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MY
BFF
IS AN
ALIEN



VIVIAN TEO

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VIVIAN TEO
Illustrated by NG MIN MIN



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For Chai Li,
who told me to chase my dream

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Illustrations by Ng Min Min

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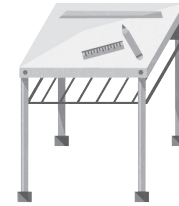
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Chapter 1 New Girl

“Our new student Octavia Wu will be joining us today. She will be here after meeting the principal,” Mrs Ho, our form teacher, boomed at Class 1C.

“Abriana, you’re Octavia’s desk partner, so you are her recess buddy and responsible for showing her around the school this week. I expect you to make her feel welcomed.”

“Yes, Mrs Ho,” I replied tepidly. Two things popped into my head immediately. One, that it was going to be a long week babysitting the new girl and two, what kind of name was Octavia anyway?

As Mrs Ho sorted out today’s maths worksheets, I wondered who in Bukit Timah Secondary Girls’ School (BTSGS) came up with the brilliant idea that we should be seated alphabetically by surname. Just because my

surname's Yeo, I had to sit next to the new girl Wu? That's just dumb. Shouldn't we get to pick who we sit with? What if the new girl turned out to be some weirdo? I wouldn't want to be stuck with her for the rest of the school year!

If anything, I should be desk partners with my best friend, Naomi Goh, especially now that we were back in the same class. She and I were both from Bukit Timah Primary Girls' School (BTPGS), the affiliated primary school of BTSGS. In fact, other than last year, Naomi and I had been in the same class every year since primary one. We used to do everything together: recess, trips to the playground and library, and playdates during the weekends. We called each other BFFs. But after we were assigned different primary six classes last year and Naomi joined the synchronised swimming team, she barely had time for me. It was always trainings and some meeting or other with her teammates.

Since Mrs Ho rearranged our seating last Friday to make space for the new girl, I had been dreading this Octavia's arrival. My original desk partner was Shefali Varma. She came from BTPGS too, though we never spoke much in the past. I had sat with Shefali for a month and she seemed nice; she lent me her geometry set last week when I had forgotten to bring mine. But you couldn't become good friends with someone in just *one* month—it was simply not enough time. And now I had to start all over with the new girl!

Just then, someone showed up at our classroom door.

“Good morning, Mrs Ho, I'm Octavia Wu. I believe I'm in your class,” she said.

The new girl was pretty, but not in a long hair, princess-y kind of way. She had very short, jet-black hair that ended at her cheeks; a clip held her fringe to one side. Her short hair made you look at her face—large eyes, sharp nose and full lips. And she was very fair, like, porcelain fair.

“Welcome to BTSGS, Octavia!” Mrs Ho exclaimed. “Come on in. Tell us a little about yourself.”

The new girl beamed brightly. “Hi everyone, my name is Octavia Wu. I come from Taiwan. We moved to Singapore because my father is starting a business here. I'm very excited to be here and I look forward to meeting everyone and learning more about Singapore.” I noticed she didn't have an accent—Mum has a few friends from Taiwan and they spoke English with an accent. But no, her speech was accentless, her enunciation crisp and clear.

After Mrs Ho announced I was her (reluctant) desk partner, Octavia took the empty seat next to me. “Hi Abriana,” she greeted me perkily.

“Hi. Erm, you can call me Abri,” I mumbled, unsure of what else to say. Welcome to Singapore? I'm your babysitter? I glanced over at Octavia—she sat tall as she faced the front of the classroom. I straightened my back, somehow obliged to correct my slouch in the presence of Little Miss Perfect. Gosh, she even smelled nice. Did she wear perfume to school?

“Alright girls, we will be working on some challenging

problem sums today,” Mrs Ho warned. Everyone groaned, me especially. I knew what I was good in—English, Chinese and writing compositions—but I also knew what I sucked at—sports, making new friends and maths, in no specific order. Mrs Ho raised her hands to silence the class. “To make things easier, you can work in pairs.”

Immediately a number of girls, including myself, shot up from our seats. Like me, not everyone wanted to work with their desk partners. Naomi, who was sitting in the middle rows one aisle away to my right, was getting up too. Octavia would just have to find her own partner—babysitting duty’s over for now!

“Naomi!” I called. “Want to do the discussion together?”

“Hey Abri. Erm...I’m not sure. I want to ask Jessica if she wants to do it with me,” Naomi said.

At least that was what I thought she said because by mid-sentence, she was already walking to the desks on the right towards Jessica Chan—the most popular girl in school. They started talking but I couldn’t hear what they were saying.

I stood unmoving. Should I wait for Naomi to decide if she wanted to partner with me? Even if I were her second choice, it would still be okay. We were BFFs, after all. But Naomi didn’t come back.

“I don’t think she wants to partner with you,” said a voice behind me.

I turned around—it was Octavia Wu. Was she mocking me?

“You can partner with me,” she said.

“Not like I have a choice,” I muttered under my breath as I headed back to my seat.

“Yes, I believe you don’t,” she said, walking back to her seat.

Yeah, rub it in. Wait, how did she hear that? Whatever, it didn’t matter. Not when I had bigger things to worry about like losing my BFF.

As I stared at the maths worksheets, I thought about when exactly things had changed between Naomi and me. After she joined the synchronised swimming team, Naomi started hanging out with the popular girls like Jessica, Chaerin Han and Andrea Cooper. The bunch of them, some from other secondary one classes, would flock together during recess. They were all from high profile co-curricular activities (CCA) like synchronised swimming, gymnastics and cheerleading—activities that required athleticism and grace and won the school shiny trophies.

Not only was the tall and beautiful Jessica president of the synchronised swimming team, she was also the school’s trendsetter. When she wore her hair with bangs, other girls sported bangs. When she cracked a joke, everyone laughed. She was the epitome of cool and if you were her friend, it meant you were cool too.

While Naomi was climbing up the popularity ladder, I was at the bottom of it. I wasn’t friends with those cool girls and I was neither athletic nor graceful. I’d pick working on news features for the school’s Young Writers’

Club over sweating it out under the hot sun anytime.

CCAs aside, who wouldn't like Naomi, anyway? She was sweet and caring. I would know. She used to take notes for me and make me "get well soon" cards when I was sick. She'd stay back to help me when I was on cleaning duty during recess, just so I could finish faster. I remembered vividly an accident in primary four when I fell on my face during Sports Day. As I waited—blood oozing from my split lip—for our teacher to return with a first-aid kit, Naomi never left my side. How did everything change within a year?

"All done."

"What?" I said, jolted from my thoughts by Octavia's voice.

"I finished the sums while you were daydreaming. Here, you can copy my answers if you want." She slid her worksheets across to me.

She had already completed all eight problem sums! Had I been daydreaming *that* long? Anyway, being fast didn't mean the answers were correct. Though when Mrs Ho went through the answers, it turned out they were. Great, my new desk partner was also Miss Smarty-Pants. Hurrah.

At recess I gave Octavia an insipid tour of the school. "This is the canteen. Recess is 10–10.30am"; "This is the library, you can borrow a maximum of four books at one go." She could forget about a five-star tour guide service because one, I wasn't in the mood, and two, I didn't like her.

A wave of sadness hit me as we arrived at the

playground. "The playground's for primary kids but secondary kids can use the fitness equipment," I said, my voice cracking a little. I was too embarrassed to admit that these days, I was often here by myself.

All that was left to do for the rest of the day was to get through it. I didn't want to entertain Octavia or work on more worksheets or listen to the teachers droning on and on. But this was school, you get through it whether you were sad or happy, or even if all you wanted was to go home, throw yourself on the bed and cry your eyes out.

When the dismissal bell rang at last, I dumped my books into my backpack and hurried to the concourse to catch my school bus while Octavia followed behind me like a puppy dog. At the concourse, I spun around and glared at her. "I'm taking the school bus home. Do you know how to get home? I don't have to babysit you after school, do I?"

"Yes, I know how to get home," said Octavia, eyes wide.

"Good!" I yelled. I wanted to be alone and I didn't want to see Octavia and her annoying smile anymore, even if getting away meant being in a bus full of noisy primary school kids. At least this boisterous lot wouldn't notice the only secondary school kid at the back of the bus wiping away tears.

As I gazed out the window, I caught sight of Octavia heading out the school gate and wondered if she really knew her way home. After all, she'd just arrived in Singapore not too long ago, didn't she? But she did say

she knew how to go home. Whatever. Octavia Wu was none of my business.

Twenty minutes later, the bus reached my block of flats. School wasn't far from home, but Mum insisted I take the school bus even though many of the older kids who lived nearby walked or took public transport home. Mum was overprotective like that.

"You're our only child, we can't afford anything bad happening to you!" she had reasoned one time. "But you could if I had a sibling?" I had retorted. Maths, sports and making friends, I wasn't very good at, but sarcasm? I aced it.

As if my day didn't suck enough, the elevators that served our block were still under repair after a lightning storm a fortnight ago caused a block-wide power outage. Lousy lift, I grumbled as I puffed my way up the stairs to the fourth floor.

As I walked into the flat, I was hoping for a whiff of melted butter and chocolate. Mum ran a home-baking business, so during the days she had orders, the comforting scent of freshly baked cookies would welcome me home. But there was no warm welcome today. Instead, our door was wide open and I could hear chattering in the house. Great, guests. I was in no mood for small talk with Mum's regular customers.

I stepped into our living room. Mum was in our armchair and seated on our sofa was a man, a woman and, lo and behold, Octavia Wu.



Chapter 2

COINCIDENCES

"Abri, this is Uncle Justin, Aunty Katy and their daughter, Octavia. They just moved in next door!" Mum announced enthusiastically.

"Huh?" It was the only response I could muster in this bizarre situation—the new girl assigned as my desk partner today was now...my neighbour?

"Abri! Come and greet Aunty and Uncle!" Mum continued, obviously oblivious.

Octavia and her parents stood up to say hello. Uncle Justin, dressed in a dark blue shirt and black pants, was tall with broad shoulders. Aunty Katy had long, curly tresses that fell over her flowy dress and framed her fair, petite face. There was something about the way they carried themselves; so poised and upright, almost... regal. It explained where Octavia got her good posture.

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To my two Es. Writing a book would never have crossed my mind if I never had you both. Just as you have inspired me to be a better person, I hope this book inspires you in more ways than one.

Thank you to my family and friends who have supported me through all these years in countless ways, especially Hon Wui, Kit, Carrie, Hongmei, Clara, Russ, Kevin and Anna (none of whom are aliens).



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 write about things close to her heart. This led to *My BFF Is an Alien*, her first middle-grade novel.

She now enjoys writing on parenting and education issues for parenting websites and blogging on her parenting and lifestyle website, *The Stuff Childhoods Are Made of*, at www.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 from it with a tribe of good friends, and fond memories of performing Chinese dance and cheerleading. She doesn't miss homework and exams.

Follow Vivian Teo on Facebook, @VivianTeoAuthor, and Instagram, @VivianTeoWriter.

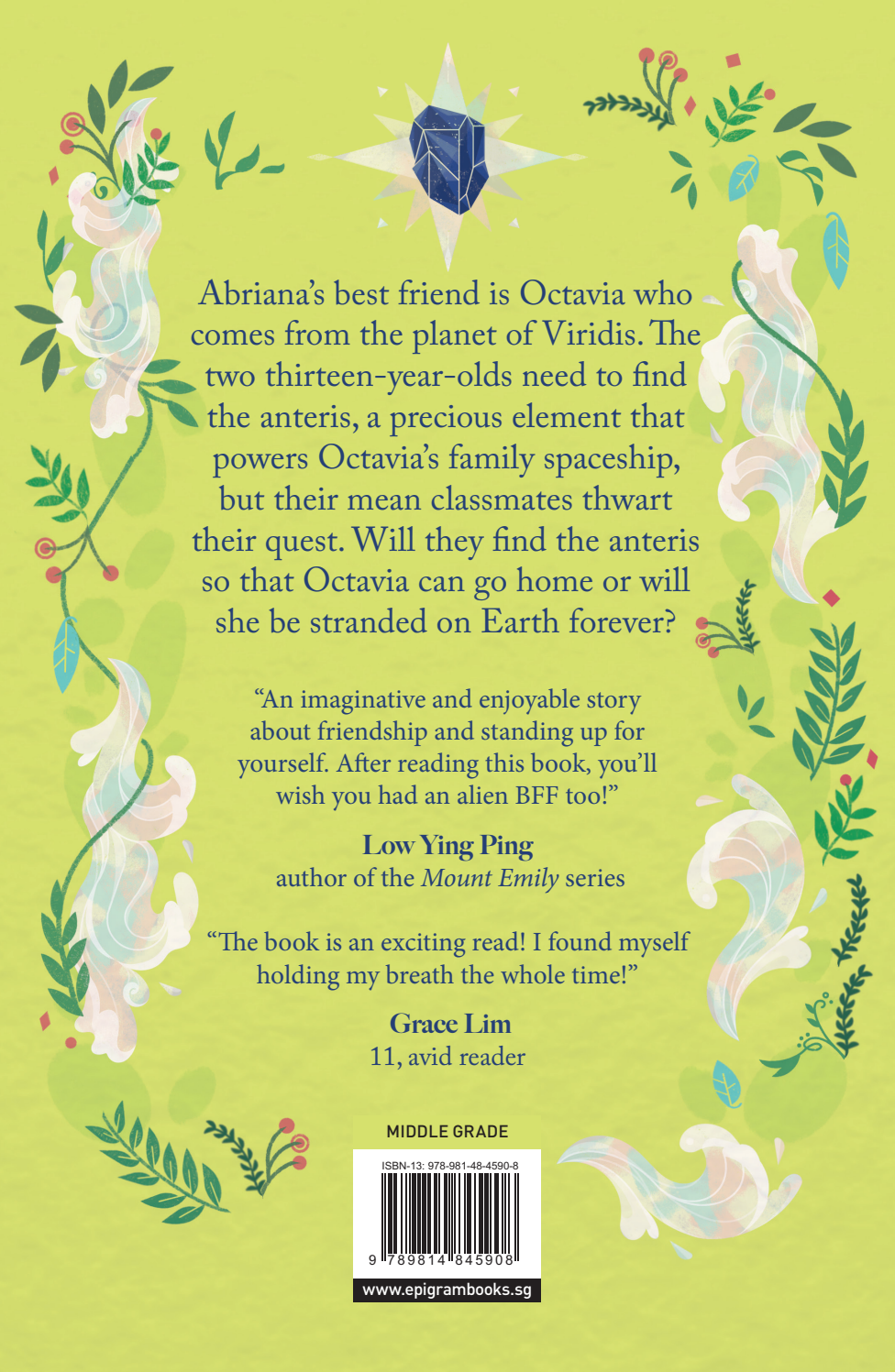


My BFF Is an Alien 2: Sabotage

The Viridians have won the war. Octavia keeps her promise to Abriana and returns to Singapore, accompanied by a trusted general who's tasked to ensure that Octavia—the future ruler of Viridis—is safe. After all, several of The Others have managed to escape Viridis and there's a chance that Earth's coordinates are no longer secret.

But when the two BFFs get together, things don't stay calm for long. A chance encounter with a wild boar is captured on video by a mysterious stranger and the footage ends up on the internet...and goes viral!

Will they uncover who is (or are) behind the video in the first place? More importantly, can the BFFs get the video down before Octavia's alien roots are exposed?



Abriana's best friend is Octavia who comes from the planet of Viridis. The two thirteen-year-olds need to find the anteris, a precious element that powers Octavia's family spaceship, but their mean classmates thwart their quest. Will they find the anteris so that Octavia can go home or will she be stranded on Earth forever?

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

Low Ying Ping
author of the *Mount Emily* series

"The book is an exciting read! I found myself holding my breath the whole time!"

Grace Lim
11, avid reader

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