

The background of the entire cover is a vibrant orange-red color. Scattered across this background are numerous faint, stylized illustrations of open books, some showing pages and others showing covers with patterns like checkers or polka dots. In the center, two young girls are depicted. The girl in the foreground, Nina, is wearing a purple jacket with dark purple polka dots and a pink backpack. She has her eyes closed and a wide, joyful smile, with her arms outstretched. She is wearing light blue pants and pink rain boots with purple straps. Behind her stands another girl, Soni, who is wearing a solid purple jacket and a yellow headband. She has a more neutral expression and is holding a small, light blue patterned bag. She is also wearing light blue pants and white rain boots with pink straps. A yellow banner with a ribbon-like edge is positioned across the middle of the girls, containing the title 'Sister Fixer' in purple capital letters.

NINA SONI

SISTER FIXER

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CHAPTER ONE

Mom stood by the door and waved goodbye to my sister and me. “Have a good day. *Bahut Seekhna.*”

Every single day Mom reminds us to learn a lot at school!

Kavita blew kisses to Mom and stepped on my shoes.

I grabbed her hand. “Stop walking backward.”

“Nina, don’t forget to bring Kavita home with you,” Mom said to me.

I waved at her without looking back. I had only forgotten my younger sister at school once. Now every single day Mom also reminds me to bring her home!

On this frosty spring morning our breaths cart-wheeled before disappearing. I held Kavita's mittened hand in mine.

As we walked down our street, Kavita burst out singing. "*I have been working on the railroad.*"



Kavita likes to sing—nursery rhymes, songs, jingles from TV commercials. And her favorite, songs she makes up. Sometimes whatever she sings on the way to school earworms in my head.

There are many reasons Kavita likes to sing.

In-my-head list of why Kavita likes to sing

- * Singing is like her, flowing and unstoppable.
- * Kavita means poetry in Hindi, so singing is all mixed-up with her name.
- * Singing gives her a chance to interrupt anyone, anytime, anyplace.

So Kavita, poetry, was singing and skipping. She was making her lungs work as hard as her legs.

Unlike Kavita, I like to make lists because lists help me keep organized.

Or-ga-nized means you keep things all straight, not zigzaggy in your head.

Most of the time I write down lists in my notebook called Sakhi.

Sakhi means friend in Hindi.

I've named my notebook because...why not? People name their pets, their stuffed animals, and their imaginary friends, so it's okay to name my notebook. And when I write in Sakhi, it's like sharing a secret with a friend.

Kavita was still singing. *"Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah. Someone's in the kitchen I know-oh-oh-oh. Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah, stomping on the old man Joe."*

"It's not 'stomping on the old man Joe.' It's 'strumming on the old banjo,'" I said.

"These are not nice people." Kavita stomped her foot and her backpack slid down. "That's why they don't strum an old banjo. They like to stomp on the old man Joe."

I adjusted her backpack. “That would be silly. It makes no sense.”

“I told you, they are mean.” She shook her head. “Anyway, songs aren’t supposed to make sense. Does ‘four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie...when the pie was opened the birds began to sing’ make sense?”

“Well, no. But this song is different.”

“Why is this different?”

“I don’t know why. It just is.”

“Let’s ask someone else.” She looked around. Jay came out of his house at that moment.

“Jay, Jay,” Kavita called.

He didn’t hear her. Or ignored her. I couldn’t tell which. Jay not only lived on our street, he was in my fourth-grade class. And he was my best friend.

“Jay Davenport! You better answer or else I’ll tell your mom!” Kavita was so loud that I bet her teacher, Mrs. Jabs, heard her from school. Three blocks away.