

Double Switched

Buckley School Books #3

Corey Green

Cover Illustrations by Rebecca Caffall

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SUMMARY: Connor's dad says make straight A's or no baseball—but that's not so easy when Connor has been Double Switched. Switched ballparks, switched classes, switched baseball positions—the bases are loaded with problems for Connor. Can he live up to his dad's high standards? Would his hero Jackie Robinson approve of the choices Connor makes?

Audience: Ages 9-12.

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For Stefi and Jeffy, baseball kids.

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Very special thanks to you, the reader.

Best wishes for happy adventuring!

Corey Green

Chapter One

The Switch

The switch happened the same day lightning struck inside the classroom.

Connor Anderson had no idea that life was about to throw him a changeup. All he knew was that he was stuck in a tiny room with five other sixth graders, taking some weird test for the school district. It had something to do with special programs—Connor wasn't sure.

He was sure about one thing: Babe Ruth never had to take a test like this.

Connor finished Part Four of his test and sneaked a peek at his friend Matt. They had been friends since first grade, but they were opposites in so many ways. Matt was blonde and pale; Connor had dark hair and skin. Both boys played baseball, but Matt looked like a linebacker. Matt attended Special Education classes for reading, and Connor had been placed in Gifted because he was academically advanced.

Both boys hoped that their test scores would show that they could quit these special classes. Quitting special classes

would make life easier in regular class—no more makeup assignments! The boys could spend more time on baseball.

“That concludes Part Four,” said Mr. Rasmusin, the test administrator sent over from district offices. “Set aside your papers.” Trying too hard to be cool, Mr. Rasmusin had told students to call him “Mr. Raz.” But nothing could make Mr. Raz cool. His short-sleeved white dress shirt, blue and yellow striped tie and four pens in a pocket protector were like a neon sign blinking “Nerd Alert!”

“You may take a short break.” Mr. Raz opened the classroom door.

One student went to the bathroom. Everyone else stayed put. Connor put his head on the desk and yawned.

Noise seeped in from the hallway. The sixth graders were being rowdy while they set up for their biography program. That afternoon, all the students at Buckley Elementary School would come to see the reports. Connor had chosen his hero: baseball star Jackie Robinson, who paved the way for black players in the Major Leagues. Connor’s display was already set up, but some of his classmates were still arranging models of inventions and other visual aids.

WHIR! More noises were followed by thuds of heavy footsteps and then shrieks and giggles.

Connor sat up and rubbed his eyes.

WHIR! SWOOSH! A miniature kite fluttered into the testing room.

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Chris and Zack, the sixth grade class troublemakers, burst into the room, chasing the kite. Zack was small and wiry, with spiky red hair that matched his love of fire and electricity. Chris, who enjoyed cooking, joking and playing pranks, was big and tall to match his oversized personality.

Chris clutched the string attached to the mini-kite. Zack carried a fan in his right hand, connected by a cord to a battery pack in his left hand. Zack aimed the fan's breeze at the kite, keeping it flying in the air behind Chris.

"Sorry," Chris panted. "We haven't figured out how to steer it."

"I forgot about my Benjamin Franklin project until last night," Zack explained, aiming the fan at the mini-kite. "So the kite's not very good, but it does have a little something extra."

Connor looked up at the kite, fluttering in the front corner of the room. Now that Zack mentioned it, the kite did look unusual. Instead of a string for a tail, it had a wire with strips of cloth tied to it. At the top of the kite was a shiny metal rod attached to a small device that looked like a silver colored battery.

"What's that?" Connor asked, pointing.

Zack grinned proudly. "It's a—"

"It doesn't matter!" Mr. Raz grabbed at the kite but missed. The kite's wire tail whipped around and hit him on the arm. "Get this out of here!" Mr. Raz snatched the kite by the metal rod at the top, yanking the string out of Chris's hands.

ZAP! There was a sizzling, crackling sound as the kite shot a bolt of electricity from the metal rod, shocking Mr. Raz.

“Yow!” Mr. Raz let go of the kite and fell backward onto the table.

The kite swooped over Mr. Raz’s head. ZAP! Everyone could clearly see a bolt of lightning as the kite made contact with the metal tip of the flagpole that was mounted over the bulletin board.

The kite fluttered to the testing table.

“Look out!” Connor yelled.

The test takers backed away from the table.

Zack raced toward the kite, still holding his fan. The fan blew the test papers into the air. Connor tried to catch them, but most landed in a mess on the floor.

Mr. Raz scrambled to his feet and knocked over the table.

The boy who had gone to the bathroom returned to the classroom and stared, mouth agape.

“Turn the fan off!” Connor shouted.

Sheepishly, Zack switched off the fan.

Connor picked up the papers that had fallen to the floor, then helped Matt turn the table right side up.

Mr. Raz glared at Chris and Zack.

“Sorry,” Chris muttered.

“We just wanted the kite to have lightning, like Ben Franklin’s,” Zack told Mr. Raz. “You completed the circuit

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when you touched the positive and negative sides. That's why you got shocked."

Mr. Raz scowled, and Connor hid a smile. Zack had a bad habit of trying to explain his inventions to people who were more concerned about the pain from being zapped.

"Just go," Mr. Raz ordered, pushing Chris and Zack out the door. "I'll deal with you later."

Mr. Raz straightened his tie and turned to face the test takers. "Sort out your papers and begin Part Five. You may leave when you finish."

The kids scrambled to claim their test sheets from the jumble on the table. Most of them found their answer sheets easily, but Connor and Matt had trouble.

"This is yours," Connor said, handing Matt a bubble sheet from Part One.

"And this one is yours." Matt passed Connor a bubble sheet from Part Two.

Parts Three and Four were more difficult. The boys had forgotten to put their names on the pages.

"I'm pretty sure this is mine," Connor said, grabbing a Part Three. "Yeah, I think I put C for question eight."

"Okay," Matt said. "I think this is my Part Four. Here, you take the other one."

The boys sat down and worked through Part Five.

Neither Connor nor Matt knew that two of their papers had been switched. They had no idea that this double switch would make the rest of sixth grade a whole new ballgame.