

Book 3

MIDNIGHT AT

MOUNT  
E·M·I·L·Y



LOW YING PING

Midnight at  
Mount Emily



# MIDNIGHT AT MOUNT EMILY

*a novel*



LOW YING PING



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*For Yipei*  
(30 years of friendship and counting)

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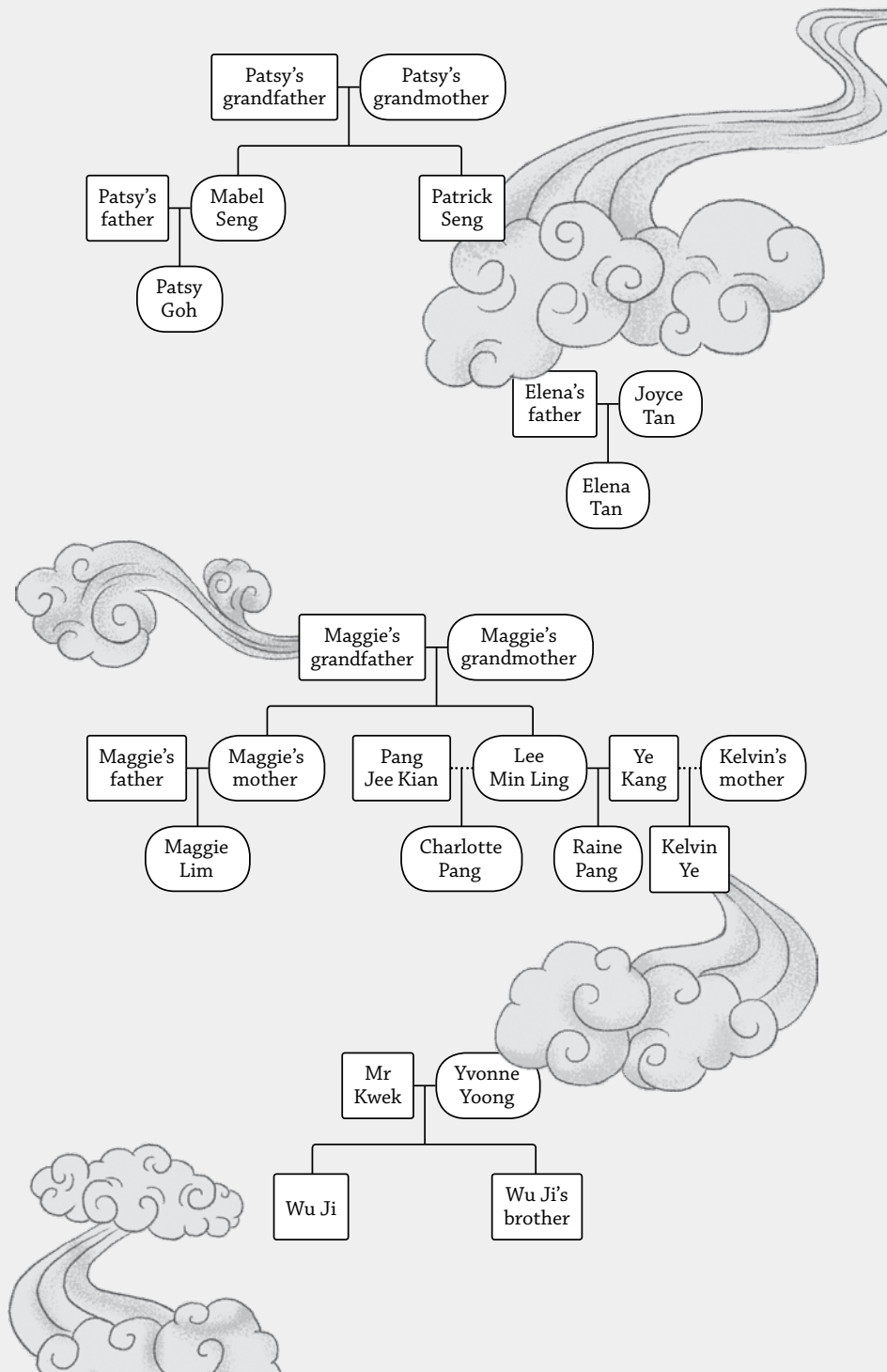


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## chapter one

“**A**re you sure that’s her?” Patsy Goh whispered, moving her head this way and that to try to get a better view of the front of the school hall.

“About 98.6 per cent sure,” her best friend, Elena Tan, whispered back.

It was the second week of the new school year and the hall at Mount Emily Girls’ School was packed that Wednesday morning. All 1300 of the school’s students were seated on the floor in their respective classes, awaiting the start of morning Assembly.

Patsy and Elena, being in Secondary Three, were seated slightly beyond the halfway mark. They had been streamed into different classes that year, but by some good fortune their classes lined up just next to each other during Assembly, so they always contrived to sit side by side. By craning their necks, they could just about see the rows of Secondary One students seated near the front.

The person Patsy and Elena were spying on was a thin, pale-faced girl with long hair in French plaits. At that moment, she was looking around her restlessly, perhaps even a little impatiently. The girl's neighbour spoke, and she acknowledged her neighbour with a stiff nod, but didn't say anything. Patsy thought she looked rather aloof.

*So that's Raine Pang? The youngest and most powerful Keeper of Time any of us has ever known?* Patsy thought with some disappointment. She had been waiting to meet Raine for so long and with such anticipation. Secretly, she had even thought they might become good friends, since both of them belonged to the exclusive sect of the Keepers of Time, but the frosty look on the girl's face did not bode well for this hope.

"So there's a 1.4 per cent chance you're wrong?" Patsy asked, still watching the girl.

Elena rolled her eyes. "I told you I checked the office register, didn't I? She's definitely in Sec One Gratitude.

And when I patrolled the Sec One corridor earlier this morning, I distinctly heard her classmate call her name."

"When you were *lurking* around the Sec One corridor, you mean," Patsy said, glancing at Elena and smiling at how her friend was clearly trying to look bashful but appeared gleeful instead. "You're going to be stripped of your prefect status if you keep abusing your power like this."

It was a mystery to Patsy how Elena could have been selected to be a prefect. She was extremely playful, more interested in having fun than fulfilling responsibilities and, to top it off, was a regular rule-breaker. Then again, Patsy acknowledged as she gazed at her friend fondly, Elena was also kind, generous and vivacious. Her friends and teachers alike could not fail to adore her, no matter how many times she got into trouble. Her charisma also meant she was a natural leader, and her classmates flocked to her to get her opinion on everything.

Over the past few months, Elena had let her hair grow out and now it was swept up in a cute little ponytail. When Patsy's hair had been that awkward length a few years ago, her classmates had teased that it looked like a broom. Yet the same length of hair on Elena looked pretty, even classy. *How does she manage to carry herself with such grace and confidence?* Patsy often wondered. But of course, being beautiful helped. Elena's large expressive eyes, high cheekbones and silky smooth

hair were the envy of all their classmates. And just last week, on top of being the prettiest and most popular girl in class, Elena had been selected to be a prefect.

Half a year ago, such an event would have thrown Patsy into a state of emotional turmoil. On the one hand, she would have been happy for her friend, and even proud of her. But on the other hand, such an elevation of Elena's social status would have made Patsy feel even lousier about herself. Patsy herself was plain-looking, with limp and long, messy hair that resisted all attempts to be tamed, even on the few occasions when she remembered to comb it before trapping it in a clumpy ponytail.

But now things were different. Oh, she still looked the same, but that didn't matter any more. What did look or not being chosen to be a prefect matter when she had discovered she was a Keeper of Time with mystical powers at her fingertips? Already, twice she had played critical roles in averting time crises, the most recent adventure happening just three months ago. She knew she was special, even if only a few people in this world also knew it.

The head prefect gave the instruction for all to stand and Patsy could no longer see Raine above the sea of heads. The opening bars of the national anthem sounded over the public address system. Many of the students were unwilling for their off-key voices to be heard, and

only moved their lips silently so that the teachers would think they were singing obediently. As Patsy mouthed the words with the rest of the school, she wondered when she and Raine would be introduced to each other properly. Perhaps Charlotte would tell her the next day when they met. Patsy felt a thrill of excitement when she thought of the WhatsApp message her friend had sent her the previous night: "Family tree done. Free to meet after school tomorrow?"

It felt odd to think of Charlotte as "her friend". After all, Charlotte was as old as her mother and was in fact Raine's foster mother. Yet Patsy had first known Charlotte as a 13-year-old when Patsy had travelled back in time two years ago.

After the discovery of Patsy's identity as a Keeper of Time, the adult Charlotte had promised to draw up the family tree of the Keepers to see how Patsy was related to her. There were only three members of the fast-dwindling sect who were still alive—Charlotte, Raine and Patsy. Time power was hereditary, so all the Keepers had the same ancestry. Charlotte had explained that one of Patsy's parents almost definitely had the power in his or her blood but, because he or she had been unaware of it, had probably lost the power through disuse. It had taken Charlotte months of research, but the tree was finally completed! Patsy could not wait to see her own name within the long line of illustrious Keepers who

had, for centuries, kept the time stream safe from the evil Midnight Warriors.

“Psst!” she hissed at Elena, feeling she had to let out some of her restless energy. The rest of the school was now mumbling the words of the national pledge.

“What?” Elena shot back in a whisper.

“Do you think Charlotte’s going to introduce Raine to us today?”

“Didn’t she say she’ll do that only after she’s told Raine about her real parents?”

“Oh yeah,” Patsy said, her hopes deflating a little. How would Raine react when she found out she had actually been born in 1989, but had been sent forward in time by her mother, to be brought up by her sister? Would she understand it had been done for her safety, or would she blame her mother for abandoning her? Patsy remembered how afraid Charlotte had been to tell Raine the truth. Perhaps she still had not found the courage to do so.

So deep was she in thought that she didn’t even realise the school song had already been sung until she felt Elena tugging at her skirt. Emerging from her reverie, she saw that everyone had already sat down and she hurriedly did the same, her cheeks burning. A teacher came on stage to give a series of announcements. Patsy found her mind wandering again and paid attention only when Elena nudged her.

“What...?” she began to ask, but Elena just raised her

eyebrows and jerked her chin towards the stage. Patsy turned to look. Mrs Yvonne Kwek, their science teacher from their lower secondary days, was beaming down at the students through her thick, horn-rimmed glasses. Meanwhile, their school principal, Mrs Poon, was congratulating Mrs Kwek for her 30 years of devoted service to the school and wishing her all the best in her retirement.

“Mrs Kwek is retiring?” Patsy asked in surprise. “She can’t be more than 55!”

“Well, she can finally retire that beehive,” Elena chuckled.

Patsy laughed along with her friend. Yvonne Kwek wore her hair in the shape of a beehive stacked high on her head. It was a hot topic of speculation among the Mount Emily girls as to whether the beehive was Mrs Kwek’s real hair. Patsy and Elena knew the truth, of course, for they knew more about their eccentric teacher than any other Mount Em girl did. On the first occasion that Patsy and Elena had travelled into the past, they had made friends with their mothers’ classmate, Maggie Lim, who was also Charlotte’s cousin. Yvonne had turned out to be Maggie’s guardian. The hair, they had found out, was a wig.

The moment Mrs Poon finished her announcement, someone shouted, “Mrs Kwek!” Several calls echoed the first, then someone started clapping and soon the whole



hall was in an uproar. The applause went on for several seconds, then a few students stood up. Very quickly, more and more students rose and the applause also increased in volume.

“I didn’t know Mrs Kwek was so popular!” Patsy marvelled, herself clapping vigorously.

“Come on,” Elena said, pulling Patsy up. Soon, half the school was standing to give their teacher a resounding farewell.

Mrs Poon urged Mrs Kwek to take the microphone, and the whole school burst into fond laughter when she croaked out her first words. Her trademark nasal voice invariably sent the girls to sleep during lessons, but only now did Patsy realise how endearing she found that voice. Looking around her, she could tell from the glowing looks on her schoolmates’ faces that many of them were discovering this fact for the first time too.

“She’s actually quite nice,” Patsy commented as Mrs Kwek stumbled through a short speech.

“Yes, just a bit cranky,” a girl next to her overheard and responded.

“And a bit deaf,” another added.

“And weird,” a third chimed in.

“But she’s *our* weird Mrs Kwek,” the girl beside Patsy ended off.

*That’s right*, Patsy thought. *She’s our Mrs Kwek*. She recalled the many times Mrs Kwek had meted out

punishments to her and her classmates as a show of her authority, but they were invariably harmless ones like being made to stand at the back of the classroom or told to carry books to the staffroom. Her beehive bun and thick, dark-rimmed glasses made her look forbidding, and she seemed to be perpetually scolding the students—but her bark was worse than her bite, really. She could never be quite as scared of her teacher as she once was, after she got to know Mrs Kwek was Maggie’s guardian. And also, Mrs Kwek had turned out to be Wu Ji’s mother...

Patsy felt her cheeks growing hot, and she clapped energetically at the close of Mrs Kwek’s speech to cover up her feelings. Every time she thought of Wu Ji, a blush would rise to her cheeks. Would she be able to behave normally when she finally saw him again?

The applause died down at last and the morning Assembly carried on as usual.

The rest of the day seemed to drag on forever. Patsy kept looking at the clock on her classroom wall and counting down the minutes to her appointment with Charlotte.

Now that she was no longer in the same class as Elena, she had been forced to make new friends. The girl sitting next to her was cheery and easy to talk to, and towards the end of the school day Patsy gave up all pretence of concentrating on lessons and instead had fun embellishing the doodles that her classmate drew on her mathematics textbook.

She was just adding a cape to her classmate's fairy when she felt a tug on the skirt of her pinafore under the desk. "Wait," she whispered. "I'm not done."

The tug became more urgent and Patsy finally looked up. *Oh no...*

She let her pencil fall limply from her fingers. Their mathematics teacher, Mrs Jaya, was standing in front of her desk, staring daggers at her. "Detention after school today," she snapped, then strode back to the front of the class.

*Detention after school... Oh no, Patsy groaned inwardly. I'm supposed to meet Charlotte today.*

When the bell rang to signal the end of school, it was a very downcast Patsy who went over to Elena's classroom. "I can't go to meet Charlotte now," she whined the moment Elena came out. "I've got detention!"

"You? Detention?" Elena asked, her eyebrows shooting up. "I thought I was the rule-breaker around here."

"I know, it's so not me, right?" Patsy sighed. "This is my first detention ever! I've texted Charlotte that I'll be two hours late. What a bad start to Sec Three life."

"Oh, it's not so bad," Elena said. She started counting off her fingers. "After all, you're going to find out where you are in your family tree today, and you're going to get to see Wu Ji tomorrow..."

"Wait!" Patsy's heart had given a lunge at Elena's mention of Wu Ji. "How do you know I'll get to see

him tomorrow? We don't know when it was that he time travelled."

Three months ago, when they were in 1988, Patsy and Elena had met Wu Ji for the first time. He too had been time travelling. The tricky part was that while Patsy and Elena had travelled out from 2016, he had travelled out from 2017. So, now that they were all back in their own times, Wu Ji would not be able to recognise the two girls until after his time-travelling adventure. Patsy was dying to meet the object of her crush again, but all she and Elena knew was that he had travelled out sometime in early 2017, but not the exact date.

"Well, I was patrolling the staffroom corridor during recess today..." Elena began.

"Snooping around, you mean," Patsy could not resist saying.

"Do you want to hear what I found out or not?" Elena asked sternly.

"Yes, yes," Patsy said hastily. "Carry on."

"Mrs Kwek happened to be talking on her mobile phone outside the staffroom. I heard her ask Wu Ji to come down with his brother tomorrow to help her carry her belongings to her car."

Patsy clapped her hands in delight. That piece of information more than made up for her disappointment in having to delay her meeting with Charlotte. Just then, her mobile phone gave a ping. "That must be Charlotte."

Patsy's face fell as she read Charlotte's message. "She said she's got something on and can't wait for me. She'll meet me tomorrow instead."

"Good things are worth waiting for," Elena said, nodding wisely.

Patsy had time for lunch before detention, so the girls headed towards the canteen together. Well, things weren't how she would have liked them to be that afternoon but, all things considered, life was pretty perfect. She smiled and her steps grew lighter. After all, she was a powerful Keeper of Time, she would know her place in the lineage soon, and she would be meeting the boy of her dreams again. What could possibly go wrong?



## chapter two

**T**he next day, the moment Patsy stepped out of her classroom for recess, she saw Elena racing down the corridor towards her.

Elena's eyes were bright with a feverish excitement and her cheeks were flushed.

"What is it?" Patsy asked eagerly, wondering if Elena was going to tell her that Wu Ji was at Mount Em right now.

"I've just thought of the most wonderful plan," Elena said, holding Patsy's forearm tightly and pulling her urgently away from the crowded classroom corridor. *Not Wu Ji then*, Patsy thought, a little disappointed.

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## *About the Author*



Low Ying Ping practically grew up in CHIJ St Nicholas Girls’ School, which she attended from pre-primary to Secondary Four. She has always been fascinated by the dynamics of friendship between girls, and the fact that many of these become lifelong bonds. She holds a Master’s degree in English Literature from the University of Warwick, UK. Her poems have appeared in *Singa*, the journal of the National University of Singapore Centre for the Arts and *QLRS (Quarterly Literary Review Singapore)*. *Midnight at Mount Emily* is her third novel.

Updates on the Mount Emily series  
can be found on Facebook  
@LowYingPing.Author

In the concluding book  
of the Mount Emily series:

***Goodbye, Mount Emily***



Patsy and her friends meet the  
Midnight Warriors in a final showdown,  
and change the course of time travel forever.

**P**atsy Goh is deeply upset when she discovers that she might not be a Time Keeper after all. But her best friend Elena Tan needs her help so, once again, they travel back in time to their mothers' teenage years. There, they attempt to prevent Elena's parents from meeting—in order to save her best friend's mother from a disastrous marriage.

*“There’s a bit of everything in this book—mystery, action, drama, with a sprinkle of romance. A time travel adventure that kids can really sink their reading teeth into!”*

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*“The plot is incredibly creative and well-written, and seamlessly sews together the elements of a local Singapore book with that of a classic YA novel.”*

**KYRA TAN KAI LIN**, 14, Singapore Chinese Girls' School student

*“This book made me go ‘Wow!’ out loud when details that I didn’t think were important all came together in the most unexpected way.”*

**ANNIKA YEO**, 12, student at Raffles Girls' Primary School

*“This nail-biting adventure never fails to entertain me, no matter how many times I read it.”*

**WONG KYLIN**, 11, student at Mayflower Primary School

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