

Chapter 1

“Cross That Line”

Brown University Campus, Providence, Rhode Island; 1925

The elegant study in the home of Professor Sarantos was large enough to house a sturdy red oak desk, simple leather chair, one oriental carpet under said desk and chair, a tall metal lamp with just enough lighting to allow him to work deep into the night, and a small leather recliner that faced his desk, if he ever had a guest. He was



usually too busy chasing long lost artifacts. He rarely felt done or complete or even successful. Such historical treasures offered him the potential opportunity to outwit, out-hustle, and just outwork all the other prominent archaeologists scattered around the world. He rarely had time for guests, but today was different.

The exposed and misshapen but finely forged sword, that looked like it would never gut a fish much less a person, was laying carefully across his desk. Two large gems embedded in the hilt were glistening madly, reflecting the rays of the sun coming in through the arched window. The golden rays almost sought it out, using it as

bragging rights, displaying the otherwise dull gems in a new and different light. But the one hole above the other two had occupied the attention of the Professor for a while.

“Gorilla... gently pass me the gem please,” said the Professor while his eyes feasted on the empty hole.

Mickey Dark, alias Gorilla, had been an exceptional student of the Professor. Upon his graduation, the Professor took him on as an intern. Mickey was about 5’ 7” with dirty red hair and unrestrained freckles. Added to the mix was a fiery personality that exactly matched his hair. He loved wearing gangster hats with wide brims but found the suits uncomfortable. So, most of the time they would see him in his old lettered sweater from the University and saggy britches with boots laced up to his knees.

“I don’t know Professor, what are you going to do with it? We don’t know what will happen if you are planning on inserting this gem into that hole. Shouldn’t we proceed with caution?”

Gorilla was always second guessing the Professor. It was borderline annoying. Mickey looked to the only other person in the room, Charlie.

Charlie’s eyes were gleaming like the Professors. All common sense left her as she blurted out, “Oh, Gorilla be a dear and give the Professor the gem.”

Gorilla hesitated, instead unwrapping a Baby Ruth bar that was part of the stash he kept in his pockets and shoving it into his mouth in the same motion. “I need lunch first, nothing like a Babe Ruth bar.”

Professor Sarantos held out his hand without removing his eyes from the hilt of the sword. “Now, Mickey Dark, hand it over!”

Charlie curled up her lip at Mickey and said, “Really, Gorilla that’s not lunch, they just say that to get people to buy them old chocolate bars, and for the record it’s Baby Ruth bar, not Babe Ruth bar.”

Mickey frowned, “Oh, what do you know anyway! You’re just a girl who knows nothing about baseball.”

Her face went two shades of pink then climbed to a rosy red. She pushed out her lip aggressively and threw her black bobbed curls to the side as she whipped her head around and faced him with a snarl. “Well, and you’re just a stupid boy, aren’t you?” Then she turned hysterically, left the study and yelled over her shoulder. “I’m getting a real lunch, smarty pants. Professor, before we do that, maybe we should eat first, you know, just in case we never come back.”

“Yeah, come on Doc,” said Mickey. “We need our nutrition. We’ve waited this long. It took us years to find the final gem to fit into the sword. What’s a few more minutes?”

Professor Sarantos pushed his dark green newsboy cap up and stared directly at Mickey. “You both are driving me crazy; do you understand how important this is?”

Mickey backed up. “I think I’m seeing the crazy, Doc.”

“Crazy, you haven’t seen crazy yet. Damn that highbrow Howey Carter, anyway. I need something bigger than King Tut, and this could be it. This might take us to another world, another breathtaking adventure, at least that’s what the legend behind it says, according to documentation found in the ancient caves of Sangoria. Gorilla, you get it don’t you?”

“I think so, but his name is Howard, not Howey; and that was an incredible find. I wish we could’ve been a part of that one. It’ll take them decades to clean it up.”



“That British scoundrel working with wealthy aristocrats was damn lucky. I heard a boy accidentally discovered it.”

“Yeah, and they’re jinxed because I heard it has a curse. Well, Professor I’m going to ‘iron my shoelaces’ - see you in the kitchen.”

Professor Sarantos gave up. He couldn’t get the gem now. He wasn’t about to follow Mickey to the bathroom, and he was actually hungry.

The Professor found Charlie eating a cucumber sandwich from a plate she’d set out on the table which held about 15 of the tiny sandwiches. She crossed her legs showing her masculine trousers and high riding boots. He didn’t mind a woman that was a ‘bearcat.’ In fact, he found it rather sexy, but she was still a student at the University where he taught. He couldn’t and wouldn’t think of forming an intimate liaison with her. She was too young for him anyway, though her brilliance and carefree spirit made her even more attractive.

Her smile was infectious. As she glanced up at him, her eyes held victory. She typically got her way and was not too proud to exploit her arts of persuasion. “Hey, Professor I made enough for all of us. What do you think will really happen with the sword? Should we all hold hands, or hold the sword when you place the gem inside the hilt? If you’re taken somewhere else does the sword come with you, or should someone stay back here to protect the sword? How do we get back if the sword does not come with us? And before you say anything else, you’re not going alone. And I think you should get your best friend, Professor Sands, to be on the other side, you know, just in case we need him.”

When she finally came up for air, she quickly inhaled another sandwich.

Gorilla hurried into the room heading directly for the sandwiches, shoving one in his mouth, another in his hand, all while trying to speak while chewing. “That’s what I’m talking about.”

“As adorable as you are Gorilla, you act so goofy and that makes you less attractive.”

Shoving in another sandwich, Gorilla answered, “Oh well, who cares, anyway. I am who I am and if you or anyone else has a problem with that, then you’re just an ‘alarm clock,’ a spoiler of my fun, and you know what I do when the alarm clock goes off; shut... it... down!”

Professor Sarantos was standing by the phone finishing a cup of tea. “You two sweethearts need to pipe it. I’m calling Thomas and make me another noodle juice.”

“Black, Professor?”

He nodded at Charlie. “Black is fine.” Some people loved pouring milk into their tea, but not him, he thought it annihilated the flavor of the spice.

Professor Thomas Sands was Sarantos best friend and long-time collaborator. They'd had many adventures together over the years, and uncovered various small tombs and many artifacts, but Sands had settled down when he married Joan. He remained loyal for Sarantos in an informative and professional way while on the home front. He still thought of him, as a person to go to.

His friend was sitting in his favorite chair, because he answered the phone rather quickly. "Hey, Sandi, you have some time? I could use you over here pronto. Great, see you soon." He placed the black handle on the receiver and smiled at Charlie. "Thanks Charlie, he'll be here in about twenty minutes. I should've thought of him sooner, don't know why I didn't."

"Oh, Professor, you're the bomb, full of brains and all that good stuff, but in thinking before you act, you're not so smart. You let the excitement of a discovery take you away before you're even there. Cheers - glad I could help."

He nodded, what else could he say to that? She was right. Nothing's curbed his enthusiasm since he was eight years old and discovered a bone on his uncle's farm in Morgantown, West Virginia. He raced back to his father who was an anthropologist and had taken him on digs since he could walk, but that bone was his find, not his father's. His first find was met with great disappointment when his father informed him it was just a piece of cow bone that a dog probably buried some time ago.



When he had argued with his dad, his dad just nodded and told him if he was to continue in the practice of discovering old things, he should expect disappointment at times. Today, his father was still in the business and assisting in the dig of King Tut, but Professor Sarantos was determined to prove to his dad he could find something even more important, that the entire world would notice. He was sure this sword was it.

He'd come across the sword about 10 years ago when he was fresh out of college. He and Sands, or sometimes Sandi, the nickname Sarantos had given him when they were kids, had accompanied their Professor on a dig in a small town in Egypt. They found the sword in a cave, when they went off looking for their own artifacts, because they didn't feel they were being used to their full potential by Professor Clark and the young men were looking to prove themselves in the world of historical discovery. He remembered it well. You could taste the musky odor. The cave was dark. The lights they carried didn't illuminate the cave very much. Time went by slowly. It had been exceedingly boring until Sands tripped over a dead body and there, they found the sword, still gripping fiercely in that man's boney fingers. They told no one and kept it hidden all this time while secretly searching for the three gems that fit inside the tiny holes in the hilt.

They didn't understand what they had found until they read about the sword in undocumented records. The legend of the sword was clear; a person in the future made it and they used it to teleport moving through dimensions of space and time. That was all they could make out of the worn-out, fragile paper.

Professor Sarantos had continued searching through books, archives, and whatever he could find to locate the gems that were part of this magical piece. Each time he got a hit, it led him in a very different direction. For years he pursued this endless puzzle. He searched, and almost gave up, until a secret discovery in an old locked chest he'd purchased in India led him to the final gem. At least that was his dream, if the information was correct.

Now, he questioned it though, because of Charlie. How would they get back? Would the sword come with them and if it took him 10 years of discovery locating the gems, would it take that long for Sands to get them back? And when they used it, would the gems disappear, leading to another adventure to find them? Maybe the gems would go back to where he found them? The unknown was tricky.

The last gem they discovered was a diamond, and they had to go to the Congo. Being chased by the natives wasn't something he wanted to repeat. He and Gorilla had to race through the jungles to the outcrop where Charlie awaited them in her small plane. She was a good pilot, but a bit too much of a daredevil. Living in England with a wealthy family wasn't her bag of tea. She didn't like the prim and proper

discipline of becoming a lady, so she opted for moving to America and continuing her education here at Brown University.

Charlie was a well-prepared young lady and wouldn't be tied down. Much to her parents' disapproval, she put her plane on the ship and brought it with her when she ran off. Women were emerging in a breakthrough rebellion of freedom, and Charlie was at the top of that groundbreaking movement even after the 19th Amendment in 1920. She was especially charming and could work her way into anyone's heart, or attention. As much as she and Gorilla argued, they were clearly smitten with each other.

"Doc, where's your head?"

Gorilla's loud voice brought him back to the kitchen.

"Just daydreaming, Gorilla."

"Professor, you're not having second thoughts are you? I hope you're not being a bluenose. I can't wait to try this, I'm up for the adventure of a lifetime," said Charlie.

"No, Charlie, I'm not putting a damper on the adventure, just thinking about what you said earlier. What if we leave and the gems disappear?"

"Well, then you're stuck there, my friend. I'm not about to go on a ten-year trek to find them again. Let me see it, Sarantos," said Sands, as he entered the kitchen. "Door was open."

The three of them jumped at the sound of the soft masculine voice and turning, a rather short man, clean shaven, dressed in a sweater, trousers, work boots, and a straw hat with a red band around it met their eyes. He wore glasses and grinned while placing a pipe back in his mouth. The three comrades breathed a collective sigh of relief.

“Professor,” said Charlie.



Sarantos put eagerly put out his hand and shook it, bouncing them both up and down. “So glad to see you, Sandi my friend. Come on in, it’s in the study.”

Sarantos ran ahead leading Sands with him. Charlie quickly finished her tea and followed them, while Gorilla shoved several mini sandwiches in his mouth at one time and then hurried behind Charlie.

“I haven’t seen the sword in years, Sarantos. I forgot how magical it felt. What a grand discovery, and no one knows. How did you keep it a secret all this time?”

“Well, Sands, you and I were the only ones that knew about it for eight years, until these two got involved with me,” Sarantos said pointing at the young interns that just entered the room.

Sands said, “Well, where’s the gem?”

Sarantos looked at Gorilla. “Now, young intern you can finally hand over the gem.”

“Whatever you say father time.”

Sarantos grimaced. “Quit calling me that.”

Gorilla went into his pocket and started pulling out empty wrappers of the Baby Ruth bar and placing them on the already messy desk of the professor.

Charlie leaned on one foot and rested her arm on the professor pushing out her chin in an indignant gesture. “Let’s blouse, Gorilla we don’t have all day.” Using her free hand, she over-exaggerated a yawn and patted her hand to her mouth.

“It was here earlier,” said Gorilla.

Professor Sarantos face warmed up and his cheeks were getting redder and redder. “I’m losing my patience Gorilla... if you lost it, I might kill you.”

“Gee Professor, I didn’t lose it,” said Gorilla while switching pockets and pulling more wrappers from the fine tweed trousers. “Ah, here it is.”

He placed the white diamond on the table. As they all leaned in to get a closer view, the otherworldly facets of the diamond threw reflections of color around the room.

“Well, I think you’ve done it Sarantos,” said Sands. He patted Sarantos on the back and stood up looking prouder than a peacock, but their joy at the discovery and their friendly reunion ended quickly.

“Hand it over and no funny business.” A man’s deep voice echoed behind them causing them all to flinch. “Turn around slowly.”

The four of them turned slowly with hands in the air to find two men who looked to be part of Al Capone's hit squad.

"We don't want to hurt you, and especially the lady, but Al wants that sword. You know it'll give him a higher standing. We came a long way, so don't mess with us. You'll regret it if you do!"

Gorilla couldn't help himself and blurted out, "Bushwa, they are gangsters."

Charlie couldn't keep her mouth shut. "Hey, I'm no lady. Who cares what Mr. Capone wants, and I'd say he's out of his jurisdiction. Shouldn't you boys be in Chicago?"

The men became a little flustered, but their machine guns were still pointing at the four of them.

Professor Sarantos took a deep breath. "Hey boys, we don't need a problem here. You can have the sword, but just so you know the curse will have you killing each other within the hour." He grabbed the sword off the desk and held it out to them walking towards them. The two gangsters looked at each other and backed up at least one full step. Sarantos kept moving towards them. "Put your guns down, boys, it's yours. I found it on a dead guy who held a gun just like that..."



The professor suddenly came down on the machine guns with the sword swiping across them like he was swinging a baseball bat. The sword went through them like butter. One gun went off as it fell to the floor shooting up the bookshelf, as Sands, Charlie and Gorilla fell face down on the rough carpet flattening their bodies to the floor as close as they could get without becoming part of the wood.

Sarantos swung the sword again before the two gangsters could recover and clobbered them both alongside their heads knocking them both to the floor.

“Let’s fly. Gorilla grab the gem!” His voice rose like an elephant bull charging another one fighting for the right to lead.

“Already did Professor,” said Gorilla, as he leaped up from the floor and raced to the professor’s side.

Sand’s and Charlie were only a second behind him, before she ran back to the professor’s desk and grabbed some papers from it.

“We’ll need these,” she said making it to the door just as the gangsters were recovering.

“Where to?” Sands voice sounded strained.

“Your car, Sands, your car,” said Sarantos

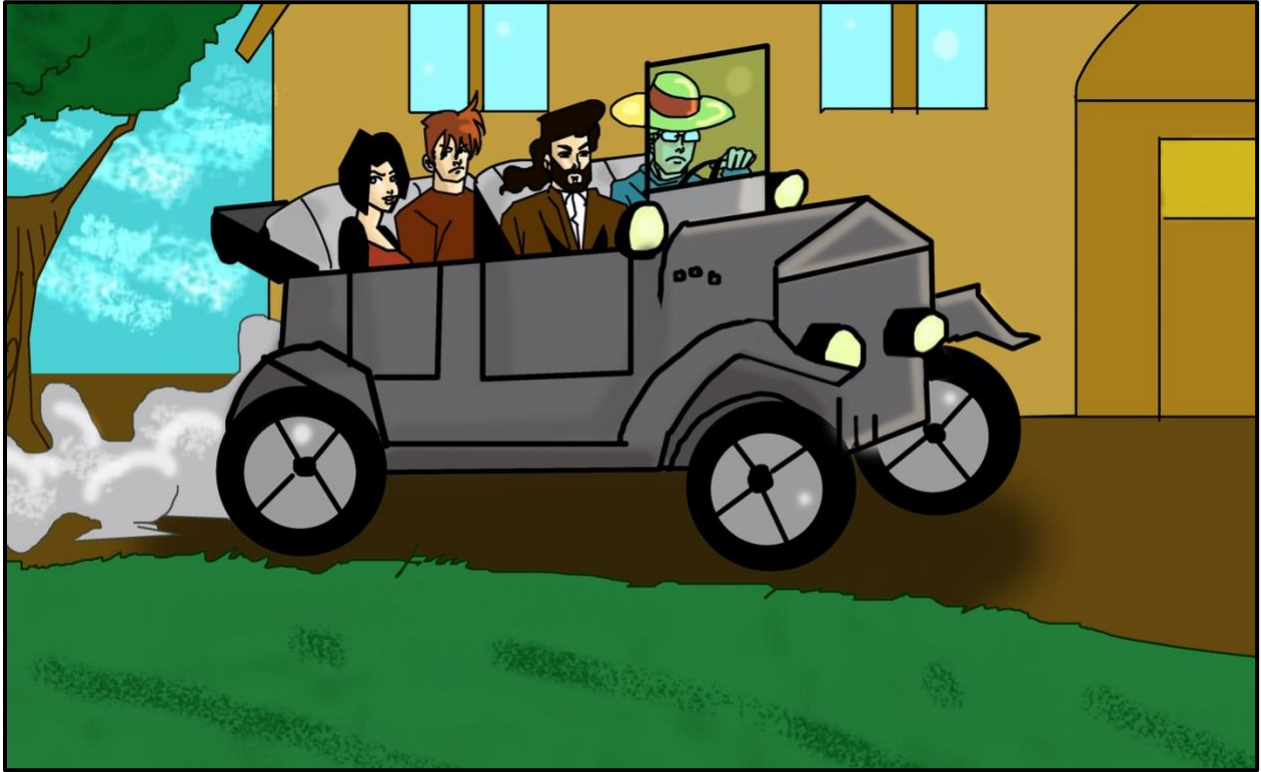
They flew to the curb and piled in, but Gorilla pulled out a knife and slit one of the gangster’s tires on their fancy Rolls Royce Silver Ghost, before jumping in Sand’s “Tin Lizzie.”

“Let’s blouse Professor, now!” Gorilla’s voice rose over the engine of the car, as the sound of gunshots pierced the air.

“Turn there,” shouted Professor Sarantos, causing Sands to abruptly maneuver the model T around a corner and move out of the range of gun shots.

Gorilla let out a sigh. “Man, I hated dicing the tire of that gorgeous machine.”

Charlie was sparkling like she'd just left the party of the year. "Oh, that was the bee's knees. Gorilla you were so darb!"



Gorilla turned red, and said, "Yeah, thanks I can't help myself Charlie, but the Professor was pretty cool too! I didn't think old people could move that fast??"

Sarantos smiled.

"Charlie, you appear too happy about being shot at," said Professor Sands. "That's one reason I got out of the whole mess long ago."

"Oh, Professor, it's just one of the most exciting things that's ever happened to me."

Sarantos said, "Now, you know why she's here. She's mad like I am."

Sands understood. "I see that my friend, where should I take you?"

Sarantos thought for a moment. “I think the Plaza hotel on 5th, we need to get a private room to try this out. I know you’re not happy about being in this mess, so we’ll keep you and your home out of it. I wonder how they found out?”

“Beats me,” said Gorilla.

“Yeah, why would they want the sword, unless they knew of its power. Gorilla how did you already have the gem when you were on the floor?” said Charlie.

He grinned slyly. “Well, my beautiful lady, I slipped it in my pocket before turning around, we didn’t want to leave that behind. I’ve learned to be a quick thinker since I started adventuring with the Professor. I’m his protégé...”

Charlie became indignant, and not for the first time today. “Hey, you cake eater quit looking at my legs. It’s men like you who’ve made women like me prefer wearing pants. You’re always staring too much at the wrong parts. Look at my brains, frat boy.”

“That’s the main reason I’ll never have a handcuff. You women are becoming men nowadays, and worse, you’re proud of it.” Gorilla was laughing.

Professor Sarantos ignored their squabbling, grinned at Gorilla and said, “Yes, you have learned with me my boy. Sandi, maybe you should take us to a cabin I have just outside of town. It’s more private, you know, in case something goes wrong. Do you have the time to drive us there now?”

“Sure, but you don’t think they know who I am too, do you? It could put my wife in danger.”

“No, unless they studied me and noticed we were part of several crazy schemes many years ago.”

Professor Sands face slowly wrinkled into a worried expression. “Well, they found out about the sword and seemed to have good timing, showing up when they did.”

Gorilla jumped into the conversation. “Doc, do you think when we were in that tiny village in the Congo talking about the sword and the diamond, someone could’ve overheard us. There seemed to be a lot of suits there, if you know what I mean. Were we followed after that?”

The Professor pushed up his newsboy cap and twisted his lip. “You know, you could be right on, Gorilla. We weren’t too shy about what we were looking for, asking many questions and hiring guides. We’d kept the secret for so long that I just naturally got careless and didn’t watch our backs as carefully as we used to when we were getting close there at the end.”

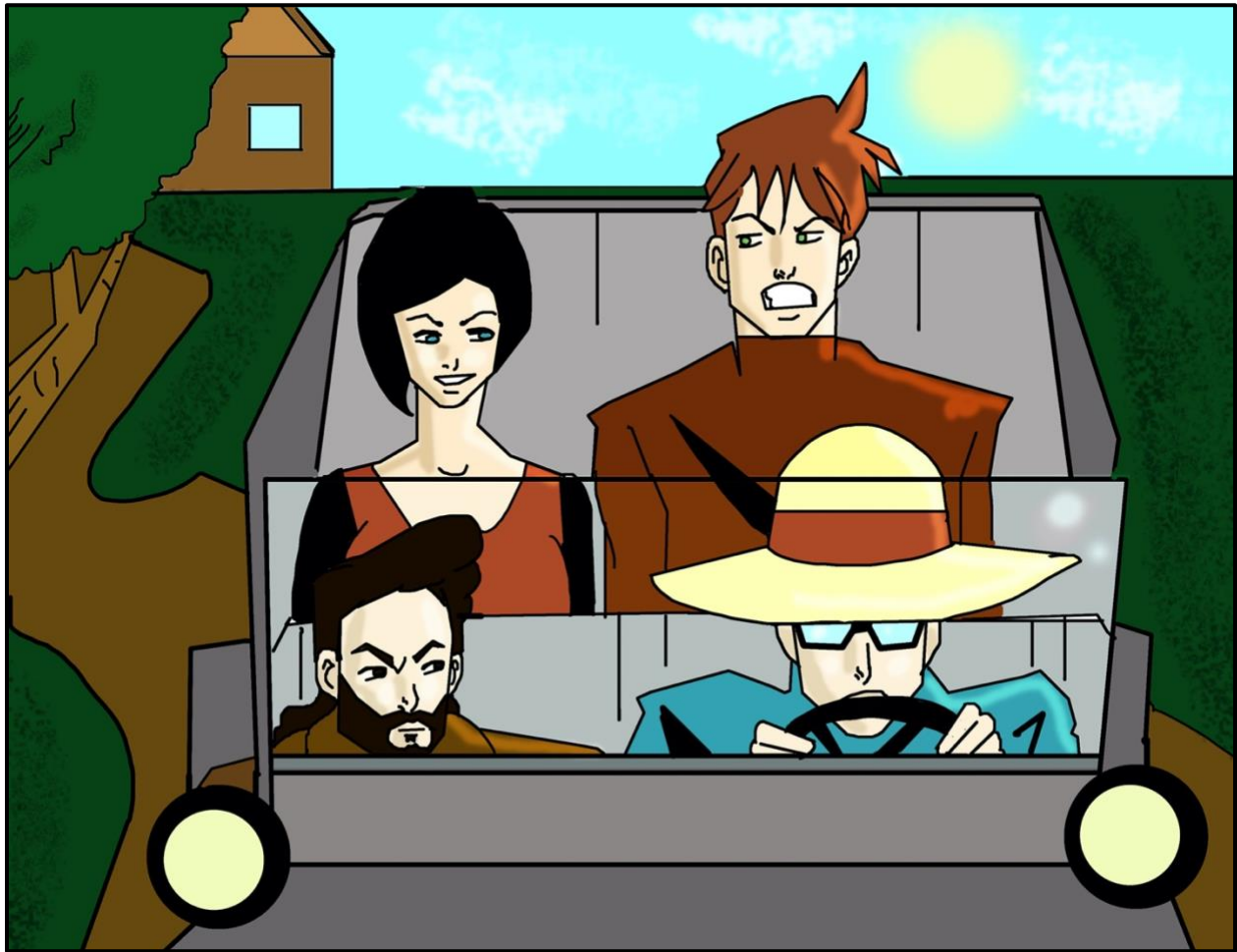
“Well, what were you boys thinking? I knew I should’ve joined you; someone needs to look out for you two. You’re lucky I’ll have your back on this adventure Professor.”

Professor Sands interrupted the conversation. “Sarantos, I think I remember going to the cabin frequently, but just to be sure, do I turn to the left at the next crossing?”

“Yes, good memory, Sandi. It’s been quite a while since we’ve been there fishing. You know I miss that. Fishing and relaxing on that big old lake on Sunday afternoons in the fall.”

“Don’t blame me, you’ve been too busy with your adventure to find the time for me, but we should make time - if you ever get back from this journey that is.”

Before Sarantos could answer, Charlie piped in. “Oh, don’t you worry about that, Professor Sands. They’ll get back, after all they have me with them. Girls are observant and intelligent, you know.” She gave Gorilla a dagger stare. “More so than guys.”



“Oh, get over yourself, Charlie,” said Gorilla, ignoring her evil glare that was warning him to keep his mouth shut.

There was no sense in Professor Sarantos telling them to knock it off, they wouldn’t. It was part of their fun, anyway. They might as well have a little fun on this adventure.

“Charlie, you and Gorilla are just like a pair of bookends, more in sync than you both realize, and I imagine you will be until the day you die. Anyway, just down that dirt road, Sandi. Thank goodness we’re almost there. I don’t know how much longer I could put up with the two of you,” said Sarantos.

“Looks like a great place, Professor,” cheered Gorilla, as the cabin slowly came into view from behind dark shadowy woods, brambles, and the now darkening sky.

“Yeah, my dad owns it, but he’s a little too busy for it.”

The thought of his dad being a part of the King Tut excavation still irritated him to no end. He respected Carter, but this was too competitive, and he wanted something big for himself.

Sands turned off the car, and they all got out. Charlie ran ahead to the cabin. It was small but well stocked with canned goods and toiletries. Sarantos frequented it often, just to get out of the college scene and feel free from the shackles of his boring ordinary life. His father never came here anymore and was content to let his son use it for his own pleasure.

“Nice lake,” said Gorilla. “Hey, Doc is that where you and the Professor fish?”

“Yeah.”

“I could get used to this place, doc.”

Sarantos looked at Gorilla and raised his eyebrow. “Don’t.”

“Ah, doc that’s just not nice, is it?”

“Don’t care, young man, don’t care,” said Sarantos as he went up a few stairs and entered the chilly cabin.

“Wait for me Doc.”

Charlie was already inside finding a key under the mat on the covered front porch.
Clever girl.

“Professor, this place is the bomb!”



“Well, don’t get too comfortable. I’m sure the gangsters know about my dad’s cabin, so we need to get the show on the road, if you know what I mean.”

“Sure, we could be gone before they arrive, and Professor Sand’s needs to get back to his own house and his lonely wife,” said Charlie.

“Hey Doc, did you see that Mercedes parked towards the side of the cabin?” Gorilla asked at the same time he whistled.

“No, I didn’t.”

“Well, it was one sweet bimbo, who does it belong to?”

A woman’s gentle voice sent electric charges into Professor Sarantos trousers. He knew that sweet melody. “Why it’s mine. Hi ya, Professor.”

It couldn’t be her, could it? He never noticed the car either. He must be losing it, or so wrapped up into this crazy sword that he lost focus, after all he wasn’t being very good at watching their backs today. It was Stella Sharp, but it could’ve been anyone. He was afraid to look at her, but he eventually did.

“Hi Stella, what’re you doing here?”

She purred. “Well professor, at least you remembered my name this time. Am I finally etched in your memory forever?”

She was gorgeous, long loose dress, great shoes that showed off her fabulous gams, red curls and her bright matching lipstick drew him inside that luscious mouth wanting to taste her.

She moved towards him and ran her gloved fingers down his arm. He was in trouble; she was a big distraction.

“So, who’s your friends?”

“Stella, leave. I’m not sure what you’re up to, but it isn’t safe here for you. We have the mob after us,” said Sarantos.

She grinned, flashing a set of perfect teeth. “Don’t I know it, lover boy.” Then her tone changed, and she became a tiger and no longer a sweet little pussy cat. She slapped him on the head, knocking off his hat and said, “What’s wrong with you? The mob came to my home looking for you! Lucky for me I’m a gorgeous woman and they were two weak boys. I sent them to your home, what the hell are you into now Professor?”

“Don’t hit me Stella, I hate that,” he said picking up his hat and fumbling to put it back on. “How did you know I’d be here, anyway?”

“You leave a trail, like a dog. Your gangster buddies told me about the sword, trying to get information from me, so how does it work and when do we leave?”

“Leave?? You’re not going anywhere, Stella,” said Sarantos.

“Ah, Doc, you’re no fun. She could be a riot. You know what they say Professor long is the road and short is the night,” said Gorilla.

Charlie slugged Gorilla and said, “Knock it off, Gorilla, but he’s right Professor, she should come along. Then you’ll have two smart and gorgeous women tagging along looking out for you boys.”

“Don’t cross that line with me Charlie, telling me what to do,” said Sarantos.



“I’m coming and that’s final,” said Stella, she stuck out her head and grabbed the sword from Sarantos hand. “Now how does this thing work?” Stella asked while whipping it around the room trying to slice and dice whatever she could reach.

“Alright, enough. You know the thoughts crossed my mind a few dozen times to take you on my journeys Stella, but you’re too demanding. Hand over the diamond Gorilla,” said Sarantos.

“Sure Doc,” he said and pulled out more wrappers, then finally the diamond.

“It’s beautiful,” said Stella.

“Okay, everyone in the kitchen and load up on stuff you might need putting it in those backpacks hanging on the door and be quick about it.”

Sarantos had already packed up his belongings and was ready to go. He put on his backpack and smiled at Professor Sands. “This is it, old friend. We’ve been the best of friends since we were ten and now, here we are standing at the crossroads to our dream. When I win the Nobel peace prize, I’m taking you with me into the light! You started the journey with me, and we’ll end it together.”

Sands put his hand on Professor Sarantos shoulder and nodded. “Thank you, my dear friend and colleague.”

The other three came back into the main room and gathered around Sarantos.

“Hold hands and pray,” said Sarantos as he placed the diamond in the sword and closed his eyes.

Nothing happened. They all looked at each other in shock, but then the colors of the room started blending together melding into the white that held them all. The vibrations in the air increased, and Sands began fading fast from view.

Above the noise Gorilla shouted, “I want to be more than friends, Charlie, let’s cross that line, just in case we don’t come back.”

“Never,” shouted Charlie. “Over my dead body.”

“It looks like we all just crossed that line,” yelled Professor Sarantos above the noise.

Then they were gone. Sands stood there alone in disbelief. The gems were on the floor, but the sword was gone. He smiled and said to the empty room, “Good luck my friend, and it would seem you just finally crossed the line, maybe of no return.”

