DREAM WEAVERS

CHAOS OF THE FUN FIEND

To my Dream Team – Angelique, Helena and Maria
– AS

To Olivia, my little dreamer
– FB

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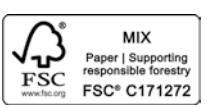

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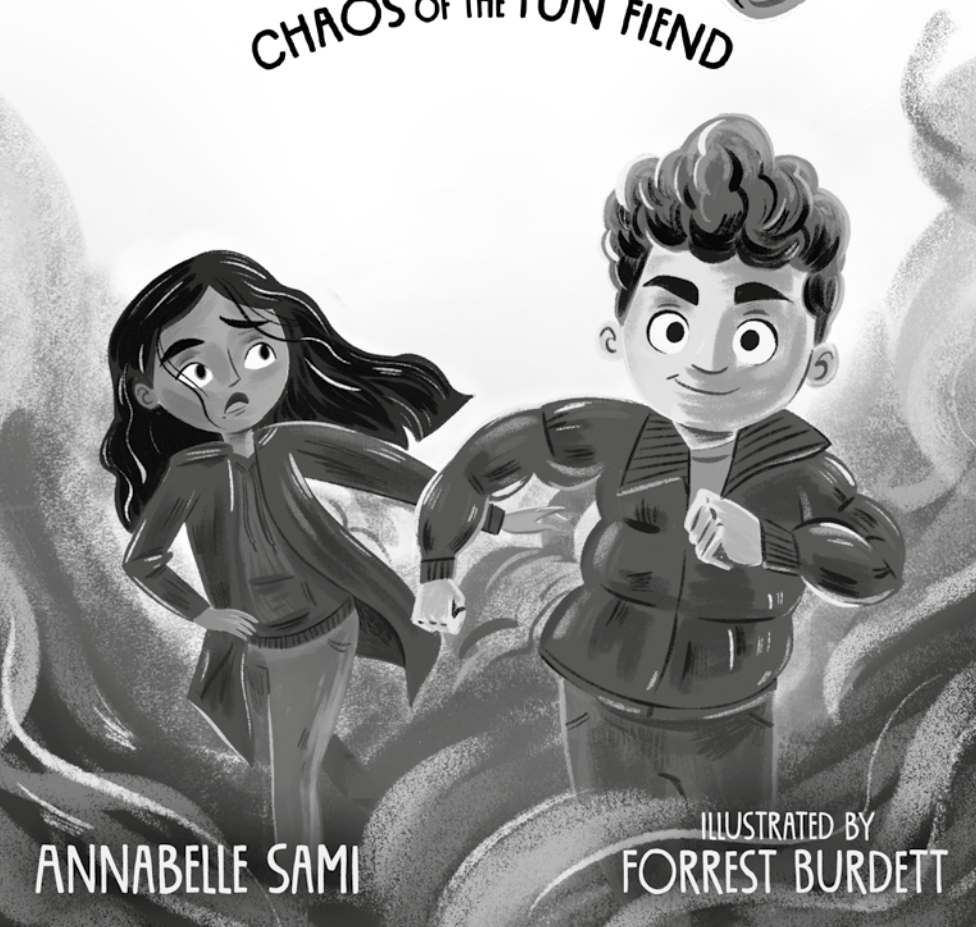

ANNABELLE SAMI

ILLUSTRATED BY
FORREST BURDETT

CHAPTER ONE
A DREAM HOLIDAY

"On your marks … get set … go!"

I press down on the airhorn with all my might and it honks loudly.

The competitors sprint across a long racetrack that I weaved across my dreambase and I grip the stopwatch in my hand tightly. The racers – an ostrich, a kangaroo, a cheetah, an alligator and a monkey – are almost at the finish line when…

"Hey!" I shout, before blowing a whistle. "That's a foul!"

The cheetah had curled its tail around the

kangaroo's leg to trip it up so they could win the race! I really should have seen that coming.

"I demand a rematch!" the monkey announces.

"And the cheetah should be disqualified!" croaks the alligator.

I sigh and wave my hands in circles as if I'm washing a window, making the animals and the track fizzle into thin air.

At the start of this year, the thought of holding an Olympic Games for talking animals would have been one, impossible and two, bonkers. But that was before I met Neena. She joined our class this term, having moved from Pakistan, and once she knew she could trust me, she told me that I'm a Dreamweaver just like her!

Now we have adventures in our dreams almost every night. It's not all silly races, though – there has been the odd run-in with jinn, spirits like scary fairies and a hangry wolf, but we've managed to control them.

There's also the small problem of Neena's uncle – a Darkweaver known as the Bhoot, who has an evil plan to try to merge the spirit and human worlds together… Something we *absolutely* cannot let happen.

That's why I'm holding the Olympics here in my dreambase, a clifftop I call Titotown. I need to practise my dreamweaving skills so I'm ready for whatever comes next. Be it fairy, beast or Darkweaver.

OK … *and* because it's fun.

I'm about to try a two-hundred-metre race when a voice floats towards me on the breeze… It's calling my name.

Titoooo… Titooooo!

I breathe in sharply and then *BAM*.

I'm lying flat on my face on the floor of Neena's bedroom, and she's poking me in the arm. "Tito, wake up! Your mama's going to be here soon to pick us up."

I wipe the drool from the corner of my mouth and groan. "How long was I asleep?" I ask shyly.

"Only about five minutes," Neena replies. "Were you doing the Titotown Olympics again? What event was it this time?"

"Hundred-metre sprint," I yawn. "But the cheetah cheated."

Nina giggles. "You created a whole race in just a nap? That's amazing, Tito!"

I perk up at the compliment. "My dreamweaving skills are getting stronger, aren't they? It wasn't that long ago I couldn't even dreamweave a pizza without it being made of cardboard." Remembering the cheesy-cardboard monstrosity, I heave myself up off the floor.

It's 5 p.m. on a Friday and pitch-black outside – winter is here. Today was our final day of school before the holidays and it was very tiring. I'd drifted off while Neena was still talking to me.

"What were you saying before I fell asleep?" I yawn again.

"I was asking what kind of present to bring your nan and grandad," Neena reminds me. "Do they prefer biscuits or chocolate?"

"Ummmm, honestly, both."

"Chocolate biscuits it is, then." Neena nods.

This holiday is going to be *extra* special because Neena is coming with my family to my nan and grandad's house!

Since we got home from school, she's been packing her clothes into a small purple suitcase while I tell her about Everwood – the seaside town where my grandparents live. Well, I *was* telling her before my nap.

"Nan and Grandad are basically kids at heart – that's what Mum always says," I explain. "We're going to have so much fun!"

"Tell me about the prank your grandad does again," Neena says, folding up a top. "The one with the coin."

I start laughing before I even begin telling the story. "He pretends he's accidentally swallowed a penny then he makes you pull his finger and it drops out of his trouser leg!"

Neena joins me laughing.

"And Nan is the best at made-up imagination games, like zookeepers or adventurers. Plus there's a fairground and an arcade that are even open in winter. And a Sea Life centre with starfish you can touch!"

"Oh my gosh, I can't *wait*!" Neena squeals.

Ameena, Neena's mum, appears in the doorway holding a steaming cup of chai. She smiles at us both. Neena's mum is a Soothsayer – someone in touch with the spirit world. She is a Starreader, and

sometimes I swear I can see the stars sparkling in her kind green eyes.

"Did you find everything I left you to pack, darling? Tito's mama is downstairs waiting."

Since we have to leave very early tomorrow morning, we decided that Neena should sleep over at my house tonight. Everwood is SO far away, basically the other side of the country, which is why we don't visit that often.

"Just one last thing to pack!" Neena slides a black leather journal into her backpack – her Jinncyclopedia.

Neena's uncle passed down the old book to her. It contains the records of countless Dreamweavers over the last one hundred years. It's called a Jinncyclopedia as it has details of all the different types of jinn (that we know of) within its yellowed pages.

Neena made me my own Jinncyclopedia that she translated into English. It's much

slimmer than Neena's since she only put the most important information in, and it would take years to translate all the pages in hers! I'm looking forward to building mine up to be just as epic. Maybe I'll even pass it on to my own dreamweaving apprentice one day…

"Ready, Mum," Neena said. She runs up to Ameena and wraps her arms around her. "I'll miss you, though. Are you sure you'll be OK here?"

I know that Neena isn't just worried about her mum missing her. Since the Bhoot ramped up his efforts to get Neena to join his evil alliance of Soothsayers, we've been on high alert. We know that he's planning to merge the spirit world with the human world and that Neena is "the key" to that happening – whatever that means. Exactly *why* he wants to merge the worlds remains a mystery.

"I'm sure Grandma and I will be perfectly fine," Ameena says, stroking Neena's head

with one hand. "And so will you and so will everyone in the town. It's only for one week, and didn't you say Tiff and Murray are away for the holidays too?"

I nod. Our best friends Tiff and Murray both left this evening to go and stay with their families for Christmas. Murray has gone to his uncle's house and Tiff is flying to South Korea to stay with her grandparents. If they're far away, hopefully the Bhoot won't be able to target them to get to Neena. Not that they know about any of this stuff anyway… I'll really miss them both but it's much easier to talk to Neena about dreamweaving without having to whisper or write secret notes to each other.

"So everyone is perfectly safe," Ameena says with a forced smile. "And you children need to have fun!"

Neena and I catch each other's eye, and I can see a glint of worry in her look. To be

honest, I'm uneasy too. I've got better at managing my inner scaredy-cat but leaving Ameena and Neena's grandma – the only other Soothsayers I know – is a frightening thought.

"And since the Bhoot doesn't know who Tito is, I suppose we're safer away at his grandparents' house anyway," Neena reasons.

My stomach flips. I *may* have been *kind of* avoiding telling Neena that the Bhoot does in fact know who I am – he saw me and heard my name the last time we ran into him. OK, I've *totally* been avoiding it – she would be so worried! But it may be better if Ameena and Neena knew…

Then I think of being at the seaside with my family and my best friend, in the most fun place ever. Maybe I can wait until *after* this week to break the news. I don't want anything to ruin the best holiday ever.

"Neeeeeena, Tiiiiiito!" my mama sings up the stairs. Mama loves opera and likes to let people know – no matter where she is!

Ameena chuckles. "Your mama is waiting. Come."

I'm a little relieved that the moment to talk about the Bhoot has passed. Ameena ushers us down the stairs and I take one last look at Neena's room.

We'll be back in a week. Just one week. What could possibly go wrong?