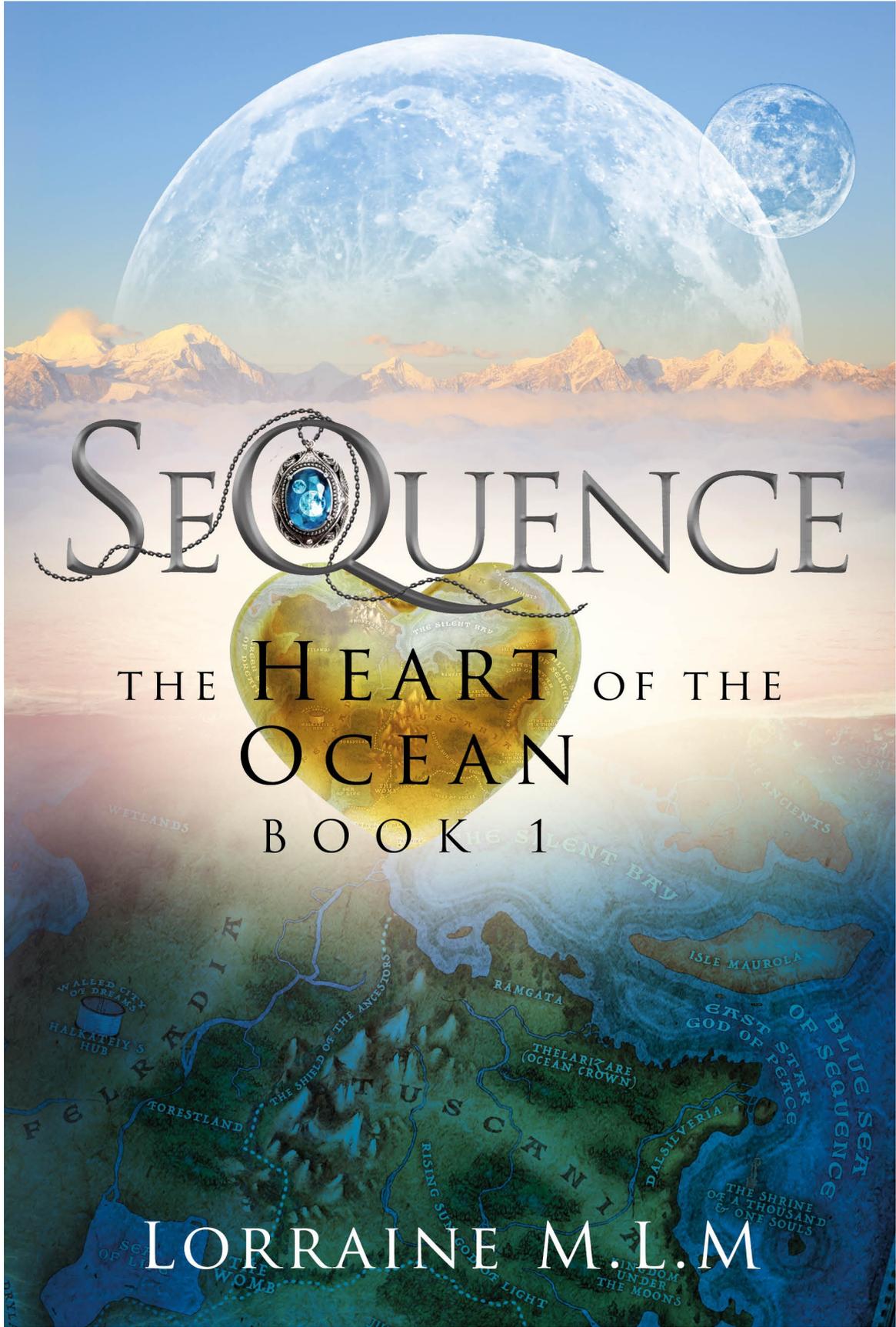


# **SeQuence**

**Lorraine M.L.M**

**The Heart of the Ocean Series**

**Book One – Chapter One**



# SEQUENCE

THE HEART OF THE  
OCEAN  
BOOK 1

LORRAINE M.L.M

## **Moon-Day One**

My Felradian Gift to you...

### *A Game of Sequence*

In a Game of Sequence, there are three defining components: players, observers, and spectators. Each player has to play by the rules, each observer needs to behold the Sequence, and every spectator has no option but to watch it all unfold. If any of the triad of components is oblivious to the Sequence, they are a peril to the Game.

There are no winners or losers. You win as one; you lose as one; ultimately, you play. There's a Sequence to Life, Love, and Death, which has to conform to the Ordinance of the Sequence. However, when Love drives the Sequence, Love becomes the biggest player of the Game.

Signed,

Halkateiy Valeima Mautilus

of house Regai-Rallias

## Preface

After two years of home-schooling, I strode into the exam hall to sit my first exam—Accountancy. In an attempt to familiarise myself with the facilities, I swept my gaze around and breathed a sigh of relief. I was the first one to arrive. I spotted my name and crossed to my desk, pretending that everything was just normal. Who was I kidding? I carried two huge water pouches pressed hard against my ears. Strange? Yes, more than strange. I ensured my grip was tight and eased into my seat.

In a state of cherished albeit makeshift tranquillity, I soaked in the peaceful sound of hushed silence. Bliss. *I can do this.* I drew in a ragged breath. *I can block the voices long enough to complete my paper.*

“Young lady,” a deep voice echoed, loud and abrupt, and I swivelled around in my chair. I hadn’t seen him enter the room. “You can’t have water pouches in here.” The exam officer stretched his long arms towards me. “Hand them over, and I’ll personally give them back to you after the exam,” he instructed, his eyes fixed steadily on mine.

Without a fight, I flashed a tight-lipped, regretful smile, one of desperation and defeat. I knew this was coming, and I also knew what was coming next. No amount of preparation could save me from my affliction.

Reluctantly, I slid the pouches off my ears and handed them to him. In a heartbeat, my world flipped over. A sea of voices clamoured through my head. Every thought within a three-hundred-metre radius invaded my mind. My serenity vanished. Horrendous pain shot through every nerve in my body, invoking a flurry of spasms and convulsions around my neck muscles. I suppressed a shrill of anguish.

*Breathe...just breathe.*

Inevitably, more students flooded into the hall. Hundreds of unwanted voices perforated through my skull. *I'll fight this!* I gripped my head. *I will fight it. I can do this. I have to do this.*

It was no use. The noise inside my head was so excruciating, and each voice pierced through me like a knife jabbed into my head. Droplets of sweat accumulated on my forehead. Tears misted my eyes. As the voices rose, the stabbing intensified, and the agony multiplied. Writhing in pain, my head pounded, throbbed and threatened to explode inside of me.

*Death by noise!* An invasion of high/low and level-pitched voices crowded my mind, burning and suffocating me from the inside out. *Death By Noise!* I clenched my fists and pressed them tightly against my ears, tapping my feet against the floor. *DEATH BY NOISE!* I almost yelled.

My breath came sharp and choppy. Hundreds of unfamiliar faces filled the room. The sound of their shoes against the floor seemed distant, yet their inner thoughts resounded inside my head.

I tried to remain calm by regulating my breathing for composure, but three hundred students' thoughts whirled inside of me. Their private thoughts—their personal feelings—their inner troubles all thronged my head. If only I could separate the voices from the emotion attached to them, perhaps that could ease my pain. Sadly, it was a mishmash of half-completed sentences all shrouded in panic, composure, indifference, love, hate...

*OMG, I'm not—I really need to wee—ready. Tic-toc—What the h—I stud—Who can I cop—It's too late, no—Last nigh—Oh, it's coming ou—Calm dow—not. He's giving me—What is double entr—the evils. I'm gonna fai—Think—I wonder what—think—eating tonig—Ooh I have an itch. My pen isn't writ—oh no—Tic-toc—she's a frea—*

I clenched my ears more tightly, but nothing helped to blot out the voices like my water pouches did. Too many thoughts, too many feelings, too many voices...I was dying a slow and torturous death; death by noise—death by voices—death by “troubles.”

“Leave me alone,” I whispered through the invasion of voices inside of me. “Let me be.” But the surge of voices gushed through my resolve, and I scrambled to my feet. “Shut up!” I screamed into the quiet room before crumbling to my knees.

Three hundred pairs of eyes stared right at me, some judging, others pitying. Tears blurred my vision. In agony, I curled into a ball on the floor, hoping and wishing for my “troubles” to end. What I desired was tranquillity—not torture—not this. I craved a life free of chaotic voices.

But serenity or freedom was something I could never have. Unable to control or ease my anguish, I lay on the cold floor, tears streaming down. Helpless and fatigued, I shut my eyes through the burning and lacerating pain.

That event was the final straw for my aunt. A week later, I was flown to Isle Speranza. Admission reason: complete psychotic breakdown.

# Part I

*Alessia - The Dawn of my New World*

# 1. Isle Speranza

“She’s beyond help,” one of the leading psychiatrists in England said, his voice low. He wiped a trickle of sweat off his brow, visibly befuddled by my supposed “troubles,” not that I’d given him anything to dispute that theory.

Three days after my “episode” at the exam centre, I’d walked into his office—a flamboyant suite of offices, I must add, situated on the twenty-sixth floor of one of the most prestigious high-rise office developments in Central London—pressing two huge water pouches against my ears.

Weird? I quite agree, but necessity overruled.

“Shall we try this again?” The psychiatrist rose from his seat behind a polished oak desk.

I jumped to my feet. With my hands clenching the water pouches tightly against my ears, I breezed past Aunt Kate and blitzed towards the door, only to be stopped in my tracks by Aunt Kate’s driver—who, for all intents and purposes, was actually a bouncer. My bodyguard. He accompanied me everywhere I went, just in case I lost it. Granted, it didn’t take much for me to lose it. Despite that, I wasn’t crazy.

“May I take one water pouch off your head?” The psychiatrist extended his hand towards me. “Just one,” he said in a controlled voice, his tone low and gentle, like he was speaking to a child. “You can keep the other one.”

I edged backwards, as far back from him as was possible, recoiled in the little space in the corner of his office, shaking my head and pressing my pouches tightly against my ears. My sanity depended on it.

He took a measured pace at me. Hastily, he grabbed both pouches and placed them on the floor. As was the story of my life, a sea of voices came crashing down on me. Any thoughts within three hundred metres of me perforated through my skull.

“Ah!” I cried a bloodcurdling wail. I crumbled to my knees and inevitably knocked one of the flower pots to the floor, spilling the contents on his white carpet. The walls caved in on me. I shut my eyes. A multitude of voices penetrated my mind, piercing right through me.

“S-top the voices... P-Please, help me. Get them out of my h-head!” A thousand voices times infinity lacerated through me. I gripped my pounding head and yowled an unearthly shrill in agony. A crowded stadium screamed inside my head, with everyone talking at the same time. Acute pain radiated in waves across my body.

“*Death by voices!*” I whispered in anguish. “*Death By Voices! DEATH BY VOICES!*” Breathing short, choppy, and heavy breaths, I curled into a ball and rolled on the carpet. “W-water. W-water,” I cried. “I n-need my w-water!”

I flung my eyes open, gazed at my water pouches, and crawled on all fours towards them. I quickly picked them up and gripped them against my ears. The voices stopped, replaced by much more manageable hushed undertones.

Aunt Kate’s blue eyes carried a profound sadness that I’d seen too many times.

“I’m sorry,” I told her.

A flicker of recognition crossed her eyes.

I drew in a steadying breath. As crazy as it looked, the water pouches against my ears provided some kind of peace from the voices, a slice of bliss, a much-needed hush. *Time to get a grip!* I rose to my feet. *I can do this.*

I hobbled to my seat, my heart thumping in my neck and ears, and sat down next to Aunt Kate. Her thoughtful eyes rested on me, sadness seeming to have been etched onto her face. This creepy episode wasn’t new to her, but it still was a step forward, all credit to my discovery of the water pouches.

The psychiatrist eased into his chair in defeat. “She’s beyond help,” he repeated.

In his defence, he was actually one of many in a rather long line of therapists who had failed to “cure” me. Except that there was one *teeny tiny* yet *gigantic* problem everyone kept overlooking. I wasn’t sick, so there was no cure. I was just different.

\* \* \*

Case number: 3567

Name: Alessia Appleton

Age: Sixteen years eleven months

Gender: Female

Occupation: Student

Place of birth: Norwich, Norfolk

Place of residence: Wroxham, Norfolk

Next of kin: Lady Kate Grantham (Aunt)

Suffered brief reactive psychosis at the age of fourteen following the death of her parents in a car crash. Patient was in the car. She suffered severe emotional trauma but was physically unscathed.

Followed by suspected organic psychosis at the age of fifteen

Currently, patient has complete and irreversible psychotic breakdown and exhibits symptoms of complex emotional trauma, anxiety disorder, nightmares, hallucinations, delusions, and schizophrenia.

Conclusion: Complete irreversible psychosis.

\* \* \*

The psychiatrist heaved a deep sigh, removed his glasses, and laid them on top of my case file. I craned my head and caught a glimpse of the first page. *That seems too grave.* I stiffened and swallowed hard. *It's really not like that at all.* I glanced up from the voluminous file and blew the curls off my face. My eyes meshed with Mr Tate's cold and dark gaze. Psychiatrist number thirty-four.

*My name is Alessia Appleton, I pretended to have a conversation with him. I'm sixteen years old. Okay, almost seventeen. And despite what you've just seen, I'm not mad. I'm just in the wrong place...I want to go home.*

He pulled a pen and paper off his polished oak desk.

*Okay. I know you think I'm mad, deranged, or plain crazy. Really, the case file and the weird water pouches don't suggest otherwise. But, truly, I'm none of those things.*

He never looked up at me.

*Here's the thing. I'm a mind reader. Yes, a mind reader! But I can't tell you that. Swapping one institution for another is not how I intend to spend the rest of my life.*

*She's delusional,* he thought, swivelling in his chair.

*Wrong,* my inner self voiced. I kept my gaze low, although I could see him perfectly from lowered lashes. Droplets of light summer rain speckled his London office window, obscuring the scenic views of the River Thames.

*She's nuts! A complete, full-blown psychotic—*

*Wrong again!* I lifted my gaze and shot him a piercing stare. *I'm not nuts or bananas. I hear people's thoughts. I can hear you right now. Yes, I struggle to control the voices sometimes. Most times. Okay, mostly every time! But that doesn't make me mad. I'm simply different.*

“There's nothing you could possibly do for h-her?” Aunt Kate's voice broke. *Poor child. She's lost so much.*

I cast a sideways glance at her.

Her face dropped. *We can't keep doing this. She needs help*, her voice echoed inside my head.

"I'm afraid she's too far gone," Mr Tate said. "She'll never be normal."

I shifted my gaze to the poster on the wall that read: *Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly. Morticia Addams*. I stared back at Mr Tate and flashed him a questioning smile. *Isn't that ironi—*

*Jump!* a loud and powerful voice boomed inside my head, penetrating through my water pouches.

My gaze flickered towards the window. *How is it possible? No voice is ever this loud when I have my pouches*. I pushed my pouches tightly against my ears.

*Jump!* the voice repeated. *Right now! Do it! Do it!* The voice continued to torment me, and I sat up with a jerk. *Jump into the water!*

*What? Into the River Thames?* Mystified, I darted a desperate glance around the occupants of the room. *Who's inside my head? I'm not crazy!*

*Your game has begun! Your sequence is in motion. Jump!* The frustrated and dragged out voice made my heart lurch. *Jump or I will throw you in!*

*No!* "Get out of my head!" I sprang up, shaking.

All heads turned to me. Breathless, my heart pounded hard against my ribs. Like it had never really been there, the voice vanished.

"Take a seat, young lady," Mr Tate said. "Jumping into the River Thames is not the answer."

I shot him a look. *How could you possibly know that I wanted to jump? Not that I intended to jump, but how could you know that?* My thoughts in a jumble, I shook my head and tried to read his mind. He now had an iron shield to his thoughts, and I couldn't read

anything at all. I snapped my head back, baffled. This was a first. No one had ever blocked their thoughts from me. *Are you inside my head? You are one strange shrink!*

“Jumping into the Thames should be the last thing on your mind,” he said again, in a controlled voice.

*You’ve got it all wrong. Like I would kill myself. All I want to know is who was inside my head.* I plopped back into my seat and pressed my water pouches even closer to my ears.

Mr Tate sat in thoughtful silence. “There’s nothing we can do for her here.” He paused, musing, and gazed at me with restless eyes, like he was seeing something only he saw. “There’s one option that may assist with this situation, but it will cost a fortune.”

*I don’t have a situation! I wanted to scream. I’m not crazy!*

“Money is no object.” Aunt Kate turned a concerned gaze on me, her brows furrowing. *I’ll do anything to get you the right help. That’s what my brother would have wanted.*

The strange voice didn’t bother me anymore. Time dragged.

Mr Tate sluggishly typed into his computer. After an eternity, he said, “There’s an asylum equipped to deal with such a complex case.”

*I’m not a case. I’m Alessia!*

He turned his computer screen towards Aunt Kate and me. A map of earth flashed on screen, and he pointed to a tiny dot in the middle of vast swathes of water. “Isle Speranza.”

I looked closely, gasped, and rolled my chair back. *No, no, no! Indian Ocean!* A ball of nerves, dread, and anxiety formed in the pit of my stomach. *Are you kidding me?* I spun around to Aunt Kate. My earlier composure flitted into the mid-morning rays that cut across the glazed walls.

“No.” I shook my head, feeling as if something was crashing my insides. Every moment, every second, my heart was being wrenched from me. A prickle of tears stung in my eyelids. “Aunt Kate?”

*I’m sorry.* “You need help, child.” She grabbed my face in her hands and waited for me to look up.

My nails dug into the water pouches, threatening to spill the water all over Mr Tate’s carpet. “I don’t need h-help,” I said, realising the graveness of this new situation. *A mental asylum? Away from home. Incarceration! But I’m not mad.* My thoughts in a jumble, tears misted my eyes. “I just want to go h-home.” My voice wobbled, my words barely audible.

“Home is no longer an option, child. It’s been two years. You’re not getting better.”

“I’ll try harder. I’ll get better. I promise.” A swell of emotion broke in my chest. “P-Please, don’t send me away,” I begged. “P-Please, p-please. I can’t l-lose you, too.” My voice cracked on a choked sob as bitter tears trickled down my face. “I d-don’t want to lose you. Y-You are my h-home.”

“I’m sorry, child,” she said, her voice tinged with deep regret. “It’s for the best.”

On that note, my end was set. Even though I hadn’t thrown one, I knew...not even *death by tantrum* could save me from a life of entrapment on Isle Speranza.

\* \* \*

A small island existed on the continental rim of the Indian Ocean named Isle Speranza, which means Island of Hope. Whoever decided to give it such a name had certainly been walking a different path to the one I was on. I called it Island of No Hope instead.

At the heart of this solitary island sat an asylum for the mentally challenged. Against my will, I was forced to spend forever in this place. My parents had died when I was

fourteen. And on my fifteenth birthday, everything changed. I began to hear what people thought. From then, my life became a miserable purgatory with no way back.

\* \* \*

*I've been playing the cowed patient for long enough. I stared at the chalk-white walls with nothing but my mind at work, pacing around in circles, resisting the urge to bite my nails. Today, everything goes. It's been one whole month, and I'm not spending another day in here. I'll make my own luck in this world.*

The sound of muffled footsteps crept into my consciousness. I shifted my gaze to the door in anticipation. Although I was expecting it, the subsequent metallic unlatching of the locks sent me flying towards the narrow bed in the corner of the room. I threw the white cotton covers over me, shut my eyes, and took silent, deep breaths.

“Happy seventeenth birthday, Alessia!” My shrink helped himself to sit on the chair next to my bed.

I pretended I was half-asleep. With an over-exaggerated yawn, I fumbled with the covers and repositioned myself to face him. I couldn't afford to reveal that I'd hardly slept.

“Today you get to wear your normal clothes!” Mr Rob Tate's voice was tinged with excitement, and yet I was the crazy one. To think that he had left the comfort of his plush London office to work on an island in the middle of nowhere was mindboggling. Even more bemusing was that I couldn't read his mind. Handing me my only pair of blue jeans and shirt, he stared at me as if *he* was trying to read my mind. “Do you promise to be good?”

“Y-Yes.” I cleared my throat. “With all my heart,” I lied.

That was the biggest lie I've ever told—today. The rest of the times, I didn't really lie, but I wasn't entirely truthful, either. I liked to think of it as being conservative with the truth.

“Good.” He placed my necklace in the palm of my hand and kept ahold of it. “You know the consequences of misbehaviour?”

Nodding, I smiled. *You’ll have to catch me first.* I tugged gently at the twinkling silver and blue diamond dual moons pendant and fastened the necklace around my neck. The familiar swing of the jewellery brushed my chest, a welcome haven.

“One hour only with that necklace.” He cast me a warning look. The polished silver and blue diamond necklace was all I had left of my parents. “One hour. I know it calms you. Don’t make me regret it.”

*One hour is all I need.* I flashed another smile, a hopeful, resolute, and dauntless smile, yet all he saw was the smile of innocence, so I hoped.

As he signed off for my privileges and my change of clothes for the day, I played dumb. I was hardly going to harm myself with a pair of jeans and a shirt. Death by jeans. Seriously, who did that? I had a far greater plan than ending my life in a mental institution. My freedom had already been snatched away from me. Now I had to claim it back—at all costs.

\* \* \*

*What on earth is wrong in this world?* Sergio, the ever-so-charming warden thought while blitzing through the forest chasing me.

Both Sergio and Caleb were within my three-hundred metre range, and everything they thought echoed inside my head. *You can’t show someone a bit of courtesy without paying for it!* Sergio’s mind was in serious overdrive, drifting from one extreme thought to the next. Distrust, empathy, confusion—more distrust, frustration and even more empathy.

I was the reason for his turmoil. Unfortunately saying “sorry” was going to be pretty difficult. I was on a path to freedom, and not even death could stop me.

I increased my speed and tried to create some distance between us. With each stride, his thoughts and words faded, only to get stronger again as he caught up.

“Seriously! I didn’t sign up...for this,” he muttered, gasping for breath. “We have to stop!”

“You mean you didn’t sign up for running across the island, chasing...damned mad people!” Caleb, the second warden, was raging like a bull on fire. He was unimpressed. *You always get me into trouble—unfailingly—always you...Sergio.*

Clenching my head with my hands, I halted and tried to shake their voices off, but all I ended up doing was giving myself a migraine.

“Correction, Caleb—mentally incapacitated!” Sergio tried to politically correct his colleague.

“Whatever! If you hadn’t let her trick you into unlocking the gate, we wouldn’t be in this mess,” Caleb said.

“Don’t fret. She’ll be caught out by the shores...five years I’ve been chasing the—” Sergio’s voice faded just for a second, replaced by a little bit of hush, before his voice echoed again inside my head.

This involuntary invasion of people’s thoughts was the reason for all my troubles, and the agonising time in a mental institution. *How can I hear them as if they’re talking directly into my ear?*

They were speaking in French, too, and I could understand them as if it was my native language. I’d never learnt French, but somehow I could understand it perfectly and speak it eloquently. It was like that with any other language; my mind could quickly adapt to it and speak it fluently. *I’m not mad!*

Like lightning, I bolted through the forest. I’d never been a good runner, and their thoughts and subsequent words didn’t do me any favours, either. I just wanted to shout, *Stop*

*thinking, please. Even for one minute!* They were slowing me down. I had worked out, with difficulty, that I needed a range of at least three hundred metres for the voices to stop. They were close—I had to increase my pace.

The thunderous, dark-grey clouds accompanied by the dense forest formed an eerie gloom above me. A contentious person might argue that it was nighttime, and a gullible person would believe it. The green meadow hid neatly in the folds of the forest, and I could hardly see the sky.

The rain thumped down and fell in heavy sheets across the vast forest, reducing visibility to just a few feet. *Wrong time to escape!* My wet clothes rubbed against my skin, making a slush, slush sound. Leaves brushed my face. *Run. Keep running—and don't look back!*

All odds were against me, and even nature wasn't lending a helping hand. The buzzing sound of lightning accompanied by the rumbling of thunder made my stomach churn.

I stumbled on the leaves and branches covering the trail. "Ouch!"

Puddles yet to sink into the ground soaked my feet. Wet leaves clung to my size eight jeans, a new fashion trend in the making. The pounding of my heart echoed in my neck and ears, but I didn't stop. There was only one way off this island, and I needed a boat. One way or another, I was getting off this island. All that mattered was running for my life, for my liberation. I'd be free.

As the forest came to an end, the fresh scent of seawater engulfed my senses. The realization that I could almost smell my freedom sent electric waves through me. The voices inside my head pounded like a discordant choir. The closer I got to the ocean, the greater the confusion grew in my mind. There were various whispers in Zenesh. My mum had insisted I learn that language, but I hadn't met anyone who spoke it.

*Tigoria, velunjaza ligoria Zeneshia.* One of the higher-pitched voices was loud and distracting.

I wanted to scream, but it wouldn't have done any good. The voices were a part of my life. The endless white beach neared, and the intense sound of the waves crashing on the seabed reminded me of the risk I was taking.

"No risk, no reward," I said.

The aquamarine-blue water shimmered in the daylight, signalling the end of the rain. I reached the immaculate sandy beach, removed my shoes, and threw them away vigorously without a moment's thought. The now-silent blue sky looked down on me as if pitying me. Smiling, I looked up to the heavens and darted a glance towards my wishful sanctuary.

Mauritius, an Indian Ocean island nation, located about one thousand two hundred miles off the southeast coast of Africa stood magnanimously several hundred metres away. Lacking a boat, my only option was to try to swim towards it. I had spent a few holidays in Mauritius' capital, Port Louis, with my parents when I was younger. If I could just make it across the ocean, I would find my way to get the help I needed.

I had less than three minutes before the wardens reached me, so I hurried forward and came to a halt once I reached the shore.

The distinct voice inside my head was very clear now. Loud and abrupt it bellowed, stopping me dead in my tracks. *Tigoria, velunjaza ligoria Zeneshia*, it repeated over and over again. The remainder of the voices were mere whispers, but echoing the same sentiment. I held my head tightly and tried to block the voices out, but they only grew louder.

Breathless, I kneeled in the sand and attempted to tie my long, untamed hair but gave up after the fourth attempt. *Every second counts!* I reached for the water and knowing the risk I was taking, I hesitantly placed my left hand in. To my befuddlement an electric shock ran through my body like a thousand needles pricking me at once.

Mystified, I fell heavily on the sand and landed on my back. Grains of sand attached to my wet clothes and my already dishevelled hair. I must have looked *the* candidate for life in a mental institution.

Something thudded against my chest. My eyes flew to my pendant. I gasped. A dazzling light radiated from the jewel, shimmered and bounced off the ocean. My breath and pulse in a race, I scampered backwards on all fours. The pendant glowed like melted silver, the two moons alight and beaming into the ocean. Fear surged through me. My hand went to my throat. I clutched the necklace and tried to yank it off. I failed. The clasp just wouldn't release.

The loudest yet soft voice barked again, this time in English, *Align your heart. Get into the water. Trust the moons. You've come home!*

I struggled to sit up. My eyes opened wide, and I darted a glance from side to side. *Who's inside my head?* My breath shortened.

The voice repeated it again, more softly this time.

*That's it! Get out of my head!* I jumped to my feet, preparing to be a heroine of my own making. I tucked the glimmering dual moons pendant inside my shirt and breathed. "You can beam all you want," I yelled, terrified. Shouting at my precious jewel was as silly as the act of doing it. But I was beyond reasoning. "I can't leave you here. You're coming with me!"

The beam faded, and in a few beats, it vanished. Freaked out, I took a moment to compose myself. I peered at the pendant and breathed. Only the usual shimmer remained. *I don't have time for strangeness, not now!*

There was only one option: to swim to the mainland. Gathering all the courage I had left, I took one step at a time into the ocean.

When the cool water reached my waist, I glanced back. The wardens were removing their shoes. From a few metres away, I could hear their hysterics.

“I don’t believe this. Alessia! Alessia!” Sergio shouted, running into the ocean after me. *Stupid, stupid, silly girl. If I catch you, I’ll kill you myself.* “What are you doing? Alessia. Come back!”

*Damn it!* Caleb swore inside his head. *Now my job is on the line. I don’t know why we should even bother with the crazy, deluded nuisance. One look from her, and he’s breaking all the rules. Birthday or no birthday, who in their right mind lets a lunatic loose?*

*Stop thinking. Please!* I understood why Caleb was livid. What I didn’t understand was why Sergio helped me. I’d planned to steal the keys from him, unlock the gate, and run, but, as if he knew my plans, he’d unlocked the gate, stood back, and asked if I needed some fresh air. Now was that sheer luck or what?

I couldn’t shake off the noise inside my head. *Her emergence is imminent*, an annoying voice echoed in Zenesh inside my head.

*About time*, another one said.

*Careful. Keep your thoughts to yourself...*

*We can’t give away our position.*

My eyes darted backwards and forwards; frustration and disbelief engulfed me. Whoever they were, they had the cheek to have a conversation inside my head. Blocking Caleb and Sergio’s voices, I concentrated on the ridiculous voices in Zenesh, I dove forward and breast stroked towards my wishful sanctuary.

*Impossible. I can almost smell immortality*, a voice drawled.

I remembered that voice. It’s the same dragged out and frustrated voice that commanded me to jump into the River Thames.

“What!” I panted and almost swallowed a gallop of water. What were they going on about? I wasn’t sure I understood them very well; my Zenesh was a little rusty. I stood on my toes, frightened.

*The sequence has to be alive for your dream to alight.*

*It’s no longer just a dream. It’s finally a reality.*

“Stop it. Please stop!” I cried out loud. Shutting my eyes and shaking my head, I suddenly slipped, and water submerged my whole body. Finally, there was silence...peace... bliss.

My once-crowded mind was in total tranquillity. I would stay under water forever, just so I could have some peace inside my head—except that I couldn’t breathe.

When I raised my head, the mirage of annoying voices descended on me.

“You honestly think she’s going to think straight and come back?” Caleb’s voice echoed. *He’s lost it, too!*

“We should have alerted the others. I have to save her!”

“Save yourself. She’s gone too deep. The tide is coming.”

The screams and thoughts gave me a headache, hindering my focus. I had to press on, but I had to get rid of these annoying voices, so I dipped my head into the water, and once again there was peace—beautiful, paradisiacal bliss. To catch my breath, I raised my head, and the confusion grew inside my mind as the noise intensified.

“She’s just a girl. I have to try!” Sergio’s panicked voice was frantic.

“Watch out!” Caleb shouted. “There’s a huge wave coming. Save yourself—”

A gigantic, foam-tipped wave rippled high across the ocean, almost like an aquatic missile. I looked ahead at the floating sea monster, and just then, I knew it was too late. After I took one final deep breath, the unforgiving wave swallowed me, sweeping me deep into the ocean.

Frantically, I tried to swim against it, but the relentless energy of the wave was so furious that it wouldn't release me. The more I fought, the deeper I went. The more I struggled, the more disoriented I got. The more I tried, the more I failed. I attempted to pull myself together, arms and legs pushing forward, but I kept going under.

With all the breath dragged out of me, the world caved in. I tried to reach out for something, anything; I kicked and fought for my life. Nothing worked. I was now at the mercy of the unsympathetic ocean.

My strength failed me. Some powerful force heartlessly dragged me into the deep, dark, ghostly waters. Giving up my fight, I shut my eyes, and before I could comprehend fully that my death was imminent, I lost consciousness.

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*\*The fantasy romance story continues in this enchanting novel for young adults\* SeQUENCE and more books in the series are available in both E-book and Paperback formats from all Amazon stores. You can also read the series books for Free with Amazon Kindle Unlimited! \**

