Cheese and Onion
Cheese and Onion
GYL
GYL
GYL
GYL
Cheese and Onion
Cheese and Onion



First published in Great Britain 2024 by Farshore
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

farshore.co.uk

HarperCollins*Publishers*
Macken House, 39/40 Mayor Street Upper, Dublin 1, D01 C9W8, Ireland

Text copyright © Farhana Islam 2025
Illustration copyright © Simran Diamond Singh 2025
The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted.

ISBN 978 000 863998 3

Printed and bound in the UK using 100% renewable electricity at CPI Group (UK) Ltd
1

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

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 and copyright owner.

Stay safe online. Any website addresses listed in this book are correct at the time of going to print. However, Farshore is not responsible for content hosted by third parties. Please be aware that online content can be subject to change and websites can contain content that is unsuitable for children. We advise that all children are supervised when using the internet.



This book is produced from independently certified FSC™ paper to ensure responsible forest management.

For more information visit: www.harpercollins.co.uk/green



Me (Mina)



Ammu & Abbu



Affa



Nana



Reasons why Mobeen and Reema are my best friends:

1. We're practically related. Reema's Abbu is my Ammu's, auntie's, next-door neighbour's, cousin. And Mobeen and I share the responsibility of being NUMBER ONE Chicken Wing Champions at Uddin's Fried Chicken.









For one night only, there would be no, *'Because I said so, Mina.'* (My Ammu)

No, '*Duro, beti!*' – (my Ammu again) – which I'm pretty sure means, **'YOU SILLY GOOSE LADY!'** in Bengali.

And no, *'Tu manush na goru?'* which almost sounds like a compliment, and then you find out it means 'Are you a human or a cow?' (I hear this one a lot from my big sister, Sairah AKA Affa.)

'I really hope we get to share a room, Mina.' Reema smiled at me as she slurped her Cherry Ice-Blast Explosion. 'I wrote your name right next to mine in **BIG BLACK CAPITAL LETTERS** so Miss Khan takes us **EXTRA** seriously. Obviously, I told her that if she doesn't put us together, well . . . she'd, you know . . . regret it.'







Mobeen sniggered, glancing quickly at me, 'Yeah . . . she definitely didn't say that.'

'Maybe if we both pray **EXTRA** hard for a room together instead of a popcorn machine, just for tonight, it might be enough.'

I **REALLY** wanted a popcorn machine.

Reema agreed and nudged me just enough to knock Mobeen off his tightrope. 'Okay, so wmaybe I didn't say that exactly, but I swear I was thinking it!' A slow smirk spread across her face as she watched Mobeen tumble onto the road and burst into a fit of giggles.

'I don't even care who I'm with as long as I don't have to share a room with Bilal the Bully . . . or his minions,' shuddered Mobeen as he got back up.

'What if he shaves off my eyebrows?' Mobeen

I giggled, and Reema did too, but neither of us expected Cherry Ice-Blast particles to shoot out of her nose like torpedoes.

In less than twenty-four hours, we would be on the trip of a lifetime. I **SERIOUSLY** had to BEG Ammu and Baba to let me go, because, if they didn't, my life would definitely be over. **EVERYBODY** who was **ANYBODY** was going. It took some major work to convince them. A whole, entire month of being on my best behaviour in fact.

Things I had to do:

- Clean my bed
- Help Ammu plant her exotic plants
- Stop my little brother Yusuf from eating paper
- Cut Abbu's toenails

But if I was Mobeen, I would be scared too. Who knows what Bilal the Bully would do to him with no grown-ups around. I don't like to make it public knowledge, but my Ammu was friends with Bilal's Ammu once. That was until my Ammu accidentally said out loud that Bilal the Bully was a shaitaan (an actual DEVIL).

We spent the rest of the walk home finalising our essentials for our



and trying to convince Mobeen that ringing 999 and demanding a SWAT team to take down the biggest bully in the universe wasn't one of his best ideas.

We finally came to a stop at the top of my street, and at first, we didn't notice the extra car parked in front of my driveway. It was only because of the nose tingling curry smell radiating from my house. It's the kind of smell that makes your bogeys run away.

'GROSS!' laughed Mobeen as he buried his head inside his school jumper to avoid curry contamination. 'I didn't want to have a shower for at least another week!'

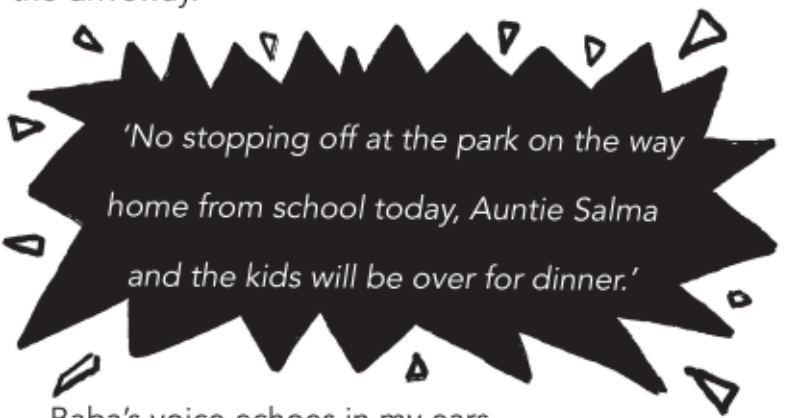
I pinched the bridge of my nose just as Mobeen's giggle turned into a gag. Although, I'm pretty sure his **SMELLY** armpits were the culprit, and **NOT** the stink bomb hovering over us, made up of ginger, garlic, onion and spices, seconds away from detonating.



Uh oh.

I freeze.

My eyes land on the fly-splattered Toyota on the driveway.



Baba's voice echoes in my ears.

Shiremoor Oaks had taken up **ALL** of my brain power and I'd completely forgotten who was waiting for me at home.

Abbas, Azeem and Abdul. My cousins, though that's still debatable. I'm yet to see proof that we're actually related. Abbas alone makes Bilal the Bully look like a cuddly teddy bear.

to the top of the street to avoid any more curry contamination. I flung the door open . . .

I could almost taste the freedom.

Almost.

A big waft of fermented fish crawled into my nose as I threw my school bag in the air and lunged towards the stairs.

OH NO!

