Name: Anisha Mistry (I do have a middle name but it's too embarrassing so am **NOT** writing it here)

Age: 10 years, 3 months and 10 days (at time of writing this)

Lives with: Mum, Dad, and my mischievous Granny Jas

School: Birmingham South-West Aspire Junior Middle High Academy School (longest school name ever!)

Favourite Subject: Science

Best friend: Milo Moon

Ambitions: To meet a real life astronaut

To invent a cure for meanness

To be the first kid in space

For all the families, large and small, blended, multigenerational, sometimes a bit mixed up and wobbly, often incredibly strong, filled with love, laughter and perfect chaos. You are all wonderful.

SERENA

For Dave, tea wizard, confidence wrangler, and general all-round legend. Thank you for spinning all the plates.

EMMA

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ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE

SCHOOL'S CANCELLED

SERENA PATEL

Illustrated by Emma McCann

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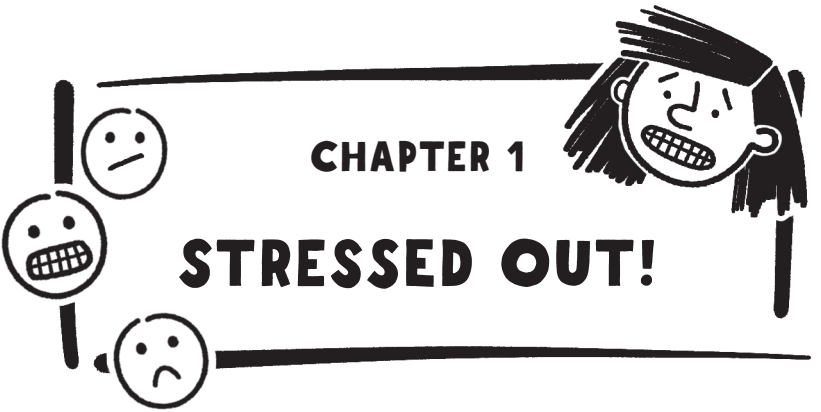


CHAPTER 1
STRESSED OUT!

I think Thursdays are a funny kind of day. It's not the weekend yet, which is okay with me because weekends mean family time. Family time usually means a lot of noise and drama in our house. Don't get me wrong, I do love my family, but they're also a bit bonkers and they get themselves into trouble **A LOT**. Anyway, this Thursday is kind of a special and exciting day at school because of the **BIG ANNOUNCEMENT**!

You see, there's a science fair next week. And not just any science fair either. It's the National Schools Science Fair and whoever has the best experiment wins an amazing prize. Actually, not just amazing, it's an **intergalactic** prize – a trip to the **national**

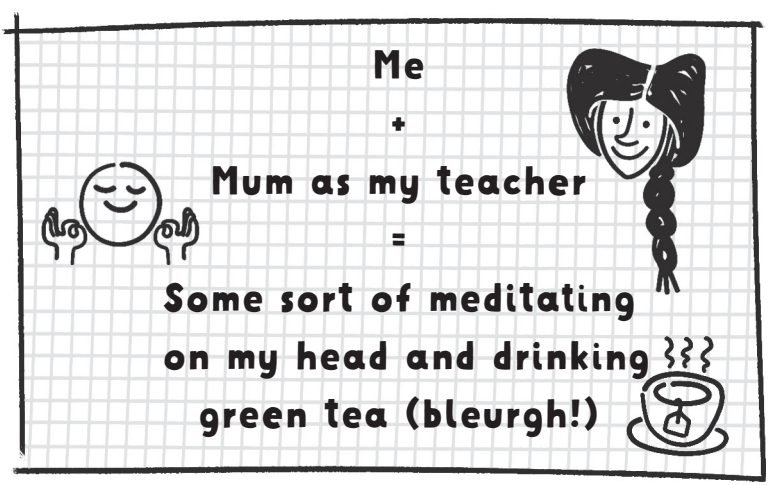
space centre! And the winner gets to meet a real-life astronaut! **How cool is that?**

Everyone in my year is so excited, even the kids who don't normally like science. Each school can only enter two teams and today our science teacher, Miss Bunsen, is going to announce who our two teams are. She's been watching us working on our projects for the last four weeks and it's been making my tummy go all weird, because I want our team to be one of the chosen ones **SO BAD**!

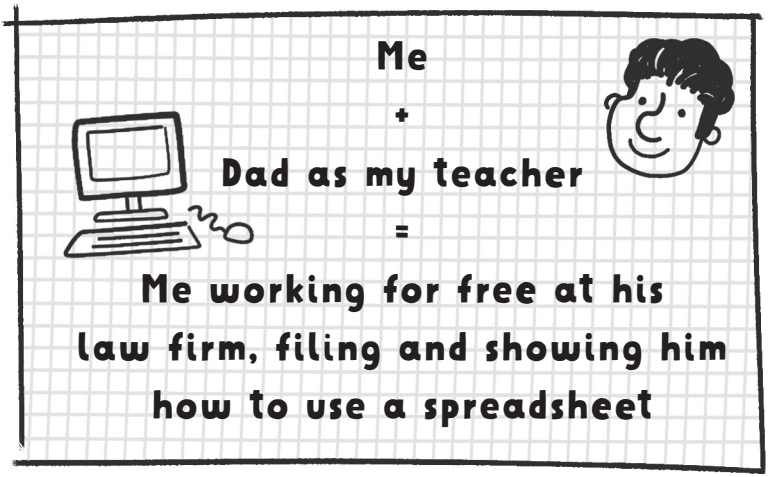
Mostly I quite like school, apart from some of the other kids. When I say other kids, I actually mean the **evil twins** Mindy and Manny, my cousins (only by marriage – their dad, Uncle Tony, married my mum's sister, Aunty Bindi). And yes, I meant it when I said they're **EVIL**. They used to go to a boarding school, but Uncle Tony decided it would be better for them to be close to home, where he can keep an eye on them. It's weird, but since they've been at my school they seem to be staying out of trouble. I keep

an eye on them though, as they are not to be trusted.

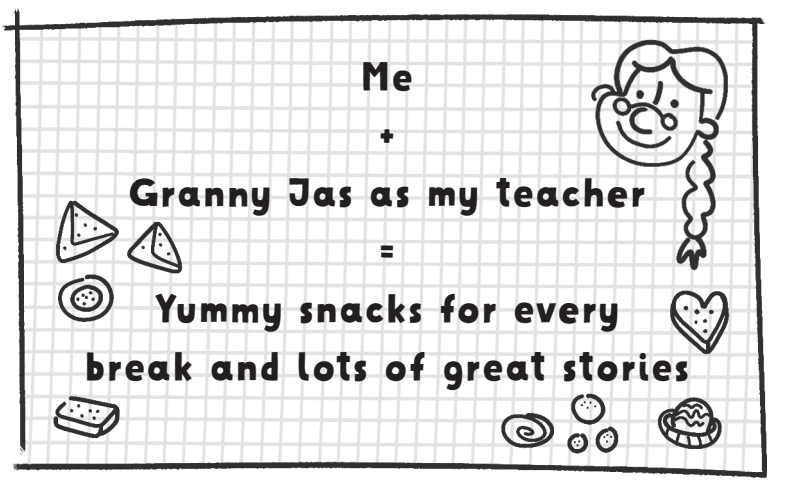
If that wasn't enough to deal with, I also have an arch-enemy, Beena Bhatt – she's the worst. She thinks I'm **her** arch-enemy but I'm really not. I might have **ACCIDENTALLY** knocked her over once but that doesn't mean we have to forever be arch-enemies! I have tried to tell her that but she won't listen, so now I just try to stay out of her way. It's not easy. I'd ask to be homeschooled, but that would probably be worse!



On the other hand…



But then what about…



I smile to myself, thinking about how fun it would be to read my books all day while Granny cooked up

a mountain of treats. She's making parathas* this morning, which are **my favourite**. The delicious smell of a big pile of steaming fried spicy flatbreads is wafting through the house.

Dad already left at 8.14 a.m., which is exactly fourteen minutes later than he should have done. He blustered out of the door **in a whirlwind** of jangling keys, briefcase and files under his arm and a half-eaten piece of toast dangling between his teeth. I don't think I've ever seen him sit down for breakfast. Mum's gone off to the local gym to run her early morning meditation class. I'm in a rush too, because I woke up late. I was up reading by torchlight till the middle of the night, so I slept through my alarm this morning. It was Dad's **morning bathroom noises** that finally woke me. I once saw a documentary about camels and weirdly that's what my dad sounds like – gargling and gurgling every morning. For once I was glad that he's so loud!

* **Parathas are just the best. They are spicy flatbreads which Granny cooks on her iron tawa pan. I love to watch her making them and the smell is amazing!**

I grab a paratha from the plate Granny's piling them onto and stuff it in my mouth too fast. "**Hot, hot, hot!**" I gasp, as Granny passes me a glass of water without even turning around.

"You kids, always in a rush. Take your time, silly," she gently scolds.

"But I **am** in a rush, I'm gonna be late," I moan.

"You shouldn't stay up till who knows what time then!" Granny smiles. "You think I don't see your torchlight shining under the bedroom door as I go to my room at night? When will you learn, Granny sees everything!"

"In my defence, I was reading a maths book!" I protest. "We always have a test on Thursdays. It's my second favourite subject! Well, it used to be."

"Used to be?" Granny studies my face. "Has something happened, beta?"

"No…I mean…well, it's just I usually know the answer when the teacher asks a question and…"

"And that's a bad thing these days, is it? Don't be

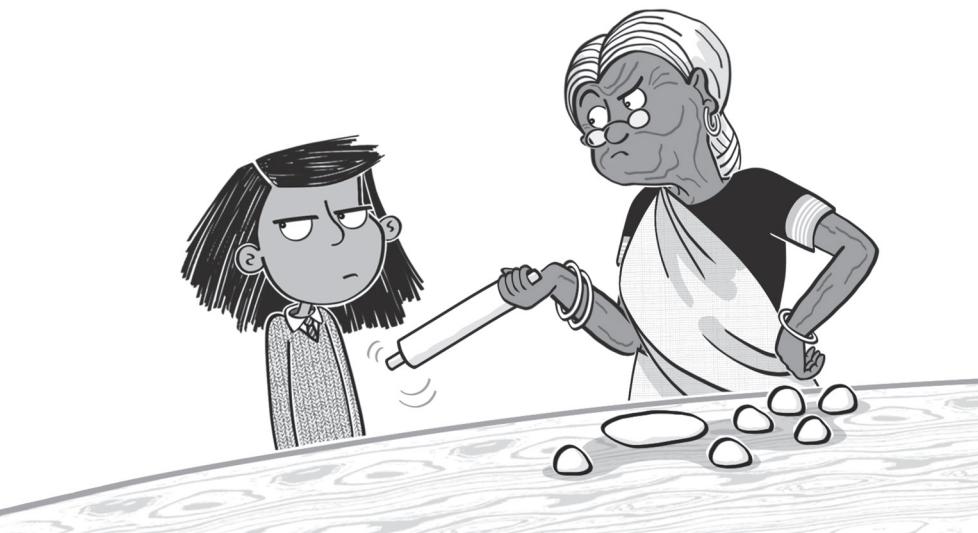
shy, beta. You should never be afraid to show your talents. You are **clever**. If the teacher asks you a question, go ahead and answer."

"You don't understand," I sigh.

Granny waves her rolling pin in my direction. "Granny understands everything."

"I just think sometimes it's easier to try and blend in, be part of the crowd. Not everyone in my school thinks being clever is cool."

"**Humph**," Granny snorts. "Anni, what are you talking about? Why would you want to hide your light? You must stand out, stand up, be proud!" She puffs out her chest.



"Do you think we would be here if our ancestors had just sat there idly letting everyone else speak up for them? **No, of course not!**"

I don't really know why Granny talks about people who lived long ago when things are so different now. I couldn't be any less like my brave ancestors if I tried – speaking up isn't really my thing.

"It's not that easy these days, Granny. If you're too clever, then some of the other kids make fun of you for being a nerd. I never used to care in Year Four or even Year Five, but things seem different in Year Six. There are still lots of kids who want to study and do well, but the teacher always uses my work as an example and it's embarrassing. It's just not good to be too clever."

"**Too** clever? **Too** clever? What is that? You can never be too clever, beta. Your brain is your **super power**, it's the thing that makes you special. Only you think like you!"

"Well, I wish someone would tell certain kids in my school that being clever is super."

"I will tell them! Shall I come to school with you now? I will put on my chappals* and march down to that school and I will tell them!"

"No, no, it's fine, Granny – anyway, grown-ups aren't allowed into school and I'd, erm, better go!" I make a move towards the front door before Granny can put her chappals or anything else on and follow me.

She shouts after me, "Put your hood up, it's cold out there! That nice weatherman, Gopal Singh – you know, the handsome one? – he said we might get some rain later. And don't forget, Bindi will be round after school, she wants your help with the party. I don't know, all this fuss, completely unnecessary! In my day we sang 'Happy Birthday', we blew out the candles,

* Granny's chappals are her sandals. Granny doesn't wear any other type of shoe – even in winter! She just puts a pair of woolly socks on and slips her trusty Scholl chappals on over the top.

and we ate some mithai,* job done. Bindi wants fireworks and flowers and too much faffing, if you ask me."

Next weekend it's Granny's big birthday. She's going to be seventy-five – practically ancient. (But I'd never say that to her, as she'd definitely take her chappal off and throw it at me!) Dad said we should have a family gathering in honour of Granny. It was meant to be just a quiet dinner, but then Bindi got involved – my **very** melodramatic Aunty Bindi. So now it's the **Extremely Enormous Birthday Party** and suddenly there's a completely **over-the-top** three-tier cake, fantastic fireworks, immense entertainment, about a hundred guests, a ton of fabulous food and of course a massive marquee. I've been hiding from Bindi all week. She wants me to be her party-planning assistant. I mean, come on, do I

* Mithai is the yummiest Indian sweet treat and it comes in all colours and shapes.

sound like I want to be a party planner to you?!

Anyway, the big National Schools Science Fair is exactly one week from today, did I say that already? I'm in a team with Milo, of course, and our new friend Govi – he transferred from another school four weeks ago and he's really shy. We've been working on this **amazing** experiment together. It's top secret though, so I can't tell you what it is yet. And no, before you say it, that doesn't mean we haven't figured out how to do it. Well, it might need a few tweaks... The thing is, between dodging Aunty Bindi and worrying about our entry for the fair, I have been **SO STRESSED OUT**!

I try to think calming thoughts on the way to pick up Milo from his house. When I get there, Milo is standing outside, happily chatting to his pocket. He got a **pet rat** called Ralph last week.

"Milo, you can't bring Ralph to school!" I warn.

Milo grins at me. "Why not? **What could go wrong**?"