

Chapter One

Anna Jenkinson sipped her dwindling water. She'd make it last the blisteringly hot mid-July afternoon. A day to be in the shade of a taverna, enjoying a cool glass of something. The easy option and not her style.

Instead, she was scrambling down a mountain with two mates on a dusty, boulder-strewn, and often indistinct eight-mile dirt track. To win a bet.

She absorbed the views, striding along with a well-worn forty-five-litre rucksack on her back and a twenty-five-litre daypack on her front. Olive, pine, and cypress trees carpeted a landscape that dramatically dropped into the Ionian Sea. Densely forested Lefkada was stunning, but the terrain that had appeared easy from a distance was much harder in reality. So often the way.

The twins stopped to bicker – again. And as ever, Anna sought the shade. This time under an ancient gnarled wild olive. She closed her eyes and smelled the tree, listening to buzzing insects and enjoying the refreshing breeze. It didn't work. She couldn't block them out.

'Are you sure it's the right way?' Charlotte shouted to the retreating figure of her brother. 'We can't afford to get lost today because of your abysmal map-reading skills.'

'Think of it as an adventure,' Anna ventured and tightened her hip belt.

'I'm sick of adventures,' snapped Charlotte. 'I'm thirsty, hungry, tired, and want a comfy bed. Whose stupid idea was it to backpack across Greece anyway?'

Simon stalked back through the scrub and stopped nose-to-nose with his twin.

‘You knew what this track was like, so put a sock in it,’ he hissed. ‘You’re only tetchy from knocking back a full bottle of ouzo last night.’

And they were at it again.

Anna sighed inwardly. They’d all shared a poky student flat for two years, which made her partly immune to their constant squabbling. Why had she thought they’d argue less Greek island-hopping than back in Newcastle?

Only a few more hours and then – alone for five blissful days. To explore and, more importantly, figure out what the hell she was going to do about sorting her life out.

A movement in the undergrowth. A pretty little blue-throated lizard scuttled out to bask on a rock. Seemingly asleep, it lunged and devoured an unsuspecting fly. Life snuffed out in an instant.

‘Hey, daydreamer,’ Charlotte yelled over her shoulder. ‘Time to go.’

Tightening the cord of her hat, Anna tripped over a tree root and face-planted a myrtle bush.

For crying out loud, man.

They’d never win if she kept this up.