

**Copyrighted Material**

## Day Six – Thursday

I have been watching the other guests. Not obsessively, as my husband, James, accused me of last night – just people-watching around the pool since we arrived on Saturday. Six days into our holiday and I have seen the way the couples and families interact. You can't help it in a resort like White Sands, you're around the same people every day.

It's an intimate hotel, or 'luxury boutique' as it refers to itself on its website. Though there are at least fifty or sixty rooms that are filled with predominantly British guests, the faces quickly become familiar. White Sands is a resort built on the northernmost point of the small island of Ixos and a long way from any villages. You can't just walk out and amble past Greek tavernas and restaurants with waiters keen to usher you inside, like I'm used to doing.

I thought I would miss that. The fact that we would have to hire a car or go by taxi if we wanted to escape

the hotel seemed like it might make the place feel claustrophobic, but then I had never stepped foot inside anywhere like White Sands before. I didn't realise somewhere could so effortlessly sweep you up into its plush velvet sofas and perfectly aligned wicker sunbeds and make you feel that if you never left again you would be happy.

Besides, as James pointed out, there wasn't really anywhere else to go on the island. Ixos is relatively unknown to tourists and undeveloped, save for our resort, and its only village is a half-hour drive along winding roads.

So instead I have given myself over to everything White Sands has to offer, heart and soul. My early reluctance about the holiday soon dissolved as I acquiesced that maybe James was right. That this was exactly what we needed. In spite of the cost.

Every morning I've woken up to go out walking before James or any of the other guests are up and about. There is something magical about stepping into the warm Greek morning air and wandering past the sunbeds, plumped with cream mattresses and rolled towels ready for guests. To see the sun rise and the water in the pool catch its first beams, dancing in ripples, before any guests have emerged to disturb the calm. To hear only the sounds of birds and the occasional words spoken by staff in a language I don't understand.

Copyrighted Material

I left our room this morning in much the same way, slipping on my complimentary flip-flops, opening the door and shutting it quietly behind me, breathing in like I had never taken a breath before. Today the bedroom had felt stifling, James splayed on his back, his mouth hanging open; clearly he wasn't going to wake any time soon. It was the first morning of our holiday that I had wanted to get out to get away from him.

I was surprised I wasn't feeling worse, given the amount we had both drunk the night before. Yesterday was the White Sands gala night, a high point of the week, and it had been talked about since we'd first arrived. Table service, instead of the usual buffet, and all laid out on the hotel's private beach with live music and dancing on the sand. It was a real party atmosphere and was supposed to be such a different evening to the one it turned into. Now everything had unravelled. James and I weren't speaking.

We had never before gone to bed on a fight. Not even after James told me he'd booked this holiday and our conversation ventured into unsafe ground, and he ended up breaking my heart with an admission I can still barely think about. Even then we'd found a way through. But not last night.

My mind was still on the events of the previous evening as I walked along the path that wove past the other rooms, each one individual and set apart from its neighbours. This isn't a hotel with two-storey buildings; its luxury is evident

in the space we have all been given, each room detached and with its own private garden.

I cut across the grass and veered away from the steps that led down to the private beach. All I could think of were James's unkind words, my unanswered questions, and the mystery over what had happened to him yesterday when he went on the fishing trip alone. He had come back seemingly spoiling for a fight.

It was so unlike my husband, who I have known for ten years. James has always been laid-back and easy-going, eager to please me. I was surprised he wanted to go fishing in the first place; he's never shown any interest in it before, but at the same time James is more active than I am. He has never been one to laze on sunbeds by the pool like I can for hours at a time. His Kindle is thrown into his suitcase at the last minute but rarely opened, unlike my carefully chosen pile of paperbacks, selected for a week in the sun.

I suppose it was because I was busy filtering through last night's memories that at first I wasn't aware of the commotion around the pool at 6 a.m., or the voices shouting at each other in Greek. I was too intent on piecing together fragments of last night and trying to fill in the many blanks to question why one of the waiters, Jonas, was racing across the path ahead of me, not stopping to wave and cheerily greet me like he usually does.

I couldn't even say with certainty the exact moment I realised something was gravely wrong. Whether it was

when I saw the crowd of staff gathered around the pool, or the seconds immediately after when I noticed the body, clothes billowing out, arms and legs in a star shape and face down in the water as they tried to pull it out.

Three hours later I am beside the same pool, only with my back to it now, and seated at a table near the bar where a detective pushes a glass of water in front of me. I hadn't lingered here earlier, after it became clear that something was so terribly wrong. I didn't go over to see who it was, although from where I stood I had a very good idea. Instead I turned and threw up into the bushes and then ran back to the room, my hands and legs shaking as I sat on the edge of the bed, not knowing whether to wake James or not.

I did, of course, because a dead body in the hotel swimming pool is not something you keep from your husband, even when you are both still simmering in the aftermath of a fight.

I knew that the detectives would likely want to question every one of the guests at White Sands, but this particular conversation hasn't come about because of such a routine. This one was sprung upon me, and I have only myself to blame for leaving our room again when James specifically told me not to.

'Was it an accident?' I ask the detective as I hold the glass between my hands and lift it to my lips to take a sip of

water. This is what James presumes. He told me so enough times earlier, though it was possibly an attempt to calm me down.

Out of the corner of my eye I see my husband pacing back and forth like a caged animal. He came out looking for me after I left our room again and found me only five minutes ago, but by then I was already sitting with the detective, who in turn ushered him away.

James doesn't want to be at White Sands any longer, not after a death. He has suggested we look for another hotel over in Crete, but that is a two-hour boat ride away.

The detective bites his bottom lip as he mulls over what to say to me and in the end simply answers, 'We do not know what has happened.' His words are clipped but his English is very good. He has introduced himself as Police Lieutenant Kallis, and told me that he is in charge of the investigation.

'Surely it must be?' I plead; the thought that it could be anything else is too terrifying to contemplate.

Kallis doesn't respond and I feel the need to clear up the fact that I stumbled across the discovery of the body earlier. To tell him the truth, because James had pretended we didn't already know at 7 a.m., when a room-service waiter delivered a breakfast I didn't even want.

'You cannot go to the pool today,' the waiter had said as he'd set down the tray of pastries and berries that James had ordered.

**Copyrighted Material**  
'Oh?' James said. 'Why is that?'

The young boy shook his head gravely. 'There has been a – a drowning?' He said it as if it were a question, though I think he was just checking he had the right word.

Now I want to be open and so I say to the detective, 'I saw what had happened this morning.'

He raises his eyebrows.

'Every morning I wake early and I go for a walk, and so I already saw the ... the pool,' I finish.

'What time?' he asks.

'Six a.m.,' I tell him. I had woken an hour earlier, but it was six when I eventually left the room. 'But there were other people there,' I add quickly. 'I don't mean I was the first to come across the body.' The staff were already heaving it out of the water.

I squeeze my eyes shut before opening them sharply as if that will somehow rid me of the image that I have not been able to get out of my head.

Kallis makes a note in his pad and asks, 'Mrs Burrow, you have seen the deceased before?' He shows me a picture and I nod. 'When was the last time?'

'Yesterday,' I say. 'Some time yesterday – I'm not exactly sure when.'

'You were at the gala night? Down on the beach?'

'Yes,' I say. 'I was.'

'Did you see them then?'

'Maybe. I ...' I think back, the night continuing to flash in distorted pictures. 'Yes, I did.' Of course I did. At the beginning of the evening I saw most of the guests I'd come

to recognise, seated at their various tables looking happy, laughing. Later in the night I saw the way some of them gaped over at James and me. I had tried to keep my voice down, but I don't know how much anyone else heard. 'Only from a distance,' I add.

'What time did you leave dinner last night?'

'I think it was about ten p.m., maybe ten thirty – I'm not sure.' Most people had still been sitting at their tables, listening to the music, some of them dancing.

'Mrs Burrow,' he says now, 'is there anything else you want to tell me?'

I wonder if he knows there is. That there are words on the tip of my tongue. By the way he is regarding me so suspiciously it feels like he knows I have something to tell him. My mind ticks back and forth like a metronome, not knowing if I should. Or if I can, more like.

If I'd confided in James, my husband would tell me to say nothing, keep out of it. After all, I don't know anything with certainty. I can almost hear his words ringing in my ears. But I didn't confide in him. I didn't tell James anything about what happened yesterday, because I didn't get the chance before our argument started.

Slowly, I shake my head. If I say anything I will have to admit *how* I know. I will have to tell Kallis what I have observed over the last five days when all the while I should maybe have been paying more attention to my marriage. Right now, perhaps the best thing would be not to say

Copyrighted Material

anything and focus on me and James. Somehow we have to put ourselves back together, and speaking up might be the worst thing I could do. But then what if there is a killer among us? What if my silence means they will get away with what they have done?

**Copyrighted Material**

**Copyrighted Material**

## Chapter One

### Day One – Saturday

Despite my love of water and the fact I live by the sea, I have never been good with boats. James knows this because we have laughed enough times about my stories of when my dad used to take me out in one and I would often hurl up over the side. Though I rarely get travel sick these days, I still feel queasy. I pointed this out to James when he told me it was a two-hour transfer between Crete and the small island of Ixos. He'd only mentioned it a few days ago, apologising and telling me he would buy me a sickness band to wear around my wrist. Someone at his gym had told him they worked, and maybe it did help, but it didn't stop me stepping onto the small harbour in Ixos Old Town feeling like I was going to throw up.

It was 6 p.m., which meant it was 4 p.m. back at home. The heat of the Greek sun burned through the few puffs of cloud that had found their way into the sky as the egg sandwich I'd had on the plane from Gatwick to Crete lurked nauseatingly high in my throat.

James rubbed my back and pulled my bag off my shoulder, transferring it to his own. 'I'm sorry,' he said again. 'I really didn't think—'

'It's fine, I'll be fine,' I said. 'I just need some air.' I took exaggerated breaths as I slipped off my cardigan and tied it around my waist. On the opposite side of the road sat a twelve-seater coach that was waiting to take us to the resort. Out of its windows, faces peered blankly. I wasn't sure if they were looking at us or just staring aimlessly as they waited, tired from a long journey and eager to get to the hotel.

'There's no hurry,' he said. 'The bus can wait.'

'But the others will be getting annoyed.' I already felt like the poor cousin compared with the guests that had boarded the coach, not a piece of matching luggage in sight for James and me. Everything about White Sands was far out of my comfort zone.

'So what?'

I shrugged. 'I'll be fine,' I muttered again. 'Come on, we'd better go.' I took my bag off James so he could pull our cases over the road and hand them to the driver who stood by the side of the coach with its luggage door open. James put his hand in the small of my back as we wound round the front of it and up the steps to where we found two seats

halfway back. I twiddled the knobs above my head until a blast of air conditioning hit my face. James was frowning, looking at me cautiously.

‘Stop worrying,’ I said quietly. ‘I won’t actually be sick.’

I sat with my bag on my lap, clutching it to me, my fingers weaving through the brightly coloured tassel that hung from its strap and that I had made two years ago in some art-and-craft class I joined for eight weeks. I was always starting these things and then stopping them. I gave up the classes because my heart wasn’t in it, though I had enjoyed them at the time. For an hour a week I had actually forgotten about everything else.

‘How long is the journey?’ I asked James.

‘Well it’s not far,’ he said as he pulled out his phone and expanded a map that was already on the screen. ‘I don’t know, ten, fifteen minutes?’

‘It’ll be longer than fifteen minutes,’ I said, narrowing my eyes to focus. ‘It’s the other side of the island.’

‘Yeah, but it’s not a big island.’ He closed the screen and put the phone back in his pocket.

I tried not to sigh as I leant my head against the seat. I had worried over this holiday enough, questioning James about the money and about why he’d chosen a resort like White Sands. It wasn’t, after all, our usual type of holiday, but then we hadn’t had one in so long that maybe we didn’t have a type any more.

‘We need this, Laila,’ he had told me. ‘We need some time together, just to reset.’

It was more than that and we both knew it, but I'd told myself that maybe he was right. And that maybe the holiday was going to be some kind of turning point, because God knew we both deserved it after the last few years.

On the coach James took hold of my hand and squeezed it, holding it up to his lips as he kissed the back of it and smiled at me. 'I love you,' he whispered.

'I love you too,' I told him.

'We haven't been away in years.'

'I know.'

'I'm excited.'

'I am too,' I said, although this wasn't strictly true. I had plenty of reservations and yet I was trying to brush them to one side. To make the most of it.

'Do you remember our first holiday together?' he asked.

'Of course I do,' I laughed. 'How could I ever forget it?'

'I don't know, I'm not sure how much you remember these things.'

'James?' I questioned. 'Why do you say that?'

'We don't talk about those days so much.'

'No, I know but ...' I trailed off. He was right. It was as if a line had been drawn across our path, separating the then from the now, although I couldn't pinpoint exactly where the divide was. Whether it was as far back as five years ago, a halfway point in our relationship, or more likely at some time since.

'I still want us to travel together, Laila,' James said, visibly getting excited. 'Do all the things we talked about

when we got together. Do you remember how we used to lie in bed for hours on Sunday mornings with the papers and coffee and just plan stuff?’

I nod. ‘We had dreams.’ Dreams that didn’t seem unrealistic at the time.

‘I wanted you to see the world. I wanted to show you some of the things I’d seen.’

‘Is that what this is?’ I asked. James had travelled the Greek islands with an ex-girlfriend years before we had got together. It was one of those things I had never grilled him about, though somehow I sensed its importance. I’d picked up on the way he avoided talking about Stephanie. How he clammed up and brushed over their months of travelling. He wasn’t the same about Addie, the girlfriend before. James didn’t care about admitting what a screw-up she’d been, but Stephanie remained an enigma.

And now we were here, in Ixos, and suddenly Stephanie was looming uninvited into the forefront of my mind, and so of course I imagined the same was true for James. I had only ever seen one photo of her, found by accident, tucked into the back of a book, and at the time I hadn’t been able to put her picture down, poring over her features, her long wavy sun-bleached hair that hung like a mermaid’s around her thin, tanned face. Her large blue eyes and the way her head tilted to one side as she laughed at the camera. In many ways Stephanie and I couldn’t have been more different. Her hair blond to my dark brown. Her waiflike frame to my curves that James professed to love.

‘Of course not,’ he said now. ‘This is just a holiday. For us.’

*Us*. It was a word I rolled over my tongue, one I had questioned when I spoke to my best friend, Claire, a few weeks back when I told her what James had done. Was there still an ‘us’?

Claire had told me categorically there was. ‘How could you and James not be together?’ she had said. ‘You two are ...’ She’d momentarily grappled for the right words. ‘Christ, you’re the couple we all want to be, Laila.’

I had nodded, tears rolling down my cheeks as I tried to trust she was right. I didn’t want to lose my husband and yet if there was an *us* then something would have to give. And that’s when she said it, reaching over and stroking my hand: ‘Possibly it means you need to try to accept that you and James might not have children, and that it isn’t the end of the world.’

The coach rumbled into action and I clicked my seat belt into place and pulled my hand away to reach into my bag for a bottle of water. I was ‘reframing my future’, taking steps to concentrate on James and me. This holiday was about us reconnecting again, and all those other words that were bandied about in the articles I read. As I’d said to Claire, I didn’t want to lose my husband – but I was aware that I *had* been losing him. White Sands was a perfect chance for us to get back on track.

James turned to look out the window and so I glanced around at the people on the coach who I would be bumping into every day, sitting next to at dinner and looking at as we sat around the lagoon-shaped infinity pool that occupied pride of place in the resort's grounds.

To my right were a couple who intrigued me and who had been on the same flight as us, sitting two rows in front of us on the plane. They were newly married and on their honeymoon, which I knew because he had announced it loudly to one of the aircrew, making a show of himself.

'My new wife and I,' he had chuckled like an overgrown schoolboy, winking at the British Airways stewardess as he nodded to the front of the plane, 'were just wondering if there were any spare seats up there?' I grimaced at the way he made a show of saying 'up there'.

'I'm afraid not, sir,' she replied with a smile, and I'd smiled myself then, glad he hadn't managed to score a free upgrade. She had, however, told him she would see what she could do for them since they were celebrating, and had returned with two glasses of champagne.

I guessed there must be about ten years between them. She looked to be half my age, about twenty, while he was clearly tipping thirty with the very first signs of grey hair around his ears and lines around his eyes.

She sat in her seat by the coach window ramrod straight and staring out to her left, her long fake fingernails making an irritating tapping sound on the leather handbag that

rested in her lap, until her husband stopped it by swatting at her. He was hunched over his mobile, scrolling through Facebook. For honeymooners, their body language was all wrong. Neither of them seemed remotely happy.

I shuffled in my seat to peek at the family of four behind us. Directly behind James and me were two boys in their teens, and in the seats behind the newlyweds sat the boys' parents. I had seen them all on the boat and wondered what two teenagers would find to do with their time somewhere so remote. It had to have been the parents' choice to come here; their sons would surely have preferred a livelier resort.

Maybe this wasn't the only holiday they'd be having this year. Possibly they had a Mark Warner trip booked for the end of the summer. I assumed that for the majority of White Sands guests, money was no object. The telltale signs of wealth were evident in the way the parents dressed and carried themselves. Over the weeks since James told me about the holiday I had wrestled with the thought of how I would fit in at a resort so luxurious in my maxi dresses from H&M and Next. 'I don't know why you don't have more confidence in the way you look,' Claire said when I told her as much. 'Honestly, Laila, you're stunning.' She had pinched a roll of the baby fat from her stomach and widened her eyes at me, and I smiled in return but didn't respond.

Now the mother had caught me looking and so I quickly turned back to the front of the coach, trying to make out I

hadn't been watching the way her husband's fingers curled around hers.

I already knew that the boys behind me were called Isaac and Theo, because their mum had addressed them by name during the boat journey. I liked the sound of both their names and tried them out, mouthing them soundlessly the way I had done with so many names over the last five years. It was hard to stop myself mentally adding them to my constantly growing list of baby names, because by now it had become habit.

Isaac was the older of the two – I put him at seventeen, though I'm not good at ageing teenage boys – while his brother looked to be about fifteen. I found myself doing another thing I needed to stop: guessing how old she would have been when she'd had her children.

She had wavy, highlighted blond hair that fell just below her shoulders, and nails that were painted bright pink and were so shiny they must have been gelled. Her face was bare of make-up and I put her in her mid-forties, which meant she couldn't have been more than thirty when she'd had Isaac, possibly even late twenties. Nine years younger than I was at the very least.

*Stop torturing yourself, Laila*, I reprimanded myself. *What does any of that matter now?* But regardless of how often I repeated the mantra, I wasn't so sure I believed it.

**Copyrighted\*** Material

The bus had started now, making its ascent over the hills then dipping down again as the road hugged the coastline. I looked past the newlyweds and out through the window at a lone fisherman on the rocks, the patches of beaches and whitewashed houses with their blue dome roofs and doors. Occasionally there was a restaurant perched on the edge of the road, remote and mostly empty, its tables covered with checked tablecloths as if the owners were confident of customers arriving shortly.

This was an island that was sparsely inhabited and had managed to hold off the tourists for as long as possible. I wondered how much say the locals had against a resort like White Sands. Whether they were grateful for the money it brought to the island, or if they'd been bullied into agreement. I was inclined to believe it was the latter, and it made me sad for them.

'Don't you think it's a shame they've built a hotel on this island?' I murmured to James, resting my head on his shoulder.

He was staring out of his own window, his attention elsewhere, and so he didn't hear me.

'James.' I nudged him. 'Don't you think it's a shame they've allowed such a huge resort to be built out here? It's beautiful as it is.' My voice was low, I didn't want anyone else on the bus to hear me.

He turned sharply, as if surprised I was talking to him. A frown creased his forehead as he said, 'Yeah. Yeah, I do.'

Copyrighted Material

He looked like he wanted to say more, but he didn't, and I had a sudden urge to ask him again if he had visited Ixos when he toured Greece. He had brushed off my question previously, leaving me wondering if I really wanted to know. What if James were to admit he had been to this island with Stephanie? Some things you are better off not knowing.

Besides, half an hour in and we turned a sharp corner and suddenly the hotel loomed ahead of us. 'This must be it,' said James. Whether or not he had been to Ixos before he'd definitely not been to White Sands; the resort had been built less than ten years ago, after we had met.

The hotel stuck out against the green rocky landscape like a piece of modern architecture, all white straight lines and glass that reflected the sun, which was dipping behind us, and yet it didn't look out of place. The coach slowed as it swung into the driveway and two men emerged through the hotel's revolving doors with trays of champagne-filled flutes.

James leant towards me and kissed my forehead. 'This is going to be awesome,' he whispered.

'Yes,' I agreed. Such a small word, but it caught in my throat as I said it.

James had surprised me with the booking six weeks ago. He had pushed his laptop in front of me, pointing at the

Copyrighted Material

images of the resort, a smile spreading across his face as I stared at them stonily and asked him outright, 'How much did it cost?'

I felt him shift awkwardly beside me. Undoubtedly it wasn't the response he was hoping for, but while I didn't really want to know the answer I needed to ask.

'It doesn't matter.'

'Yes, it matters,' I said, and looked up at him.

He shook his head once, his eyes narrowing. I could see he was embarrassed.

'James?'

'Five thousand.'

'Five thousand pounds?' I choked. 'For ten days in Greece?'

My eyes stung with the amount. We had never spent anything like that before and I couldn't comprehend why we would, especially now. The last thing I wanted was to start crying, but I knew it wouldn't take much before I did.

'Don't say it like that. It's not just *ten days in Greece*,' he said.

'If you wanted us to get away we could have gone to Corfu or Kos or anywhere where there's a choice of hotels, not somewhere like *Ixos*,' I said. 'A five-star luxury resort – I mean, I don't get it, James.'

When he didn't answer, I asked him again: 'James? You've spent all our—' But I stopped short, unable to finish the sentence. My husband had spent all our IVF money.

My hands were trembling against the table as I tried to fathom what this meant.

‘No, I haven’t spent it,’ James was telling me. ‘I’ve had a bonus.’

My heart lifted, but only a little. ‘What kind of bonus?’ The last time James had received one, it had been a pitiful sum over eighteen months ago that angered us both, although James did nothing about it. At the time I wondered how much his younger brother, Carl, had received, because there was little doubt their father had given him more, but I never brought it up.

‘The holiday is paid for,’ he said, leaning down and pressing a kiss onto the top of my head. ‘So will you stop worrying about it. Please.’

‘But still,’ I’d gone on, ‘you know it could have been better spent. What happens when the next round doesn’t work?’ We had been through the process enough times by now that I was certain it might be the case. ‘We could have left your bonus money in case we needed to try again. James?’ I had implored him.

It had been a month since I had taken yet another pregnancy test only to see one thin red line appear. James had found me in the bathroom. Not crumpled into a ball on the floor tiles by the toilet as I had been on the five occasions before. This time I was staring at my ageing reflection in the mirror, one hand loosely covering the test as it lay on the sink beside me.

The 39-year-old woman in the mirror didn’t look like the girl I still imagined myself to be. It wasn’t that I had grey hairs yet – like my mother, I’d been lucky in that

respect, especially for someone so dark. I only had thin lines around my eyes, my forehead wasn't as smooth as it would be if I gave in to Botox but neither did it crinkle badly when I frowned. It was the hollowness of my eyes that got me. Sometimes they just looked dead. Like all the life had been sucked from within me and I was nothing more than a shell.

At the time James had peeled my fingers back so he could see for himself that we weren't having a baby. His hand stayed on mine, but with his other he picked up the test and tossed it in the bin.

We didn't speak of it. There seemed little point. We had dissected my failed pregnancies enough over the last five years, each time picking ourselves up and brushing ourselves off, ready to start again. Six rounds of IVF had produced nothing and yet as I heard the clink of the test hit the bottom of the bin, I was already preparing myself to go through it again, my mind racing through when my body would be ready and how quickly we could find the required money.

But a month later James was telling me he'd spent £5,000 on a holiday and I was struggling to make sense of it when he said quietly, 'I can't do this any more, Laila.'

I knew what he meant immediately. I could tell by the way he was looking at me: cold, fearful. But I asked anyway: 'Do what?'

'I can't go through another round. It's been five years of living like this and I can't do it any more.'

'No,' I'd replied, shaking my head vehemently. 'Don't say that.'

'We always said we would stop at five. We've had six lots of IVF now and it hasn't happened for us ...' He had let the implication hang: if it hadn't worked after six attempts then surely it never would.

Had we once said we would stop at five? I no longer remembered, but maybe we had when we first started out. When our hopes hadn't been crushed time and time again. When five attempts seemed like an impossibly huge number of treatments and we'd both assumed it would surely have happened by then.

'We can't,' I'd whispered, afraid to say too much, to say the wrong thing in case he found some way of convincing me that this could be the right decision.

'It breaks me every time we get the results,' he said. 'I can't bear watching you go through it.'

'But I want to go through it,' I protested. 'It's my decision, and I'm happy.'

James shook his head. 'It's our decision,' he said slowly. 'And you're not happy, Laila.'

Maybe happy was not the right word, but that wasn't the point. He had spent thousands on a holiday – so what did that mean? That in his mind it was definitely over?

'How could you?' I'd cried as I ran out of the room. There was no way I could let James do this to us.

It was too big a discussion to be resolved in one night. We'd picked at it in the days following, both coming at it

from our opposing sides, neither of us knowing how we could resolve something so monumental.

I had intended my question to Claire to settle things in my head, wanting her to confirm that I couldn't possibly give up. Instead she answered truthfully: 'Laila, I'm worried about you and I have been for some time. After everything you've gone through, you're not the same person. For what it's worth, I think James is right. I think you should at least take a break from IVF.'

No. That hadn't been the answer I was expecting, and so I sought out my parents, whose hopes had been resting on news of a grandchild. I knew I didn't imagine the flicker of relief that passed over Mum's face when I told her what James had said, and what Claire had advised me. She had taken me into her arms and clasped me against her chest and said, 'Laila, I think this may be for the best.' It broke me knowing that, to so readily put her hopes aside, she must have really believed this.

Something shifted in me after that. Could we really give up our dreams so easily? Then again, weren't dreams only worth having when there was the slightest chance of them becoming reality? As the days blurred into weeks I couldn't help admitting that something had been lifted. A weight. A darkness – call it what you will. It was still early days, but I was beginning to think that I could imagine a life for *us*. One without children in it. And if that were the case, then this holiday was exactly what James and I needed.

## Day Six – Thursday

There is something George Clooney-esque about the detective, Lieutenant Kallis, that makes me even more uneasy. As if answering questions about a dead body isn't enough, the fact his deep brown eyes pierce into me under thick bushy eyebrows and the way his stubble is shaved to what feels like perfection, sets me further off-kilter.

There is a flurry of activity around me, although I have my back to the pool and I can only see what is happening in a blurred reflection of movement in the thin slice of mirror behind the bar. The body has been removed. The water is draining. Sunloungers have been pushed back to the edges, parasols folded and laid out on the ground so there is room for the police to work.

They are trawling the area, carefully stepping over the manicured lawns and shedding bags and jackets across

the pathways, peering over the top of the emptying pool and combing through the bushes beyond. It is hard to reconcile the area with the image of what it was like before: guests sunbathing on the loungers, the ripple of the water as someone slices through it, waiters carrying trays of cocktails.

Though Kallis won't say much, the police seem to be treating the death as suspicious. The handful of police who turned up early has grown to a swarm.

I don't know what this means for us or what the rest of our holiday will entail. It feels wrong to even consider this when someone is dead, but I guess most of the guests will be doing the same. Do we stay? Do we leave?

James is firmly in the latter camp. 'What do you think it's going to be like, Laila?' he said earlier. 'There are police everywhere, they're draining the pool. One of the guests is dead!' He shouted the word, *dead*, like I might not have understood it.

Of course I did. I saw the body with my own eyes, and I cannot rid myself of the image however much I try.

I wish we weren't sitting so close to where it had been floating earlier. I should have done what James suggested this morning and stayed in our room after I'd got back and told him the news. I shouldn't have said I needed to get out for another walk, just so that I could slip away. If I hadn't done that, Kallis would never have found me.

**Copyrighted Material**

I have answered his question of whether there is anything else I want to tell him with a shake of my head.

‘In that case, Mrs Burrow,’ he responds, ‘can you tell me what you were doing fifteen minutes ago, loitering outside the deceased’s room?’

## Chapter Two

### Day One – Saturday

James stepped off the coach outside White Sands and we both stood for a moment, staring at the building in front of us with its huge glass windows flanked by white stone pillars and palm trees.

‘I have wanted to do something like this for you for so long,’ he said as I joined him. ‘I wanted to treat you, Laila.’ He glanced at me, almost shyly. Sometimes I felt like neither of us was sure what the other wanted any more, not like we used to be, though we were making every effort to change that. ‘I just . . .’ His words faded before he said, ‘I just want to give you everything you deserve and—’ He stopped abruptly. It was the wrong choice of words.

I found out only recently he blamed himself for us not getting pregnant. But it was not James’s fault we couldn’t