

LONGLISTED FOR THE 2016 EPIGRAM BOOKS FICTION PRIZE

MISDIRECTION

BOOK ONE OF
THE SAVANT TRILOGY



*“Ning Cai
is a wonder.”*

—Neil Gaiman

NING CAI

“Ning Cai is a wonder.”

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“Good mystery stories and magic tricks both rely
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wondering how the author pulled it all off—
and Ning Cai puts on a great show!”

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BOOK ONE OF
THE SAVANT TRILOGY
NING CAI

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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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*Dedicated to my BFF Pamela Ho,
who started yours truly on this
amazing journey as a writer*

ONE

I'M ALIVE. I know this because dead people feel no pain.

Blinding white light floods my vision as I open my eyes, and I regret my decision instantly. I blink back a sharp sting of tears. I try to sit up in bed, as I do to roll out every morning to start my day at Blackmore High, but everywhere hurts like effing hell.

Every muscle, bone and sinew is screaming in major agony. And way beyond the sore muscles I am familiar with after a great parkour training session or workout. What happened? I try to think. Did I fall? It must have been a very bad tumble. I don't remember. My brain feels scrambled.

Loud thunder like the wrath and fury of ancient gods rumbles overhead, fully rousing me now. Dark clouds lurk outside my unfamiliar window, spreading out into

the twilight, hailing the keen promise of rain. The rolling thunder finally fades and grows distant. From the window comes the soft musical drumming of tropical monsoon rain, getting progressively louder in its rhumba.

But there is something else too.

A bright electronic sound chirps rhythmically beside me, along with an accompanying high-pitched wail, which reminds me all too much of that painfully annoying alarm on my phone set to wake me up for school every morning. It's the one that Siri punishes me with, when I have used up every one of my allowed snoozes. Right now, the ceaseless wailing near my head is unmercifully loud enough to wake the dead.

I throw a glance in its direction and notice a red light flashing rapidly above some kind of complicated-looking medical equipment with a bright screen showing wavy lines, numbers and other types of clinical data my brain fails to comprehend. Long red tubes extend from the whirring machine, feeding themselves directly into my left arm.

My pale, thin arm.

The right arm matches the pallor and lack of definition of the left, and I flinch. Whatever happened to my sun-kissed tan and toned muscles? It's like someone generously slathered Mom's fancy South Korean face-whitening cream all over me. Looking down, I see something wrapped snugly around my wrist: a plastic tag with a very official-looking barcode.

PARKWAY EAST HOSPITAL

PATIENT NAME: SCHOOLING, MAXINE

SEX: FEMALE

DOB: 5 JAN 2000

Maxine Schooling. Is that me?

Yes.

The name, which I slowly remember now as mine, feels like the forgotten lyrics of an old song once very much loved, but which has not been heard or sung in a long while. Long enough to almost forget. Its letters do feel somewhat familiar to me, but in a rather detached kind of way. In other words, this virtual indifference perplexes me.

The sharp, unmistakable smell of hospital antiseptic is clear to me now, and I feel my heart race as cold sweat breaks out across my forehead. Obviously I'm in some kind of institution, warded in bed, hooked up to a life-support machine of some sort. But why? How is it that I can't for the life of me remember?

It sounds like Darth Vader is in the saccharine-white room with me. But that pained ragged breathing, I quickly come to realise, is actually coming from the oxygen mask looped tight around my face. Feeling my stomach start to churn with panic, I squeeze my eyes shut and try to process everything that is happening right now in this moment, willing the overwhelming cacophony of loud noises to go away.

Don't freak out now, I tell myself. Breathe.

I take in a series of deep breaths and pace myself. Slowly inhaling oxygen into my lungs until they feel full to bursting, exhaling gently and deeply, and visualising pushing out more than I take in. Someone taught me that, I can't remember who, but it is supposed to help calm you down and focus on the present moment.

A loud clattering sound interrupts my moment of travelling inwards, and I open my eyes.

Swaying like a helpless marionette in the heavy monsoon rain outside, the flowering branch of a majestic angsana tree taps a beat against the windowpane, and I suddenly recall snatches of a distant memory.

A horn blares loudly and I take off running, like a fearless pilot riding the warm winds. My favourite pair of seasoned trainers pound a resounding rhythm against the hard pavement as I sprint. Feeling the hot midday sun in my face and the soft caress of the humid breeze against my skin, I confidently execute a perfect precision jump followed by a cat leap and a well-practised flip. As my body sails through the air, time seems to slow down to a crawl and I see everything clearly. I am in the moment.

I land gracefully on the balls of my feet, and my ears are filled with the sound of people cheering. Trusting my intuition and muscle memory to make the right number of steps at the optimal speed, my body springs like a released coil and launches itself across the last obstacle in a flawless speed vault, before coming to a dramatic roll on dark asphalt across the finish line. The crowd roars its approval and I am handed a trophy.

Parkour.

It is a parkour trophy. Heavy, shiny, the biggest yet in my collection. And I see my dearest friends and classmates going crazy, clapping and cheering for me as I wave hard at their sweaty, smiling faces.

Mom, Dad and Danny are also in the stands celebrating my win. My adorable little brother, sitting proudly on our tall father's wide, sloping shoulders, is laughing hard and unabashedly showing off that dark gap of his missing front

tooth. Reaching across the metal barricades that separate us, I try to slap Danny a high-five but just before I can reach him, I'm quickly pulled away by the organisers, who whisk me off for pictures with the media and their important sponsors. Our fingers nearly touch but our hands miss.

My family. I remember them. Where are they right now?

My entire body feels strangely numb, like an arm desensitised from poor blood circulation because I slept on it for too long. Tentatively, I wiggle the stiff fingers of my right hand.

Whoa!

My stubborn digits protest the movement and right away they tingle, as if I just plunged my fist deep into a lava pit before submerging my entire arm into an open polynya in the Antarctic's frozen ice sea. The pain is savage AF.

Swearing under my breath, I gasp at the intensity of the engulfing sensations coursing through the very tips of my fingers, radiating from my hand, speeding down my forearm, shooting past my elbow, prickling right up my shoulder.

My entire body tenses at the pain and I choke back a cry. The agony slowly ebbs. I grit my teeth and prepare myself. I flex again. This time the pain twinges but not nearly as bad as before. The weird spasmic sensation is still there but much reduced, and the numbing tingle radiating afterwards thankfully does not last as long. Most importantly, my fingers are starting to work like normal again.

I allow myself a small smile of victory and then try again one more time, masochistically ecstatic that the residual tingle is only concentrated in my hand, which I can now squeeze tight. I relax and shut my eyes, feeling a massive

cloud of weariness starting to settle like a weighted blanket over me. Maybe I should go back to sleep.

Yeah.

But now I can't.

Because someone is suddenly singing David Guetta's "Titanium" to me.

I remember the lyrics. And the soft voice. I blink and my blurry vision struggles to focus on the almond-shaped face of a young woman of mixed Chinese and Indian parentage. Pretty enough to be a social media influencer with tons of followers, she appears to be in her late teens or very early twenties.

The Chindian stranger has a nice voice and I almost feel regret when she stops singing. But she smiles at me. Her expression is dazzling like the sun, and the bright white light behind her forms a halo around her dark head of curls, adding an angelic glow. She leans in so close that our noses almost touch.

"Hey, stranger."

She wears stylish cat-eye glasses and a gold ring in her nose that nicely complements her wheatish complexion. There's something extremely familiar about her, and my instincts tell me that I can trust her. Regarding me with her bright eyes rimmed in black kohl, the Chindian girl angles her head towards me and winks.

"Wake up, Sleeping Beauty. It's time for you to re-enter the world."

Her laughter reminds me of melodic Balinese wind chimes dancing in the breeze. Her warm smile is surprisingly contagious and I find myself grinning back at her. Someone

else joins her, a young Filipino nurse who stares down at me. His eyes widen in surprise just before he pushes off the rails of my bed and swiftly springs out of the room, calling for the doctor. Unfazed by the nurse's behaviour, my smiling visitor arches an eyebrow at me.

"So, do you remember who I am?"

I contemplate her expressive hazel eyes and friendly smile, taking in the long mess of dark hair spilling down her small shoulders, her delicate collar bones and the colourful friendship band knotted on her slender left wrist. And suddenly, it all comes back.

Yes.

They told me that she had just made a wish after blowing out the three candles on her birthday cake, when I was born at KK Women's and Children's Hospital on a hazy Wednesday. My scientist parents and her father, Uncle Devan, were close friends at the National University of Singapore and became working colleagues after graduating, so it was no surprise we also became bosom buddies. She would always patiently entertain me with stories she made up on nights I called her because I couldn't sleep. And ever since I can remember, I've always called her Luce.

And Luce called me...

"Max." Lucille Ang-Anandan's velvety voice calms me and I feel my shoulders start to relax. "Everything's going to be okay."

The doors burst open.

The same nurse is back with a petite Indian woman in a smart white jacket. Rushing past Luce, the doctor swiftly keys a code into the wailing machine and the disturbing

clamour of flashing red lights and electronic commotion finally stops. While I am deeply thankful, my ears suddenly feel odd, unused to the shattering silence around me.

“You’re in good hands, Max,” Luce calls out from her spot behind the doctor. “Everything’s going to be okay.”

Picking up the stethoscope wrapped around her neck, the doctor warms the metallic end of it rapidly between her palms before pressing the bell to my chest. On her otherwise pristine uniform, a fresh stain—a small archipelago of what looks like fresh laksa gravy—clues me in that she has just been interrupted during her meal break. Glancing at the doctor’s simple wristwatch, I see that it is a quarter past two in the afternoon. A ray of light bounces sharply off the shiny plastic of the faded photo ID badge clipped to her breast pocket. Her name is Dr Wijesingha.

“Breathe,” the doctor tells me. “Nice and slow.”

Her face is a mask of keen concentration as my chest heaves when I deepen my breaths for her benefit. She listens intently and then instructs the nurse to contact my family. He nods and leaves the room, but not before throwing me a look of delight. Removing a slim torch-light pen from her breast pocket, Dr Wijesingha switches it on and points the bright LED beam into my eyes.

“Please look at me.”

Trying hard not to blink, I stare into the very core of the bright circle of white, darting my eyes to follow its movement. It reminds me of a surreal dream I once had, which was all too real for me; I fail to recall the specifics, but I have a fleeting memory of an engulfing warm light baptising me fully as I reached the very end of a long, dark tunnel.

Yes. Everything’s going to be okay.
My name is Maxine Schooling.
And today I’m alive.

TWO

GRATEFUL, I SIP from the glass of cool water Dr Wijeyasingha carefully tips towards my lips. Water has never tasted so good. The physician dries my wet chin with a paper towel and adjusts my nasal cannula, making sure my oxygen supply is properly delivered.

“Comfortable?” She looks earnestly at my face as she tucks the small flexible tubes of my cannula behind my ears. I nod, grateful to be finally free of that uncomfortable oxygen mask.

Pulling the single chair in the hospital room as close as possible to my bedside, the doctor takes a seat and flips open a thick medical file. Luce, observing quietly from the side, catches my nervous gaze and returns a reassuring smile and encouraging nod.

“Don’t worry,” Luce tells me. “I’m right here.”

Feeling slightly comforted, I manage a smile back at my friend just as the older woman looks up from her open pages. Tossing her ponytail over her shoulder, the doctor turns to look at me, throwing a quick glance over at a nonchalant Luce, who gives her a lazy shrug, before focusing her full attention back on me.

“You can call me Dr Wijeyasingha,” she says. “Do you know your name?”

I hesitate. Her unexpected question throws me off and I feel my eyebrows arch.

“Do you know who you are?” she tries again.

“Go on,” Luce urges as I lick my dry, chapped lips.

“Max,” I rasp, surprised by the strangely throaty voice that I do not recognise as my own.

It sounds very much like my mother’s uniquely husky voice.

I clear my throat and try again, the name awkwardly rolling off my tongue like a foreign phrase hastily learnt in a classroom and then forgotten. “Maxine Schooling.”

Dr Wijeyasingha plays with her plastic ballpoint pen, and the sharp clicking noise it makes under her thumb makes me deeply uncomfortable, although I don’t fully understand why I feel this way. She stops her pen-clicking and leans forward.

“Do you know how long you’ve been here?”

I stare at her.

No lady, I don’t even know why I am here and it’s all honestly starting to freak me out. I want to say this but my tongue fails me. Instead, I lower my eyes and shake my head.

“You came to us with twenty-one broken bones, four cracked ribs, a fractured skull and a shattered jaw. A whole team of doctors and nurses worked round the clock to save

your life in the operating theatre. I was one of them.” The doctor’s voice is quiet, and her small fingers play with the curled corner of the page from the thick folder on her lap.

The news startles me. I must have been awkwardly gawking, with my jaw hanging loose, because Luce comes over and snaps my mouth shut with her hand.

Dr Wijesingha’s lips come together in a grim smile. “In fact, no one was sure if you would ever wake up from your coma, especially after you sustained such traumatic injuries. So what I’m trying to say is that this is nothing short of a medical miracle, you waking up after three years.”

Three years?

I cup my hands to my face before raking shaking fingers through my hair. Its short length surprises me. Snatches of memory come flitting back like loose pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, recollections of Mom helping me braid my long tresses into neat cornrows like Ronda Rousey on the morning of every parkour tournament. I hated to cut my hair and grew it down nearly to my bum, and I was so proud of it. Now, it is just a short bob.

And there is something else.

Noticing my unspoken distress, Dr Wijesingha activates the selfie cam on her mobile phone and hands it to me. She regards me with a kindly gaze. “You’re still a very attractive young lady. I honestly wouldn’t really worry about the scarring too much.”

Staring into the mirror of the 21st century, I see my father’s pensive blue eyes on my mother’s delicate Asian face looking warily back at me. My face has changed. I am the same, but also different. A thin scar slashes diagonally through my left

eyebrow, bisecting it. Curious, I trace a fingertip along the line, observing how eyebrow hair has ceased growing in the distinct welt of its angry path.

“It’s not the end of the world, Max,” Luce says. “You’ve got a seriously cool Charlie Puth eyebrow thing going there for you.” I busy myself in a feeble attempt to hide the white scar with my dark fringe. “I think it adds character. You look pretty badass, actually.”

I sigh, wanting badly to believe Luce, as I return the doctor’s phone.

“W-what happened to me?” I finally ask, still slowly getting used to how excruciatingly difficult and tediously lengthy it is to humanly articulate words from formed thought. “Accident?”

The physician shakes her head regretfully. “I’m so sorry, but we’re not allowed to say. The police don’t want anything clouding your memory or influencing your judgement, nothing that will jeopardise or affect your case. It’s still an ongoing investigation.”

Police? Case? Investigation?

I bite my lip. A thousand questions surge through my brain.

“Are you able to recall what happened, Maxine? Anything at all? What is your very last memory?” Dr Wijesingha eyes me keenly. “Close your eyes and try. But please don’t feel the need to rush it.”

Closing my eyes, I concentrate, searching for clues in the deep recesses of my mind. What do I remember? Everything is dark. But then, like a blossoming bush of Kurinji flowers that Dad said blooms only once in twelve years, a memory in the form of fragrance comes to me: warm amber wood,

freshly sliced cucumber, lush watermelon, basil verbena. Then the constant sounds of pen-clicking intrude, and the scents dissipate in my mind.

Click. Click. Click. Click. Click. Click.

I feel my shoulders rise towards my ears, and my neck muscles tense up. My eyelids fly open and I feel a furrow of annoyance deepen on my forehead. The doctor stops her annoying habit, looking almost startled at my unintentionally fierce glare.

“Sorry,” I say, shaking my head. “Didn’t see anything.”

Standing by my side, Luce pats my stiff shoulder, reminding me to relax. “Maybe we just need to give it some time.”

“It might be a good idea for you to keep a journal, Maxine. Making daily entries recording significant events, personal thoughts or insights, anything you remember even, will assist in your recovery process. It will be a journey,” the physician tells me as she snaps the folder on her lap shut. “Now, your blood pressure and heart rate are still a bit peaky, so try to get some rest. I need to inform CID that you’re awake. The police officers will want to come by to ask you some questions.”

I glance up at Luce and my friend smiles reassuringly. “I’m not going anywhere.”

The pager on Dr Wijesingha’s hip emits a series of shrill beeps, and after silencing it, she gets up to leave. Walking over to the small sofa near the foot of my bed, she picks up the overstuffed and unapologetically colourful scrapbook from the faded beige cushion, and gently sets it on my lap.

“Your family’s been informed and should be on the way to see you now. I’ll check in on you later when I’m done with my shift, but in the meantime just press the red button and

buzz for the nurses if you need anything, okay?”

Smiling my thanks, I watch the doctor leave my cosy single-ward room. The large scrapbook in my hands is emblazoned with bold words decorated liberally with bright silver and hot pink glitter:

WAKE UP, SLEEPING BEAUTY!!!

Inside are cute cartoon sketches, washed-out Instax Mini polaroid photographs and encouraging handwritten notes from family, friends and some of my favourite people from school. Luce sinks into the chair Dr Wijesingha just vacated, and we settle into comfortable silence as I turn the wildly decorated pages.

Together, we laugh at the ridiculous photographs stuck on the pages of the scrapbook. There are a few favourites. Luce painting my toenails in my favourite shade of Disney-villain purple and Halloween-pumpkin orange as I lay sleeping; my darling Aunt Theresa arranging fresh sunflowers in the vase by my bedside and tickling my face with a leaf; my jock cousin Jon pretending to holler into my ear as he holds a seriously epic unicorn birthday cake with my name on it and 16 lit candles; a laughing Dr Wijesingha wearing a small Santa hat, slipping a hairband with lit reindeer antlers on me as I slept on; and a skilfully taken wifie by my scrawny best friend CK, who is grinning gleefully in the photo, so much so that his braces actually seem to gleam with an exuberant shine while yours truly lies comatose with his dark sunglasses over my eyes and Beats by Dre headphones over my scarred, clean-shaven head.

A hard lump of emotion gathers, sticking uncomfortably in my throat. I try to swallow it down but that horrible

sensation doesn't quite go away. I can't wait for my family to come see me. Hearing Danny's silly boisterous laughter, Dad's booming deep voice and Mom's perpetual nagging because she cares—all that normalcy will make me feel better instantly.

There is a knock on the door and it swings open.

"Hello?"

A Chinese lady, probably in her mid to late thirties, who looks like the older version of Mom's younger sister, tentatively pokes her head into the room.

She chokes a gasp as she walks in, her beaded Peranakan slippers barely making a sound on the smooth tiles. Her gaze never leaves my face. I notice that her traditional sarong kebaya is wet and her long hair is damp with rain, but the large smile on her crying face is bright enough to warm the entire room. Luce stands so my aunt can sit in the chair and take my hands in hers. I feel her chilled fingers trembling with emotion.

"Aunt Theresa?" I croak the crying woman's name, like some kind of an instinctual muscle memory. She is a lot thinner than I remember her to be. I squeeze her fingers gently. "Please don't cry."

My aunt immediately smothers me with kisses, and I can smell the kitchen on her colourful Nonya clothing as she hugs me close. Aunt Theresa has obviously come directly from My Sayang, the Peranakan restaurant along Niven Road that my great-grandmother started right after the Japanese occupation during WWII.

"Chilli Padi." Aunt Theresa bursts into a flood of tears as she whispers my childhood nickname. On the first day

of the Lunar New Year when I was six and my cousin Jon was seven, the grown-ups were deeply engaged in a long game of mahjong and weren't looking at us kids. Jon and I snuck into the restaurant's kitchen and dared each other to eat from a fresh bag of red-hot chilli padi we found stashed away, just to wager which one of us was able to handle the spicy chillies better. I won our silly little competition but the ensuing result from our unfortunate childish rivalry was not pretty. It was also when my nickname stuck.

"Are Mom and Dad on their way?" I murmur into my aunt's bosom as she squeezes me just a little too tight. "Danny too?"

Aunt Theresa pulls away and strokes my hair. The bags under her eyes look severe, like she is suffering from insomnia because of a massive burden on her small shoulders. Even though she is just two years younger than Mom, my aunt looks much older than I remember. Drawing out a ragged breath as she forces a smile on her wan face, Aunt Theresa leans back, tucks a lock of hair behind my ear and takes a short moment to compose herself as she eyes the scar slashed across my left eyebrow.

"They're not coming," she finally says.

My eyes search hers as I wait for an explanation. But it does not come.

"I don't understand," I say, hearing the childish whine and unmasked hurt in my new husky voice. "Why won't they see me? Did I do something wrong?"

"I'm so, so sorry," she whispers, her voice strained with emotion.

I turn to look at Luce, quietly leaning against the wall

behind my aunt, but my childhood friend looks away.

“Jamie and Francis were killed that night,” Aunt Theresa says. “Danny didn’t make it either. The police weren’t able to find out who did it or why. But now, maybe all that will change.”

“No,” I mutter in disbelief, shaking my head obstinately. “No. No. No.”

My broken heart refuses to accept what my aunt is trying to say; I want nothing more than to push those words away, tear them all up, declare them as lies. But my logical, analytical mind understands exactly why my family isn’t coming for me. The clues are all there, right in front of me.

I reach down and quickly leaf through the unfinished scrapbook started by my loved ones three years ago, charting my stay in the hospital. There are pages and pages showing photographs of familiar faces, but none of my family.

No Mom. No Dad. No Danny. They are also clearly missing from the pictures taken on all three birthdays I spent in hospital, where everyone else who cared about me was there to celebrate as I lay in my coma.

A surge of rage courses through me and with a sudden burst of energy, I slam the book shut and fling it off my lap. The heavy scrapbook crashes to the floor near Luce’s feet, denting the corners of the book, but she doesn’t flinch.

I press my hands into my face, desperately wanting to wake up from this nightmare. I hear a rustling of clothing as my aunt moves from her chair, reaching over to wrap me in a protective embrace. I feel her hands stroking my ugly chopped tresses, in an attempt to comfort me. But her kind actions only serve to remind me of how my mother fussed over my long braids.

Aunt Theresa rocks me gently, like I am a baby.

I should cry. Yell. Scream. Break something.

My heart hurts so badly, yet the tears don’t come.

Instead, I struggle to breathe as crashing emotions overwhelm me.

Luce looks at me, quiet sadness reflected in her sorry eyes.

“I’m so sorry, sayang.” Aunt Theresa tries to console me. “So, so sorry.”

But nothing my aunt says helps. Rage burns in the space where my heart should be. Anger. Hate. Sadness. Pain. Loneliness. Regret. I didn’t even get to say goodbye.

If only I had one more moment with them. One more chance to tell my family how much I love them. Even when I acted like an absolute troll sometimes, but only because I thought they were being unnecessarily difficult or mean to me.

If only I had the power to change the past, I’d jump back in time and rewrite history so none of this ever happened. But I’m not a child any more, and I know this is not a fairy tale. There is no such thing as magic. This is my reality now, and I am hopelessly stuck in a living nightmare. All I can do now is wonder if justice will ever be served.

But I am filled with so many questions that have no answers.

Who killed my family and put me into a coma? Why were they so damn hell-bent on destroying us? How did these cold-blooded criminals manage to elude the police for three years? And is there any possible way for me to make the murderers pay for what they did to Mom, Dad and Danny?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ning Cai is the author of the Singapore Literature Prize-shortlisted memoir *Who is Magic Babe Ning?* She is also the co-author of three additional books: a travel account (*Adventures of 2 Girls*, with Pamela Ho), a middle-grade novel (*Magicienne*, with Don Bosco), and a creativity self-help guide (*Game of Thoughts*, with John Teo).

For over a decade, she was “Magic Babe” Ning, a multi-award-winning stage illusionist and escape artist known as “the sexiest woman in magic”. Lauded for her death-defying acts and record-setting feats, Ning performed for Middle Eastern royalty and showcased her brand of deadly sexy magic to an international audience on stage and on TV. After a brief period of retirement, she returned in 2017 as the mentalist Ning: Mind Magic Mistress.

Besides being engaged as magic consultant for various projects, she has starred in popular Mediacorp TV shows such as *Meat and Greed 2* (Channel 5), 《吃饱没? 3》 (*Eat Already? 3*) (Channel 8), *Love in a Time of Change* (Channel NewsAsia) and *Record Breakers* (Okto). A TEDx speaker and committee member of SCWO’s Women’s Register, Ning is also the creative director of Mighty Magic Lab, a kids edutainment company which focuses on empowering children with creativity and confidence through magic. You can find her on Instagram at @ning.thing.



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The first book in an exciting new YA mystery trilogy about a teenage savant on the trail of her family's killer, from the multi-talented Ning Cai, international magic celebrity and author.

When parkour champion Maxine Schooling wakes from a three-year coma, she has no memory of how her parents and little brother were killed the night she was attacked. Using her new-found photographic memory, she covertly helps her hacker BFF with the police investigation of a savage serial killer on the loose. In her race to track down the Singapore Spectre, Max finds herself embroiled in a conspiracy involving stage illusions, a secret exposé, and a controversial megachurch headed by a powerful man.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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