SUNK

LORETO 3

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Can they survive the Race of Vermes?

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Dedication

This story is dedicated to all the children in the Woman’s and Children’s Hospital. We want you all to know that you are not alone in your journey, like the team from SA in the story. They were there for each other, to help the through good times and bad. You have a family who loves and cares for you, who will help you through this messed up game called life. To all the children in the hospital, we hope that you will fight through your struggle and have a full recovery. Stay strong and believe that everything will be alright.

Because it will.

From Madeline Penny, Eloise Penny, Chloe Colgrave, Olivia Christie, Teresa Di Fava and Annabelle Woods.
The headset microphone scraped gently on my dry lips. I brushed it away, and then continued with my work. The hologram that sat in front of me on the stainless steel desk projected the second year science test at Flinders’ University.

‘Seventy two,’ I whispered into the microphone. The white, glowing pixels formed and arranged the answer to question 31 onto the blue, delicate screen. I shook my head. Why did I always get that question wrong?

‘Scribble out answer, replace with sixty two,’ I commanded, the screen doing just that.

The title stared at me, like a monster ready to pounce. It read: Xenia Lennon. The name made me sick. What sort of a name is Xenia? A silent crash behind me rang in my ears. I glanced over my shoulder to see Eddie, with his hologram in a million pieces scattered across the floor. I rolled my eyes. Eddie – or Edward – and I had been friends since middle school. Typical Eddie hadn’t changed one bit. Not only had his clumsiness stayed the same, but his looks. His brown, wavy hair pointed in different directions and covered his face. He really needed a haircut. And if he didn’t, I would cut it off for him. Eddie’s blue eyes looked into mine. Is it possible to smile with your eyes? Well he did. His dark green Flinders’ University jumper was a couple of sizes bigger than what it should be, and his blue pants stood out from the faded jumper. Eddie was training to be a plastic surgeon. I was studying to become a scientist.

It had been my dream since I was little, when I would break apart hover-boards and breathing masks all so I could put them back together. I turned back to my test. Only five more questions to go.

I remember that moment like yesterday, the 12th of September in the year 2996. I remember the ping from my iWrist, a phone on a bracelet made by Apple. I remember the tears that were shed at that moment in the ghostly hallway. The moment I realized that I had failed the test - I had failed myself.
Chapter One

Xenia leaned back on the log and gazed up at the stars. Her piercing blue eyes shone in the darkness of the night and her blonde wavy hair was flowing in the breeze. Her off shoulder purple top and blue jeans were perfect for the weather. Xenia closed her eyes. She still couldn’t understand what had happened. She tried once more to run through it.

Two of the seven continents had been either burned by the sun through the hole in the ozone layer or drowned by the remains of Antarctica. So far Asia and Antarctica were the only continents destroyed. Humans were forced to live on the remaining continents until scientists could figure out how they could rebuild the continents.

Xenia buried her teary face into her slightly tanned hands. Science. It was all she knew. And she had failed her dream. Now she was a lousy baby sitter. Sure, she loved little kids. But compared to science, she was sitting in a pile of horse manure.

Xenia and her sister were staying with her Aunt Zindra and Uncle Marquis in the country while her parents were on holiday in Europe. The country used to be empty and deserted, but it was now full and crowded.

Xenia felt a hand on her shoulder, and looked over to see her sister Clara. Her long, blonde hair was tied at the very end with an aqua hair tie. She loved wearing her pink and orange dress with patterns of leaves falling off an old oak. Clara was 15 and already very beautiful. She smiled and then got back to roasting her marshmallow over the bonfire they prepared.

I can’t believe my mum and dad aren’t letting me stay home by myself! I’m 23 for god sakes! Xenia thought to herself. At least her Aunt and Uncle trusted her to look after their son Freddie.

Freddie was her little cousin, who was obsessed with fire trucks. He was running around the bonfire, squealing,

‘Zena! Come play with me!’

She loved that way he pronounced her name. She slowly got to her feet, stretching her arms and putting her ipad 47 down. Maisy her cat jumped off her lap and stared at her with her bright magenta eyes. She rescued Maisy from a science lab where she was being tested – that was why she had magenta eyes.
‘I’m going to get ya!’ Xenia called, chasing after her five year old cousin. But instead of laughter, there was a scream.

It pierced through the night. The owls were woken up from miles away. The earth might have even shaken as her little cousin screamed in pain.

Xenia raced around the bon fire to find Freddie, lying with his shoulder in the bon fire. The skin was melting away revealing red, raw flesh. Tears streaming in her eyes, Xenia picked him up and rushed in side.

She laid him down on the couch and raced into the kitchen, then opened every cupboard looking for some ice and a bandage. Finally locating some, she ran back to Freddie.

He had stopped screaming and now was crying quietly with an occasional whimper. She pulled up her sleeve to revel her wrist. Xenia quickly dialled 000 and listened to the ring tone.

‘Hello?’ asked a voice on the end.

‘Um-I’ve got a young boy here and has severe burns on his arm.’ she cried in a worried voice.

‘Where do you live?’ the man asked.

‘102 Snowy Hill South Australia,’ she told the man, staring at poor Freddie.

‘We’re on our way’ he informed Xenia and then hung up.

After about 20 minutes four people in hospital uniforms arrived. Xenia pointed towards Freddie who was still on the couch. One of the men told her that he had to go to a plastic surgeon to get his arm treated.

‘So will you take him over there?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ a tall man with dark hair told her. ‘And if you want you can stay with the boy too.’

They all piled in to the van and zoomed off.

Xenia waited impatiently in the plastic surgery waiting room.

She heard the faint sound of Freddie’s laughing. Launching on to her feet she raced to him.

Freddie’s arm was in an orange cast.

‘Thank you Eddie!’ he said, smiling to the man next to him.

‘I used to have a friend called Edd-’Xenia laughed.

Then she saw him.

‘Eddie?’ she gasped, looking at him.

‘Hi Xenia!’ Eddie chuckled.

She fainted.
‘Xenia?’ Eddie whispered, putting his hand to her forehead.

‘Get off me!’ Xenia yelled, slapping his hand away.

‘Why are you so angry at me!’ he yelled back.

‘Oh, you just had to rub it in my face when you got the degree!’ Xenia yelled into his face.

‘Oh come on! I was 22 and an idiot!’ he yelled, rubbing his hand.

‘Still! You did not have to do that!’ she said angrily.

‘Ok- ok I think you better get going Freddie’s enjoying himself too much!’ said Eddie laughing.

Xenia turned to the five year old smiling next to her.

‘Oh Freddie!’ she laughed, hugging him.
Chapter Two

‘Hey, Maisy, come here girl!’ Xenia called to her cat down the white hallway outside her temporary purple bedroom at her Aunt and Uncle’s house. Purple walls, purple glass figurines, purple Float-a Bed- oh yeah, I forgot to mention that Xenia’s Aunt and Uncle were filthy rich. The couple worked at Apple, the technology business that had been running for nearly 1000 years. Their house was defiantly an improvement from her parents’ home. She wanted to stay there forever, but she knew she would have to go back home once her parents came back from their escape from Europe. They had called last night and assured Xenia and Clara that they were safe, staying in a Sky Hotel until the planes arrived.

Maisy was allowed to come as well. Her fur was dyed a faint blue, which was all the range. Maisy trotted into the room, her tail waving behind and jumped up next to Xenia.

‘Good girl,’ Xenia told her cat as she scratched Maisy under her furry chin. She didn’t notice a man in a black suit standing at her doorway until he coughed.

Xenia jumped off the bed, surprised, and stormed right up to the body guard.

‘What are you doing here?’ Xenia demanded. The body guard stood to one side as another man walked in. He was smartly dressed in a green suit with a light up tie. His hair was messy- which reminded Xenia of Eddie- in a sort of way which made it look fashionable. Xenia couldn’t work out who he was, until she saw her Aunty and Uncle behind him, with their worried expressions. Then it came to me. Like a tidal wave. They were here for me. A competitor in The Race of Vermes.

‘Miss Xenia, what a lovely surprise!’ Dictator Molten greeted Xenia. He put out his hand for Xenia to shake, but she stood frozen still. He brought his hand back and turned to her Aunt and Uncle

‘Where are her paren-‘

‘They’re away.’ interrupted Xenia angrily. Molten looked back to Xenia.

‘You’re a feisty one, aren’t you? Well, I can assure you that the Race will be fun, don’t you worry! We will give you some time to pack some clothes.’ said Molten, turning to leave the room.

‘I’m not going. It’s too dangerous with all the natural disasters.’ Xenia huffed.

Molten turned around, surprised.

‘Oh, you will go.’ He told Xenia, smiling at her. The body guard placed his hand on her shoulder.
‘No!’ Xenia said though gritted teeth. The body guard tightened his grip.

‘Good day to you.’ Dictator Molten nodded to Aunt Zindra. The body guard clamped his hand over Xenia’s mouth and dragged her away, down the corridor. As Xenia was dragged down the hall, she spotted her cat chasing her. Maisy reached to her full height, trying to make herself bigger and hissed loudly at the body guard. But he just kicked her away.

‘Maisy!’ Xenia cried, looking at her cat. Clara rushed up to Maisy and picked her up, rocking her like a baby.

‘I’ll take care of her. You’ll only be gone for a few weeks.’ Clara nodded to her sister.

Xenia woke up in a dark room. Her head was throbbing as she tried to comprehend what had happened. The race. The race! Xenia sat upright and looked around into the darkness. She wondered if the room had any lights. Xenia clapped twice and was blinded by the yellow lights. The polished wood covered the whole room, which was around 10mx10m. On one end was a long marble hover table, decorated with silk napkins and a glass table ornaments. On the other side were a couch and a glass wall. Xenia rushed over to the glass to see where she was, but regretted it. They were in a tent, but the high tech one. And in front of then was the dark, deep blue ocean.

‘Oh crap,’ Xenia mumbled.

Xenia walked back towards the centre of the room, only to find 10 single beds with bodies in them. Xenia gasped. Were they alive? She ran over to the nearest bed with a girl in it, held her shoulders and gently shook them.

‘What…’ The girl sat up, with her short black hair, which looked like it was at war with her pillow. The girl looked younger than Xenia, around 18. She looked up at her with a strange look on her face.

‘Who are you?’ The girl asked, rubbing her head.

‘I-I’m Xenia. Who are you? And where are we? Who are the other people?’ Xenia blabbered.

‘Slow down!’ The girl laughed. ‘My name is Violet, and this is the training facility for the Race. And the others are our team mates.’ Violet walked over to the table, where she gestured for Xenia to take a seat.

‘Why are you so worried?’ Violet asked Xenia. Xenia took a seat and slumped into her hands.

‘I know that this is a fun sporting event, and we get to see the remaining continents, but don’t you think that it’s a bit weird?’ Xenia sighed.

‘What do you mean by weird?’

‘Well, for a start, only a few people came back last year, when they first started the race. Second, why is it so important to the Dictator? And finally, why are they locking us away like prisoners?’ Xenia cried. Violet though for a moment.

‘First of all, only three people didn’t come back. But that was only because they were in a team which was too stupid that they didn’t realize that they left a few members on Europe.’
Xenia shuddered at the thought of Europe. After what had happened, with her parent’s narrow escape, she wanted to forget that it had ever existed. Violet continued talking.

‘And I think it’s important to the dictator because he wants everyone to see the world before any more continents sink. And they aren’t locking us away like prisoners, sweetie, they are just looking after us until the Race begins. Speaking of which, it will start in about twenty minutes, so let’s have lunch!’

Xenia felt silly, relying on a person younger than her. Violet should be the one worrying, not her. There was a loud thump, then a crash from behind them. Xenia didn’t need to turn around to realize that Eddie had come with her.

‘Xenia?’ Eddie laughed. ‘It’s great to see you! How’s Freddie?’

‘Fine, fine.’ Xenia mumbled. Xenia didn’t notice that the rest of her team mates were sitting down to a large, golden turkey. Xenia decided that she should just go with it. Besides, what was the worst that could happen?

Over lunch, the competitors from South Australia got to know each other. The boys names were Charlie, Talin, Dustin and Maddox, all aged around 25. Charlie, Talin and Maddox were all brown haired with hazel eyes. Dustin had dark skin and a sort of Mohawk which was dark brown, which matched his eyes. He wore faded jeans and a nicely fitting shirt. All the boys were extremely excited about the Race. The girls included Zelda, Lucinda and Zindra. Lucinda and Zelda had blonde hair like Clara’s and had the same obsession with skirts. Zindra had brown hair, sparkling hazel eyes and seemed to feel the same way that Xenia did about the event.

Half an hour later the body guards came and dragged the team outside. Xenia had to shield her eyes from the light as the sun pierced through the icy blue sky. A good 100 metres away there were large stands, full of cheering sports fans. Xenia didn’t know what to think. Was she excited or dreading the Race? What if they ran out of water? Violet squeezed Xenia’s hand.

‘Don’t worry,’ Violet told her as they were walking towards the starting line. But how could she not? Xenia glanced at the other teams from the different states. Australia had been divided into four states- Northern Australia, Eastern Australia, Southern Australia and Western Australia. The teams looked competitive. Violet saw the look on her new friends’ face.

‘It’s just a race,’ Violet reminded her as the competitors took their places. But what Violet didn’t know was that they were terribly, horribly wrong. A man stood next to the colourful stands with a starting pistol. Xenia looked ahead to see a rocky path.

‘On your marks, get set… GO!’ A voice boomed as the starting pistol fired.
It took Xenia about three seconds to actually realize that Molten has started the race and everyone else has run off. The crowd was either disgusted or surprised that she was just standing there. They screamed at her to run, bloodthirsty for some action.

‘Xenia! What are you doing? Run!’ Eddie screeched.

Xenia obeyed the orders and sprinted across the protruding gravel. The gravel changed to large rocks as the sea drew nearer. One rock was extremely precarious, which allowed Xenia to fall onto her now bleeding leg.

‘Eddie!’ she screamed in agony, ‘My leg!’

Eddie turned around to help Xenia but he was disgusted by her draining calf. Closing his eyes, he held out his hand and pulled her up, carrying her to the jet to avoid any extra damage to Xenia’s leg.

‘Quickly! Get in!’ Zelda called to Xenia and Eddie pulling the two of them up into the jet. Xenia blocked her ears to block out the terribly annoying sound of the team arguing about who was going to fly it. Charlie complained and said that he was an experienced engineer and should be the pilot.

‘Engineers make planes, not fly them stupid!’ Talin retorted. ‘Honestly, do you really think that—’

‘Just shut up!’ Zindra screeched. ‘All of you! I can’t stand it any longer. Haven’t any of you dingbats realized that we have auto pilot?’

Shocked and relieved, the nine other competitors strapped themselves into their seats – but not Zindra.

‘Zindra, sit down before we take off,’ Lucinda said cautiously. ‘You could get hurt or… well, you know what… die.’

‘Oh please,’ Zindra laughed. ‘A little plane flight never hurt anybody!’

But as the plane took off, the force pushed her viciously against the wall striking her temple.

‘Zindra!’ Dustin shouted.

Zindra’s body crumpled to the ground. Everyone stared at her, but because of safety nobody got up to help her.
Once it was safe Zelda got up and tried to encourage Zindra to open her eyes, but she never did. After about five minutes of this Zelda arose with puffy red eyes and watery cheeks and announced Zindra’s death.

For the next fifteen hours nobody spoke a word. They were all too grief-stricken because of the loss of their moodiest participant. The only sounds to be heard were Zelda’s sobs and Talin’s snores.

Xenia turned to Eddie and held his hand. He was the only person she really knew well and she didn’t want to lose him as well as Zindra. Her pain in her leg soothed when she saw Zindra’s dead body because she knew that would’ve hurt more. Xenia was extremely shocked of how perilous this journey was. Did Dictator Molten know of this all along and purposely choose someone to compete that would refuse to sit down on a plane ride and get herself killed? Who else has he planned to fall into his death trap?

‘We’re here,’ Violet proclaimed ‘Now everyone, please try not to get killed.’

Many people laughed at this comment but stopped quickly because of the seriousness in her voice.

‘I mean it! This is our life we are playing with!’ she yelled and this time nobody laughed.

‘What do we do with her body?’ Talin asked referring to Zindra.

‘We’ll bury her.’ Xenia said making many other participants exchange confused looks but nobody said that she shouldn’t.

Once the jet landed, Xenia picked up Zindra and took her to the beach. With her bare hands she dug a hole large enough to fit a human body in it. She filled up the whole with dirt covering the loneliness and emptiness of Zindra. Then she wrote in the dirt with a stick:

Here lies Zindra
South Australia’s fallen competitor of
The Race of Vermes
Let her soul have an eternal life

Leaving the past behind her, Xenia turned around and headed to the next starting point.

She didn’t look back, but she certainly wanted to.
Chapter Four

Xenia finally reached South America. Now it was time to walk. Her leg was still terribly sore from tripping on a rock when she first started the race.

‘Ok. I need a good start and I need to focus.’ she muttered.

She walked to the starting line and ……….BANG! The start gun boomed. She ran as fast as she could, she felt nothing could stop her, nothing but the beautiful view. While she ran she saw the fantastic scenery of South America. The beautiful rainforests and the sparkling rivers and couldn’t help but let her stare at them, but she knew she had to keep on going. She ran and ran until she was out of breath, so she stopped but she saw her oppositions behind her so she had to keep on going.

‘All I have to do is reach the next river and the then these horrible leg pains will stop’ she said.

‘Only a little bit more,’ she told herself in a tired voice.

Finally, she saw Zelda in the distance already in her canoe. Xenia ran harder and faster until she was only a couple of meters away. She heard Zelda encourage her on, and then Xenia hi-fived her and Zelda was off. Xenia was so puffed out so she sat down straight away and was already dreading the next race.

After about ten minutes a jet plane arrived and she and the other competitors got in straight away and put their seatbelts on straight away after the last incident. In all of their heads they were wondering what their team mates and competitors were doing. Xenia looked out the window and she could see Zelda canoeing as fast as she could and she was in front which made Xenia tingle inside. Zelda was getting close to Talin who was going to drive the rest of the way. The next day, it was Talin’s go and they started at the starting line and……….BANG! They were off. He got in and zoomed off in his car. Now they had to pick up the other people who just raced. When Xenia saw Zelda she hugged her as hard as she could and Zelda did the same.

‘You did so well!’ Xenia said with a chirpy voice.

‘I wouldn’t have done so well if you hadn’t ran so fast to give me a head start!’ said Zelda

The they began picturing what Talin was doing at that moment.
They peeked through the jet window and could see Talin driving in his car but the north car was catching up and they weren’t sure if he noticed, so Zelda and Xenia were shaking. He did realise and he got faster drew nearer and nearer to the finish line. After all his hard work and strength, he finished the race first. Xenia and Zelda squealed in delight. All Xenia could think was: will they be that lucky in their next race?

Once they got to their private jet, the team members congratulated each other for winning. It was a great feeling – being praised – but then the thought struck Xenia. Where was Eddie?

‘Don’t leave without me,’ she said and she hopped off the plane.

She looked around but found no signs of him. She only heard voices.

‘You’d better do it,’ she heard a voice speak in a threatening manner.

‘Or what?’ Eddie questioned. Xenia saw a glimpse of him, but didn’t approach him, for she had no idea who he was talking to. ‘We’ll kill you if you don’t. Now scram!’ another voice yelled. Eddie came round the corner and collided with Xenia.

‘What were you doing?’ she asked.

‘Nothing important. It’s none of your business,’ he snapped. Storming off Eddie got Xenia off his heels and on the jet neither of them spoke a word to each other. Xenia was furious but she couldn’t help looking at him to see nothing but worry on his face.
Xenia was now seriously dreading this trip. It gave her nothing but homesickness.
She missed her parents, her sister Clara and her adorable cat Maisy. Oh how she missed Maisy the most! What if her family aren’t feeding her! Xenia thought. Those shining purple eyes she may never see again. I may just be another victim of Molten’s race like Zindra was Xenia thought. She saved Maisy from animal testing for a makeup company so that is why her eyes are bright purple from strange purple contact lenses that wouldn’t come off her eyes. She missed Clara and how she used to annoy her sometimes but that didn’t matter she still loved her with all of her heart. She missed her parents because they always gave her the newest technology and always gave her hugs.

In the African race each contestant is supplied with ten one point five litre bottles of water each. Which is a great thing to be given as the trip would take over a fortnight to make it to the coast of Madagascar.

A week passed of running, walking and resting but at the end of the week there wasn’t much water left.

When the nine survivors made it through Chad and were entering Sudan the most terrible thing happened during the night. They had built a camp fire and they were going to bed not realising that they had not yet blew the camp fire out, but they still went to bed. As the competitors slept, the fire got bigger and bigger until the fire caught on the tress that they were sleeping on and fire stuck out burning everyone. Everyone ran and tried to blow the fire out. They fanned branches directed to the fire. After around forty-five minutes it went out. Xenia’s arms were sore from carrying heavy branches and swinging them around for ages. They all sat down examining there burns Lucinda’s burns being the worst. She was burnt all the way from her finger tips to her shoulders.

‘If I had my plastic surgeon gear I would fix that in no time,’ said Eddie. ‘I deal with that kind of stuff every day,’

‘Eddie, weren’t you supposed to blow out the fire while you were on watch?’ Xenia asked. ‘Are you trying to kill us?’

‘Of course not Xenia I, I just forgot,’ he retorted.
‘You made a deal with the other group! Didn’t you? It was the Eastern team! They threatened to kill you if you didn’t get rid of us! How could you?!’ she screamed followed by gasps from everybody else.

‘Do you think I had a choice Xenia?! They were going to kill me!’ he yelled at her.

Everyone else sat down and felt very awkward.

‘Eddie, I’m sorry I didn’t understand why you’d do that even with a death threat. I really am sorry,’ Xenia whispered.

‘It’s okay. But we’d better keep moving,’ Eddie said.

After another draining week and a half the group made it to the coast of Madagascar. They were all extremely exhausted.
Chapter Six

Eddie turned to face Xenia, a look of sorrow on his face. He approached the old boat that was tied to the shore. ‘I used to go fishing with my dad when I was a kid.’ His face looked stricken, and Xenia could see the tears building up in his eyes at the thought of his dead father.

‘We used to go fishing in an old boat almost just like this.’ Xenia advanced towards him, and gently touched his arm. He drew back, with a look of regret and embarrassment in his eyes. Xenia turned to face the others. She was just about to say how they should get a move on before the others come, when she saw a distressing sight on top of the hill. Zelda saw the horror on her face, and asked ‘What’s wrong?’ Charlie followed Xenia’s gaze, and saw the rest of the contestants streaming down the hill.

‘Quick!’ he cried, running to untie the boat. ‘You guys get in the boat and I’ll hold them back!’

Xenia shakily stepped into the old, decrepit fishing boat. Her grip on Eddie’s arm for support, tightened as the precarious boat shook. As she scrambled into the boat, it quivered, allowing the icy, cold sea water to find its way into the boat. She huddled into a ball at the top of the boat, letting the breeze brush past her cheek and plant goose bumps all over her shivering body. Eddie followed, as well as Zelda, Violet, Lucinda, Maddox, Talin and Dustin. Xenia’s eyes searched for Charlie, but couldn’t see him. All that was visible was a ball of people, trampling down to the shore. As they got closer, Xenia saw the tiny figure of Charlie standing confidently, arms crossed with a look of pride shown from his body language. Xenia had never realised how small and undernourished Charlie was. Perhaps it wasn’t such a good idea for him to hold them back after all. The ball got bigger, and bigger, and bigger. It was like a wave, a stampede of elephants. Xenia closed her eyes, blocked her ears. She wished this was all over, that she was never here. The thumping of running feet stopped, and in its place came splashing of water. Xenia looked up, and saw the crowd desperately splashing through the water. But what she saw behind them, made her blood curdle. The Charlie she saw only a moment ago was a strong, assertive Charlie. This Charlie was a splatter of blood, a lifeless, warped Charlie. How could something so big, happen in such a short period of time? She heard a
muffled, choking cry, and realised it was from her. ‘Charlie!’ she cried in sorrow. Tears poured down her face, making a river. Eddie held her in his arms and let her cry into his shoulder. She turned to see the rest of the racers only small dots on the horizon. ‘We have to go back to him, and help him!’ she bawled in despair. ‘It’s no use.’ Eddie said flatly, trying to give comfort. But there was nothing more to say. For the next three hours the journey was silent, in respect of Charlie.

All eight of them stared at the glowing sunset. The water shimmered and made small ripples along its surface. Xenia tried hard to fight her tears back, but as Eddie said, it was no use. All the crying made her sleepy, but she didn’t want to sleep. She wanted to stay up all night and mourn for the loss of their dear friend, Charlie. Her eyes started drooping, and the round, dark circles under them were now visible. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t hold back slumber. Eventually, sleep came.
Chapter Seven

After a few incessant weeks of aimlessly sailing the seas, the group finally arrived at their destination. ‘I’m picturing streamers, balloons, a giant chocolate cake, Oh and pavlova for our welcome!’ exclaimed Lucinda. It seemed like the whole Charlie disaster had blown over, and the motley crew had forgotten about him. I’ll never forget, Xenia thought to herself. She seemed almost envious of the others. She wanted so bad to forget Charlie, but she couldn’t. When she started feeling so much as a little bit happy, Charlie would be looming on her mind again. Not the humorous, cheerful, old Charlie but the lifeless splattered Charlie. The dead Charlie. Sometimes she would play that over in her mind. Dead, dead, dead. From time to time she would wonder if their dictator, Gary Molten even cared that so much blood had been spilt. Perhaps this in fact was his intention, to rid himself of these ‘vermin’. After all, it was The Race of Vermes. She pushed that awful thought away, detesting Molten. Of course their own dictator wouldn’t want to exterminate them. They were his people. But no matter how hard she tried, she believed it was true. The Dictator hates us. He wants as gone - that’s it. Xenia was drawn back to reality. They were well on their way back to Australia, and the rest of the crew were shivering in excitement. They talked in hushed voices for the rest of the journey, as if worried someone was watching them. They pondered on the good and the bad of the race, and swore to keep a strong friendship after their arrival at Australia. They were so deep in conversation that they didn’t see the growing land they were approaching. Soon the boat bumped against the shore, bringing it to a halt.

‘We’re here!’

They all clambered off the small boat they had inhabited in weeks. Xenia tried running but tripped over her own feet. She had been sitting down for weeks, and her legs were like jelly. Eddie took her hand, and they ran together up the uphill sand hill. Once they reached the grass they started sprinting. They were so exhausted, but were desperate to get home. Xenia was panting, sweat pouring down her face. She stared at her feet, as she ran as fast as they would take her. As she
looked up, she noticed their way had been blocked by a wire fence. She turned to see the rest of the group also staring at the fence curiously. Body guards were patrolling around on the other side of the fence, all with firearms, and a look of pure mercifulness. Eddie reached out his hand to touch the fence, and pulled away fast as he touched it. ‘It’s electric.’ He said. Xenia saw the inquisitiveness on his face, and wondered why this was such a mystery to him.

‘Perhaps this beach is off limits?’ she suggested.

He shook his head. ‘That can’t be it. They wouldn’t put up an electric fence if this was off limits.’

‘What are you trying to say?’ Zelda asked, with raised eyebrows.

Dustin shook his head and yelled, rather rudely to one of the guards. ‘Hey, you! Yeah, you – what’s going on, why can’t we get through?’

The guard moved towards them, with only a metre or so between them. You could smell the acidity of his breath, and Xenia swore she could smell the scent of alcohol.

‘Get off this land. This is property of our dictator, Gary Molten. None who are outsiders may enter Australia.’

‘But we’re not outsiders!’ proclaimed Violet. ‘We’re the remaining contestants from the race of Vermes. Surely you have heard of it.’

‘Aye, I have’ he said in a flat voice, whilst avoiding eye contact.

‘Then you must let us in!’ exclaimed Lucinda.

‘I’m afraid I can’t’ he said, and for a moment his poker face was no longer visible, but a look of pity was on his face. ‘It’s Molten’s orders; no contestants from the race are permitted to come back to Australia. I believe that was his intentions in the first place.’

The group were silent, in absolute shock. Lucinda, Zelda and Violet were in tears; whilst Dustin, Eddie and Xenia, were in complete shock so remained silent. Why am I surprised? Xenia thought to herself. Of course it was Molten’s plan all along; he is the worst government Australia has had in over a millennium. Xenia followed the others, who were progressing towards the boat.

Once they were in it and floating away from the sand, Xenia asked, ‘Where are we going?’

‘To Tasmania.’ Eddie replied unemotionally. After all they had been through; this was Eddie in his worst state.
For the next three days, they sailed in silence, in absolute shock of what they had been told. On the fourth day, they arrived at Tasmania. It was like a dream, paradise. The water was clear, crystal blue, and the beach was shaped similarly to a horseshoe. Mountains were in the distance, and the thousands of trees were gently swaying in the breeze. Standing on the sand with their clothes blowing about them, was a crowd of people. It was like a swarm of bees, there were so many. As the boat came closer to the shore, Xenia saw many familiar faces. There were Uncles, and Auntes, her Grandmas and Grandpas. Her mum, her dad and her beloved sister Clara also were standing on the beach, smiling. Once the boat hit the sand, Xenia jumped out, and embraced her family in a hug.

‘We have a surprise’ Clara giggled. As she said this she revealed a small, blue cat.

‘Maisy!’ Xenia cried.

‘No, but this isn’t Maisy.’ Her mum replied. ‘Maisy is right here.’ She motioned to Xenia’s Dad’s arms. ‘That kitten is one of Masie’s seven babies!’

Xenia smiled. Perhaps the race was a blessing in disguise. For now, as she stared off into the distance, she was home.
Epilogue

50 years later

You may think that reaching the shores of Tasmania would be the end of my story. That perhaps my fellow companions and I died out, or somehow got back into Australia. But you are wrong. The day we arrived at Tasmania was a memorable day. That day, Eddie and I realised we were deeply in love. One week later we were walking down the aisle. Besides outgoing Freddie, two more little children came long. Their names are Charlie and Zindra. We named them after the fallen competitors in The Race of Vermes. They look like me. My brown hair and my crystal blue eyes.

Although we named our first and only daughter after a moody and challenging woman, my Zindra is nothing like the one I knew 50 years ago. She is the sweetest little girl dressed as a young lady already. She is always looking curiously for my diary about when I was in the race to find out about the deceased Zindra but I don’t want her to know anything about her atrocious death.

Charlie is lots like the competitor I knew long ago. He is brave and willing to sacrifice himself for someone else. How I love my family.

We all decided to stay here in Tasmania and not under the dangerous powers of Dictator Molten. He was assassinated by rebels and protesters but the power is now his son’s. Although he is from a different generation he and his father are exactly alike. They are cruel, demanding and extremely self-absorbed. But the one generous thing that they did was ban the race.

But still, I will never let any member of the Molten family take my children away. Ever.
“Xenia woke up in a dark room. Her head was throbbing as she tried to comprehend what had happened. The race. The race!”

It’s the year 3000 and the ozone layer is melting fast. Antarctica has melted causing two other of the seven continents to overflow with water, and more are sure to follow them. To make things worse, the dictator of Australia has introduced a race around the remains of the world. As the race to the finish line draws nearer, tears are shed, and blood is spilt. ‘Sunk’ is an emotional book you are bound to never forget.

This book is aimed for adolescent readers.