

Book  
5

MY BFF IS AN ALIEN

PREQUEL

# DECEPTION



VIVIAN TEO

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PREQUEL

# DECEPTION

**In the series**

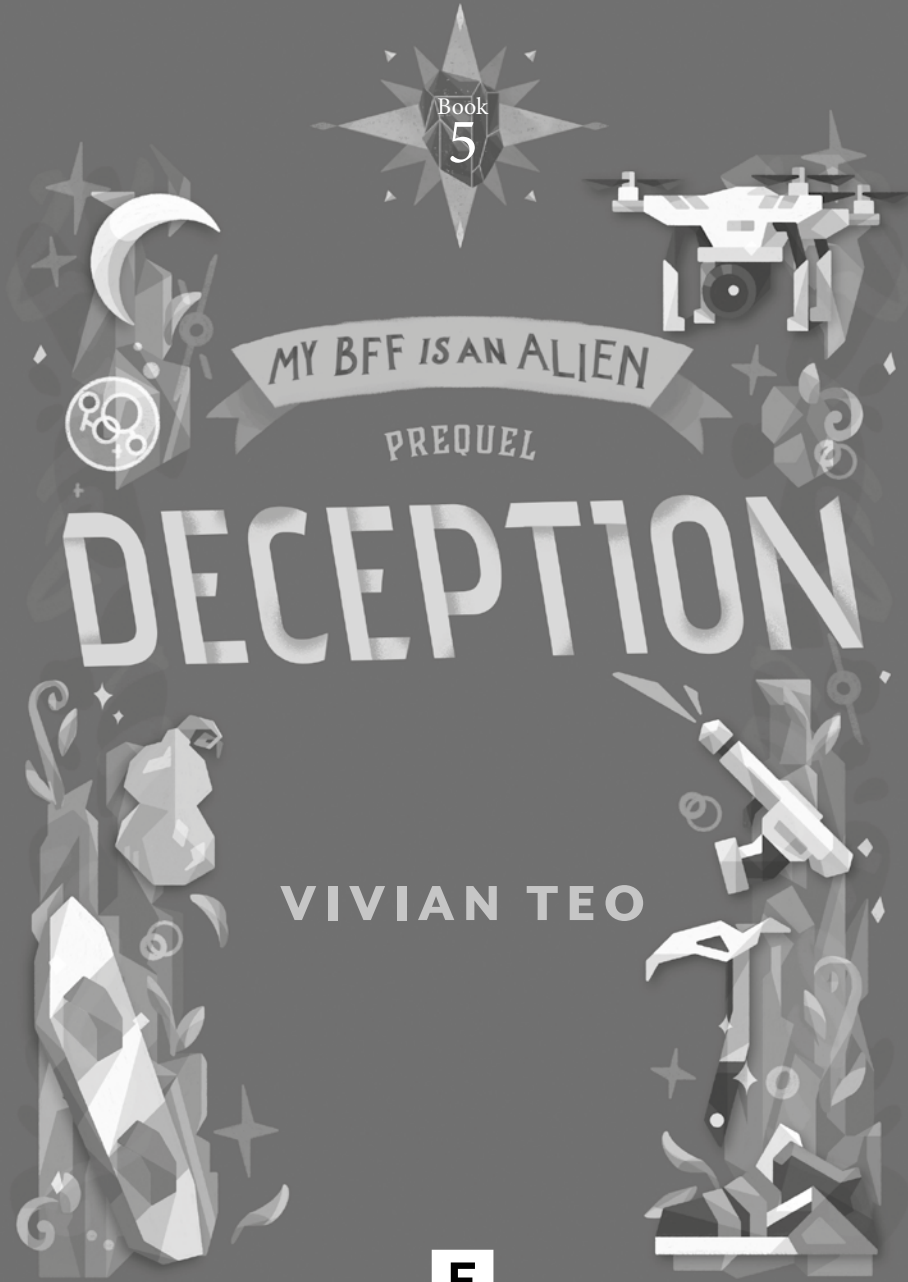
*My BFF Is an Alien* (Book 1)

*My BFF Is an Alien: Sabotage* (Book 2)

*My BFF Is an Alien: Turbulence* (Book 3)

*My BFF Is an Alien: Invasion* (Book 4)

*My BFF Is an Alien: Deception* (Book 5)



**E**

EPIGRAM

For my father-in-law,  
who's dearly missed by all

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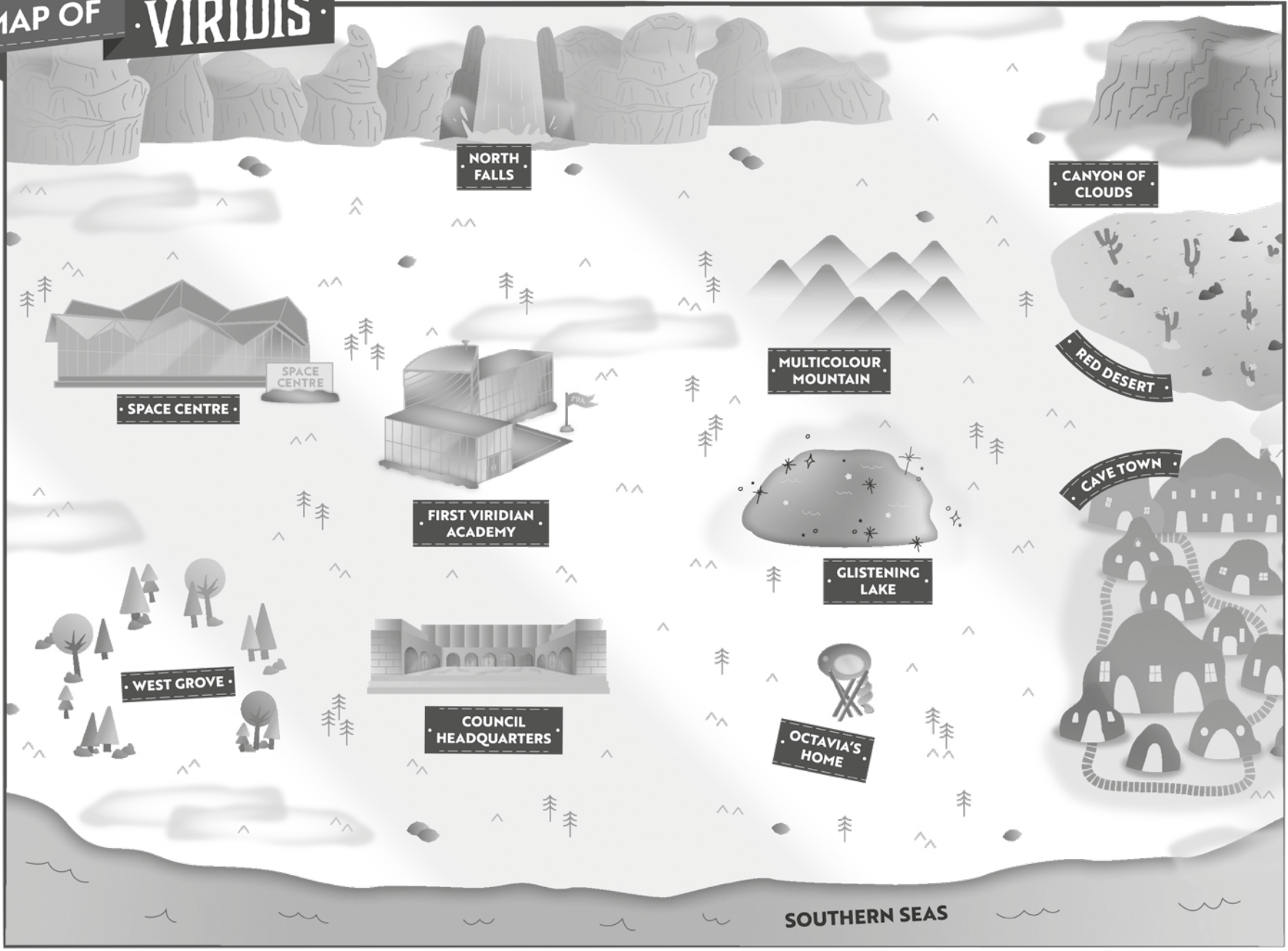
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## Contents

First Day	1
Initiation	15
Truth	29
Qualifier	41
Round One	52
Debrief	61
Plans	70
Round Two	82
After-effects	88
Friends	95
Visitors	104
Round Three	111
Dissent	119
Reverberations	126
Dissidence	135
Breach	145
Rescue	152
Final Round	163
Destruction	171
Safe Haven	177
Epilogue	187

# MAP OF VIRIDIS



NORTH FALLS

CANYON OF CLOUDS

SPACE CENTRE

SPACE CENTRE

MULTICOLOUR MOUNTAIN

RED DESERT

FIRST VIRIDIAN ACADEMY

CAVETOWN

GLISTENING LAKE

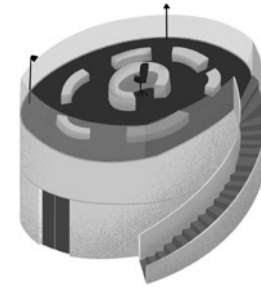
WEST GROVE



COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS

OCTAVIA'S HOME

SOUTHERN SEAS



## Chapter 1

# FIRST DAY

“It’s perfectly fine if you’re nervous. Most of our students are on their first day,” said Mistress Kadell as we approached Class One. “But you’ll see that there is no reason to be. The teachers and students here are of the finest calibre.”

“Ma’am, I’m neither nervous nor worried,” I assured her.

The head of the academy blinked in surprise. “Good,” she replied.

I gave her my sweetest smile to mollify any offence she might have taken. Some adults didn’t like to be corrected—especially not by children—but a falsehood must be called out. She was right: most would be nervous on their first day at FVA. This was Viridis’s most prestigious school, after all. But *I’m* not most

Viridians. I'm Octavia Wuen, descendent of the mighty Wuen clan, granddaughter of Viridis's Head of Council and the future Head of Council. Why would I be nervous or worried?

The tap of our boots echoed inside the quiet main building. Class One sat atop Cylinder One, a two-storey structure at the west end of First Viridian Academy. Its curved facade was tinted gold by the morning rays filtering in from the building's glass walls. It looked very grand. Some would probably find it intimidating. Not me.

I got a better view of the sprawling compound as we climbed the stairs that spiralled around Cylinder One. Spread across the main building were nineteen other cylindrical structures, with similar roofless classrooms at the top. In place of physical walls was a sound barrier in the form of a faint yellow light that wrapped around the curved half-walls of each classroom. The first storey of each cylinder contained auditoriums, laboratories or galleries.

We arrived at the entrance to Class One. A teacher stood in the centre of the room while students were seated on red chairs that encircled him. Not a peep from the class could be heard as the sound barrier prevented noise from entering and exiting the classroom. As we entered, the students—I counted nineteen—rose to their feet. Mistress Kadell gestured at them to take their seats.

"Class One, I believe all of you already know Miss Octavia Wuen by name, and I know many of you

have been looking forward to meeting her. Octavia is the youngest Viridian to ever qualify for First Viridian Academy, with a perfect admission score. So it is only fitting that she join the cream of the crop here in Class One."

I kept my chin up as I stood there in my red, form-fitting tunic and dark brown pants tucked into black boots, aware that all eyes were on me. The academy head continued. "Most of you are a few years older than Octavia, but there is much you can still learn from one another." She turned to the teacher, a tall Viridian with a head of black and silver hair. "Master Ven, I shall leave Miss Wuen in your charge."

Master Ven nodded staidly. Mistress Kadell exited the class, and I took the only empty seat by the entrance. The soft frameless chair resembled a sack stuffed with beads. It adjusted itself underneath me, moulding to fit with the contours of my body. I leaned over to take my *PiCom* out from my bag but before I could find it, the beads in the chair shifted so that I was facing Master Ven: it had assumed from my posture I wasn't paying attention. I leaned over swiftly and tugged my bag onto my lap before the artificial intelligence had time to make any more assumptions!

"Miss Wuen, your tutors tell me you are up to speed with our syllabus," said Master Ven, tapping on the *PiCom* on his desk. "But if you find we are going too quickly, feel free to voice that."

"I'm sure that won't be necessary, sir. I'm well prepared."



Master Ven peered up from the *PiCom*, his hooded eyes narrowing. “I’m only saying you have that option.”

I resisted an eye-roll. “Of course, sir. Thank you,” I said, and forced a smile.

Satisfied, Master Ven pulled up a hologram model of a black crystal on his *PiCom*, while smaller versions of the hologram sprang up from the individual *PiComs* sitting on everyone’s laps. He settled in his chair, which revolved around his desk at his command, and launched into how an *anteris* changes in chemical bonding, state and appearance, depending on how the element is manipulated for use. I had never seen a real *anteris* but had already learnt how it buttresses tunnels for space travel. Being home-schooled didn’t mean I was behind those who attended formal schools.

I was also well-versed in the sciences, mathematics, technology, arts, languages and athletics. In fact, my tutors said I was way ahead for my age. Which was why Father and Mother had decided to let me apply for early admission into FVA, right before I turned thirteen this year. One could certainly apply for the Academy at any age, but nobody ever did before they were fourteen, after they had completed foundation school and were ready for FVA’s rigorous admission tests.

I hadn’t always been home-schooled. Like everyone else, I started at a foundation school when I was seven, but within half a year, Father and Mother had to withdraw me. According to the school head, it was because “Octavia’s capabilities far exceed what

foundation schools can offer her. She would be more suited, and equipped to excel, in an environment where she receives undivided attention.” (I had read the letter off Father’s *PiCom* while snooping around in his study for supplies to build a model spacecraft!)

But I knew the *real* reason was because I had shoved Rowinsen Paat for calling Katlin Zee a crybaby when she dropped her lunch, and Paat had ended up with a broken arm. The school was probably afraid I’d cause more accidents. If I had understood at the time how little control I had over my power, I would have just tripped Paat and made him think he’d fallen on his own!

Those who inherited their powers from family lines, like me, would normally develop their gifts in their teenage years—not at five years old, when one (namely me!) had practically zero control over one’s emotions and actions, and would tear up books in frustration or smack someone during a meltdown. Thanks to me, Father and Mother had had to replace our furniture on more than one occasion.

I had learnt to control my strength over the years. But I would still have accidents, like the time I rushed over to Council Headquarters to give Father and Mother the good news that I’d been accepted at FVA. In my excitement, I had shoved open the automatic sliding door while it was in the midst of opening. Needless to say, I broke it, and Father had to work inside a door-less office for several days before a new one could get installed.

I felt awful about it, but honestly—a place as important as Headquarters really should have more durable doors!



“Students who have lessons outside Class One may leave now,” announced Master Ven as our chemistry lesson came to an end. A cacophony of chatter and footfall filled the air as the sound barrier was deactivated.

I was due at the planetarium for Earth Studies. I tapped on my *PiCom* to check the location.

“I’ll show you where.” I turned to see a girl with black, bouncy shoulder-length hair. She had a tanned complexion and large black eyes with eyelashes that curled upwards. “I’m headed to the planetarium too,” she said, with a friendly lilt in her voice. “I’m Isa.” She slipped her *PiCom* into the pocket of her black, cropped jacket. Beneath it, a pliant-fibred black top and bright orange pants hugged her petite frame.

“Thank you.”

I noticed only two other students leaving the room besides us. Everyone else had remained in their seats.

“Not many taking Earth Studies, are there?” I asked Isa, as we took the stairs to the ground level.

“Most choose not to,” she said, as we walked among the many students heading in different directions. Some of their glances lingered on Isa and me, which, as usual, I made a point to ignore.

“Why is that?” I asked as we passed another Cylinder.

“It’s pointless, don’t you think? What can we learn from a backward planet? The students staying back in Class One are taking Oceanography. Tell me that’s not more interesting than Earth Studies!” She nudged me on the shoulder, as if expecting me to agree, but I happened to find Earth Studies fascinating. “Unfortunately, as Miraa, we don’t have a choice. Earth Studies is a compulsory subject.”

I was surprised when Isa used the word “Miraa”. It was an antiquated term for Viridians born with gifts, and whose parents also have gifts. On the other end was “Plibi”: Viridians who are born without gifts or whose gifts have diminished because the generations of Miraa before had married Plibi. I didn’t think anyone used those terms anymore.

“*Kevii*, Isa. *Kevii*, Octavia,” a boy bade us good day as we entered an adjoining building with white walls and bluish floor-to-ceiling windows. A grand white-and-sandy-brown staircase curved fluidly around the building connecting its five levels.

“Oh—*kevil!*” Isa returned and flashed her pearly whites, while I nodded at him. “Anyway, as I was saying—oh, *kevil!*” She was again interrupted, this time by two girls who also addressed us by name as we started up the meandering staircase. The greetings from random students continued all the way up the stairs to the planetarium.

“Do you know them?” I asked.

“No, but they know us. They look up to Miraa; we’re

famous!” She gave her hair a toss and winked at me. I had to grin at her exaggerated actions. “So, as I was saying, Earth Studies is mandatory for those of us whose parents serve on the Viridian Council. My surname is Wazhani. We’ve met before, you know.”

*Her father is Kian Wazhani.* I tried to recall ever meeting her and drew a blank. Council members had the privilege of taking their children to the majestic white stone building that is Council Headquarters, and I had met a few of them there over the years. Though it wasn’t the place for children to mingle or form friendships—Headquarters was the most important place on Viridis, where all the major decisions for the planet were made.

“It’s fine if you don’t remember. We were introduced, but we never actually talked, and it was years ago,” said Isa, with a wave of her hand, which made me feel better about not remembering.

The planetarium was on the fifth storey. Under the room’s white, dome-shaped ceiling, hundreds of seats surrounded a central podium. Isa and I found places on the second row. At the podium was a tall desk, behind which stood an equally tall Viridian tapping on his *PiCom*. My heart lifted when I saw the familiar face and mop of silver hair. General Bin looked up then, and I raised a hand and wiggled my fingers to say *keVII*. He gave me a wink and a slight smile before returning his gaze to his *PiCom*.

“Do you know General Bin?” Isa asked, with a curious tone.

“He was my tutor for Earth Studies and Defence Tactics.” He also happened to be Viridis’s Head of Security and a family friend who had known me since I was little.

“It’s no wonder you scored so well in the admissions test! You had the best tutors!” Isa exclaimed in a hushed tone. I stiffened. I wanted to tell her having the best tutors wasn’t the only reason, and that I’d also worked really hard, but two boys slid into the chairs beside Isa, interrupting me. I noticed they were the two other students who had left Class One.

“Ayer Mahan.” The tall one introduced himself and held out his fist. His forest green jacket and casual white top complemented his bronze skin.

“Octavia Wuen,” I said and tapped the side of his fist in greeting.

“I know who you are.” Ayer grinned.

“Idaius Ziq,” said the shorter boy with a tawny complexion, just as trendily dressed in a smart, blue jacket zipped up to his chest. He reached across so we could tap our fists.

*Ziq and Mahan.* “You’re Miraa,” I said. It felt strange saying that word.

“Yes. Forced to take Earth Studies as well,” Ayer lamented, eyes on his *PiCom*. “I might fall asleep when the lights go out.”

“Why do you all think Earth Studies is pointless?” I finally asked. Surely, General Bin’s lessons at FVA were just as interesting.

Ayer gave one final tap on his *PiCom* before he turned to me. “Do you know why Miraa have to take Earth Studies?”

I took a guess. “Because, other than Viridis, it’s the only other planet—that we know of—with highly evolved beings.”

Ayer waved a finger at me. “It’s because of Project Safe Haven.”

Project Safe Haven was a programme Grandmother had initiated after Viridis intercepted one of two space probes that Earth had launched. After studying the planet and its inhabitants, the Council decided that Earth would make a good backup planet should calamity ever befall Viridis. We have since been building identities and creating finances on Earth in preparation for such an emergency.

“As children of Council members, we are being groomed to succeed our parents. So we need to know Earth well, should we ever have to lead Viridians there. But really”—Ayer turned up his palms—“we’re essentially preparing for that one-in-a-million event that will never happen. It’s a waste of time, if you ask me.”

Isa chimed in. “There’s nothing we can learn from these aliens. I’d understand if the planet were more advanced than Viridis. But Earth is backward, and its inhabitants are not as highly evolved.”

Idaius leaned over. “*And* their society is barbaric,” he added. “You’ve seen how humans treat their animals and their environment, and how easily disease spreads

in their community. Surely, you do not approve of their practices?” He narrowed his eyes at me and quirked his thin lips. He seemed really smug.

“No, I don’t always approve of the things they do, but I admire their resilience, and their ability to recover and rebuild after a catastrophe, like they did after the world wars,” I argued.

“Which wouldn’t have happened in the first place, if they had our brains and psychological maturity.” Ayer tapped his temple to make his point. “If you want to learn about resilience or rebuilding, we have all that on Viridis. Maybe you just haven’t realised because you’ve been stuck inside your house for too long.” Ayer chuckled at his own joke and nudged a smirking Idaius.

I bristled. A few years ago, I probably would have punched them in the face, sending them to the nearest infirmary. But that was not how I wanted my first day at FVA to go. Instead, I took a deep breath—something my parents taught me to do when I got riled up. It didn’t always work but did now as the lights in the planetarium began to dim, creating a soothing environment that helped calm me.

“You know”—Isa placed a finger on her chin—“Octavia has a point. I’ve not thought about it that way before.” She nodded encouragingly at me.

“Well, let us agree to disagree!” Ayer leaned back in his seat, his hands intertwined behind his head. I rolled my eyes at him as the planetarium darkened.

A giant hologram of a blue-and-white globe emerged from General Bin's *PiCom*.

"Today, we're looking at the rising number of respiratory infections on Earth," General Bin began. The general played news reports from Earth in English—the planet's universal language. I found Earth languages fascinating; they have more than seven thousand spoken languages while we only have the one official language: Viridy. I mentally calculated today's Earth date (Earth has around thirty days in a month and twelve months in a year; Viridis has twenty-four days in a month and fifteen months in a year) as General Bin talked about the measures the different countries had implemented to curb the virus's spread and their race to create a vaccine. I was intrigued: If the same thing were to happen to Viridis, would we be able to contain it? If we had a sample of the virus, could we help them to create a vaccine?

I heard a snore. I glanced to my left to see Ayer fast asleep. Beside him, Idaius's peepers were glued to his *PiCom*. Isa's eyes were glassy, like her mind was elsewhere.

"Does anyone have any thoughts about the implications of the virus outbreak on Earth's economies?" General Bin asked the twenty or so students scattered around the planetarium.

The general gazed in my direction. I had many thoughts, ranging from potential job losses to social unrest, but instead, I covertly put a finger under my nose and pointed to my left so that he would see the three very uninterested students for himself.

"Mister Mahan," General Bin called. When there was no response, he bellowed, "Mister Mahan!"

I turned to see Isa nudge Ayer, who suddenly bolted up in his seat. "Yes, sir!"

"Your thoughts, please?" General Bin's voice boomed as the lights in the planetarium brightened.

"Uh...uh...I think..." Ayer mumbled, looking at Isa, then at Idaius. They both shrugged helplessly at him. Hah! They obviously had no idea what the general's question was.

"Mister Mahan, you will write up a thousand-word essay on the possible implications of the virus on Earth's economies and have it submitted by the end of tomorrow," said General Bin, who'd had enough of Ayer's dawdling. "Mister Mahan, and the rest of you, will read up on the Earth news I've sent to your message boxes. I expect a vibrant discussion at our next lesson."

As the lights came back on, I had the uneasy feeling someone was watching me. My gaze shifted to the general's right and landed on a boy at the opposite end of the planetarium. He was dressed in a trendy, black-cuffed white jacket. Was he another Miraa I had met but didn't remember? His black hair flopped over his eyebrows, and his piercing, deep-set eyes held mine for a while. Though he was the one who broke eye contact. He slung his bag over his shoulders and sauntered to the exit. His had not been the curious but friendly gaze I was used to. His was hostile.

"I knew old Bin had it in for me," Ayer grumbled, distracting me.

Isa leaned towards Ayer’s ear. I bent over my bag and pretended to pack. “Watch what you say about Bin in front of Octavia. They’re friends,” Isa whispered softly, but it couldn’t escape my ears.

The Communications Unit had written extensively about my family, including my gifts of super strength and healing, and everyone thought they knew everything there was to know about me. But nobody knew I had super hearing—not even my parents, my grandmother or General Bin. And it was my secret to keep!



## Chapter 2 INITIATION

“How was your first day?” asked Father. The hologram of my father bobbed above my *PiCom* as he strolled across the lobby of Council Headquarters, its opulent white *maboris* wall in the background.

“It was fine,” I replied. I was in my hostel room, lying prone on my bed with arms folded and my chin resting on them. My *PiCom* was sitting on a pillow in front of me. “I’m ahead of the lessons at school. Earth Studies was interesting, though, with everything that’s going on over there right now.”

“Oh, yes. The respiratory illness that’s making its rounds on Earth. Really awful, but I think the humans will get through it. They have been through worse.”

“Yea, I think so too.”

Mother’s hologram emerged next to Father’s. “Hang

on, Father. It's Mother. I'll put her through."

"Sorry I'm late! What'd I miss?" asked Mother. She was comm-ing from her office and had an apologetic smile on her face. Behind her, clouds swirled around rugged brown cliffs—the Canyon of Clouds was her favourite virtual background.

"Not much, but I was waiting to show you my room!" I got off the bed with my *PiCom* in hand. I twirled around slowly so my parents could take in everything: the dark *blichwood*-framed bed and adjacent matching desk set against light green walls; the large spotless window beside the desk that overlooked a garden below; a cupboard made of the same solid wood; and a narrow, ceiling-to-floor *cleanab* that would clean and press my clothes. I ended the tour with the black-and-white tiled bathroom opposite my bed.

"Cosy!" said Mother. "And you have a *cleanab*! Now you have no excuse not to have clean clothes."

I rolled my eyes. Trust Mother to notice the *cleanab*, of all things.

"Looks like you're settling in well," said Father, the Council Headquarters' stone building receding behind him as he walked.

"Yea. It's not as big as my room at home, but it has everything I need. I like it. Are you heading to the North, Father?"

"Yes. Your grandmother and the team from the Weather Unit are already there. We are meeting tomorrow morning to discuss the drought." The building

behind gave way to a view of the lawn opposite Headquarters, where a streamlined, orange-and-black aircraft resembling a huge pea pod waited. "I have to board the *airolon* now. I'll comm you both tomorrow!"

Mother and I waved. "Bye, Father!" "Speak soon, Justin!"

Father's hologram disappeared. He had been terribly busy ever since he started preparing to take over from Grandmother as Head of Council next year. But he never failed to comm when he couldn't be present with me.

"Have you made any friends?" asked Mother.

"I'm friends with Isa Wazhani." But Mother looked like she was expecting more, so I added, "And Ayer Mahan and Idaius Ziq."

I didn't exactly regard the boys as my friends, but I thought it would make Mother happy. After all, one of the main reasons they had wanted me to return to regular school sooner was because they thought I needed to make friends my age.

When I was younger, I used to look longingly at other kids playing together. I was never allowed to join them because I could not control my gift of strength back then. I soon grew used to the solitude and even learnt to appreciate doing things alone. But I always wondered what it would be like to hang out and swim or hike with a friend instead of with my parents and other grown-ups.

But Mother didn't look pleased. "Did you meet *anyone* whose parents aren't Council members?"

I shook my head. "They were the only ones who came

up to me, Mother. They even took me to lunch and showed me where the hostel is.”

“All right. But it’d be good to know kids from outside the Council circle too, Octavia. Having friends from different backgrounds will widen your perspective and help you appreciate everyone’s uniqueness.”

“I know.” Urgh! Mother may have forgotten what it was like to be the new kid. I sighed. “I’ll keep trying.”

The lights in the room blinked twice, a reminder that it would be lights-out soon, so Mother and I said goodnight and ended the comm.

I was climbing into bed when I heard a knock on my door. I padded over and saw Isa’s face through the viewer—a square screen that showed the room’s exterior.

“Isa?” I spoke into the viewer.

“Let me in!” she hissed softly.

I opened the door only a little because I really didn’t want her to come in. But Isa didn’t get the hint, and pushed the door wide open and walked in. She was in a black, form-fitting outfit; definitely not dressed for sleep.

“What’s going on, Isa? It’s after lights-out.”

“Close the door.”

I shut the door in a huff. Isa ordered the night light to come on, and a soft orange glow soon brightened the room.

“You’re not actually thinking of sleeping already, are you?” She eyed me in my pyjamas, and I folded my arms defensively. “Come on, get changed. We have to go.”

“What do you mean? Go where?”

“Out.” She tilted her head at the window. “It’s a

must for every Miraa on their first day at FVA!” Her mouth widened into a mischievous grin. She went to open the window.

I was curious as to what was worth breaking hostel rules for. So, as the automatic window panel whirred downwards, I went to the bathroom to change. I chose a black, long-sleeved jacket and pants like Isa’s because wherever we were headed, it seemed to call for stealth. When I came out, Isa was sitting with her back resting against the window frame, her legs dangling on either side of the window ledge. “Ready?” She winked.

“Where are we going, exactly?” I joined her at the window and looked down at the dimly lit garden two storeys below.

“Up.” She nudged the air with her chin. “You think you can do it?”

“Yea,” I replied, utterly unfazed. I had never scaled a wall, but I had climbed mountains, and the hostel was only four storeys high.

“See you at the top!” With that, Isa swung her leg in to perch on the ledge and gripped the top of the window frame with her hands. She raised herself to a standing position and hoisted herself above the window. I craned my neck and saw her using the V-shaped decorative beams on the hostel facade to climb up to the window ledge on the third floor. She soon swung herself over the edge of the roof and disappeared from sight.

I, too, perched myself on the window ledge and felt for





## 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 [vivianteo.com](http://vivianteo.com).

Vivian is an alumna 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.

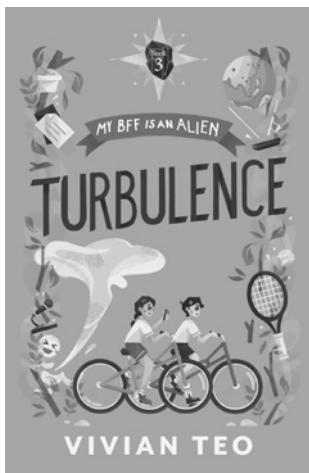
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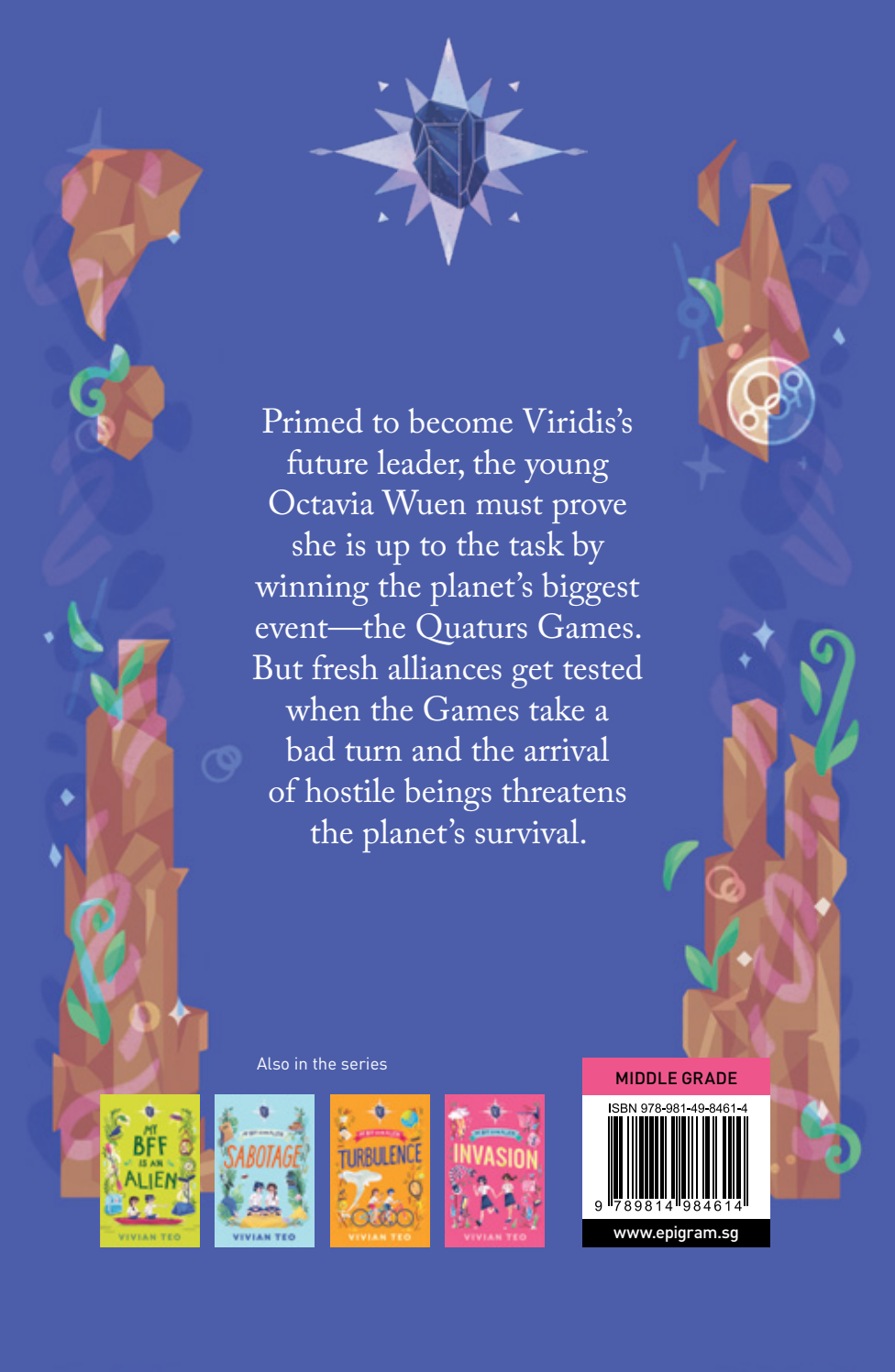
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*TURBULENCE* (BOOK 3)



*MY BFF IS AN ALIEN: INVASION*  
(BOOK 4)



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