

LYNA LANKYLEGS

AND THE BRIGHT HILL GANG

RAINING COCONUTS



LINDA LOCKE

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Illustrations by May Thu

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WRITTEN BY
LINDA LOCKE

ILLUSTRATED BY
MAY THU



EPIGRAM

*For two feisty and clever girls who inspired
me to write this book: Zara and Freya.*

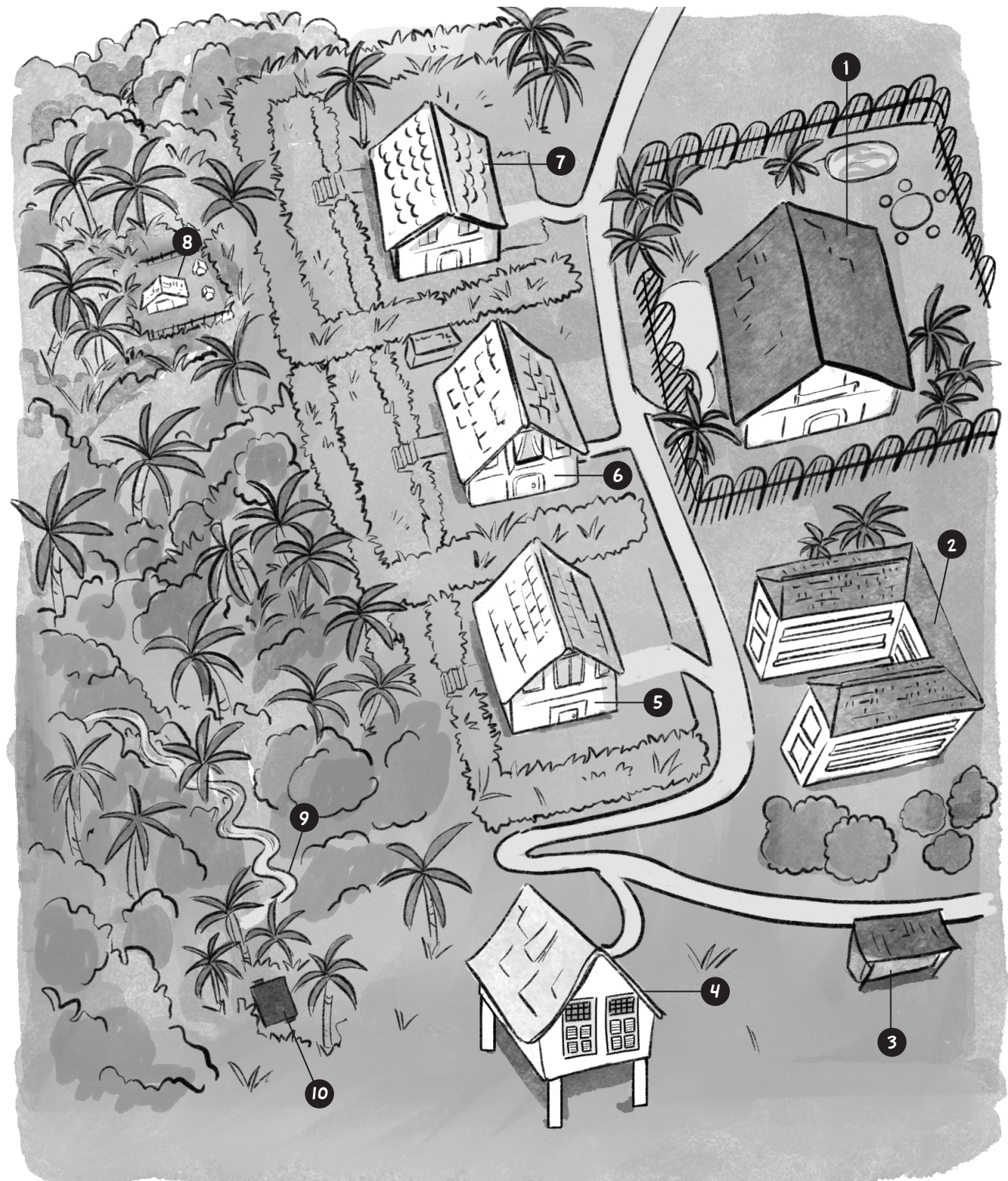
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BRIGHT HILL CRESCENT

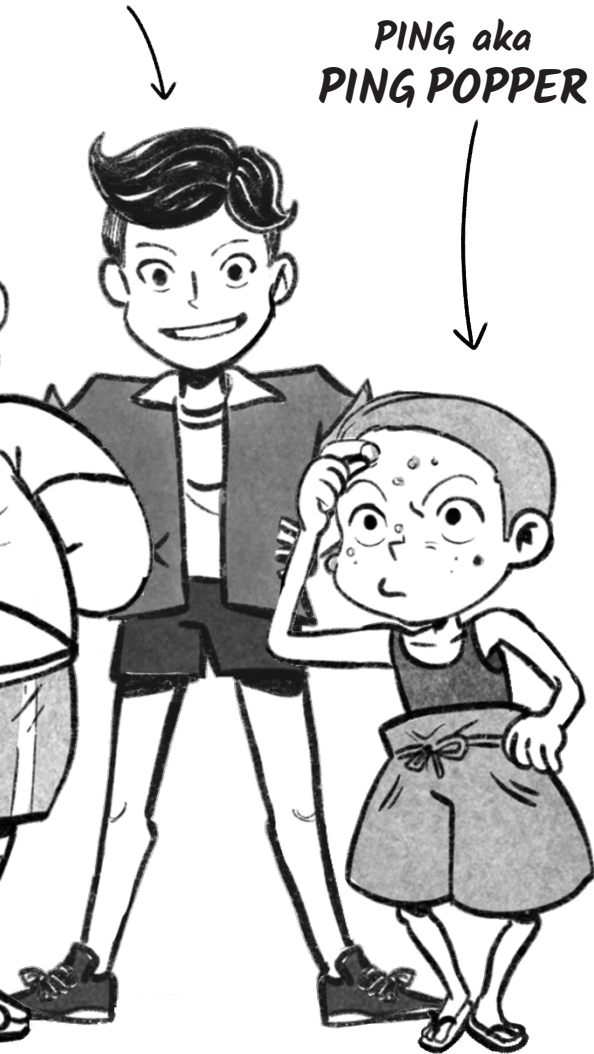
- ① Mabel's house
- ② Carol and David's flat
- ③ Mamak shop
- ④ Jane's house
- ⑤ Eric's house
- ⑥ Lyna's house
- ⑦ Reggie's house
- ⑧ Chicken farm
- ⑨ The stream
- ⑩ Fort Septic



FRED aka
FUNGRY FRED



ERIC aka
ERIC THE VIKING



PING aka
PING POPPER



LYNA aka
LYNA LANKYLEGS



REGGIE aka
REGGHEAD



SAM aka
SAM SCRAM



1 PARTY TIME

“And then the monster opened its big scary mouth to—”

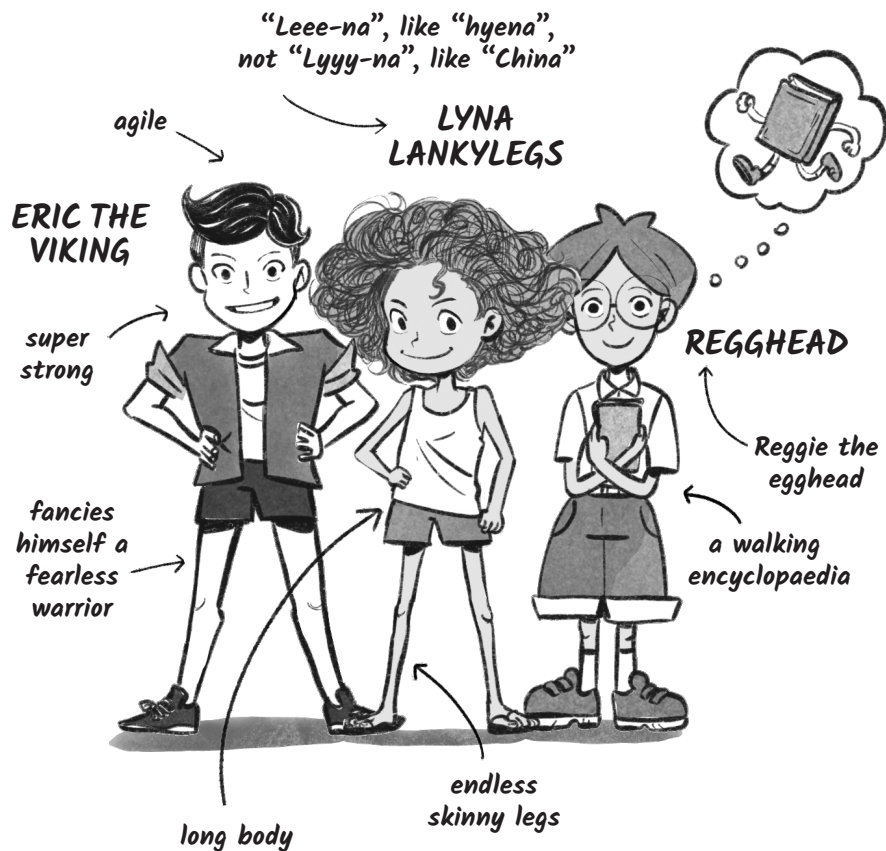


A cacophony of clanging metal and chattering voices in a mix of languages brought Lyna’s storytelling to a sharp halt, and her little sister Katie jumped in surprise.

Among it all, her mother cried, “Quick! Hurry, hurry, you’re *so* late!” in a voice strident and high-pitched enough to pierce the din.

The final preparations for Lyna's seventh birthday had begun.

"Are you sure your mum said we could come?" her friend Eric the Viking had asked when she'd invited him and Regghead. Her mother wasn't happy about it, but Lyna had been determined to invite *some* of her gang to her party. It was her birthday, after all.



Quite adventurous and something of a troublemaker, Lyna was the proud leader of, and the only girl in, a gang of six. They called themselves the Bright Hill Gang, because they all lived on Bright Hill Crescent estate.

Her mother didn't entirely approve of her being in a gang of boys—often calling them mischievous rascals—but since Eric the Viking and Regghead were their left and right neighbours, she'd had to relent. Eric's family were Chinese, like Lyna's mother, but Regghead was Eurasian. His father was British, just like Lyna's father, and had arrived in Singapore twenty years ago in the 1930s.

The other friends coming to the party were mostly girls: Mabel Wong, Jane Chang and Carol Lamb, as well as their brothers and sisters, such as Carol's brother, David.

Hmm, David. She'd had to invite him or risk upsetting Carol. He was always staring at Lyna.

It was weird. She didn't like it.

"Katie, come on. Let's see what's happening outside," Lyna said, shrugging off her discomfort and jumping to her feet, scattering the toys they'd been playing with.

"Hoi, Lyna, don't break my toys!" Katie scolded her big sister, flinging out her arms to protect her doll's house—a Christmas gift from last year. Lyna had rearranged the miniature furniture and figurines, with little care for what was meant to go where, so that both floors of the little house were the perfect stage for her storytelling. Lyna didn't much like playing with dolls, but she enjoyed making up stories about the tiny people, and Katie and her favourite dolls were always a rapt audience.

"SORRY!" Lyna yelled as she raced off.

"WWWAIT!" Katie wailed, trying to set her dolls back up.

Running ahead, Lyna saw a small army of

men arriving on the back terrace, carrying and arranging sets of bright red metal chairs and tables.

"Over there, on the terrace," her mother said, waving them along.

Divided into squares, "the terrace" was the fancy name her mother used for what was basically a large, uncovered and roughly cemented rectangle running alongside the narrow garden of their bungalow. It sat above the main garden ("garden" being the fancy name for what was basically a lawn).

Right now, it was where the men, rushing around like a whirlwind of ants (and nearly knocking over Lyna in the process), were busy setting up playground equipment.

"What are they doing, Linnie?" her curly-haired, big-eyed little sister asked, as she appeared at the terrace door clutching her most-loved doll—curly-haired, brown-eyed Susie.

"Looks like they're setting up a really big

slide, Katie, and a seesaw...and look, swings and a roundabout,” Lyna said, pointing and smiling excitedly. “You like the roundabout, don’t you?”

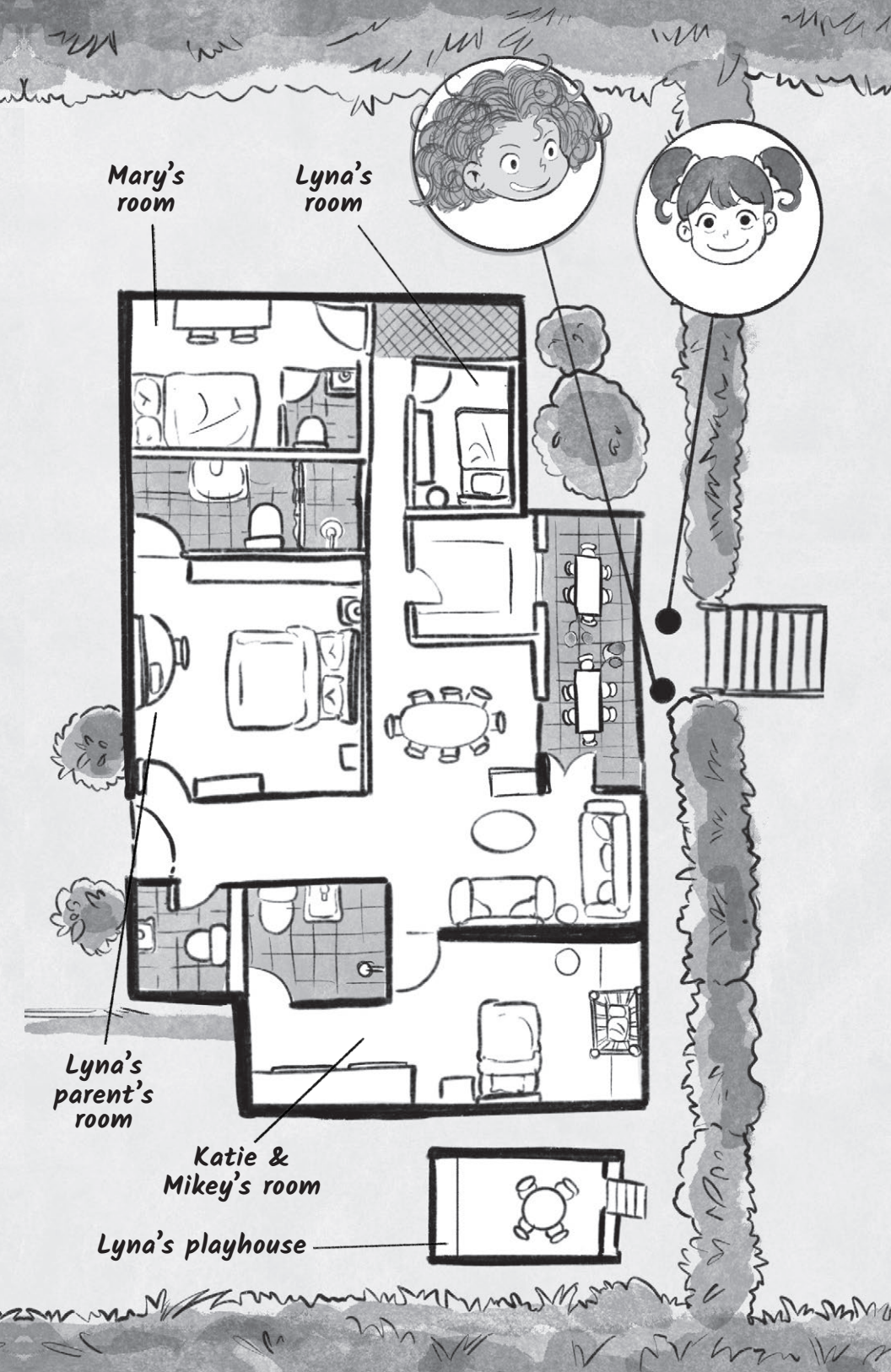
“Yes, Lynnie, it goes *WHOOSH!*” said Katie, flapping her arms and running in a circle.

“Shall we have a closer look?” Lyna asked, taking her nodding sister by the hand and steering her to the weathered brick steps leading to the main garden.

The two girls were about to head down, closer to the commotion, when their mother spotted them. “Girls! Please don’t get in the way of the workmen.”

“Okay, we won’t, Mummy,” Lyna and Katie chorused. Lyna pulled her sister to one side and back to safety. It was probably best to avoid making her mother angry, especially today...

“The workers have to be quick,” their mother continued, waving her arms like a windmill to direct the seating arrangements. “They are very



late, and we have so much to do before your friends arrive. Run along and ask Mary to help you get ready. I bought you both pretty, new dresses.”

Katie jumped up and down, thrilled. “Yay!”

Ugh! What? Nooo!

“Do I have to, Mummy?” Lyna hated all the fussy dresses her mother loved and didn’t understand why she had to wear them.

“Yes, it’s a special occasion,” her mother insisted.

“Pffft! Fine!” Lyna huffed, stomping off in a tizzy.

“LYYY-NA! KA-TIE!” their family amah, Mary, called from inside the house. “Come now, must change and brush hair.”

“Coming!” Lyna yelled back. Lyna was very fond of Mary (even though she always called her “Lyyy-na”, like “China”, instead of “Leee-na”, like “hyena”). She was kind and caring, and had been like a second mother ever since she came to live with them.

The girls ran into the big bedroom, now occupied by Katie and Mikey. To her delight, Lyna had been given her own small room after Mikey was born. It meant that she was all grown up. She *was* turning seven.

Laid out on Katie’s bed were two yellow dresses, with little white flowers along the neckline, full skirts and a big bow dotted with even more tiny flowers dangling in the middle. Next to the dresses were pretty yellow-and-white socks and black shoes so shiny that Lyna could see her reflection in them.

“Arghhh! I don’t know why Mummy likes this matchy-matchy thing. I’m unique!” Lyna declared to no one in particular.

“Haiii, Lyyy-na, your mummy spend a lot of money to make you pretty,” Mary scolded, as she helped Katie into her dress.

“Yes, yes, I know, but...” Lyna protested, as she reluctantly dressed herself.

“No ‘but’. Dresses very pretty,” Mary said firmly.

Lyna preferred her usual outfit of a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops, but she knew it was pointless to argue. *Why does Mummy insist on dressing us as twins? I’m the big sister!*



“Susie likes it!” Katie exclaimed, giving a twirl and pointing to her doll on the bed, as if it were looking approvingly at her. Taking in her

own appearance in the wardrobe mirror, Lyna rolled her eyes and scowled.

Eric the Viking and Regghead will never let me live this down. Lyna smacked her forehead with her palm, now dreading their arrival. When they saw what she was wearing, they would tease her mercilessly *and* tell the others. *I’ll have to make a joke about it before they say anything.*

“OOWWW! Mary, you’re hurting me!”

Lyna cried, trying to pull away from her amah, who was wrestling with a hairbrush stuck in Lyna’s tangled mess of hair.

“Aiyah! Lyyy-na, why your hair always big mess?” Mary said, exasperated. “Katie’s hair not so bad like this.”

Tall and skinny, Lyna was burnt brown from being out in the sun all the time. In contrast, Katie was honey-skinned, small and dainty, with huge hazel eyes and a bright, toothy smile. With their three-year age gap, Lyna and Katie

could not be more different. Well, except for one thing: their mops of curly brown hair. She and her sister had hair like their British father,



and baby Mikey took after their mother, who was Singaporean Chinese, with thick, wavy, jet-black hair.

But while Katie's curls fell in perfect bouncy ringlets, Lyna's hair was a tousled mess and very unruly.

It was hard and painful to tame, especially since she rarely brushed it herself.

"Don't shake, Lyyy-na," Mary urged, "then I finish faster."

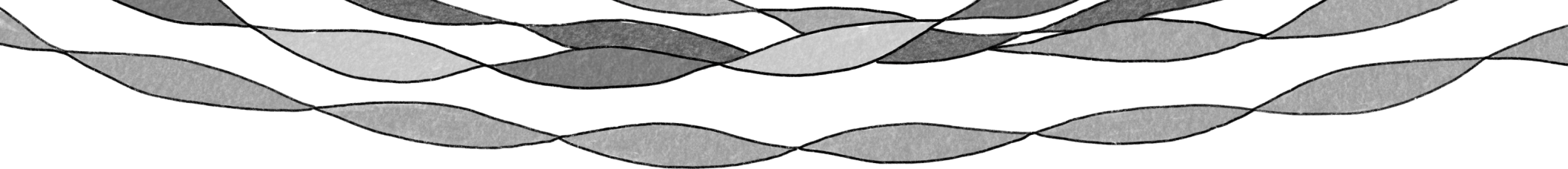


Lyna gritted her teeth and glared at Katie, who, of course, was now perfect from head to toe and busy running a tiny brush through Susie's hair.

"Okay, finish. Now, go show Mummy," Mary said, shooing them out. "And don't get dirt on dress, Lyyy-na!"

"Yeeess, Mary, I'll try." *And I'll most likely fail.* The likelihood of getting grass stains or mud on her dress as she romped around with her friends was high, and that would mean trouble for Lyna.

Even if it *was* her birthday.



2

PRESENTS PRESENTLY

Wow! UH-mazing.

Lyna found the drab grey terrace of their rented bungalow completely transformed. Twisted crêpe paper in pink, green and blue criss-crossed the rectangular area, creating a colourful canopy. Clusters of multicoloured balloons were strung up in the corners, bouncing around in the gentle breeze.

Mummy is so clever! The terrace looks pretty.

Jimmy the gardener was tying off a string above a long row of red metal tables and chairs running down the centre of the terrace, from

which more dazzling balloons bobbed about. It wasn't his usual day to come and do the gardening, but her mother needed extra help with the party arrangements.

“Balloons!” Katie squealed, thrilled.

Lyna's mother loved hosting parties for grown-ups and for children. She would go all out with decorating the house and garden, just as she did today. Normally, Lyna wouldn't pay any attention to the hoo-ha her mother got up to, but today it was especially for her.

“Hi, Ming,” Lyna called, waving.

“Happy birthday, Lyna,”

Ming said, smiling.

“Party soon.” Ming was the day amah. She came every afternoon to look after baby Mikey, who was already crawling,

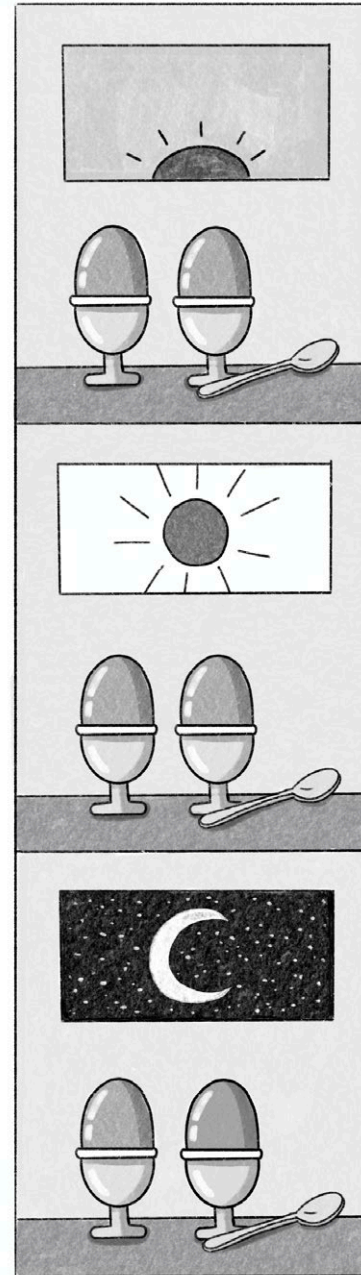


while Mary usually minded Lyna and Katie. Ming was currently busy placing pretty paper plates, napkins and cups at each place setting. Lyna was pleased to see that Ming had managed to cover most of the dents and scratches on the well-used tables, which she regularly saw at the birthday parties she attended (she'd probably left a few marks herself).

Her mother's talents didn't stop at party decorations. She'd been taking baking lessons, and was now not only a good cook, but a good baker too.

When her mother first got married, she didn't even know how to boil an egg, she was fond of saying. Thankfully, she'd got a lot better. Lyna didn't know if she could survive eating boiled eggs for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.

Baking allowed Lyna's mother to show off her artistic side, which could be seen in the



special birthday cakes she'd made. From princesses in fancy ballgowns made of icing, to a little farmhouse complete with a variety of chocolate farmyard animals—she could do it all.

“Katie, what kind of cake do you think Mummy is making me?” Lyna was burning to know. Birthday cakes were always top secret, and everyone was banned from the kitchen until the grand reveal at the party—except Mary, of course, who helped her mother (and was sworn to secrecy).

“Secret, Lyna!” Katie replied, holding her finger to Susie’s mouth, the doll clutched close to her chest.

Switching her gaze to the paper plates and cups, Lyna also started to wonder what kind of party food her mother had planned. Earlier that morning, she’d seen crates and crates of Fraser & Neave’s famous soft drinks, Orangeade and Cherryade. All her friends loved the sweet, fruit-flavoured fizzy delights.

Just then, Lyna’s mother appeared at the kitchen window and inspected the tables with a critical eye, before nodding with satisfaction. “Well done, Ming,” she said approvingly. Ming had followed her mother’s directions perfectly, including setting up a separate table for all the mothers, who would drink tea and chat after the children finished eating and went off to play.

Lyna headed over to her mother with Katie in tow.

“Mummy, are we having those tiny sausages on sticks with tomato ketchup?” Those were treats that only appeared on very special occasions.

Lyna’s mother turned to face her and smiled. “Of course.”

“And potato chips and iced gems?” Lyna asked, winking at Katie, who was hopping from foot to foot.

“Yes, and sandwiches, marshmallows and mini sponge cupcakes with icing and the glittery silver balls you like on top,” her mother said, laughing. The two girls grinned at each other, and Katie clapped her hands with glee. “Now, girls, give me a spin and let me get a good look at your new dresses.”

Lyna and Katie twirled for their mother (Lyna a little more grudgingly, like a cranky ballerina).

“Pretty. Yes, very pretty,” their mother said, pleased. She constantly complained that Lyna

behaved like a “tomboy”, hanging around boys and getting her clothes muddy, and always nagged her to dress and behave more like a young lady.

“Your friends will be arriving soon, Lyna. Please, can you play with Katie in her room until then, so your new dresses stay clean?” her mother instructed, before adding, “And try not to crumple them.”

“Okay, Mummy,” the two girls chimed in unison as they turned to go, even though Lyna was already devising a hundred different games to play that would definitely wrinkle her dress.

“And Lyna, one more thing. Don’t forget to thank your friends for their presents.”

OOH, yes, presents! Lyna had been so focused on the dress, the party decorations and the food that she’d forgotten all about presents.

I wonder what my friends will bring me. Lyna loved surprises.

3

PAINT-BY-NUMBERS

DING DONG! DING DONG!

Lyna had barely sat down in the bedroom to play with Katie when the doorbell sounded.

Leaping back up, Lyna sprinted to the front door, yanking it open to see her friend Mabel, smiling broadly, and her stern amah, frowning crossly, standing on the doorstep.

“Hello, Mabel. Come in, please,” Lyna said, giving her friend a big hug, then grinned at her amah. “Hello, Ah Chun.”

“Hi, Lyna, thank you for inviting me to your party,” Mabel said shyly. Mabel was the only

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Locke is the co-author of *Agnes and Her Amazing Orchid*, a picture book about the creator of Vanda Miss Joaquim, and the author of the *Jack is Curious* series inspired by her son. After spending thirty years in advertising, garnering over 300 awards to her name, she started her consultancy Godmother Pte Ltd, holding key marketing and management positions at Club 21.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

May Thu is an illustrator and designer, with a degree in Visual Communications from NTU. She is deeply inspired by stories and is always on the lookout to weave in various visual storytelling methods in her work. She was also the illustrator of *Wei Wei's Piece of Cake*, published by Epigram Books.

Lyna Lankylegs, fearless leader of the Bright Hill Gang, is turning seven, and she cannot wait for her birthday party. And there's more: a jungle adventure complete with crazy catfish, slithering snakes and wild boars. But wait, what's this? Coconuts are raining down from above!

Join Lyna and her ragtag gang of boys as they blaze through the Singapore jungle, getting into all sorts of trouble.



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