BOBBY BAINS AIN'T PLAYING



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Illustrated by Daniel Duncan

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"From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. When his woman dies, he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound. So why despise her? From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all ..."

– Guru Granth Sahib

CONTENTS

1	Wow, Wow and Double Wow!	1
2	A Valuable Lesson	8
3	Wigby Juniors Hit Back	17
4	Bella Is Right	28
5	Bobby's Mum Is Cool	37
6	The Big Let-Down	49
7	Will the Boys Stand Up?	59
8	Bobby's Big Plan	66
9	We Ain't Playing	74

1

WOW, WOW AND DOUBLE WOW!

Maisie screamed and jumped up and down, waving a leaflet around. "OMG! OMG!"

My best friend, Thiágo, shook his head. "Why is she screaming, Bobby?" he asked.

"I've stopped asking why Maisie does anything," I replied.

Thiágo grinned at me.

"Football tournament!" yelled Maisie. "Wow, wow and double wow!"



Our teacher walked in and smiled. "Something exciting, Maisie?" asked Mrs Richardson.

"Yeah, Miss!" Maisie replied. "There's going to be a five-a-side football tournament in Wigby!"

"Lovely," said our teacher. "But could you save the screaming for after school, perhaps?"

"Yes, Miss."

As Maisie sat down, I grabbed the leaflet from her. The tournament was happening at our local park, where I played home games for Wigby FC Juniors on Saturdays. I felt like screaming too but held it in.

Football is my life. I'd rather play football than do anything else. I eat, sleep and dream about it. Sometimes, instead of listening in class, I dream about scoring the winner for Liverpool FC in the Champions League. Or winning the Premier League. It doesn't matter which competition, as long as I score!

"Bobby?" asked Mrs Richardson.

"Yes, Miss?"

"Are you away with the fairies again?"

"Only if they're wearing Liverpool FC kits," replied Bella, the other girl who sits at our table.

Mrs Richardson smiled. "Do try to listen," she told me. "It's rather useful in a classroom."

"Yes, Miss," I said.

Maisie widened her eyes at me. "You going to play in the tournament?" she whispered.

"Yeah!" I whispered back. "Nothing is going to stop me!"

I play football in the garden, at the park, at break-times and lunch-times at school. I play for the school football team and also for our local Saturday league team, Wigby FC Juniors. It's my big passion, as Mrs Richardson once said to me.

"You'll be fine anywhere," she'd said. "As long as you have a football to kick."

Mrs Richardson was right. A deserted island, lost in Australia, even visiting Mars – if I had a ball, I'd be fine. The five-a-side tournament was another chance for me to play, and I knew that some of my mates from Wigby Juniors would be just as keen to take part.

"Bobby?" I heard my teacher call.

"Sorry, Miss!"

★

After lunch, Mrs Richardson introduced our new topic. "The festival of Diwali," she said. "It's less than two weeks away, so we're going to learn all about it."

A boy called Shrik raised his hand. "But I already know about Diwali," he said.

"Then you can help to teach the others," Mrs Richardson replied.

"Oh yeah," Shrik said.

Our teacher smiled. "Diwali is the Hindu festival of light," she explained. "It is bright and colourful, and based on an amazing folk tale called Rama and Sita. Sikhs celebrate it too."

Maisie and Bella stared at me.

"What?" I whispered.

"You're Sikh!" they said.

I *am* Sikh, just like my entire family. That's why I've never cut my hair. Instead, my mum ties my hair into a bun, and I cover it with fabric – it's called a *patka*. Sikhism is very important to me. I learn about it from my mum and from her dad – my *nana-ji*. That's what Sikhs call their grandfather on their mum's side.

Sikhs have their own Diwali story.

"Miss," I said, putting up my hand.

"Yes, Bobby?" Mrs Richardson replied.

"There's a Sikh story about Diwali too," I told her. "It's not the same as the Hindu story."

"Really?" asked Mrs Richardson. "I didn't know that. Can you tell us?"

I shook my head. "I only know a bit," I explained. "I'll have to ask my mum."

"Maybe she could come to school and share it with us?" my teacher suggested.

"That would be cool!" said Bella.

"Mega-cool," Maisie added.

"Maybe," I replied. "I'll ask her."