

Chapter 1

“Covid Survivor”



The phone rang one ordinary August morning, but he didn't care. It'd been a year since humiliation filled his belly and sent a familiar fire into his

cheeks. He vowed out of adventures for the rest of eternity.

Twenty minutes later, someone was pounding at the door. He knew it was Gorilla. The pounding continued. The kid wouldn't let it go. He wouldn't let him stew in his dull negativity. His classes usually went smoothly as no one ever asked him questions about the empty briefcase, but there was Gorilla, always sitting in the back row staring him down.

“Don't get it,” he said, yelling at his new housekeeper.

Her name was Clara. She was 65 and treated him like a mother hen. She'd been nagging him for weeks to get out of the house and live his life. Instead, he rudely told her she was his housekeeper, not his mother. He sternly reminded her he preferred to be left alone.

She usually didn't listen, and this was no exception as a minute later, Gorilla stood in front of him eating a Baby Ruth bar, or as he commonly misstated, a

Babe Ruth bar. It didn't matter. It bordered on annoying.

“Hey, ya, Doc. I got news you're going to want to hear.” His voice muddled with the intermittent chomping and slurping of chocolate.

He barely glanced at the kid because there was no news he was interested in.

“Spare me the lecture today, kid. I'm not in the mood.” Gorilla didn't flinch. The Professor was in the crosshairs and knew it.

Smacking and licking his lips, he went on without hesitation. “Oh, this you will be in the mood for, Doc. I guarantee it!”

“Bushwa, as you would say, but spit it out, kid.”

“Sure. Do you remember Professor Darwin Claymore?”



“How can one forget him? I think he was the quack who ran for the hills when the school demanded he resign because of the absurd things he tried to teach his students. What ever happened to him, anyway?”

“He disappeared for three years. No one heard what happened to him until he posted in the news recently

that he started offering private classes on magical artifacts.”

“What?” His head moved against his will. His eyes locked on Gorilla. Tension moved from his gut to his neck. His curiosity was piqued.

“Hello there, Doc. It’s about time you looked at me. Delighted to see you too. Yes, he posted that, so I went to see him. He bought a small house on the outskirts of town and his private tutor sessions take place there. Well, he is a fascinating man. We got to talking. One thing led to another and the next thing I knew, you and I have an appointment with him at noon today.”

“What? I refuse to see him as he’s balled up and mad.”

“Afraid you are, Doc. Charlie is meeting us there too. You’ll want to hear what he has to say. I have beat my gums for a year now trying to get you back in the game and you’ve refused time and time again, but this will actually accomplish that. I’m sure of it.”

“You’re all wet, kid, but if you promise to leave me alone for the next year if I go with you today, then you have a deal.”

“Attaboy, Doc. I promise to never bother you again, although I still might sneak into your classes.” Gorilla didn’t know where the night was headed, but he knew it was building up to something and the thrill of adventure excited his senses.

“Well, let’s get going then, but give me a second to wash up. You know he is a blotto?”

The Professor ambled to the bathroom with Gorilla hot on his trail. The kid was clearly nervous he would renege on their deal and was determined not to let him out of his sights! The Professor washed his face briskly and Gorilla handed him a towel.

Gorilla couldn’t contain his urge any longer. “Baloney, he drank after what he went through, but he was never a drunk. People are goofs. Look how

they treated you. Students still call you a crazy recluse. That's the bum's rush."



He grabbed his hat and turned to face the kid. He winked. "But I am a crazy recluse."

Gorilla smiled.

The kid had his own vehicle now. He wasn't a terrible driver. It took them about twenty minutes before they pulled up in front of a small cottage with passive stone steps leading up to the house of Professor Darwin Claymore. Charlie's car was already there. The air seemed purposeful.

"Professor!" She ran out onto the porch and threw her arms around his neck. "I've missed you, you old bear." Every look begins a journey.

"I told you I'd get him here," said Gorilla, holding his head high and walking past her and straight into the house.

"You're the bomb, Gorilla," she said, throwing a smile his way. Then, taking the Professor's hand, she offered, "Come in for some noodle juice, the kettle's ready."

"Sure, and it's wonderful to see you, Charlie." She led him indoors. His curiosity increased further.

"Glad to see you, Professor."

Professor Claymore had a simple house, but he flooded each room with shelves of books. It was like walking into a library. They found Claymore sitting in a wooden chair off the dining room in a small study with wood-paneled walls and shiny oak floors. The smell was nostalgic.

He was a small man, with thinning grey hair plastered to his head and wire-rimmed glasses framing his large circular eyes. His mouth was small, but showed large white teeth when he grinned at his guests. He wore a well-worn brown sweater along with an awfully expensive looking watch.

“Have a seat,” Professor Claymore said moving his hands around the room extending the invite to the chairs gathered around his own. They were all placed warmly in front of a blazing fire. The crackling reminded Sarantos of his youth.



“Thanks, Professor Claymore. The kid tells me you have news that will make me bust out of my depression.” He extended his hand in welcome towards Claymore, while narrowing his eyes at the kid.

Claymore grinned. “It might help, but first tea.”

He rang a bell, and a tall thin woman with narrow grey eyes and tightly woven black hair came into the room carrying a tray with freshly brewed tea, what looked like tiny shortbread biscuits, and a plate full of cucumber sandwiches.

“Thanks, Bella,” said Claymore.

The woman nodded her perfectly placed head of hair and left the room.

“Thanks, Professor. I’m famished,” said Gorilla, grabbing a sandwich and throwing it into his mouth and following that down with a biscuit. The kid seemed to never stop eating.

The young man’s ability to eat always impressed Professor Sarantos. He must’ve been the same way at his age, but he couldn’t remember that far back anymore. It was one of those things that wasn’t important enough for him to remember about himself nowadays.

The tea was a delicious mellow blend of black teas, similar to English tea, which reminded him of a close friend from his teen years.

Charlie politely ate a sandwich and sipped on her tea. She looked the same. He hadn't seen her in at least six months. Watching her made him realize how much he'd missed her joyful enthusiasm.

Gorilla and Charlie still hadn't gotten together, and for the life of him, he couldn't figure out why. It was clear how fond they were of each other. Maybe it was just the fondness of friendship, but being friends first can be a building block to a great relationship. Like the fated flap of a butterfly wing, he believed they'd be a couple one day.



Claymore ate two shortbreads, sipped on some tea, and then nodded his head. “Professor Sarantos, it is an honor to sit with you. I debated for a year if I wanted to come forward and explain to you what had happened to me, that basically set me up for a life of solitude. I have been dying to share my experience with someone, and I believe you will understand my tale more than anyone else.”

“Well, thank you, Claymore. You have my ear and I have to say I’m intrigued. You’ve brought me to this bull session, so let’s get started.”

“Of course. It’s about your sword. I found it many years ago and used it to upgrade myself in the science community, at least that’s what I expected it to do.”

Sarantos leaned in and set down his cup. “You found the sword and used it? You never said, or took it to the school?”

“Yes, I used it, but no, I didn’t share my experiences, for two reasons. The first one was my illness that I contracted when I went forward in time to 2020. The world was running wild with a virus they called Coronavirus or Covid. It wiped out so many people across the globe. Deaths were still being tallied when I was able to get out, in late December.”

“What? You contacted a virus from 2020? Weren’t you worried you’d bring it back here?”

“It was risky, but I stayed away from everyone for an extra few weeks, after my two weeks of being ill was over. I secluded myself outdoors, lived in a tent and ate extraordinarily little. It affected my taste, so

I wasn't hungry for the longest time. I ran a fever. The virus took over my body and my muscles shook. If I shared this deadly virus information, it could've caused a worldwide panic. Who knows what governments or people might do, if they believed me."

"That sounds horrible, Claymore."

"It was. I've already told the kids about my experience and they shared yours with me. I have to say your adventure was more enjoyable than mine. The second reason I didn't share my story was the advancement in academic science was incredible. I would've loved to stay longer and get more information back to our time, but the lockdowns in that future world wouldn't allow it. They even closed schools, restaurants and most businesses. It was a lethal virus to many people and a massacre to the economy of the average person. I will never know the outcome of 2020 and what ultimately happened in 2021. Did the world recover?"



“What you must’ve seen, I can’t imagine - the horrors.”

“Oh, I must also tell you about these fascinating machines that held so much information, you could communicate over vast oceans. These computers, this is what they called them, allowed people to see each other and chat freely even if they were miles apart. The machines sitting on your lap held more

information than a library. They held phones in their hands smaller than a slice of bread, that actually took colorful pictures and video.” Claymore went silent and glanced around the room. “Oh, my friend, the things I saw, no one would believe me. That’s why I couldn’t talk about it, unless I had proof to back up my words.”

“There is no one else telling the same story. I would, have believed you though and I feel slightly jealous that you had that experience without me. I have to admit, I heard rumors and thought of you as kind of kooky, but I should have known better.”

“Oh, Professor Sarantos. I might’ve surmised the same if our situations were reversed. For me, it was stressful. I didn’t think I’d get the virus, but I did. I must’ve let my guard down for a second, my friend, that’s all it took. They blamed leaders, they blamed China, but it didn’t matter to me. What mattered was winning the battle against the virus that invaded my body. Can you imagine if I died there? I needed to survive.”

“Sure. Yes, of course, that would’ve been your first thought. I completely understand.”

“China, weird, huh, Doc,” said Gorilla.

“Yes, very weird. Why was that then?”



Professor Claymore nodded and said, “Well, it originated there, and people said they should be held responsible for the outbreak. It was travelling overseas before anyone knew. If they’d reacted sooner, it might’ve been contained because the virus was so contagious. When I got infected, I felt like I

was drowning in darkness. Death held me in her arms and wouldn't let me go. I could hear that laughter of hers and it haunts me to this day. The smell of fear clung to my skin like a dog to its master. Would I die there - in a strange world, alone? It was alarming. I felt isolated, no one to hug, to help me feel better, to soother me, I was truly on my own. Anyone with the illness was on their own, usually isolated and quarantined. Most were given no medication and told to see a doctor only if they got worse."

Sarantos sipped on more tea. "Because it was so contagious?"

"Yes, because of that, and everyone wore masks wherever they went. I can't forget my illness. The first day was the worst day for me. I lost my taste for food it ran away from me! My forehead burned and all I could do was think about getting back to my familiar past and regretting ever touching that sword."

"I can't imagine the fear you had in dying in a strange place from a new virus no one had heard of before. No one would know who you really were."

“Yes, and it dragged on for weeks. I fought it with everything I had until I could feel safe enough to come home. I had already found the gems to go inside the sword but couldn’t leave when I was sick because it was infectious. I couldn’t imagine looking for the gems after I’d been ill, because I never felt right for a long time, and I was always so tired. So, so tired.”

“Lucky for that. I wouldn’t want to run around looking for gems either. Isolating from other people would’ve been difficult. I’d also have been constantly anxious about coming back and bringing the sickness back in time,” said Professor Sarantos.

Claymore nodded. “Yes, I felt that way too. Like I said, they had amazing tents in 2020 and cots, so I could find solitude in a forested area where I put up my tent and stayed there on my own. If I died, no one would’ve found me for a long time. I was in the hills of the lawless Appalachian Mountains. It was frightful.”

“Wow, what a, dare I say, life-threatening experience. I shared some difficulties on my adventure, but I had the luxury of the company of two friends who took great care of me. I have to say, had it not been for them, I wouldn’t be listening to your fable today,” said Sarantos.



Claymore shifted in his chair, poured out more tea and ate a sandwich. No one said a word until he finished.

“I’m glad I had no one with me, Professor Sarantos. They would’ve succumbed to the virus, and who knows if they would’ve made it back? I’m a survivor of Covid and feel blessed I lived to tell you about my experience.”

“Thanks, Professor, for sharing your story. I have to say it makes me feel better. I think it’s time for me to adventure forward again. If you can survive what you did and realize you couldn’t share such amazing news with the world, then it doesn’t matter what I went thru. As long as we know our own truth, nothing else matters.”

“I couldn’t agree more Sarantos. The meanness of some people and the kindness of others during that time I had the virus surprised me. Nurses and doctors worked without thought of themselves. It was heartwarming. Their compassion, care and generosity of spirit to help heal others’ pain was mind-boggling.”



“I never thought of that. They are like heroes taking care of the ill in everyday life, much less during an infectious outbreak.”

“Yes, I heard amazing stories. And something I think I should share with you. Buy stocks of Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft when you hear those names. McDonalds, Walgreens, and Tesla to name a few more. That should earn you a load of money.”

Professor Claymore laughed.

“Are you joking?”

“Not at all, Sarantos. It’s just I have shared no information with anyone else, but also no one will listen except you three. For that, I am thankful and eagerly grant you this winning ticket!”

“Thanks, we’ll keep that in mind,” said Sarantos.

“If you three have another hour to listen and take notes, I have a list of investments you should make over the years.”

The three of them nodded in approval.

“I know these things, because I went forward in time to 2020, and because I’m a Covid Survivor!”

