

* excellent.

Do you Assisi what I Assisi?

Dio Mio.

The scraps of Italian that I actually knew seemed to dictate the whole situation perfectly. Here we were in god knows where, half way across the world from our homes, in brain melting heat, with streams of sweat to rival that of Victoria Falls pouring down our bodies, staring down the barrel of the gun of an angry, little, Italian man. I have faced many situations in my life, but I never believed that I would face this. In that brief moment, with a cacophony of Italian curses in the air, a flurry of questions and thoughts swamped my skull. Was it all going to come down to this? Was I really destined to perish on this hillside? Was this really the proverbial end? I squeezed my eyes shut, and braced myself for what was to come, hoping all my cynicism was wrong, and there was in fact life after death.

It had all begun with my mother and I travelling around Italy in a chugging bus, driven by the motor vehicle god amongst men, the brilliant, talented, and possibly mute, Agostino. Our guide was a Slovenian woman, who breathed tobacco, and went by the name of Mojca. We had voyaged on all day through golden fields of flowers that glistened like an ocean of liquid sun. But on the horizon stood Assisi, the hill-town of Umbria, and our journeys end.

Making our way to the town's Basilica, Mojca stopped her always-one-step-ahead pace, and informed us of the destination in which we had arrived. Now this is where the real fun began, in the morning warmth, Mojca had indicated to the highest point of the town, and said with all the mystique and passion, her husky European voice could offer; "It is a long climb, but, when you reach the top? Oh, the views; it has views to make you weep."

I swear, that woman should have gone into advertising, because with that one simple phrase I knew that if I was to accomplish one thing that day, it was to reach the top of that hill and see the tear-inducing views. I could imagine it then, plains stretching far across the land, like the golden fields of Elysium, green trees and shrubs spattered around like emerald jewels spilled from the heavens themselves, rolling hills more beautiful than the Bliss wallpaper by Windows. A scene so picturesque, that even Monet could not do it justice. All I, and the eight others joining me on my Odyssey, needed to do, was make it to the top of that hill.

How naïve our hopes and dreams seem now.

Our first mistake happened approximately two point three seconds after commencing our journey; we went left instead of right. Whose fault it was I'll never know, but what I do know is that our navigation skills did not improve from there. And so it began, me, my mother, two Canadians, an Australian Greek couple, and some Americans, trekking up Assisi in the wrong direction, on what turned out to be one of the hottest days of the summer, a recipe that resulted in being more disastrous than a twelve year old trying to replicate his Nona's traditional wedding soup.

Text Production - Recount

As the sun continued its own journey, the temperature increased. The air was so thick with heat that it pressed down into my skin, burning through my pores, and leeching the life from my muscles. Every breath was like swallowing a desert, whilst beads of sweat created oases on my skin, making strands of hair stick to my face, and my shirt cling to my back. The steep incline made our thighs ache with scorching pain; only exhausted pants and the crunch of the dirt road under foot breaking the silence.

The heat dried out our mouths, and stoked the flames of our tempers.

“Are we going the right way? I thought this walk was supposed to be easy?” The American croaked.

We could only manage a shrug, and even then, my shoulders screamed in protest. Finally, I looked up, and that was when I got really worried. Yes, it was unbearably hot, and yes, I was probably on the brink of serious dehydration, but when I saw the sight in front of me, I really thought my brains had fried. I stood stock still, questioning my sanity, was I actually hallucinating this? Had I finally cracked? Because there before us, in one of the most remote places one could think of, in the middle of the long grass and Cypress trees of the Italian countryside, was a bar.

If it was a hallucination, it was awfully specific. Here stood this bar, with a corrugated iron roof, and a fat man, with thick stubble, and a bald head that glared in the afternoon sun, sitting behind the counter, staring.

Upon reflection, he was quite an unattractive man, but at that moment, that fat guy was practically Gabriel. In our time of trial, salvation had arrived; this man had water. We threw down our euros and guzzled as much of the liquid life as we could stomach. In between chugs of water, we asked our saviour exactly which way our destination was; in reply, he raised a hand and pointed a sausagey finger towards a dirt track. Still intent on seeing paradise, we followed his direction, yelling *Grazie* numerous times to make our thanks clear to this angel of the hill.

I was wrong, he wasn't an angel at all, he was Lucifer in disguise; that *Stronzo* had pointed us in the wrong direction. Which became very obvious when a murderous Italian farmer emerged, gun in hand, demanding exactly what it was that we were doing on his property. So there I was, fearing for my mortality, tears welling in my eyes. I cursed the fates, as a grimly sardonic voice in my head seemed to laugh, *at least she wasn't lying; these views sure are making you weep!*

Word Count: 995