Name: Anisha Mistry (I do have a middle name but it's too embarrassing so I 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

USBORNE

For Rishen and Avni, who bring the sunshine even on the cloudy days xx
SERENA

For Davey G, as always
EMMA

USBORNE

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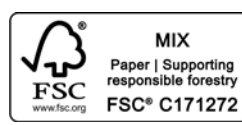
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ANISHA

ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE



SERENA PATEL

Illustrated by Emma McCann

USBORNE

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CHAPTER ONE

FREEDOM!

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It's the best day ever! Finally, freedom! Well, for the next few days anyway. We're going on our Year Six residential trip! For **THREE** whole days!

I was a bit nervous at first, just because I've never really been away from home without at least one of my parents or Granny Jas, but then Mindy, Manny and Milo got super excited about all the fun we could have, and that made me excited too. Plus, for the first time ever the residential is also doubling up as a science and geography field trip! Two subjects I really love!

Thirty of us are going to a place called Coral



Cove in Wales with Miss Bunsen and our new geography teacher, Miss Poles. The best thing is that while we're there we're going to take part in the Beach Warriors competition. The Wildlife Protection Society is running a series of local competitions in certain parts of Wales to raise awareness of how we can all tackle beach pollution and look after our wildlife and nature. It's open to all the schools in those areas and Miss Poles thought we could do it as part of our trip! She had to check we'd be able to take part and The Wildlife Protection Society said we can!

To enter we have to come up with an idea for making a positive difference to or raising awareness about beach pollution. Miss Poles suggested

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cleaning up the beach and making our own wildlife habitats* there. We just have to take photos of our project and write some words about what we did and email it all in by four o'clock on Wednesday. There will be a winner for each town that is taking part and they get to name a section of beach where they do their project!

Anyway, it's exactly **7.32 a.m.** on Monday morning and we're standing outside school with our suitcases while Miss Bunsen checks everyone off on the register. I convinced Mum and Dad not to wait to wave off the coach. Even as we were saying goodbye at the car just now, Mum was lingering and being weird and looking at me with misty eyes.

"Ah, beta, I'll be right here when you come back, okay?" she said. "And don't worry if you need to come home early, Dad will hop in the car and come to get you."

"I'm not driving almost three hours to Wales!

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*** A habitat is another word for the home or environment of an animal or plant.**

She'll be fine. You'll be fine, won't you, Anni?" Dad had ruffled my hair then.

My tummy had lurched. I was so excited, but Wales **IS** a long way from home. Mum must have seen that millisecond of doubt in my face, because then she offered the most horrific thing.


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"I could come along with you! I'm sure the teachers wouldn't mind…"

"NO!" I shouted a little too loudly. "That's a lovely idea, Mum, but I think I'll be okay. It'll be good for me, you know! I need to be a bit more independent."

Mum hadn't looked that convinced, but thankfully Aunty Bindi had phoned her right at that moment, which distracted her. Every phone call from Aunty Bindi is exciting at the moment. The baby is due any day now. Aunty Bindi's tummy is so big, and sometimes we can see the baby jiggling about in there. The whole family is so hyped up about it, which is the other reason I'm sort of desperate to get away. That sounds horrible, but I don't mean get away from my family… Well, maybe a little bit.

I love my family, but it's a lot right now. Mindy and Manny are going to be a great big brother and sister. They've been helping Uncle Tony get the baby's room ready at their house. Granny Jas has

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taken up knitting and is making all kinds of woollen things. Her first attempt was a bit wonky, so she made it into a big orange scarf and said it was for me! It was way too long, plus it's summer, but I didn't want to hurt her feelings so I wrapped it round myself three times and wore it to school. I thought everyone would laugh at me, but Beena decided it was cool and somehow I started a trend of wearing woolly scarves to school. It didn't last long once Beena realized it's far too hot and uncomfortable!

Granny also organized a special **pooja*** for the baby. A bit like a baby party, but weird because the

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*** A pooja is a special blessing with prayers. Granny takes them very seriously. The main thing I know about poojas is that they involve a lot of sitting around with your legs crossed, which really hurts after a while!**

baby isn't here yet. Aunty Bindi and Uncle Tony had to sit on the floor with a priest who said lots of stuff I didn't really understand, but Aunty Bindi was really happy. Sometimes it feels like we have **poojas** for everything in our family! The only good part was that they had a massive chocolate cake afterwards!

Mum and Dad are super excited about the baby too. They've been cooing over tiny baby clothes, and Dad has been filming the family lots, so the baby can watch it when they're older.

I guess I've been feeling a bit…well, a bit like the spare tyre in the back of Dad's car. A bit not-needed. I don't really know what **I'M** supposed to be doing! That sounds really silly when I think it out loud, though, and I haven't told anyone that. It's supposed to be a happy time and it is. I think I'm just a bit overwhelmed and the beach trip will be a good break. **Won't it?**

Beena Bhatt's voice snaps me back to the current moment.

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"Miss Bunsen, where shall I put my parasol and my deckchair?" she squeals.

I look over to see Beena wearing a full-on summer dress, sunhat and sandals. She's pulling a bright-pink suitcase behind her, and her mum is pulling along another two cases, with a deckchair and a parasol under her arm. Miss Bunsen looks worried.

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"Er, Beena, we did say just one bag. And you won't need the deckchair or the parasol either. We won't really be sitting around on the beach."

Beena looks confused. "What do you mean? It's a beach trip, right? I packed my swimming costume, my best sunglasses, suncream…all the important stuff!"

Miss Bunsen sighs. "Did you read the letter, Beena? We have been talking about the trip in class. It's a research trip. There won't be any sunbathing, dear. We'll be building habitats, going for walks, climbing, and gathering samples of seawater and sand."



"URGH, YUK!" Beena shouts. "That

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doesn't sound fun. Did you know about this?" she yells at her friends Layla and Amani, who also look confused.

Beena's mum sighs. "Oh, Beena. I did think it was a bit strange when you said the school was taking you on a seaside retreat. I wish you'd let me read the letters they send home!"

"It's **NOT MY FAULT!**" Beena screeches. "I don't want to go on this rubbish trip anyway now! It sounds **BORING!** Come on, Mother, let's go back to the car!" she orders.

Beena's mum laughs. "I don't think so, Missy. You've got clothes and your toothbrush; you'll be fine. It'll be an adventure! Off you go." And she nudges her towards Miss Bunsen. "I'll take the deckchair and parasol home with me."

Beena stands there in horrified silence as her mum marches away, and then Miss Bunsen herds her onto the coach. I stifle a giggle. Beena is much better than she used to be, but some things never

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change. I sit down near the big pile of bags waiting to go onto the coach and open my backpack to check I have everything. I've got three books, my notepad, pens and my favourite soft teddy that Aunty Bindi gave me when I was little. I rub its head and tuck it down in the small side pocket.

Just then Mindy and Manny arrive with Aunty Bindi. "Anisha!" Manny shouts out happily from under his huge backpack. It has all kinds of things hanging from it: a saucepan, binoculars, a torch, a bucket and a spade!



"Are you sure you have enough stuff with

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you, Manny?" I chuckle. "You do know we're not camping outside; we will have beds to sleep in and meals cooked for us."

"I'm just being prepared!" he replies. "Besides, how many books have you got in that bag, Anisha?" he teases.

"Fair point!" I laugh.

"I did try to tell him," Mindy says. "You know how he loves all that survival stuff. Remember when we went on that forest holiday!" She rolls her eyes.

"Er, as I remember it, the walkie-talkies and secret signals worked very well!" Manny retorts. "And anyway, the bucket and spade are definitely necessary. I want to see if we can find the **secret sandcastles** on the beach we're going to. I saw a thing online and it's super cool! It went viral!"

Mindy sighs. "Is that the YouTube video you showed me?"

Manny grins. "Yeah! Anisha, wait till you see it. There's this person in Coral Cove – where we're

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going – and they leave these amazing sandcastles on the beach."

"Okaaaaay," I say, not sure what the big deal is.

"No, you have to see these sandcastles, Anisha!" Manny enthuses.

"They are pretty good, I suppose," Mindy admits.

"And," Manny continues, "**NO ONE** knows who is building them! How cool is that? I want to build a sandcastle next to one of the secret ones and take a picture!"

Aunty Bindi waddles up behind us. "Oh my darlings. Be safe, okay. I love you both **soooooooo** much!" She squeezes them. "And you too, Anisha, come here!" She yanks me into a big bear hug with Mindy and Manny and the baby bump.

"Now listen. Baby and I will be waiting here for you all, okay?"

"Don't come out yet, baby!" Manny instructs the bump.

"We'll call you!" Mindy says, waving her phone.

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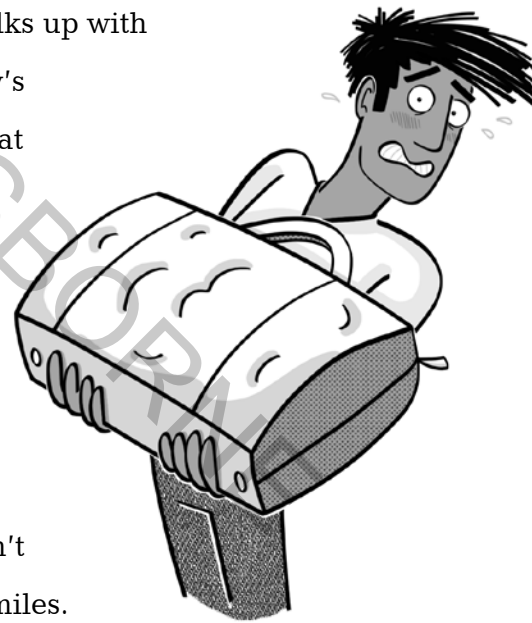
"I'm afraid not," Mr Graft, our head teacher, says as he walks past. "There's no phone signal where we're going. We'll post updates on the school website when we can, but no news is good news and you have the telephone number of the dorms we're staying at, in case of emergency."

He says the word **EMERGENCY** very meaningfully.

"What? But they'll be gone for three whole days!" Aunty Bindi shrieks.

"Don't worry. We'll find a way to keep in touch," Manny reassures her, and gives her a final hug.

Uncle Tony walks up with Mindy and Manny's cases. "Mindy, what is in this case!" he complains.



"Not much. Just a few clothes and all the snacks Bindi packed for us in case they don't feed us." Mindy smiles.

Uncle Tony chuckles. "She'd come with you if she could!" He turns to Aunty Bindi. "Right, shall we leave the children to get on their coach, sweetums? We have that

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medical appointment remember?"

"Oh I suppose so," she replies. "Be safe and stick together, okay?"

Aunty Bindi squeezes everyone one more time and then she and Uncle Tony leave. I can see Aunty Bindi looking back every few steps. We wave and smile till my face hurts.

"This is so awesome," Manny shouts once they're finally gone. "We haven't been to the beach in so long! I hope we get to swim in the sea. I brought my snorkel!"

"It's not the Bahamas. What do you think you're going to see in the sea, Manny, someone's old shoe? Anyway, where's Milo?" Mindy asks.

"I don't think he's here yet," I say, and then I see him. He's wearing his backpack, carrying a litter picker, a net and wearing a cap that says **TEAM GREEN**!

"What's all that for?" I ask.

"I'm doing my bit for the environment," Milo explains. "I watched this documentary about how

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the wildlife on our coasts is in danger, because of littering and pollution. I want to clean up the beach!"



"Well, that's kind of why we're going there, Milo," Mindy points out.

"I know that," he answers seriously. "That's why I'm being prepared."

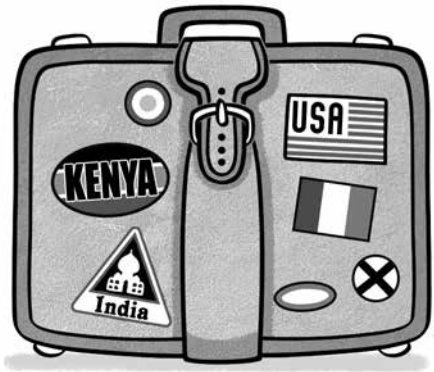
"That's exactly what I said!" Manny exclaims and they high-five each other.

Just then Miss Poles calls out, "Right, children, it's time to go. Shall we line up and get onto the coach in an orderly manner, please. No pushing. That means you, Oliver! Nice cap, Milo!"

Milo grins broadly. "Thanks, miss!"

We join the queue next to the coach, putting our

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cases in the storage space under it. I notice a big brown suitcase with stickers on the front that say **India**, **USA** and **Kenya** on them. It looks really familiar.

"That's so funny. You know who has a bag just like that?" I say.

"Who?" Mindy asks.

"Granny Jas. It's like the one she took to India that time and came back with filled with mangoes and got into trouble at the airport."

"I'm surprised Granny didn't come to wave us all off actually," Manny comments.

"Yeah, me too. She was being a bit weird on the phone last night. Maybe she's sad we're going," Mindy says.

"I didn't even see her this morning," I say.

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"She was probably too busy knitting for the baby." My voice sounds hard when I say that and Mindy looks at me inquisitively.

I change my tone. "You know, because it's not long till the baby comes now," I say brightly, wondering what that lurch was in my tummy. It's been happening a lot lately.

"SURPRISE!"

a voice shouts out from the luggage compartment, and Granny Jas jumps out from behind the brown case!

"Granny!" I yelp as I fall backwards into Mindy.



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"What? Were you really hiding in the luggage compartment? How on earth did you get in there?"

"Aw, you **DID** come to see us off!" Milo says happily.

"Nope." Granny grins as she reaches out for his hand, and he helps her out.

Something starts to dawn on me then, as I untangle myself from Mindy. That bag doesn't just look like Granny's bag; it **IS** Granny's bag! "Granny, why is your bag in the coach?" I ask.

"That's the surprise!" she laughs. "The school were asking for a volunteer to come and help chaperone you children, and I thought, what fun! I haven't been to the seaside in years. So, of course, I offered and they accepted…and now here I am!"

"OH, I,ER… WOW," I say, suddenly losing all my words. I was not expecting this at all. I had gotten used to the idea that it was going to be a no-grown-ups week.

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I look at my cousins. They don't seem bothered at all. "That's great, Granny," Mindy says, smiling. "Let me help you put your bag in here."

"Road trips with Granny are the best!" Manny beams.

"Do Mum and Dad know you're coming with us?" I ask.

"Ha, no! I left them a note and some paratha in the freezer. They would have tried to stop me. You know what they're like, **beta**. All that too-old nonsense they tell me. I'm looking forward to getting my feet in the sea, and won't it be nice for us to have some time away together!"



I force a smile. "Yeah, lovely, Granny." I don't know why, but I feel really

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irritated that Granny's here. Which is weird because Granny is one of my favourite people.

"You okay, Neesh? Your face looks strange," Milo says as we get onto the coach.

"I'm okay. I guess I was looking forward to it just being us," I whisper. "It'll be fine."

"Yeah, totally, and Granny **IS** a lot of fun," Milo reminds me.

As the coach pulls out of the school gates, starting the journey to Wales, I can hear Granny Jas behind me starting to hand out snacks. A few minutes later she's getting her knitting out and asking the other kids to help unwind her wool, while starting a singalong.

Everyone loves Granny. I love Granny. But right now, I feel really, really **ANNOYED**.

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