



## CHAPTER 1

# CALLING NAMES

Anu

“Anu!” Grandad calls loudly. I grab my bag and run downstairs from the flat, straight into Grandad’s corner shop. It is warm and toasty. It always is. Especially on a cold morning like today. Grandad is arranging something at the back, his familiar orange and blue jumper peeking through the shelves.

“Bye, Grandad,” I call, running out of the shop. “See you at 3pm.”

“Bye, my princess,” he says. “Keep smiling.”

That’s how Grandad always sends me off to school, ever since I was in reception.

*I'll try, I think to myself. If Hannah lets me.*

The shop bell jangles behind me as I step out. The road is already busy with peak-hour traffic. The fog hasn't even lifted yet. The city looks like a scene from an old Tamil horror movie — grey and dark.

Just two more days to half term. I just want to keep my head down and get through them. I like the studying part of school. It's Hannah I can't deal with. She's like a monster coming out of the fog to get me.

She makes fun of how I look, how I run during PE, and pretty much everything else. I pull up the hood of my fleece and walk through the gates. “Hey!” a voice rings out.

Uh-oh! It's Hannah. I pretend not to hear and hurry in. Maybe she's not calling me. But she catches up with me.

“Do you think your grandad will sell me some cigarettes?” she asks, coming closer.