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 Deepak who believed I could.
SERENA

For the sisters of The South Room for their wise counsel, cat photos, nephew videos, and excellent giffage. You keep me sane.
EMMA

First published in the UK in 2021 by Usborne Publishing Ltd., Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England, usborne.com

Usborne Verlag, Usborne Publishing Ltd., Prüfeninger Str. 20, 93049 Regensburg, Deutschland VK Nr. 17560

Text copyright © Serena Patel, 2021

The right of Serena Patel to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Illustrations copyright © Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2021

Illustrations by Emma McCann.

The name Usborne and the Balloon logo are Trade Marks of Usborne Publishing Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

JFMA JJASOND/21 ISBN 9781474959544 05229/1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C020471

ANISHA
ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE



SERENA PATEL
Illustrated by **Emma McCann**

USBORNE



CHAPTER ONE

ROAD TRIP!

"**ANISHA!** It's time to go! Come on, Dad's outside with the minibus!" Mum shouts from downstairs.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath. Okay, it won't be **that** bad. Will it? It's just me and my **entire** family, travelling to Leicester in a minibus and spending three days there. **Together.**

I check my bag one last time: notebook, pen, book on the history of space exploration. One more thing to add. I sit on the bed and pull open the drawer of my bedside table. There it is – my silver autograph book. It's one of the most special things I own. I flick through the pages. I've got autographs

and replies to my letters from the people I most admire in here. Tim Berners-Lee – he invented the internet. Brian Cox, the brilliant physicist, Tim Peake, the astronaut, and Professor Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell – did you know she discovered radio pulsars*?



* Pulsars are the remains of stars that have gone supernova – which means they have exploded! You can sometimes see them blinking in the sky from earth – so cool!

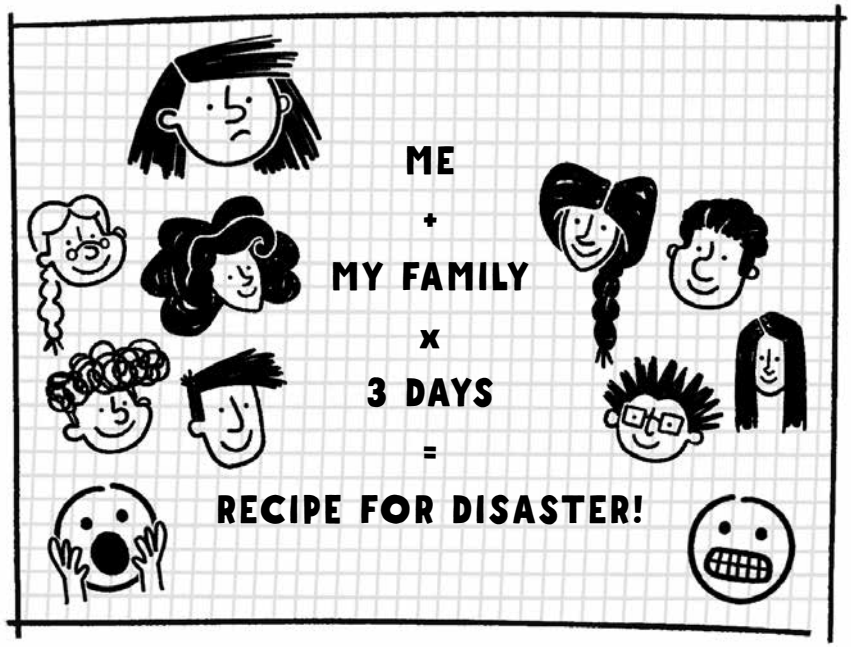
And this weekend I'm going to add Sangeeta Sanśōdhaka. She is a **famous** Indian space engineer. When I first read about her, I was so excited to see someone who looked like **me** doing my dream job. Then just last month, Milo and I **WON** the **National Schools Science Fair**. The prize is a trip to the National Space Centre in Leicester. We'll get to see actual rockets and space rovers, and by coincidence Sangeeta is going to be there too. She's in England for a conference and is doing some work with the Space Centre, so Milo and I will get to meet her in person! It's the most exciting thing ever to happen to me and I can't wait.

Mum and Dad and the rest of my family decided that, as we haven't been to Leicester for a long time and it's half-term, we should all go. The **Shabdkosh** festival happens in Leicester every year and it's taking place this weekend. **Shabdkosh** means "everything" and the festival literally contains **ALL** the things you could think of to do with

Indian culture and food. Granny has always wanted to go, but usually Dad's working or there's other stuff happening. This year, because of our prize, Dad took the time off so we can all go and make a little holiday of it. He's already calling it the **Mistrys' Road Trip Extravaganza**. I don't know why – Leicester's not *that* far away.

Anyway, the festival sounds kind of interesting, I guess. They're having a **Wonders of the World** theme this year and there are going to be some cool displays. Hopefully my family won't do what they usually do whenever we go anywhere and cause mayhem…

We're going to explore the festival for our first two days in Leicester, before I finally get to go to the Space Centre on Monday. It'll be fine, I tell myself. It's only nine of us staying in a little bed and breakfast, sharing rooms and being together every moment of **EVERY DAY**!



"Anisha, how long does it take to get your things together? Come on now, beta, everyone is waiting!" Granny yells up the stairs.

I grab my bag and run down, only to find everyone **NOT** waiting, but still trying to get about a **hundred bags** in the big black minibus parked outside our house. Uncle Tony's limousine has pulled up behind it, its boot full of pink luggage that is being transferred into the minibus's large luggage compartment. It's already quite full, but Mum is

desperately trying to fit another bag in by pushing it with her bum.

"You do know we're only going for a few days, right?" I say to her.

"They're not mine!" Mum huffs, out of breath. "It's all Bindi's. She must think we're **moving** to Leicester."

"I heard that!" protests Bindi from somewhere behind another pile of luggage on the pavement.

Just then Uncle Tony, who was leaning over into the back seat of the limo, stands up. He groans under the weight of the biggest make-up case I've ever seen.

"Sweetums, are you sure you need all this, my love?" he wheezes.

"Oh yes, honeykins, I only packed the bare minimum," Bindi squeals, taking the make-up case from him with no trouble at all.





"There had better be space for my tubs!" Granny pushes past both of them, carrying a **tower** of Tupperware.

"What on earth is all that for?" Mum asks.

"Well, I want to get some of that lovely Leicester food while we're there so I can freeze it when we get back. Plus, they've opened a new **Spice Bazaar** and Mrs Kumar from number 23 went last month and she came back with all sorts of delicious things. I can do my chopping and sorting in Leicester and have everything all neatly packed in my tubs for the journey home," Granny tells her happily.

Mum opens her mouth to say something but then seems to decide against it. When Granny Jas wants to do something, eventually we end up doing it, so the tubs get loaded on too.

My cousins Mindy and Manny are already in the minibus and wave at me through the window. I wave back. It's so nice now we're all **friends**. It hasn't always been that way, but I'm actually looking forward to spending some time with them this week.

"Hey, Neesh!" Milo makes me jump as he runs up behind me cheerfully. "I was worried you guys would go without me. I can't believe we're leaving so early. I'm usually still asleep at 7 a.m. on a Saturday."

"No chance of leaving you behind or leaving on time. We're still loading up," I say, nodding at the pile of bags that Uncle Tony, his chauffeur Mustaf, my mum and now Dad are trying to **squeeze** into the already full luggage compartment.

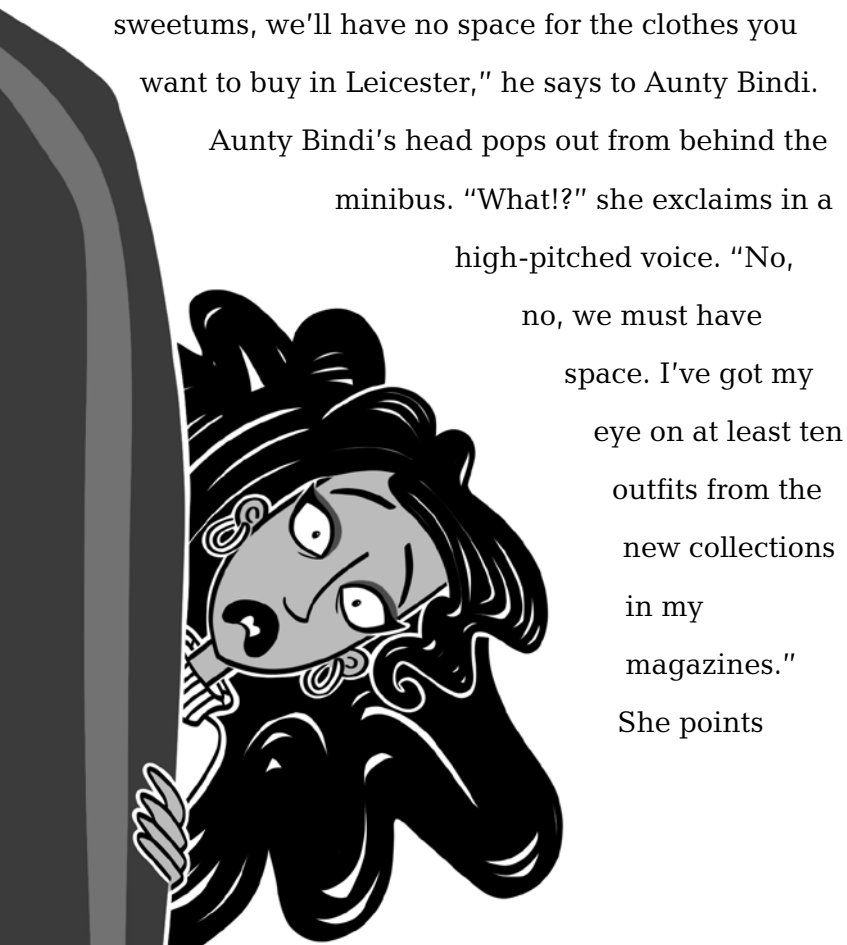
"This minibus is **sick**," Milo says, impressed.

"I've never been in one this **posh.**"

"Dad borrowed it from his friend who runs a coach company," I say. "It's really **swish** inside. I had a look last night when Dad brought it home."

"It's got a state-of-the-art **satnav**!" Dad grins as he passes us with another pink bag.

"Another bag?" huffs Tony. "You know, sweetums, we'll have no space for the clothes you want to buy in Leicester," he says to Aunty Bindi.



Aunty Bindi's head pops out from behind the minibus. "What!?" she exclaims in a high-pitched voice. "No, no, we must have space. I've got my eye on at least ten outfits from the new collections in my magazines." She points glumly to the smallest case on the pile. "I mean, I suppose we can leave this behind."

Mustaf steps forward. "May I offer my **services**, madam? I could follow in the car with the remaining bags."

Aunty Bindi looks hopefully at Uncle Tony, but he shakes his head. "No, Mustaf. Thank you for offering but it's your week off and your family are expecting to see you. But you can help me in another way. Do you remember when I took the twins camping that one year?"

Mustaf smiles ever so slightly and nods.

"Didn't I buy a **ridiculously** big roof rack for that trip? I'm sure I still have it in the garage. Would you be able to drive round to the house quickly and bring it?" asks Uncle Tony.

"Of course!" Mustaf moves swiftly towards the limo, hops in and speeds off.

Aunty Bindi runs over to Uncle Tony and flings her arms around him. "Thank you, sweetums, I know

I'm a pain needing all my things with me," she says, smiling.

"Never a pain, my love." Uncle Tony smiles back at her, gooey-eyed. I have to look away before they start smooching. Grown-ups are so **yucky** sometimes.

Milo blushes, embarrassed by all the lovey-dovey stuff like me. **"ANYWAY!"** he practically shouts. "Neesh, I read up on the **Shabdkosh** festival your granny told us about. We are still going, aren't we? I can't wait, I've never been to a festival before! I've got my action-cam hat that Nan bought me for my birthday and I can record **EVERYTHING** we see and do," he says, tapping the little square lens perched on top of his baseball cap.



"I'm not deaf, Milo, you don't need to **yell**. And to answer your question, yes, we are still **going** to the festival. If we ever get out of here, that is."

Mindy sticks her head out of the minibus window. "You know, Milo, they have a very famous **jewel** on display at the festival," she says, raising her eyebrows at us.

"Ooh, like **how** famous? Is it more famous than **David Attenborough**? Or more famous than the **dinosaurs**?" Milo asks.

"Technically, I don't know if you'd call dinosaurs famous, Milo," I say. "But I will tell you an interesting jewel fact. Diamonds are the only gem made up of a single chemical element. Isn't **THAT** more interesting than how famous something is?"

Milo looks at me for a moment, thinking. Then he turns back to Mindy and asks, "Mindy, is it more **famous** than Steve Backshall – you know, that animal guy off the telly? He swam with sharks!

Wait, I'm coming up, save me a seat by you so we can talk about it on the way!"

I smile, shaking my head.

Mum passes me with her long list. "Isn't it **exciting**, Anni? Lots of lovely quality **family time**. You can help me find all these special scented candles and incense sticks while we're there, if you like. There's a shop with all the best spiritual supplies. It'll be fun."

Just then Granny sneaks up on me – **she always does that**! She's wearing her favourite **salwar kameez** – the cream one with the green-and-pink patterned chunni*. She never wears a sari when we travel, as she says it's too difficult to use the toilet. I don't know what the difference is between using our toilet and one somewhere else, but that's **Granny logic** for you. "Are you getting on the bus or not, **beta**? Mustaf will be back any second and as soon as that roof rack is loaded, we need to get moving."

I look at Granny grinning her gummy grin at me. "Granny, did you pack your **teeth**?"

"Oh, yes. I just don't like to wear them on long journeys. They rattle in my mouth when the road is bumpy," she replies.

"Oh, I see," I say, **wincing** at the thought. "Anyway, shall I check if Dad can fit your bag in the luggage compartment, Granny? I'm not sure there's enough space though. What on earth have you got in there?"

"I never go anywhere without my tongue scraper, my nail cutters and my calendar."

I smile, shaking my head. Granny is so strange sometimes. She puts her bag with the others and says, "Come on, **beta**, let's get on the minibus. I see Mustaf coming down the road."

I follow Granny onto the bus. There are five rows of seats – four to each row with an aisle down the

* A chunni is a headscarf, usually worn with a salwar kameez, which is a long tunic top and trousers. Granny says they're really comfortable. Whenever I've worn one, I usually end up losing my chunni or leaving it somewhere.

middle. Dad is sitting in the driver's seat with Mum behind him. Manny's **proudly** sitting in the front passenger seat. He recently had a growth spurt so now he's allowed to sit in the front. Mindy wasn't happy at all because now Manny is taller than her! She said it was rude of Manny not to wait for her to grow too. They are twins after all! Milo and Mindy are sitting halfway back on the minibus.

I sit on the same row as them but on the other side of the aisle. I don't mind sitting by myself – it's nice to have some space for once. Granny sits behind me and spreads out across the two seats with her knitting and a bag of snacks. For a second, I'm sure we've left someone behind and then I remember Mindy's dog Bella has gone to a special B & B where there will be lots of other pups to play with. Aunty Bindi found it on the internet – they have pooch ball pits and paddling pools! Bella is going to have a **fab** time.

A few minutes later, the roof rack is on and the



last of the luggage is secured. Aunty Bindi and Uncle Tony get on and sit in the back row. Mustaf waves from outside and we all wave back.

"Ready, family?" Dad turns to ask us.

"Yes!" we all shout back.

"**Ready**, navigator?" Dad asks Manny, giving him a nod.

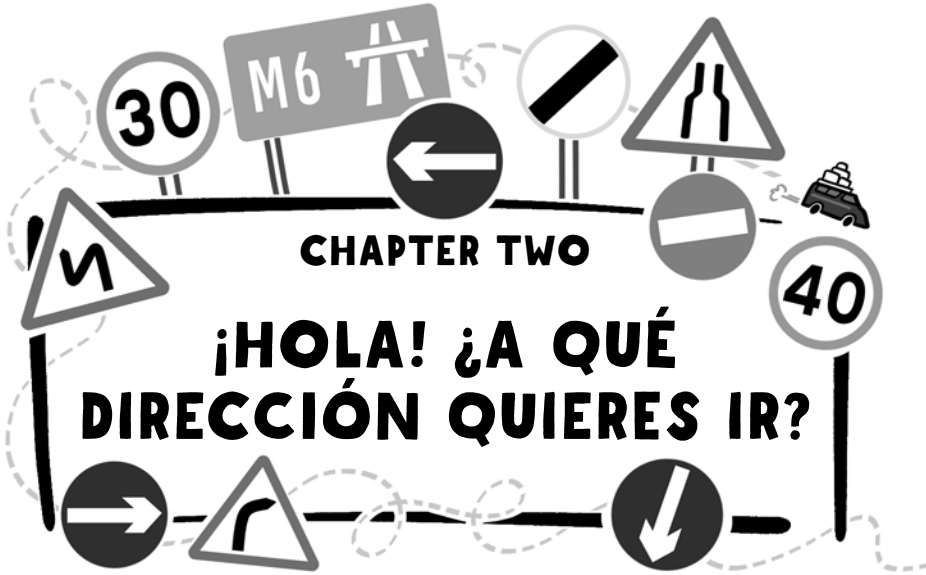
"**Aye aye, captain**!" Manny beams.

"You do know we're not on a **ship**?" Mindy giggles, which sets Manny and Dad chuckling too.

And just like that, we're **off**. As the minibus pulls away, I see our reflection in the windows of the houses. Our big black minibus gleams in the early sunlight, heaving with a pile of bright pink luggage on top. I hope Mustaf secured it all properly.

Aunty Bindi tries to get a **sing-song** going. I watch my street go by as we move down the road. Granny starts passing around snacks, savoury and sweet.

My tummy does a little **flip** as we head out of Birmingham and towards the motorway. This is it – no turning back now. Just for once, I hope this trip goes to plan!



CHAPTER TWO

¡HOLA! ¿A QUÉ DIRECCIÓN QUIERES IR?

We're not on the road long before the traffic suddenly slows and a queue of red brake lights stretches out in front of us. The electronic speed sign says twenty miles per hour and we crawl along with everyone else.

Dad sighs. "Well, this is **annoying**. The satnav should redirect us though. Hopefully we can get off at the next junction."

"Um, not to interfere, but is that a good **idea**? You do remember the last time we got **lost**?" says Mum, leaning forward in her seat.

Dad clears his throat loudly. "Nothing to **worry**