

VIVIAN TEO

Praise for My BFF Is an Alien: Turbulence

"As Abriana and Octavia's friendship grows, the duo has to deal with typical and atypical issues (well, Octavia is an alien with supra-hearing and abnormal strength) which cause tension in their relationship. Throw in some social media snafus and the stage is set for an adolescent drama with very funny lines in relief.

Vivian Teo, I like!"

—Hwee Goh, Hwee's Book Share Club

Praise for My BFF Is an Alien: Sabotage

"I liked how Vivian weaved in the topic of social media and used it as a teaching point for readers who are still learning how to navigate the platform safely, and the perils if misused."

-Susan Koh, A Juggling Mom blog

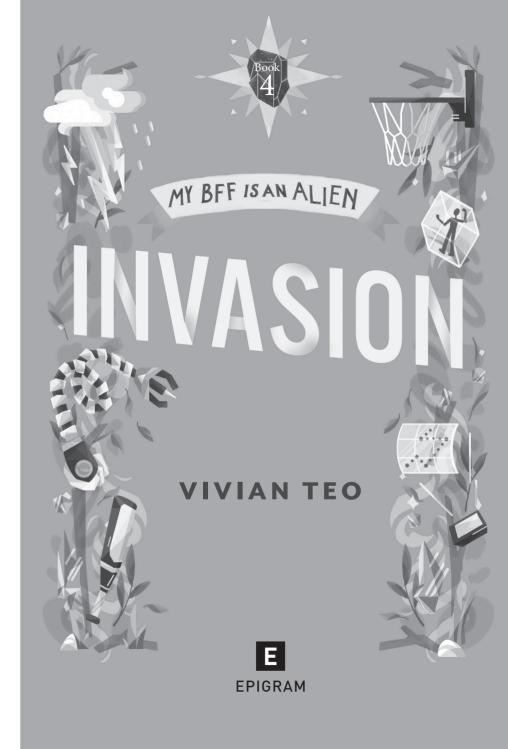
Praise for My BFF Is an Alien

"An imaginative and enjoyable story about friendship and standing up for yourself. After reading this book, you'll wish you had an alien BFF too!"

—Low Ying Ping, author of the Mount Emily series

In the series

My BFF Is an Alien (Book 1) My BFF Is an Alien: Sabotage (Book 2) My BFF Is an Alien: Turbulence (Book 3) My BFF Is an Alien: Invasion (Book 4)



To every young and grown-up fan of this series, thank you for journeying with me

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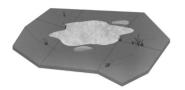
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Chapter 1 NEWS

I waited, arms folded, for flag-raising to begin. The quadrangle was pockmarked by wet splotches from an overnight deluge. A few girls from lower secondary called out to me, smiling. I recognised them; they'd attended the feature-writing seminars I'd conducted before the June holidays. I returned their greetings half-heartedly.

I was surrounded by my fellow Secondary 3 Bravery classmates, who were chattering around me noisily. It was always a pain to return to school after the holidays, but seeing my friends made it a little easier. Octavia wasn't here, though. She had left for Viridis with Aunty Katy right before the school holidays, after we had confirmed The Others' presence in Singapore. They were going to try and convince the Viridian Council to send help to Earth.

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As instructed by Aunty Katy, I had faithfully recorded the abnormal weather events that had sprung up all over Singapore in the past month—freak thunderstorms, tornadoes, hail, flash floods. These strange weather occurrences baffled meteorologists, who could only blame the weather phenomena on climate change. But I knew the truth: The Others were causing the weather chaos. Aunty Katy believed The Others were testing for the presence of individuals with powers like the Viridians, before launching a takeover of Earth, like they'd attempted with Viridis.

As the days zipped by and Octavia still hadn't returned, I started wondering if we might already be too late. Surely The Others have realised by now that we didn't have any superheroes on Earth and were theirs for the taking. The weather events they'd been manufacturing had already caused so much damage: a tree had collapsed onto a block of HDB flats during a thunderstorm in Choa Chu Kang; a tornado in Tuas had rained tiles and roofing upon houses and cars; a flash flood in Jurong East had almost swept pedestrians away. Luckily, no one had died from any of these weather events, though some unfortunate souls had sustained non-life-threatening injuries. But it was only a matter of time.

Someone slipped into the spot beside me, breaking my chain of thoughts. It was Octavia! I noticed her panting lightly and figured she must have sprinted all the way to school. I stared at her, slack-jawed. I was lost for words, not that there was time for any questions (or

a teary reunion) because right then the national anthem blared from the speakers, and everyone quietened down and stood at attention.

My mouth moved as I automatically sang along to the anthem, but my thoughts were racing. Octavia's return was a great sign! I had been worried the Viridian Council wasn't going to let Octavia come back at all, given that The Others were here. After all, Octavia was Viridian royalty, and they wouldn't want her in harm's way!

I had so many questions: How many troops was Viridis sending? How were they planning to capture The Others? I so wanted to talk to Octavia!

The national anthem was followed by the Bukit Timah Secondary Girls' School (BTSGS) song, so I could only continue with my lacklustre singing. After that, our principal, Madam Nafisah, stepped onto the podium to deliver the day's announcements. I contemplated whispering my questions to Octavia, but a rumble reverberating through the sky distracted me.

Madam Nafisah stopped mid-speech and glanced skywards. "Alright, girls. Please make your way to your classrooms. We will continue the announcements in class." Her voice boomed from the speakers, and all seven hundred pupils at the quadrangle marched swiftly towards our classrooms.

Following the spate of unpredictable and severe weather events, the Singapore government had issued an advisory to schools that at any sign of bad weather,

we were to head indoors and avoid open spaces. These days, we never knew when a thunderstorm, tornado or lightning storm was going to strike!

I was desperate to ask Octavia my questions all morning, but there just wasn't any opportunity to do so. When the bell finally rang for recess, I was amazed I hadn't died from the suspense! Octavia and I waited in our seats as the classroom emptied.

"So? What did the Council say? Are they sending help?" The words burst from my mouth as soon as the last student exited the room.

Octavia let out a heavy sigh. "The Council isn't sending help."

I could not believe what I just heard. "What?"

"The majority of the Council voted against it."

"But...but, WHY?!" Was the planet with the capabilities to eliminate The Others really going to abandon us?

Octavia's lips puckered. "The Council believes that if we let The Others have Earth, then they would forgo Viridis. That would keep Viridis safe."

I stared at Octavia, my mouth open. "They are sacrificing Earth to The Others?" I finally uttered.

"If it means anything, Father and Mother voted to send help, but obviously they were outvoted," Octavia said.

She had avoided my question, but I knew what I said was true.

"You went back for a whole month only to come back

with...this?" I said, my voice rising. I knew it wasn't Octavia's or her parents' fault, but I couldn't contain my anger! How could the Council be so selfish? How were we going to fight The Others on our own?

Octavia looked apprehensive. "There were many steps before we even got to voting. The Council had to hear all sides of the argument. Father, Mother and I had argued the best we could. Anyway, none of that matters now. The decision's been made."

Of course I knew they had tried their best. Aunty Katy once told me she and Uncle Justin saw the good in Earth and wanted Octavia to stay here because they saw the positive influence it had on their daughter, even when the old fogeys on the Council looked down on us! (I may have paraphrased that last bit.) Well, she'd been right about the Council.

"Why did they let you come back then?" I asked. "Shouldn't they be keeping you safe on Viridis?"

"We got special permission to come back to say goodbye. Father and Mother also have to close off our finances here and tie up any loose ends before we are supposed to return to Viridis for good."

My jaw dropped. Were Octavia and her parents abandoning Earth—and me—too?

"That's just an excuse we gave the Council, of course. We would never leave you in the lurch!" Octavia placed her hand over mine. "Abri, don't you worry. We are going to take care of The Others."

"Like...how?"

"Father and Mother want to speak to you before we devise a plan."

I gave a weak nod and sank into my seat. I spent the rest of the day trying to let the news sink in. There was no army coming to save us.



"Not again," Dina Aprida moaned behind me.

During our last lesson of the day, a thunderstorm brewed. The wind howled like an angry beast as rain crashed down like a dam had burst in the sky. Even if we were getting used to these bizarre weather occurrences, it didn't mean we were in any way comfortable with them.

Our form teacher, Mr Fernandes (aka Fernandes Chicken), did his best to ignore the lightning flashes and thunderclaps outside. But his face grew increasingly perturbed with every boom that interrupted his explanations on quadratic equations. After one exceptionally loud bang that induced gasps round the classroom and set the ceiling lights flickering, Fernandes Chicken gave up trying to talk above the storm and told us to start on our worksheets.

I tried to concentrate, but it was difficult with the apocalypse happening outside. While Octavia was away, severe weather events had persisted across the globe, but only a few had seemed abnormal. None of the countries had as many freak weather events as Singapore did—we were talking about an average of two events a week in a

small country! As part of my weather "surveillance", I had been diligently checking to see if any weather events contradicted the daily weather reports. When I checked this morning, the day's forecast was hot and sunny. This was definitely abnormal!

Another explosion in the sky sent frightened squeals around the classroom. I heard Dina grumble exasperatedly, "Someone must really have it out for Singapore!"

Her words lingered in my head. Someone must really have it out for Singapore. Why Singapore? We didn't do anything to The Others...the Viridians did. Someone must really have it out for Singapore... The Others did not have it out for Singapore...but they did have it out for someone who was living in Singapore!

I gasped aloud, but nobody paid any attention given the ruckus outside. For the remainder of the lesson, my mind worked non-stop to piece together everything that had happened since the first abnormal weather event we had experienced in Singapore this year. By the end of the class, I still hadn't completed my maths worksheets, but I had come to an important (and frightening) revelation: my BFF and her parents were in mortal danger!



Chapter 2 FIGHTING CHANCE

With rain boots on, Octavia and I sploshed about in calf-high waters as we headed home. Boots were now mandatory for students to bring to school, given the frequent floods. We had to take a longer route as the thunderstorm—despite stopping abruptly after its tenminute rage—had flooded several roads in the Bukit Timah area. Meanwhile, Octavia's frown deepened as I went on about what I had figured out during our maths lesson.

We arrived home to find Octavia's parents happily chitchatting with Mum in the living room of my flat. But as I greeted Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy, their smiles seemed strained. There was so much I wanted to say to them, and I believed that, likewise, they had a lot to say to me.

Octavia and I ate our lunch quietly as Aunty and Uncle talked about their "June holiday" activities and "agricultural business" in "Taiwan". I stole glances at them, looking for signs that they were worried about what's to come, but I found none. When their conversation moved on to the strange weather we'd been having, I couldn't tell if the concern I saw then was what you'd see on any parent's face in the wake of such dangerous and unpredictable weather or about much more (like, say, dangerous aliens who are planning on taking over the planet?).

It was late afternoon by the time the four of us were gathered at Octavia's flat. Aunty Katy immediately drew me into an embrace.

"Oh, Abri! Octavia has told you?" Aunty Katy let go and looked at me with a bittersweet expression, like she was happy to see me but saddened by the circumstances we were in. I nodded.

"I'm sorry we failed to get help, Abri," said Uncle Justin, looking quite sympathetic. "But don't worry, we're going to do whatever we can—"

"Wait, Uncle Justin, before you go on," I interrupted, "I need to tell you something. What The Others are doing... it's not about Earth or Singapore. It's about Viridis!"

Aunty Katy and Uncle Justin exchanged curious looks as the words tumbled from my mouth. I continued, "Aunty Katy, before you left for Viridis, you said The Others could be using weather events to test for people with superpowers, to determine whether or not to launch

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an attack on us." I paused for breath. "But I don't think they want to take over Earth. I think they are here for your family."

"What makes you think that?" asked Aunty Katy.

"After you left for Viridis, the weather events have only intensified in Singapore and nowhere else. I think, after the Sentosa cave incident, they know someone from Viridis is here, someone with powers like they'd experienced on Viridis. If their goal is to take over Earth, it would make sense to continue testing around the world. Instead, they are focused on locating the source of that power here.

"Look," I said, opening my notebook so the pages faced the adults. "I recorded these in June. Eight abnormal events over four weeks, all in Singapore, and only a few abnormal ones in the rest of the world." I flipped the pages. "And today, one more," I said, showing them where I had pencilled in today's thunderstorm. "That makes nine."

I looked at Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy for signs of agreement.

"Abri, that's a good deduction, but I'm not entirely convinced that they are looking specifically for us," said Aunty Katy, her brows knitted. "The Others may have identified a source of power here, but they can't possibly know if the power is Viridian or Earthly."

"But it's possible!" exclaimed Octavia, widening her already large eyes. "Besides, if they are looking for that source of power, they are as good as looking for us!"

The three of us turned to Uncle Justin, who had been silent the whole time.

"There is merit in each of your arguments," he said, his hand on his chin. "But if Abri's weather records are accurate, then we can expect The Others to be relentless about testing Singapore until they find the source of power, whether the power comes from a Viridian or not."

His forehead creased. "Though, if they *are* looking specifically for us, we will need to be extra careful. I'd think revenge wouldn't be far from their minds. Abri"— Uncle Justin turned towards me—"we'll need to scan those nine places you noted down, to confirm the presence of The Others. Then we'll come up with a plan to handle this situation."

I nodded. I was ready to go through my notes with them when Uncle Justin added, "But for now, we have a Taiwanese dinner to prepare."

Given the dire situation we were in, his last sentence was quite unexpected.

"Abri, we invited your parents over for dinner," said Aunty Katy, "as a thank you for taking care of Octavia whenever we're away. Justin and I are going to get busy in the kitchen, so go finish your homework, then come back for dinner with your parents, alright?"

So, Octavia and I went back to my flat. But as I sat at my desk, I could barely concentrate on the maths problem in front of me. My brain churned up question after question: How were we going to find The Others before they located Octavia's family? How many of

The Others were here? How much worse were the weather events going to get?



Mum and Dad chatted merrily with Octavia's parents over a delectable spread of classic Taiwanese dishes: three-cup chicken, dried radish omelette and cucumber pork. I was seriously impressed by Aunty Katy and Uncle Justin's culinary skills, and how well-versed they were in the Taiwanese way of life as they spoke of hiking at Taiwan's Yushan and the taste of lesser-known street foods like taro balls and savoury soybean milk. For a second, I almost thought they really were Taiwanese!

After dinner, Aunty Katy and Uncle Justin insisted Mum and Dad take the rest of the night off, and Octavia and I would spend the night at their flat. Mum and Dad looked truly grateful. "I can't remember when we had our last date night given Chng Han's shifts at the newspaper," Mum mused. As she and Dad headed out for a movie, I sincerely hoped The Others wouldn't spoil their rare evening out with a lightning storm!

The four of us gathered in the living room. Octavia and Aunty Katy joined me on the sofa while Uncle Justin sat on his armchair across from us. I explained how I had determined whether the weather events were abnormal. While hail and tornadoes were obviously unusual for Singapore, thunderstorms and lightning storms were trickier because we had plenty of those. So I had to check

if the local weather stations had forecasted the storms (much like what Octavia and I had done with SWAP, where we sieved through media-reported weather events all over the world). And if the storms were not predicted, I classified them under abnormal.

Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy wanted to recce the nine places while Octavia and I were at school. But that would take a couple of days, so Octavia insisted we helped too, in order to get things done quicker (though I suspected she just didn't want to be left out of the action). So it was decided that Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy would cover six locations tomorrow, and Octavia and I would take the other three locations after school.

While Uncle Justin programmed a PiCom to recognise my biometrics as one of its owners, Aunty Katy ran us through how the PiCom scanning worked.

"The PiCom will automatically detect traces of The Others within a 50-metre radius. It will map out the area The Others are in, or have been, with red markings, and the data will be saved. And when you move to another area, it will do the same thing. So all you need is to physically be in the area The Others are or were in, and the PiCom will do its job."

Uncle Justin pulled up a few scans that Aunty Katy did after our cave-in at Sentosa. It showed a screen of red dots forming random lines that haphazardly crisscrossed each other. "The red traces indicate that The Others had been at the location. If more than one of them had been there, the markings would overlap one another, like you see here," explained Uncle Justin as he ran his index finger over the lines. "Unfortunately, the PiCom won't be able to tell us exactly how many are or were at a location, but we can interpret the data and make a best guess. From the scans Katy did, for instance, we think there were probably three or four of The Others at each location. Let's just examine the data we collect tomorrow and decide how to proceed from there."

After Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy's detailed explanation, Octavia and I didn't have questions. I tried (unsuccessfully) to stifle a yawn, so Aunty Katy decided that it was time to call it a night.

While we all helped to tidy up, something occurred to me. "Uncle Justin, Aunty Katy, the Council said they were not going to help. You're both part of the Council. Won't you get into trouble for helping?"

"That's so you, always thinking of others." Aunty Katy smiled at me. "The Council may have decided they are not going to send help, but they didn't say we can't solve this in our own capacity. We're not doing this as members of the Council but as civilians."

"Don't worry, Abri," Uncle Justin patted my shoulder. "We told them we needed time to erase our identities here. We'll hold the Council off for as long as we can."

"And it's really our fault that Earth is now facing all these weather calamities," said Aunty Katy, her smile waning. "If we had never come to Singapore, none of this would have happened because The Others would not have detected our presence here in the first place."

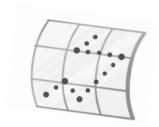
But if they had never come to Singapore, then I would never have met my BFF. And I wouldn't trade that for anything!

"That said, we're not being entirely selfless for staying," said Uncle Justin as he and Aunty Katy exchanged a knowing look. "By eliminating The Others here, we will end their threat to Viridis, once and for all. The Council can thank us later."

I looked at Octavia's parents with gratitude. "Thank you," I croaked over the lump in my throat. No matter how Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy put it, going against the Council's wishes could not have been an easy decision. I could only hope the Council wouldn't find out.

Octavia placed an arm across my shoulders. "It's the least we can do. We owe it to the people here." She had said it without any hesitation. Like it was a no-brainer that they would want to defend me, my parents, our friends and the people of Earth.

I felt truly blessed at that moment. Even though our tasks ahead would not be easy, we had at least a fighting chance with my superhero BFF and her superhero parents in our corner.



Chapter 3 GAME PLAN

Octavia turned on her PiCom once we exited the school gates. It was after school, and we were on our way to where the floods happened yesterday. We headed towards Dunearn Road, in the opposite direction of home, as the news reports said the flooding had been more serious there.

Octavia's eyes stayed glued to the device in her hand. After walking in the sweltering heat for about ten minutes, the only dots that showed up were the beads of perspiration on my forehead. That's the trouble with the PiCom: we had to be within a 50-metre radius of where The Others had been. So, even though we knew the thunderstorm had happened near our school, it was hard to pinpoint the exact location.

"Maybe we're going the wrong way?" I asked, raising

a shoulder to wipe the sweat sliding down the sides of my face.

Octavia's brows furrowed as she mulled over my question. "Let's go for another five hundred metres. If nothing shows up, we'll cross the road and walk in the opposite direction," she said.

My blouse collar became increasingly soaked with perspiration as we trudged on. I was starting to think that maybe the thunderstorm yesterday wasn't caused by The Others and that's why nothing was showing up. I was about to say something when Octavia exclaimed, "Here!"

OMG. Red markings were colouring up the PiCom screen!

"They went up the overhead bridge!" said Octavia excitedly, quickening her pace towards the bridge that was several metres ahead. I had to break into a jog just to keep up with her!

She bounded up the stairs with me close behind. When we reached the middle of the bridge, we let the PiCom do its work. As the screen filled up with red dots, I took in the view; we were right above a wide canal which was flanked by two busy roads that stretched endlessly in front of and behind us. The spot had given The Others a vantage point to watch the drama caused by their handiwork!

"It's done," said Octavia.

I turned to look at the screen, which was filled with criss-crossing lines of red. "Can you tell how many of The Others were here?"

"I can't be sure. Mother hasn't taught me how to interpret the data," said Octavia, her eyes focused on the patterns on the screen. "Let's collect the data first, then we can find out when we get home."

Next, we headed for Turf Club Road, where just last week a hailstorm and strong winds had felled trees, damaging a mall. Good thing it was nearby, but bad that it was another fifteen-minute walk under the hot sun!

This time, we didn't need to wait long. The PiCom screen started dotting up even while we were approaching Turf Club Road. As we circled the mall to capture all the markings, we saw the damage from the storm. The shops that lined the front of the mall were cordoned off as workers repaired broken roofs and smashed windows. While the fallen trees had already been cleared, there were still broken branches and leaves strewn all over shopfronts and the carpark. It was not a pretty sight.

Our final stop was Jurong East Street 32, where flash floods were reported to have taken place two weeks ago. To my relief, Octavia declared that we would take a taxi. We told the driver to drive down the street so we could cover more ground quickly. But nothing showed up on the PiCom, even after we went another round down the same street.

"I don't think they were here," Octavia muttered as the taxi took us home.

"Catching Little Monsters ah?" the taxi driver asked, referring to a popular augmented reality mobile game,

which had a multitude of people galivanting around Singapore trying to capture cute virtual monsters on their smartphones.

"Yeah, Uncle...trying to catch monsters," I replied. It wasn't far from the truth; except in our case the monsters were literal, and we didn't find any at Jurong East. I knew there were bound to be errors in my notes, but at least we were able to determine that The Others had been at two of the three locations. So far, my record of "catching monsters" wasn't bad!



We gathered at Octavia's flat again that night. Turned out I was also pretty spot-on with the other locations. Uncle Justin and Aunty Katy had found traces of The Others at five of the six places they receed...which meant seven of the nine weather events I recorded in June were caused by The Others!

While Aunty Katy pooled our data for analysis, Uncle Justin briefed us on the plan to eliminate The Others. "We are going to lure them to secluded spots in Singapore with our powers," said Uncle Justin as his fingers worked deftly over his PiCom, "where we will lie in wait with a trap."

A cube-like hologram materialised above the PiCom. "The arsenal in our spacecraft is limited, but we do have FENCE. It's a five-by-five-metre perimeter fencing that can also serve as a trap. Once The Others step within its

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a foreigner, or as an alien, some might say. Our friendship was one that transcended individualities, culture and distance. Together we saw whole new worlds and went on seemingly impossible journeys. I'm honoured to read you my essay, 'Friendships can Transcend Boundaries', which is inspired by a real-life friendship."

I unfolded the copy of the essay and began.

"My BFF is an alien..."

END

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About the Author

Vivian Teo worked as a financial journalist and editor for fourteen years at major US and UK trade publications. She became a freelance writer to spend more time with her two daughters and to write about things close to her heart. This led to My BFF Is an Alien, her first middle-grade series.

She now enjoys writing about parenting, education, social and financial issues for various media, and blogging on her own parenting/lifestyle website, *The Stuff Childhoods Are Made Of*, at www.vivianteo.com.

Vivian is an alumnus of the University of Melbourne and Methodist Girls' School. Like Abri, she started off quite friendless and unathletic in secondary school but graduated with a tribe of good friends and fond memories of performing Chinese dance and cheerleading. However, she doesn't miss homework and exams. Follow Vivian Teo on Facebook @VivianTeoAuthor and Instagram @VivianTeoWriter.



Coming soon...

The Prequel

My BFF Is an Alien: Deception

The Quaturs Games, a high-stakes sporting event, takes centre stage on the planet of Viridis. Young Octavia Wuen allies herself with new friends who, like her, are gifted with powers. But friendships are tested when things take an unexpected turn at the Games and the planet's survival is threatened by the arrival of alien beings.

Available soon at epigrambookshop.sg

