**Chapter 1 – Let’s get radioactive!**

I’m lying on a steel table, all too aware of the giant ray gun pointed in my direction. It looks like one of those room-sized five-ton laser things supervillains use in movies. The kind they threaten to destroy the planet with. “What music are you into, Ross?” I’m pretty sure the radiation tech is just trying to distract me as he bolts me down. A hard-plastic-mesh mask over my neck and head holds me still—they moulded it to my face yesterday—and the tech struggles to click it onto the table.

“Oh . . . anything. Whatever,” I mumble through my teeth. The hardened mask doesn’t let my chin move much. The headpiece locks in, and the tech—Frank—gives my shoulder a bump with his fist. “C’mon, man. If you’re gonna lie here for half an hour, you need some tunes. I’ve got all kinds. Name something you like. There are no wrong answers.”

I scan my brain. “You could . . . Can you just . . . general pop?” Frank stops and doubles over at the waist like he’s been gut-punched. He hangs there, talking to the floor. “Okay . . . No wrong answers but that one.” He straightens up and winces at me. “Seriously? You like that Top Forty garbage?”
“It’s . . . what my parents have on all the time . . .” So dorky. I try to look away casually, but my head won’t budge. Frank stares before letting out an exaggerated sigh.

“*Fine*. But tomorrow, tell me what *you* like. Not what Mum and Dad like.” He walks over and fiddles with an old-timey boom box on a high wall shelf, next to a teetering stack of CDs and cassette tapes. Seriously? There must be a gazillion dollars-worth of equipment in here, and they can’t afford an iPod speaker?

Beyoncé fills the room, and suddenly Frank is all business. “I know we went over this yesterday, but let’s review.” He wraps his arms around his clipboard and begins, like he’s done this a thousand times. “The gurney you’re on is going to lift you up and move you into place. The treatment takes twenty-five minutes or so. Keep your limbs inside the ride at all times. Do not throw things at the radiation techs. Do not FEED the radiation techs. Do not waggle your legs around like a synchronised swimmer.” Frank steps aside to let another tech—Callie, I think— reach in and mould some blue clay over the bridge of my nose. She smiles at me and tells me it’s to protect my “good” eye from the beam. Then she pats my chest. I hope I don’t look as nervous as I feel, ’cause I feel like a rabbit in a trap. My face is hot.

“Okay. Now for the important part.” Frank is back. “When I tell you, you’re gonna stare at the red X above you. The one we made over there by the big zapper yesterday. You’ll see it when the machine slides you over.” The mask prevents much of a nod, but he seems to catch it. “Don’t move your eye off of that X*,* or your eye will explode into a million pieces, okay?” I let out a little grunt. Frank puts his hand on my arm. “I’m kidding, Ross. I mean . . . kind of. Don’t look away from the X. Your eye won’t explode, but we’re dealing with your vision. Important stuff. So, keep your eye on the X, or it could . . . Just keep your eye on the X, and you’ll be fine.”

Everybody smiles a lot here, probably because they can tell I’m freaking out. “We’ll be right around the corner. You’ll do great,” Frank tries to reassure me.

They walk off to my left, but I can’t turn my head to follow them. I’ll admit it. It’s a little freaky being the only one in here with all this machinery. All this . . . *stuff*. It’s not what your average kid has to go through.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. **Look up and write down the definitions** of each of the words, taken from the text, as listed below; then, **put each word into a sentence of your own**.
* radiation
* winces
* casually
* teetering
* treatment
* synchronised
* prevents
* reassure
1. Why do you think Ross is lying on a steel table? Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.
2. When Frank asks Ross what music he would like on, he replies, **‘“Oh . . . anything. Whatever.”’** What might this suggest about how Ross is feeling?
3. Find the phrase that informs the reader that Frank is taking the situation seriously.
4. Identify and copy the **hyperbole** about the x-ray and Ross’ eye. (Look up the definition of a hyperbole, if you cannot remember).
5. **‘She smiles at me …Then she pats my chest.’** Why do you think Callie does this?
6. How do we know Ross is **anxious**? Use a quote from the text to support your answer.
7. **Ross implies he does not feel like an ‘average’ child.** How do we know this and do you think he has a right to feel this way?