someone at the gate. 'Good timing! I'm just about to go to the garden centre now. Is it still OK for the boys to come round to your house?'

Danny and Josh looked up from their weeding. Their mouths fell open in horror.

Standing by the hedge was their next-door neighbour—Petty Potts.

