

# SINDHU AND JEET'S MISSING STAR MYSTERY

CHITRA SOUNДАР



ILLUSTRATED BY  
AMBERIN HUQ

BLOOMSBURY

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MISSING STAR  
MYSTERY**

*To all librarians and teachers,  
who instil a love of reading in us.*

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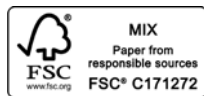
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# THE NEW WILL

## ***DING-DONG!***

Sindhu put down her copy of *The Handbook for Young Detectives* and sighed. That would be Jeet, the other half of Sindhu and Jeet's Detective Agency. They were both expected to attend a memorial gathering for Mrs Barker, a woman who used to live down the road.

Jeet bounded into Sindhu's room full of inappropriate enthusiasm.

“Good morning, Sindhu.”

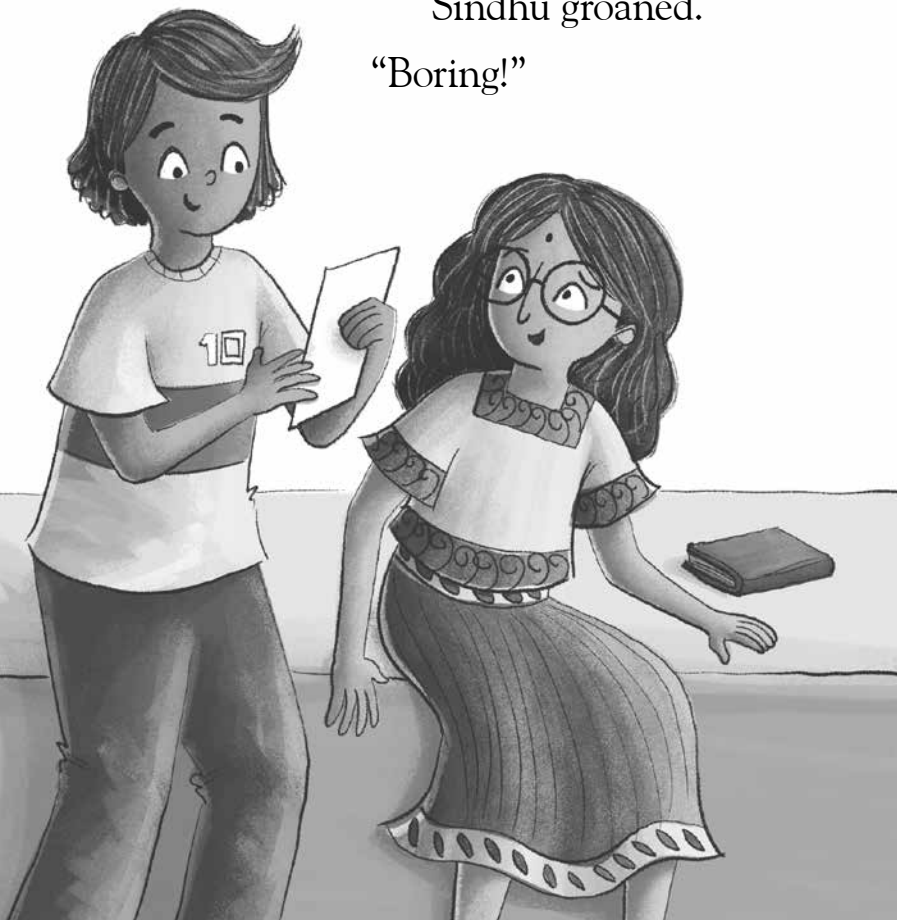
“I don’t want to go,” said Sindhu.

“I didn’t even know Mrs Barker.”

“No problem,” he replied. “I made a fact sheet about her for you.”

Sindhu groaned.

“Boring!”



“Not this one,” he said. “It starts with a joke.”

*“What did Mrs Barker say to the dog when she brought out her specially prepared dog food?”*

“Bone appetit!” guessed Sindhu.  
“I’ve read that one before.”

“OK, fine, here’s another one.”

*“What do you call a detective who looks for dogs?”*

Sindhu tapped her pencil on her book. “Hmm, what?”

“Sherlock Bones,” said Jeet, giggling.

Sindhu groaned. “Please just dig out the facts about Mrs Barker.”

“Here we go,” said Jeet and started to read the facts aloud.

1. Mrs Barker was super rich.
2. She lived in a large two-storey house at the end of the street, with big black gates. At the back, there is that legendary mindfulness garden everyone’s always going on about.
3. She loved dogs. She loved all sorts of dogs. Big, small, loud, quiet, young, old, abandoned or strays.
4. Mrs Barker wrote a book called Mrs Barker’s Cookbook of Dog Treats, which sold over two kazillion copies.

“Hang on a minute,” said Sindhu. “Mrs Barker is very rich. That means all her money will now go to someone she loved.”

“It will go to someone whether or not she loved them,” said Jeet.

“I’ve just been reading Chapter 7 in my handbook – *Sudden Deaths and Suspicious Windfalls* – and it says in there that relatives always fight over the money left behind.”

“Well, according to fact number 5, that’s not a problem.”

5. She had no kids. Just one nephew – Edwin.

“Right, then Edwin gets everything and there’s no one who will fight him over the money,” said Sindhu. “Boring!”

“Last fact,” said Jeet. “The most delicious fact of all.”

6. My mum is going to lay out a spread of biscuits – cream-filled ones, jam-filled ones and butter biscuits too.

“Now I get your totally inappropriate

enthusiasm,” Sindhu said, with a laugh.

“Sindhu! Jeet!” Mum’s voice floated up the stairs. “Time to go.”

\*

Inside Mrs Barker’s house, a giant poster of her book cover was displayed prominently on the living room wall. People were seated on steel chairs waiting for something to happen. Sindhu and Jeet went closer to look at the poster before they settled into two seats at the back of the crowd.

“Look! My mum is bringing out the biscuits,” said Jeet, pointing at his mum carrying a tray.

“I wish they would start soon,”

said Sindhu. “I don’t like sitting quietly in one place.”

“There’s going to be music and dancing, according to my mum,” said Jeet.

“What?”

“Yeah, Mrs Barker was always happy and having fun, according to my mum.”

“According to your mum, when can we go home?” asked Sindhu.

“Where’s your sense of mystery?” teased Jeet. “Let’s play ‘What-if!’”

Sindhu brightened up. She loved the game of ‘What-if’ that detectives played. It helped them to think about the mystery in hand.



What if Mrs Barker is not really dead? What if she is hiding and watching all of us?

What if Mrs Barker had uncovered a treasure map in her mindfulness garden and went to find the treasure?

What if Mrs Barker had disappeared because she drank a magic potion?

What if she had run away because the dogs from the shelter smelled of poo?

But not everyone was in a playful mood or as happy and fun as Mrs Barker had been. The man sitting in front of them turned around and scowled.

“Stop babbling!” he snapped.



Sindhu sunk lower in her seat as Jeet blurted out a quick sorry.

The man shot up from his chair and rushed to the front of the gathering.

“He’s impatient,” Sindhu said.

“I think he is the nephew, Edwin,” whispered Jeet.

“There is no mystery here,” said Sindhu, bored. “Rich woman dies, leaves her wealth to rude nephew. End of story. No one lives happily ever after.”

“There is definitely a mystery,” said Jeet. “Whether the cream-filled biscuits on the table are full of strawberry cream or orange cream.”

**BARK!**