

GOODBYE

MOUNT

E·M·I·L·Y



LOW YING PING

Goodbye,
Mount Emily



GOODBYE,

MOUNT EMILY

a novel



LOW YING PING



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For my parents

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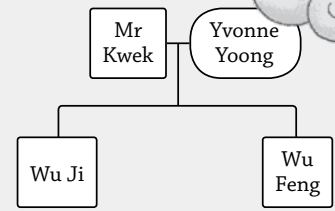
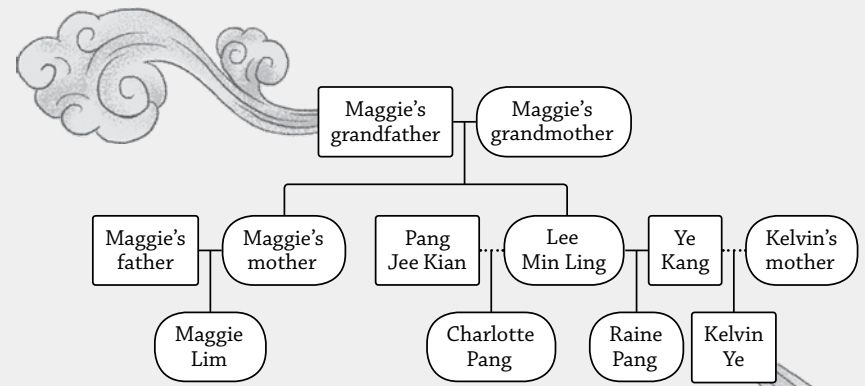
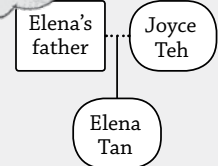
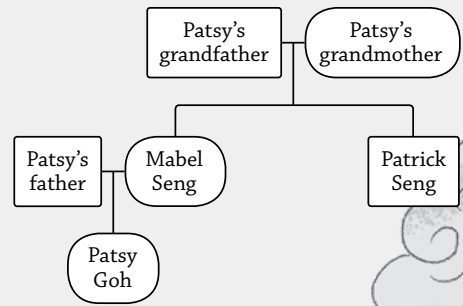
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chapter one

One minute, she was walking along a smooth pavement by a busy road and the next, she was tripping on an exposed root of a buttress tree.

What...? Patsy Goh flung out her arms to regain her balance, and just managed to save herself from falling.

Heart thumping, Patsy gazed around her, trying to figure out if anything appeared out of the ordinary. But the scene was as it always had been along this stretch of Selegie Road: cars whizzing by with hardly an interval between them; a public bus trundling to a stop just

ahead of her; harried pedestrians hurrying in both directions along the pavement.

Patsy retraced her steps, walking slowly and carefully this time, her senses alert.

Nothing.

Had she imagined it? That split second when the scene had shifted and a tall tree had appeared by her side? Yet, if it were not real, why did her toe still throb with the pain of it being stubbed against the tree root?

There could only be one explanation for what had happened—a time breach.

The tree did not exist now, but had sometime in the past, or would in the future. Something had happened, and the barriers between time were breaking down.

Patsy sucked in her breath in excitement. The last time she had encountered a time breach was three years ago, when she had travelled back to 1987. In fact, all her adventures to do with keeping the time stream safe had happened when she travelled back into the past. Could something really be happening in the present, right here in 2018?

Patsy loitered at that same place for several more minutes, hoping to see the scene shift again, but nothing happened. At last, she gave up, and continued on home.



Patsy sat at her study table in her room and stared at the date, 6 May, in her diary. It was circled in red ink.

Five more weeks, and the day she had been waiting for would finally arrive.

The next Liminal Date.

The *last* Liminal Date.

Was it mere coincidence that a time breach had occurred just five weeks before a Liminal Date—a day when time power was at its peak and the barriers between time softened? She remembered a Liminal Date from long ago, when she and her friends, Maggie Lim and Elena Tan, had once healed a time breach by burying the Crystal of Time in the centre of time power at Mount Emily Girls' School—or Mount Em, as the girls affectionately called it. No, it couldn't be a coincidence, Patsy decided.

Coincidence is a word that people use when they don't believe in magic. Those words had been said by Maggie, who had eventually travelled hundreds of years back in time to become the very first Keeper of Time. How Patsy missed her!

Patsy's hand hovered over her mobile phone as she wondered for the umpteenth time that day whether to text her friends about what she had experienced. The time breach had been so fleeting; she wasn't entirely sure she had not imagined the whole thing.

I'm just itching for another adventure, Patsy decided,

taking her hand away from her phone. *After all, it's been 14 months since my last one!*

I'm becoming as bad as Elena, she thought with a half-smile. Her best friend loved excitement and could never get enough of it. Three years ago, Elena had dragged a reluctant Patsy on an adventure, which had resulted in their discovery of the Crystal of Time.

Patsy closed her diary resolutely and took out her Geography textbook. She had a test the next Monday, and she desperately needed to know the differences between cumulus and cirrus clouds, but as she stared at the pictures in her textbook, all she could think of were the swirling clouds of the mists of time.



The next day, as Patsy walked into Yio Chu Kang Community Club, she still had not yet decided whether to tell her friends about the suspected time breach.

About half a year ago, Patsy, Elena, Raine and Wu Ji had started a study group. The idea had come about when Wu Ji, who was a year older than Patsy and Elena, had started becoming much busier preparing for his 'O' Level examinations and could no longer find time to hang out with them as often as he used to. He had gone on to do very well and had just entered a junior college. This year, it was Elena and Patsy's turn to take their 'O'

Levels. Raine Pang was only in Secondary Two, but she was happy to come and study alongside her older friends every Saturday afternoon.

Perhaps, thought Patsy, as she climbed the stairs to the second storey of the community club where the reading room was located, she would speak quietly to Raine first. After all, Raine also had time power. She too might have seen something.

By the time she reached the top of the stairs, Patsy had changed her mind. She should confide in Elena instead. She knew her best friend would never laugh at her or think badly of her, even should the so-called time breach turn out to be just a result of her overactive imagination. Then she abruptly pulled the brakes on that thought. Elena was probably not even in the reading room. In fact, Patsy could not remember when Elena had last turned up for their weekly study sessions.

As for the last member of their study group, Wu Ji... No, she couldn't tell him. She would not want to do anything to mar his impression of her as a powerful user of time magic.

Patsy turned the door handle and entered the reading room, then cried out in surprise when she saw the pretty girl with shoulder-length hair at the table nearest the door. Elena looked up with a smile, her large expressive eyes twinkling her welcome.

Wu Ji, who was seated nearby, looked up as well and

gave Patsy a thumbs-up sign. Patsy was so pleased to see Elena that it was only after she had sat down between her friends and worked on her Mathematics sums for half an hour that she realised one member of their group was missing.

“Raine?” she whispered.

Elena was focused on her homework and did not seem to hear her, but Wu Ji shook his head in reply.

“Oh,” Patsy said, disappointed. Although she saw Elena and Raine every now and then in school, they were all in different classes. It was getting harder to find time to spend together in school, especially now that she and Elena were in Secondary Four, and inundated with schoolwork and co-curricular activities. She especially treasured their weekly get-together at the community club as all four of them could be together. But it seemed that recently, they always had a member missing: first Elena and today, Raine.

“I called her,” Wu Ji explained, “but she said she’s busy and can’t come today.”

“Shh!” someone shushed them from across the room. Wu Ji made a face and pointed to the door with his chin. Patsy nodded eagerly and tapped Elena’s arm. In a minute, the three of them were sprawled on the spectators’ benches outside the squash courts of the community club, relaxing with cold drinks while watching the squash players sweat it out.

“So what have you been up to?” Wu Ji asked, looking at Elena. “I haven’t seen you in months!”

Elena pulled a face. “Don’t exaggerate. I’m very sure I was here last month. Or was it the month before that?” She paused, wrinkling her brow. “Oh, I don’t know. I’ve just been busy, what with my mum’s wedding coming up and getting ready to move to Uncle Pat’s place... We just finished painting my new room and we’ve still got to buy the furniture—”

“Is that all?” Patsy said, feeling a little let down by her friend’s evasive reply. Something hadn’t seemed right with Elena recently. It wasn’t just her repeated absences from the community club. Even when Patsy saw Elena at school, Elena had seemed preoccupied and more irritable than usual.

“What else could it be?” Elena said with a careless shrug.

You tell me! Patsy wanted to say. Instead, she retorted, “Well, then why didn’t you say so earlier? Whenever I asked why you couldn’t join us, you were always so vague—”

“We were supposed to keep it a secret,” Elena said. “I can’t be blurting it out—”

“We were supposed to keep it a secret *from others*. You knew that I already know of it from my mum—”

“Wait...” Wu Ji interrupted, his eyes gleaming with excitement behind his spectacles. “So your mum is

finally getting married to Mr Patrick Seng? Really? That's big news!"

"Stop calling him Mr Seng," Patsy said, laughing. "It sounds so weird and formal. Just call him Uncle Pat like all of us do."

"And don't say a word about it outside of our group," Elena warned. "My mum will go nuts if the media hears about it. The wedding's in a week and she doesn't want paparazzi there."

"She won't be able to avoid the reporters for long, you know," Wu Ji said. "Mr Seng is so famous that practically every other weekend there's a write-up about him in the newspapers or some magazine."

"Uncle Pat," Patsy corrected.

"Uncle Pat..." Wu Ji muttered, trying out the feel of the words on his tongue. "*That* feels so weird to say."

Patsy grinned. Her uncle, Patrick Seng, was one of Singapore's most celebrated Chinese poets, and Wu Ji, who enjoyed reading Chinese novels and poems, had been a big fan of his for years, even before he and Patsy had met on a time travelling adventure two years ago.

"It feels almost disrespectful—" Wu Ji continued.

"Oh, you'll get used to it," Elena said offhandedly.

"You never got used to calling Auntie Charlotte 'Auntie Charlotte'," Wu Ji countered.

"That's different!" Elena said indignantly. "Patsy and I got to know her when we were time travelling. We were

teenagers together!"

"Oh yeah? Then what about Mr Seng? Wait till you have to call him 'Dad'," Wu Ji said.

"I'm not calling him 'Dad'!" Elena said, looking shocked.

"Or 'Pa' or whatever," Wu Ji suggested.

"I'm not calling him anything except 'Uncle Pat'!" Elena said, still looking alarmed.

"All right, all right," Patsy cut in, noticing that Elena was really getting annoyed. "Wu Ji, you've made your point. You can continue calling him Mr Seng if you like."

Wu Ji pushed the bridge of his spectacles with a finger, smiling triumphantly. "What *will* the papers say, anyway?" He raised a hand with fingers outstretched and moved it across the air as he spoke, as if reading from a headline, "Multiple-award-winning poet Patrick Seng marries childhood sweetheart after waiting almost 30 years."

Patsy chortled with laughter and she was relieved to see Elena chuckling quietly too.

"That sounds about right," Patsy said amid her giggles.

"And then the article will go on to state," Wu Ji continued, with a sideways glance at Patsy, "that the star-crossed couple finally get together after the poet's niece travels back in time and discovers the secret that kept them apart for so long. No longer hoodwinked by the lies of her ex-husband, the female lead returns to the embrace of her one true love—"

Patsy glanced at Elena, whose face had suddenly lost its earlier merriment. “Hey,” she said nervously to Wu Ji. “Stop.”

Wu Ji looked taken aback, then his cheeky smile disappeared when he noticed Elena’s expression. “Sorry, I went too far. I was too excited about the news—”

“It’s okay,” Elena said quietly. “It’s true my dad lied to get my mum to marry him. And after all those miserable years, I’m glad Mum finally left him. It’s just a bonus that we helped her get together with Uncle Pat after that.”

There was an awkward silence for several seconds. Elena looked troubled and Patsy knew she was thinking of her father. Although Elena and her mother had left her father about a year and a half ago, her mother had only asked him for a divorce a year ago. He had let out a string of abuse, yelling at her over the phone and then texting her repeatedly when she stopped answering his calls. Finally, he had only agreed to the divorce when his lawyer advised that based on the evidence, he would come off very badly if the case went to court. Since then, Elena had only seen her father several times, and from what Patsy had gathered, the meetings had not been pleasant.

Patsy cast about in her mind for something to say to break the tension, and at last, she remarked, “You know, I think I saw a time breach.”

To her gratification, both her friends let out cries of exclamation.

“A time breach? When? How?” Elena squealed.

“You mean, like, now? Not some decades-old stuff?” Wu Ji added excitedly.

“I know!” Patsy said eagerly. “It’s exciting, right? Yesterday, on my way home from school. I saw and felt the scenery shift.”

“Are you sure?” Elena asked.

“Not a hundred per cent,” Patsy admitted, then gave her friends a description of what she had experienced.

“It does sound like a time breach. Oh, but surely you can trust your senses!” Elena said. “After all, you’ve been learning a lot about time magic from Charlotte and Raine.”

Patsy beamed. It was true that for the past year, she had studied with the two other living people who had powers similar to hers—Charlotte Pang and Charlotte’s much younger half-sister Raine, whom she had adopted. Patsy had worked hard to learn as much about time magic as she could to make up for discovering her talent only at the late age of 14. She had practised attuning her senses more acutely to the power of the Crystal of Time, as well as studied whatever wisdom had been passed down through the generations about their unique talent. Recalling that Maggie had learnt how to be a Time Keeper by reading her late parents’ notebooks, Patsy had started her own notebook to write down what she had learnt, so she could pass the knowledge on to her

children, should she have any in the future.

Patsy had been very moved that Charlotte and Raine still trusted her with the secrets of time power even though they were unable to find out if Patsy derived her power from being a descendant of the esteemed Keepers of Time, or the reviled Midnight Warriors. Of course, Raine herself was the daughter of the evil Midnight Warrior Ye Kang, but at least they knew her mother Lee Min Ling was a respected Keeper of Time, and Raine had never even met her father before.

“So you really think I saw a time breach?” Patsy asked.

“I certainly don’t think you were hallucinating!” Elena replied.

“If that’s the case, we’re lucky the next Liminal Date is just five weeks away,” Patsy said.

“So soon?” Elena squealed.

Patsy nodded. One of the important pieces of information Charlotte had passed to her and Raine was the long list of Liminal Dates. On those days, which happened approximately once every three years, time power was at its most concentrated. The last date on the list was 6 May 2018. When she had asked Charlotte what the next Liminal Date would be after that, Charlotte said she did not know. Patsy remembered Maggie telling her that the Liminal Dates had been calculated by their ancestors using ancient astronomical knowledge that had long been lost. Patsy wished the Time Keepers’

ancestors had taken the trouble to calculate further into the future, but they had probably never expected their descendants to be so sloppy as to lose the knowledge of how to make the calculations. As it were, once 6 May was over, the subsequent Liminal Dates would come upon them unawares.

“We’d better not miss that date,” Patsy said. “We don’t know when the next Liminal Date will be. In any case, it’ll probably be a few years from now, and by then, the time stream may be in complete chaos!”

“But why would there be a time breach?” Wu Ji asked.

Patsy shrugged. “It usually happens when there’s a misuse of time power.”

“A misuse of power?” Elena repeated, looking startled.

“Don’t worry, there hasn’t been,” Patsy said. “Raine and I only train with the crystal when Charlotte is around. I’m pretty sure we didn’t cause any time breach. Anyway, the last time we trained with it was weeks ago. If we’d caused any disturbance to the time stream, we would have noticed something before now.”

“And the crystal is still being safely kept by Charlotte, right?” Elena asked.

Patsy nodded. “No one could have used it without her knowledge.”

Elena relaxed, looking relieved.

“We should tell Auntie Charlotte and Raine about this,” Wu Ji advised.

“Yes,” Patsy sighed. “I was hoping Raine would be here today.”

“The next time they come over to my place for dinner, I’ll ask them,” Wu Ji said. His mother, Mrs Yvonne Kwek, was a good friend of Charlotte’s late mother. After Lee Min Ling had passed away, Yvonne had treated Charlotte like a daughter, even though their ages were only about a decade apart. Their close relationship was why Wu Ji and Raine had practically grown up together. Yvonne, like Patsy’s and Elena’s mothers, knew nothing about time magic, and the teenagers were determined to keep it that way.

“I’ll find a chance when my mum is not around, and tell them about what you saw,” Wu Ji promised.



chapter two

A week later, Patrick Seng and Joyce Teh tied the knot in a quiet ceremony, followed by a simple lunch with family members and close friends at a restaurant. Fortunately, word about the wedding had not got out to the press, and the newlyweds slipped away that evening for their honeymoon.

Elena was bunking over at Patsy’s flat for the two weeks Joyce and Patrick would be away. Patsy had been looking forward to it for a long time, and not just for the fun of having her friend over. She was determined to use the opportunity to get to the bottom of Elena’s mood swings.

“Are you sad that you won’t have your mum to yourself any more?” Patsy asked as she opened her parents’ spare tri-fold mattress and spread it out on the floor beside her bed.

“Me—sad?” Elena said, sounding surprised. She was standing by the closed door of Patsy’s room, her arms full with pillows and a blanket as she waited for Patsy to arrange the mattress.

Patsy looked up at Elena’s tone of surprise and said, “You’ve been moody for months!”

“That’s not true!”

“Not true you’ve been sad?”

“Not true I’ve been moody!”

“So you admit you’ve been sad?”

Elena threw her pillows and blanket onto the mattress, then plonked herself face down on the pillow. “I’m so tired,” she groaned.

“Elena,” Patsy said with a touch of impatience. She sat on her bed and nudged Elena’s shoulder with her big toe. “Come on, what have you been hiding from me and the rest of the gang? You’ve been having mood swings for... oh, I don’t know how long. And you’ve hardly shown up for our weekend gatherings. Is it your dad? Has he been bothering your mum again?”

Patsy thought she heard Elena mumble something, but the sound was muffled by the pillow under her face.

“Did you say something?” Patsy asked.

Elena turned her face towards Patsy. “I just broke up with my boyfriend,” she said in a deadpan voice, then turned her face back into the pillow.

“You...what?” Patsy sat speechless for a moment, then dropped onto her knees beside her friend and gave her a shove. Elena obligingly flopped over onto her back, a resigned look on her face.

“Tell me again... You what?”

“Broke...up...with...my...boyfriend,” Elena said, enunciating each word clearly in a mock-serious tone.

“You had a boyfriend?” Patsy said in amazement, feeling exceedingly stupid at how slowly she was absorbing the news.

“Oh, it was a disaster. Lasted all of eight months. I was miserable throughout. We both were! It’s over now, phew. Goodnight,” Elena turned onto her side, facing away from Patsy, and curled up.

“Eight months!” Patsy couldn’t wrap her mind around it. “You’ve had a boyfriend for eight months and never told me?!”

Elena remained still and silent for a moment, then began snoring loudly in a pretence of being asleep. Patsy shook her vigorously. “Who was it?” she demanded, her mind working furiously all the while. Where could Elena have met this boy? Certainly not at Mount Emily Girls’ School. And she knew Elena didn’t attend any extra classes outside.

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About the Author



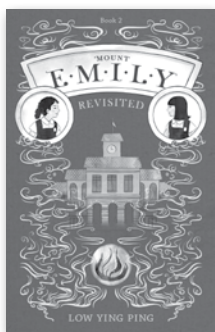
Low Ying Ping practically grew up in
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Mount Emily is her first book series.

Updates on the Mount Emily series can be found
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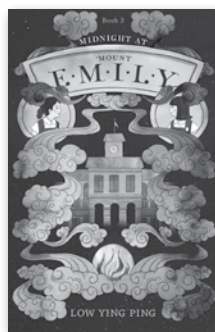
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In this concluding book of the Mount Emily series, Patsy and Elena are now in Secondary Four and face having to leave Mount Emily Girls' School at the end of the year. However, they soon find that graduating from their beloved school is the least of their concerns, as unexpected circumstances lead them to have a final showdown with the Midnight Warriors, changing the course of time travel forever.

“Low’s Mount Emily series of time travelling BFFs should come with a warning label: seriously addictive. My children (aged 10 and 12) and I gasped in delight and howled in horror as the adventure hurtled towards its dramatic climax.”

GEMMA KOH, freelance editor

“Exceptional plot that kept me riveted. A new perspective on time travelling through a literary adventure. I thoroughly enjoyed the read!”

JANELLE JOI CHIN, 13, Anglican High School

“Goodbye, Mount Emily is a very exciting and well-written story. I couldn’t put it down! I am very sad that the series is ending. I think the friendship between Patsy and Elena is very sweet. #squadgoals”

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