

Athens Adventure – Day 4

Freddy squinted in the bright sunshine and looked towards the group. Sure enough, right at the back, a girl with strange staring eyes, her hair, a tangled mass of writhing...somethings.

The girl stepped forward from out of the group.

Freddy stepped back a little from the front of the Lancaster Road group.

The girl smiled modestly, her hair still a mass of curls and seemingly in perpetual motion. She took another half-step forward.

‘Come’ she said kindly, her eyes softening their harsh look, ‘we are your friends. We show you our city. My name...Medusa...you are welcome’. Freddy could see she was serious, and smiled nervously back at her.

‘Thanks, I’m Freddy’.

‘Look, there, the magnificent Parthenon, the cradle of civilisation and democracy’. She pointed to her left at the hills in the distance.

‘Just... like in the books...’ whispered Wil, gazing at the instantly-recognisable building on one of the hilltops close to the centre of the city.

‘We show you tomorrow morning. We meet you on the Acropolis. Bye!’

Hardy and Freddy were sharing a room together in the hotel. This was fine for Hardy as the television in the room was showing constant replays of Didier Drogba’s winning goal for Chelsea in the FA Cup Final, and Hardy was Chelsea’s biggest fan. This was not fine for Freddy as he did not support Chelsea, was tired, and was looking forward to the trip with the Greek kids the next day.

‘C’mon, turn it off now, he’s going to do the same again...!’ moaned Freddy

‘I know, just once more, look, over from Mikel to Drogba, then to Lampard...brilliant flick back to Didier...then...chip...past van der Sar for the goal!’

‘It doesn’t matter how many times you watch it, it was still only one-nil! Go to sleep’.

Hardy finally drifted off to sleep, with the television still playing replays of the goal. In his sleep, Hardy was still doing the same, repeating over and over,

‘Mikel, Drogba, Lampard, Drogba, goal!’

‘Michael, Dogfood, Lampshade, Drongo, goal!’

‘Tickle, Tockle, Tackle, Dapple, goal!’

‘Middle, Doddle, Laddle, Diddle, glow!’

As Hardy, away with the football fairies, muttered to himself, Freddy covered his head with his pillow, and waited until the morning.

Some of their new friends were waiting for them in the hotel reception after breakfast on Monday morning.

Zeus was once again at the forefront of the group.

‘Kalimera, little British guys, we would like to show you the magnificent Parthenon, atop our mighty Acropolis!’

Michael and Wil looked at each other suspiciously.

‘A tour of the city...ancient ruins...no thanks!’ said Wil.

‘Oh come on,’ said Michael, ‘it’ll be OK, might be quite interesting actually’

Zeus motioned to his colleagues, who approached the group of Kidz players.

‘Each one of us will accompany one of you! Then we won’t get lost! Follow me!’

Freddy followed behind Zeus as he was told.

Michael went with the boy called Achilles.

Aphrodite teamed up with JoJo, and Clara with Jason.

Jaz and the boy named Pythagoras linked arms and started walking.

Heracles linked arms with Hardy,

‘Urghhh, get off!’ said Hardy, giving Heracles a slap.

‘You shouldn’t have done that!’ said Zeus with a chuckle. Before he could move, Heracles had grabbed Hardy by one arm and one leg, and lifted him up high above his head.

‘What did you say to me?’ Heracles was laughing and threatening to throw Hardy into the hotel fountain.

‘Sorry, sorry, I...I...didn’t mean it!’

They set off, with Alex and Jason swapping stories of their adventures, and Mr Andrews chatting to Plato, who wandered along beside him.

‘So, when was this Acropolis built then, young man?’ Plato stared at the sky for a few minutes as they walked along. He put his hand to his chin and stroked it wisely for a few moments.

‘Hmmm...’

‘What did you say, lad?’

‘Well...you see...’

‘Well what, lad, come on when was it built?’

‘Hmmm...on the one hand...’ said Plato,

‘Yes...?’, said Mr Andrews patiently,

‘...And on the other...’

‘Oh I see, absolutely...’ said Mr Andrews.

Two great minds, thinking alike.

Wil, the last to join the group, just had the crazy-haired Medusa to go with. She stared at him and he stood quite still for a moment, until she laughed and said,

‘Come now, Wil, don’t be scared, I won’t bite!’ She grabbed his hand and pulled him reluctantly along after her.

They reached the Acropolis and climbed the dusty hillside to get up to the Parthenon. A guide was waiting for them at the top.

‘Kalispera leetle Eengleesh keeds’ said the guide, ‘welcome to the Parthenon, my name is Athena, and I will be your guide for today! Now, let me start, are you all sitting comfortably?’

Various children shifted uncomfortably on the hard stone steps of the building.

‘Then I’ll begin...in the fifth century BC, the Parthenon was built as a tribute to the goddess Athena...

Various children murmured, and muttered.

Two hours later...

‘Now moving forward to the fourth century BC, this was a very interesting period...

Various children yawned, stretched and mopped sweaty brows as the midday Athens sun got to them. The tour went on...

And on...

And on...

‘Oi, look here’ whispered someone behind Freddy’s back, ‘wanna play?’ It was Heracles, who had

managed to get hold of a football from somewhere.

‘Come on, get the others!’

Freddy gathered his team together, and they slipped away from the tour. Several groups of new people had joined to listen to the words of wisdom from the guide, although a few were now shaking her as she had apparently fallen asleep at the sound of her own voice.

So a match took place. Right there, in the shadow of the Parthenon. Greece against Lancaster Road. It was a brilliant match between two very evenly matched teams, and was decided by a superbly angled, slide-rule pass from Pythagoras to Heracles, who muscled it in at the far post. The only other event of note during the game was a foot injury to Achilles, which came as a result of a late tackle by Hardy which just clipped his heel and sent him sprawling into the dust.

‘I’ve never seen him get injured before’, said Zeus, ‘Anyway, Wednesday is the big day! We’ll see you there...oh...who do you think will win?’

‘No doubt about it’, said Michael, ‘2-1 to Liverpool!’
