

Chapter 1

“A SPOONful of GReeCE”

Sometimes your plan doesn't move forward, and you're stuck.

“Run Doc, run.”



Gorilla hadn't needed to tell him to run. He already was.

“Kid, I am running, and damn you. You got us into this mess!”

“Baloney! Not my fault. What was that? Was that a gunshot? Doc, they’re going to bump us off. All for the dame with the blue light in her eyes! Should I ditch it?”

“Hell, no, kid, you ditch that artifact and I’ll bump you off myself.”

“Quit talking. You’ll run faster.”

The kid was in front of him and moved at a faster speed. Wait, what? Where did you go? He vanished. Disappeared. Oh, the Professor was about to bite the big one. More awful shots whizzed past his head. One of them nearly took off his ear.

His pace wouldn’t last, and he visualized the kid standing over his dead body kicking him with his size 10 shoe as he decided if he was dead or not.

He always blamed the kid. Sarantos wondered if everyone else was right about ending these adventure excursions. And he was wrong? No way, he wasn’t wrong; he was the professo...

Someone grabbed his arm roughly, and they yanked him off his feet and pulled him into a dark alley.

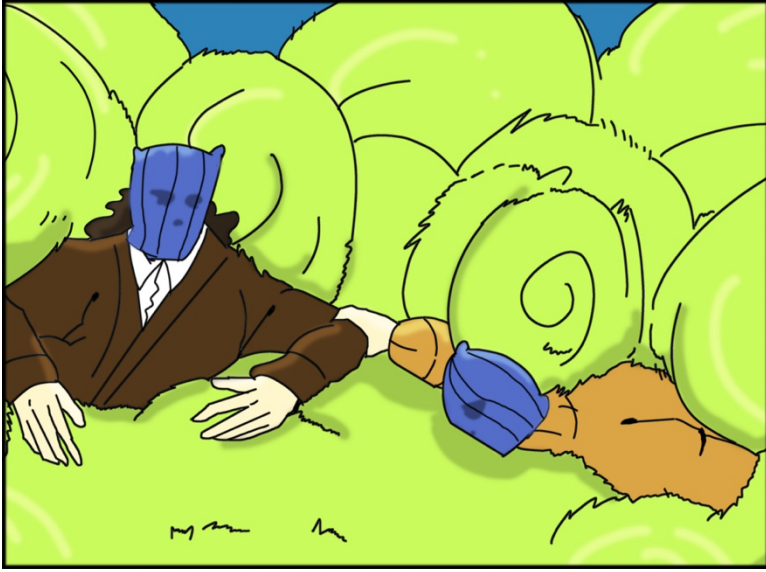
Thought and emotion swept him away. Two large men pulled a weathered navy blue mask over his astounded face and the lights went out. They moved him briskly, shoving him into what felt like a wagon. He couldn't imagine any joy in doing what was expected.

The two men spoke in hushed tones, like two choir boys talking about their plans when unsupervised. As he focused, the language became clear to him. They were speaking Greek.

He had learned little of the Greek language, but knew enough of it to know the men were probably Greek. Maybe he was getting a surprising spoonful of Greece on this adventure? He loved the charming people of Greece; they were so full of life and vigor. "Philotimo" was a natural way of life for Greeks, and it represented an open-arm hospitality and authentic giving to all. Their way of life emphasized respecting others as equals while giving unconditionally, expecting nothing back. So why would they kidnap him? Who did they work for?

"Doc?"

“Kid, is that you?” Who else called him Doc?



"Let's see where this thing takes us," said the kid, as unsure as always. The Professor laughed.

They both whispered random thoughts as the cart traveled over a rough patch of road, neither knowing where they were going nor if their lives were in danger. Clearly, the men who chased and corralled them meant business.

“Hey, Doc. I still have the artifact. Either someone wants us, or they want the lady, or they want both, or they just wanted to rescue us.”

“Brilliant deduction, kid,” replied the Professor sarcastically. “We need to get off this cart. I don’t think I want to find out what’s waiting for us at the end of the rainbow.”

“Doc, we’re not tied up, but not sure what’s holding my body down. Something is.”

“Smells like hay, to me.”

“Yeah, that’s the smell. Good call Doc.”

“It’s not rocket science kid.” A few seconds went by. “Action is hard. But sitting here is pointless. We have to break our existing inertia. Millions of obstacles are hurled in our direction. A lack of love? A lack of confidence? Let’s do something about this salty situation. What do you say, kid?”

“I can’t breathe, Doc. I don’t like my head covered and shoved into a wagon.” The kid’s voice was shaky.

The Professor was able to somehow pull his mask off. It resembled a potato sack. He then took off the kids. The kid’s forearms had rows of sweat droplets desperately looking for a sense of direction.

“There you go, easy as apple pie.”

“Thanks, Doc.”

Sarantos could hear and smell the fish markets as they turned the corner. The cart had picked up speed and was heading downhill too quickly. Were they were going to dump them in the sea?



“Kid, I’m going to count to three. Then we’re going to throw the hay off us and jump out, rolling onto the ground. You good?”

“Applesauce.”

“One, two, three.”

He pushed the bales of heavy hay wrapped in twine off as his muscles strained under the effort. It was harder than he thought because there had been so many bales that surrounded their bodies. Somehow, they made it out. They were no longer trapped like an animal in a cage, but also pinned under all those bales.

The sun was peeking through a rip in the dirty canvas and setting outside. Gorilla wiped his brow. “No matter how hard the world pushes us, Doc, there’s something strong inside us that pushes back!”

The Professor smirked at Gorilla, then thought of the sweet and sassy dark haired Greek woman he’d met in the bar last night. He’d wanted to kiss her, but knew those lips were nothing but sweet poison. Oh lord, talk about a spoonful of Greece. He’d love to have a spoonful of her.

They decided it was time to jump off. Sarantos held his head up and made sure he would roll into a soft area. The kid already began his roll when a car pulled up closer behind them.

One of the Greek men cracked open the cloth and yelled out. “Hey knock it off. We’re trying to save you. Compliments

of a beautiful woman named Charlie.” The guy’s English was very broken, but understandable.



The kid’s momentum wouldn’t be stopped unless the Professor grabbed his arm and pulled him back. He reached for him and hauled him back onto the cart, barely clutching his shirttail in time. Good friends are like stars. You don’t always see them, but you know they’re always there for you.

Luckily for Gorilla, he’d thought about that sweet poison on his lips. Sarantos should’ve kissed her. He might die and never taste that mouth. Small choices add up.

They jumped into the front seats without hesitation. The kid flailed about and sat up, grabbing the top of the front seat.

“Did you say Charlie?”

“Yes, Charlie. A beautiful woman.”

“Where is she? Doc, did you know she was coming to Greece with us?”

“No, I didn’t kid, but I’m sure glad she did.”

“We drive you there now.” Even a slight change leads to a very different destination.

“I don’t mean to sound ungrateful, but what’s with the mask?”

“Charlie suggested it.”

Both men looked at each other and laughed.



“Keep your little secret then, with that minx,” said Gorilla.

That ignited the men more. They laughed harder.

Wait until he saw that Greek girl again. He longed to give her a wet one. She’d reveal what her headdress was for, a torture of sorts. He’d be like a stick of dynamite when he went off.

The cart slowed as it pulled into the fisher’s market. The moon played on the sea and lit up the area with a cool, soothing glow. It was magnificent. Romantic and drowning in mystery.

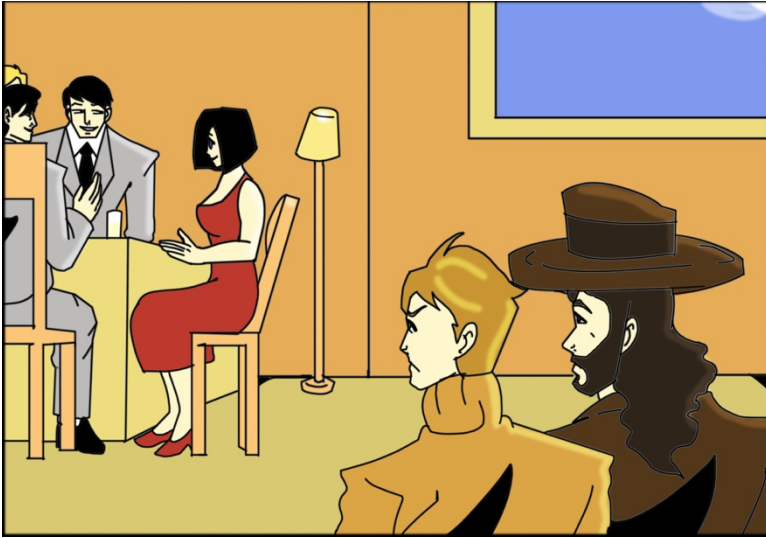
The cart stopped in front of a rundown bar and the men jumped out to head inside.

He shrugged at Gorilla, and they followed them in.

The atmosphere outside didn't match the inside. It was far from run down.

The freshly painted walls invited them in while the tables with bright white cloths on them, echoed love throughout the room. Strangers sat about in crowded room. A polished piano was by the long wooden bar, and a man played a pleasant love song. He didn't understand the words, but the passion was obvious.

Dancers nearly bumped into each other as they glided to the rhythm, but no one seemed to mind.



Gorilla nudged him in the arm and pointed. On top of the bar sat a beautiful woman engaged in a private conversation with several interested men. He hadn't known that Charlie knew Greek.

Clearly, the kid was angry by the color of his face. He rushed to leave the bar.

The Professor grabbed his arm. "Hey kid, you need to turn around and not say goodbye. It's Charlie, and I'm sure she is trying to set up accommodations here to make it comfortable for all of us. She saved us, after all."

The kid frowned and pulled out a Baby Ruth bar. Some things will never change.

“Bushwa. She knows I’m crazy about her. Look at her! It’s the bum’s rush with all those big-six hanging around her.”

Somewhere in the midst of the dancing crowd, a man hollered. “I said he needs to stop showing his wang to my woman!”

Soon, fists flew and Charlie looked up and noticed them as they stood with mouths hanging down to the ground; they looked all wet.

Sarantos moved his body to the right hauling the kid with him and avoiding the incident. He hadn’t wanted to get into a battle today.



Charlie waved and moved towards them. Dressed to kill and full of smiles, she was making her way through the crowd but when a couple of gentlemen threw punches at each other right next to her, she punched one and sent him dropping to the ground. She didn't stop there. The other man refused her annoyance at their childish behavior. She replied by clubbing him over the head with her drink.

Charlie never missed a beat as she continued towards Gorilla. She jumped into the kid's arms, hugging him as she planted a big wet one on his surprised and waiting lips.

What a woman. The kid was one lucky fellow.

She looked back at the Professor and smiled. Her lipstick stain was smeared haphazardly around her lips, but on her it looked like a piece of art.

Charlie never gave him the chance to be mad, brilliant. She threw her head back and giggled. “I missed that goofy chocolate kiss. Aren’t you ever going to run out of those things?”

He smiled sheepishly. “Well, that doesn’t excuse your actions.”

She stared him deep in the eyes. The kid wouldn’t blink.

“What are you talking about? The fire’s going strong and then you turn it to ashes, and they crumble to the ground when we touch. What’s going on then, right now?”

“Nothing’s going on. I’m fine. Never mind.”

Their love matched a paralyzing poison. It was too much. Charlie looked like she wanted to bolt from this bar, but she stayed.

Charlie and the Professor locked eyes. Her eyes swept the room and then chose him as their target again. They were soft but in pain; her happiness reflected sadness at the same time. Sarantos nodded, showing her he understood.

Charlie wanted to leave Gorilla but couldn't because she got him and loved him despite his youthful jealousy.

Maybe Gorilla had just tasted a spoonful of Greece? The kid smiled at her and took her hand. "Let's get out of here."

Charlie said, "Professor, I've got us rooms for the night. We need to hang low. I know I wasn't supposed to be here, but I found some free time and so here I am. By the way, I knew you guys would need me to save you again."

She smiled and lit up the room.

"We're lucky to have you on our team, Charlie. Right, kid?"



Gorilla turned towards the two of them and took her other hand. “I’m sorry, Charlie. I am one damn lucky guy and, as you say, chuffed to see you. The privilege of my lifetime was loving you.”

“Good. Let’s go meet the gentlemen that are going to get us out of here.”

The four men that hung back and conversed with Charlie spoke English. In fact, two were her friends from England and two were her cousins, large in build and looking street smart.

Greece had been one of their favorite places to visit over the years. They knew the streets of this area like the back of their hands.

The drinks kept coming. As the crowd thinned out, they stopped for fear of getting drunk and disorderly. They had to keep themselves in tow.

The kid hadn't drunk anything but water.

"Kid, no drinks for you tonight?"

"No, Doc, I need to keep my senses about me. We know what I carry."

"Maybe you should hand it over to Charlie?"

"Maybe not."

Both of them turned to Charlie and her rosy cheeks and slurred speech suddenly changed their minds. Maybe tonight she wasn't to be trusted?

It appeared she needed to keep up with her larger-than-life friends and cousins drinking. Their size allowed it, hers didn't.



Charlie's eyes twinkled as she held up a shot glass and slurred a Greek toast, a version of "cheers" or "ya mas", which meant "to our health". As in other countries, you clink glasses when you toast and Charlie clumsily clanked and downed it along with her male counterparts. Her hand slammed down on top of the table a few seconds later. Moments later, her head was lying on the table and she was sleeping.

Her overly handsome cousin Nicholas laughed and said, “She’s getting better boys!”

They all had another round and talked about her and them back in the good old days.

The stories were fantastic. The next hour rushed by and was a sentimental swell of emotion, but Gorilla didn’t like that they would’ve abandoned Charlie slumped by the table. He slid his chair next to her and held her head on his lap, caressing her hair gently.

The guys joked about him being a baby vamp and laughed and drank harder.

A friend of hers with midnight hair and eyes almost as dark said, “Kid, she’s going to be mad at you in the morning if you don’t leave her sleeping right where she fell.”

“I doubt that, and I’m not a student, so the term baby vamp doesn’t apply to me so you can’t get your jollies from me.” The kid seemed annoyed.

Oh boy, the kid did not know what he walked into with these men.

“Oh kid, you are a baby vamp... a baby vamp in love!” Nicholas had motioned for the guys to join him in another toast and that brought them to tears.

The kid held his own. Not only did he get a spoonful of Greece, but of England too!

“I’ll help you get her to bed,” the Professor said to the kid.

Her cousin, Alfred, butted in, “I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

“Come on guys, you could help us; we won’t say a word.”

“This might be fun,” said Nicholas.

The four guys got up from the table. It amazed Sarantos they could still walk straight. She was like a paperweight to Nicholas and he threw her over his shoulder.

They laughed all the way to her room and teased the Professor and Gorilla until they finally tossed her on the bed.

The redheaded friend, Thomas, blurted out, “We’ll leave you blokes to deal with her, we need to make a quick exit.”

The kid smiled at him. As they all quietly left the room, Gorilla caressed her hair once again.

As the Professor walked to his own room, he smirked as he thought that the kid might be in trouble in the morning...

