

Level 4 Fiction – The Village

The resort hid behind a fringe of palms that overlooked a curve of powder-white sand. The guests were busy: working on tans by the pool, booking kayaks and massages, snoozing. At night, they ate too much and drank too much and listened to bad music as if the rest of the world didn't exist. It was an adults' place, and Ava was bored.

On the third day, she noticed a sign at the far end of the bay. It pointed along a track that led through the rocks, then up over the headland. Ava told Mum about it.

"What ruins?"

"The sign just says ancient ruins. Want to come and look?"

Mum lowered her magazine. "Ask your dad," she said.

"He said to ask you."

Mum glared across the pool, to where Ava's dad was talking business with some man he knew from work. They both knew it would be impossible to drag him away.

"I can go by myself," Ava said.

"Good idea, love. Don't forget to take water."

The track climbed quickly, the dusty path hemmed in on both sides by sharp, volcanic rock. Rust-coloured dirt coated Ava's sandals and stuck to her skin. It was baking hot, and the landscape was dry and bleak, the scrappy bushes more thorns than leaves. The lushness of the resort seemed odd now – and so far away. Ava glanced back and saw that she was already on her own. No surprise that guests wouldn't come here. It was a lonely, unfriendly place of heat and sweat.