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S.W.I.T.C.H. 10: Gecko Gladiator

Written by

Ali Sparkes

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SWITCH

Gecko Gladiator

Ali Sparkes



illustrated by

Ross Collins

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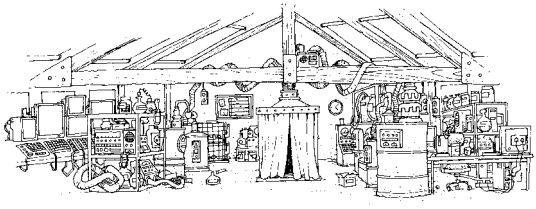
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Photograph on page 127: Thanks to Tiny Drury, cool chameleon.

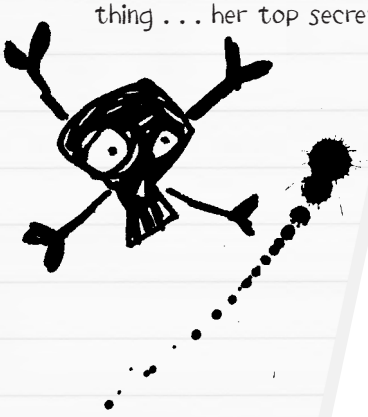


To Jacob James Harley Stewart
(who keps his socks on to read in bed)

With grateful thanks to
John Buckley and Tony Gent of
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for their hot-blooded guidance on
SWITCH's cold-blooded reptile heroes.

Danny and Josh and Petty

Josh and Danny might be twins but they're NOT the same. Josh loves getting his hands dirty and learning about nature. Danny thinks Josh is a nerd. Skateboarding and climbing are way cooler! And their next door neighbour, Petty, is only interested in one thing . . . her top secret SWITCH potion.



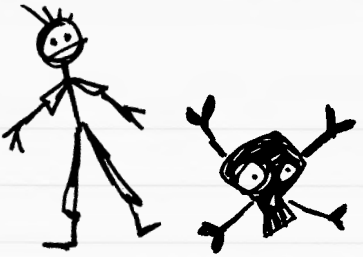


Danny

- FULL NAME: Danny Phillips
- AGE: 8 years
- HEIGHT: Taller than Josh
- FAVOURITE THING: Skateboarding
- WORST THING: Creepy-crawlies and tidying
- AMBITION: To be a stunt man







Josh

- FULL NAME: Josh Phillips
- AGE: 8 years
- HEIGHT: Taller than Danny
- FAVOURITE THING: Collecting insects
- WORST THING: Skateboarding
- AMBITION: To be an entomologist

Petty



- FULL NAME: Petty Hortense Potts
- AGE: None of your business
- HEIGHT: Head and shoulders above every other scientist
- FAVOURITE THING: SWITCHing Josh & Danny
- WORST THING: Evil ex-friend Victor Crouch
- AMBITION: Adoration and recognition as the world's most genius scientist (and for the government to say sorry!)

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A Poxy Situation

'Do you think she's dead?'

Danny, wobbling on Josh's shoulders, peered through the dusty window into Petty Potts's front room. He didn't answer his twin brother but pressed his nose up hard against the glass, trying to see past the grimy net curtains and work out whether the large blue shape on the sofa was moving.

'Danny!' hissed Josh. 'You're breaking my back!' He was doubled up, supporting his brother's weight, and his forehead was grinding against the damp red brick under their neighbour's windowsill. 'Is she dead?!'

'It's hard to say,' muttered Danny. 'I mean—she never looks all that healthy at the best of times, does she?'

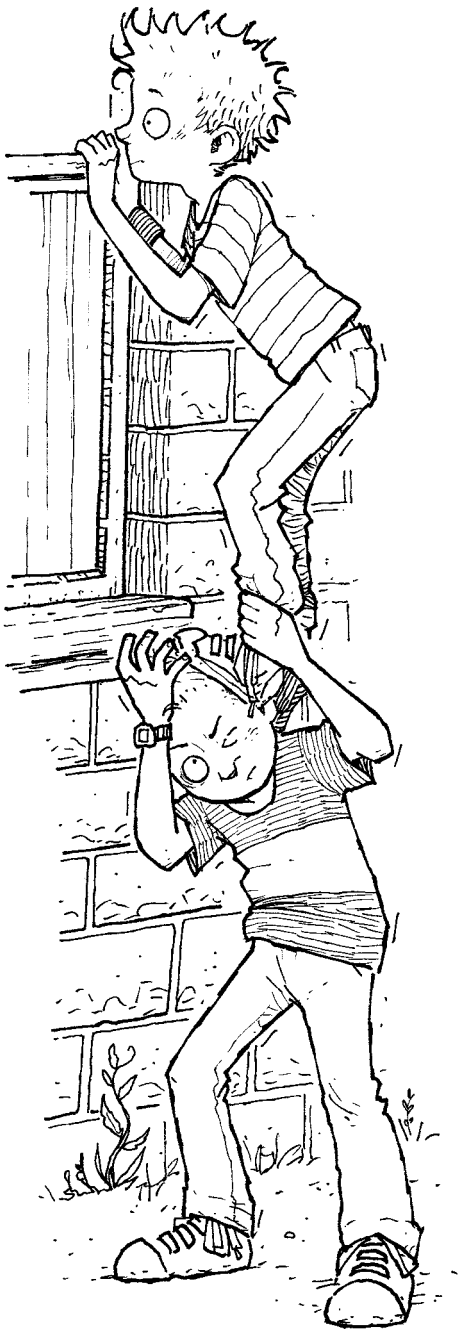


'No—but she doesn't usually look like a corpse!' grunted Josh. 'Is she moving?'

Danny got up onto his feet, treading carefully on each of his brother's shoulder blades, hanging on to Petty's rather rotten window frame. The top panes didn't have nets, so they'd be easier to see through.

'I can't hold you up any longer!' gurgled Josh, but he didn't have to. Three seconds later there was a creak and a crack and a crash and Danny had fallen through the window.

'Gah!' remarked Josh, in surprise. He stood up and glanced all around,



guiltily. Had anybody seen his brother accidentally breaking and entering? No . . . there was nobody around. 'Danny! Are you OK!' he whispered, peering inside through the broken glass and wood. Below he could make out Danny, struggling out of a dusty grey net curtain, spluttering.

'OK—I'm coming in!' Josh said, carefully climbing through. It was a good thing really that the wooden frame had been weak, even if it meant that Petty's window had been smashed. If they'd broken down her front door they would probably be skewered on the end of poison-dipped spears by now or reduced to a heap of ash and charred bones or something. Petty had put some formidable defences in place in her house recently, but amazingly had failed to secure the window.

Danny had escaped the dusty net curtain by the time Josh jumped down next to him—and he wasn't cut by broken glass. That was good news. On the other hand, Petty was still motionless on the sofa. That was not so good. They looked at each other, gulping.

From this angle they could only see her grey mop of hair. It was hard to tell whether she was dead or alive. As he got closer Danny could see one small patch of wrinkled cheek. He prodded it, gingerly, with one finger. 'It's warm!' he said, with relief. And then he shrieked as Petty's hand suddenly swiped up and grabbed his wrist.

There was a moment of silence during which Petty eased herself up on one elbow and peered at him. 'Hello, Danny,' she croaked. 'Hello, Josh. What, exactly, are you doing in my front parlour?'

'We came to find out if you were still alive,' Danny said, panting with relief. 'You haven't been answering the door for days and we thought you might have died.'

'Oh really?' Petty raised an eyebrow behind her smeary spectacles.

'Well, you know . . . you are quite old,' Danny said.

'Danny!' Josh kicked his brother's ankle. 'Don't be rude!'

'No—not a bit of it!' Petty said, sitting up properly now. 'After all, I am ancient. It's a wonder

I can even walk, talk or safely visit the toilet. My heart could pop. I could just keel over at any time. Just one loud noise or a funny smell and it could be curtains for Old Granny Potts. Better not stand too close to me when you've got an attack of flatulence, Danny. You could take us both out.'

'So—why didn't you answer our calls? Our knocks? Our doorbell ringing?' enquired Josh.

'I have had chickenpox,' Petty said. And now that they looked properly they could see that she had a rash of rather nasty red pimples—many of them topped with a little yellow crust. 'I've been dreadfully tired and sore and I didn't feel like talking to anyone—or infecting anyone!'

Josh and Danny took a step back.

