

Section 5

Chapter Summaries

Prologue

Meena tells us her earliest memory and we realise that comedy is important in her life. She mocks the stereotypical notions that people may have about immigrants arriving in Britain.

Chapter 1

Meena describes the village where she lives. She also describes her father. Meena admits to her father that she stole some money from her mother's purse to buy sweets with.

Chapter 2

Meena feels guilty when she eats the sweets. She describes her mother, who is fed up of living in the village. Meena also describes the various aunts and uncles that she has and explains why her relationship with them is different to the relationships she has with the white people in the village. She also tells us about her mother's childhood and how it contrasts with her own.

Chapter 3

Meena befriends Anita Rutter, who she describes as 'the undisputed cock of our yard'. Meena describes Mrs Christmas, who she hasn't seen for a while. Mr. Christmas tells the girls off for being naughty outside his house. Anita is defiant and answers back to him, impressing Meena. Meena is confused when she isn't invited into Anita's house for fishfingers. Meena describes some more inhabitants of the village, including Hairy Neddy and his band, and Sam Lowbridge. When she gets home, Meena helps Mrs Worrall, the neighbour, with her baking and realises that Mr Worrall is very sick.

Chapter 4

Papa warns Meena about the dangers of lying. Meena describes her father's *mehfils* and one of the topics that the guests talk about: the partition. Papa tells Meena about when he accidentally planted a bomb during the partition. Meena describes the deaths of Mr and Mrs Christmas, and how her parents worry about their own family in India. She tells us that her Papa wanted to be a film star when he was younger but was not allowed to by his father. Meena also tells us how her parents have still got a very loving marriage, in stark contrast to many other marriages in the novel. At the end of the chapter, Meena's parents tell Meena that Mrs Kumar is pregnant.

Chapter 5

It is now late October. Mrs Kumar is heavily pregnant. Meena describes the Rutters' dog, which is called 'Nigger'. Anita asks Meena if she'd like to go to see the men unload the autumn fair with her. It is Diwali, and Meena describes her parents' attitudes to religion. She talks about when she visited a gurdwara with her mother, and was racially abused. Meena hangs out with Anita, Fat Sally and Sherrie. The girls pass the Big House and speculate about who lives there. Three boys approach them and Meena feels left out when none of them choose to be with her. Anita tells Meena that the boy she has chosen, Dave the 'Poet', wants to 'shag the arse' off her, and tells Meena that this means that he loves her. Later that evening, Meena gets into serious trouble when she repeats the phrase in front of her aunties and uncles. Meena sneaks back to the fair and sees Dave sneak into a caravan with Deirdre, Anita's mother. Meena doesn't tell Anita this but takes her to the Big House