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Deadly Letter

Written by

Mary Hoffman

Illustrated by

Sophie Burrows

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Chapter 1
Who's It? Not You

Prity didn't know which was the worst thing about her first day at Green Park School. There was plenty to choose from.

For a start, there was the cold. That wasn't the school's fault, but they hadn't turned the boiler on yet. "There's no need.

It's such a mild autumn," Prity's teacher Mr Shepherd explained.

Prity shivered. If freezing winds and damp drizzle counted as "mild", how was she going to cope with the winter in this strange country?

Prity hoped the school dinner might warm her up, but she couldn't eat much of it. There were things they called samosas, but they didn't *taste* like samosas. They were very dry, and the dinner lady served them with a dollop of mashed potato and some bright orange beans. Pudding was an even drier sort of biscuit and a strawberry milkshake.

Then there were all the jokes about her name. Grown-ups didn't seem to be able to stop themselves from saying "What a pretty name!" – and then they realised they had





made a pun and went all red. And after the grown-ups at school did that, there was no way to avoid kids calling out things like "Pretty ugly" or "Pretty stupid" after her.

Where Prity came from, her name wasn't at all unusual. No one felt the need to comment on it. Prity thought all the English names like Jake and Brooke sounded much odder, but she kept her thoughts to herself.

Prity knew English from her school in India. In fact, most of her lessons there had been in English. But they spoke a different kind of English here in Tottenham. When the children spoke to a teacher, they didn't say "Sir" or "Miss". When they told a story they began, "There was this man, right?" – and Prity didn't know who the man was supposed to be.

But the worst thing was playtime. Prity stood in the playground in her warm new coat and shivered as she watched all the children who had been friends with each other since nursery school. She wondered how she was ever going to fit in. There were other kids

from India and Pakistan at Green Park of course, but most of them had been born in London and talked with Tottenham accents just like the white children. They didn't seem to mind the cold, the food, or the people. They hadn't got off a plane two weeks ago, or left everything they knew behind them.

A group of children was dipping in and out to see who was going to be "it" for a game. Prity stood and watched them. They had been playing for some time and they kept using a word that Prity knew was rude. But this time a teacher was near by, so they used the proper words.

Ip dip sky blue.
Who's it? Not you.
Not because you're dirty,
Not because you're clean,
My mum says you're the fairy queen.

O-U-T spells out
So out you must go.

The person chosen to be "it" this time was Casey Gill. She was one of the four children who sat at Prity's table in class.

"Want to play?" she called out, but Prity shook her head. She wanted to watch first



and work out the rules. But she still hadn't understood them by the time the bell went for afternoon school. She had spent playtime on her own, not playing with anyone.