

Chapter 2

“YouNg LoVe”



It was a quiet evening, and the spring breeze blandly blew in through the open window, slightly stirring ungraded exams from his students. It was nature reminding him to mark them. Professor Sarantos glanced at the giant sapphire crystal ball

paperweight that prevented his papers from flying around the room.

He smiled. The memories from retrieving that finely blown piece of glass still caused him knee pain, just like the cold and damp weather. He rubbed his knee; he felt the scar through his trousers. Those were much simpler times. That laughter of youth echoed in his head, which, for the rest of his life, would make him feel as if someone was running around barefoot on the inside of his chest.

He did not try to get up from his chair. With a grin, he went back to the book on dragon lore that invited him into another world of adventure.

He shook his head and focused on the words, ‘dragons were magical beings that weren’t fond of eating human meat, however they enjoyed chewing on their—’

“Doc, hey ya, doc. I got something.”



He knew that loud, obtrusive voice. It was Gorilla. How did he get in? It was already 9pm.

His housekeeper Clara followed behind the kid.

“Sorry, Professor, but he insisted on seeing you. I’ll get tea.” She left the room before he could complain.

Clara hated when he complained, as most people did. Sarantos though loved complaining as he grew older and the more people he could irritate doing it, the happier it made him. Age equals wisdom!

The kid looked like he'd been running from something or someone. He sat down in the chair opposite him. Then, he took out a Babe Ruth bar, tore off the paper and went to work. Interesting. With that small innocent feat, he closed his eyes, relaxed back on the chair and took in a deep breath.

“Kid, what’re you doing here at this late hour? I thought we’d discussed that and decided your visiting hours were strictly between 9am and 8pm, and only on the weekdays. It’s Sunday kid.”

“Balderdash, and who cares what day it is.” He wadded up the wrapper and threw it into the wastebasket. “And he scores!”

His cheeks felt warm. “I care what day it is. That’s why we made the rule.”

“Your rule, Doc, not mine, and bushwa to that doc, this is way too important. Some things can’t wait.”



“I’ll bite kid, but I am busy so please make it quick.”

His lips were still chewing on the peanuts in his candy bar when he glanced around the room, stopping on the pile of ungraded papers.

“Looks like you haven’t done your homework, Doc. Too bad. You might not have time now.”

“Oh, I think I will, right after you leave me alone!”

Before the kid could retort, Clara returned carrying chamomile tea and small vanilla cookies sitting on a dark green plate. Her smile was pleasant enough as she poured out the tea and left it on the table placed between their two chairs, making it easy for both to reach the tea for a refill if needed.

The Professor watched the kid as he excitedly spooned sugar and poured cream into his tea. The whole action felt weird to him. Why bother drinking tea if you couldn’t enjoy the flavor of said tea leaves. Guzzling it black enhanced the rich aroma and kept the deep-rooted taste that belonged to the earth.

He sipped the hot tea. “Okay, kid, you have ten minutes to explain why you barged in here on my day off from interruptions.”

Gorilla threw a cookie in his mouth, washed it down with tea, and nodded. “Remember years ago, when you were trying to get information on the Jade Dragon of Banda?”

The Professor put his tea down and lifted his eyes to stare into Gorillas, and slowly said, “Yes.”



The kid grinned and opened his backpack and threw an aged and folded up paper on the table. “Look at that, Doc.”

After meeting with Professor Darwin Claymore, his view on adventure had changed. Now, he never

assumed any Professor mad. He took a deeper interest in any mission, only tackling those that would satisfy his own intellectual curiosity or near-sighted needs and forgetting about the stuffy academic shirts that thought they were the only ones who mattered. He no longer needed to prove himself to any historical or scientific communities. In fact, he had since discovered two small but fascinating artifacts.

But this... could it be the kid had found information leading to the find of the century? Should he dare hope? Nope. He smiled and calmed himself before picking up the paper and unfolding its delicate and finely creased material.

As he scanned its contents, he couldn't stop his eyes from growing into tiny balls of wonder. Standing up, he threw the map on the desk and unfolded it the rest of the way.

The kid was next to him, of course, chewing on more cookies.

“Oh, kid. What do we have here? Where did you find this? Can it be real?”

“We have a map, Doc. I believe it’s real. I had a job to serve six big cheeses, you know, bringing them drinks, until they were blotto. You know, plastered. They began talking about private things, not caring who overheard. I became real interested Doc, and so I poured them more drinks.”

His gut tightened up, and he looked up from the map to the kid.

“Please tell me you didn’t steal this map, kid.”

“Well, their bull session went on until the wee hours of the morning until they were so bent, they practically handed it over to me.”

His mouth fell open. “They handed it to you?”

“I asked nicely, of course, but I’m sure it will take them the rest of the day and until tomorrow to

recover and realize their colossal mistake. So I took it with a smile and beat it.”



“Why did you wait so long to come here with it?”

“I argued with myself whether I should bother you on a Sunday or wait until tomorrow, but the smarter half of me concluded to bother you today.”

“Kid, next time you argue with yourself, always allow your smarter half the advantage.” He patted him on the back.

His mind raced. His palms grew moist. He still needed to grade the papers, but this couldn't wait.

“Kid, go pack, and see if Charlie wants to go to Columbia.”

“You got it, Doc.”

As he ran out of the room, Gorilla grabbed the remaining cookies and his backpack. The door slammed when he left the house.

“Clara!” His voice was loud and urgent.

He closed the window, sat down, and feverishly started grading the students' tests.

Clara hurried into the room, almost tripping over a small throw-rug that had a lion's head decorating the center of the intricately woven woolen carpet.

“Oops, bunny, almost fell.”



“Are you okay, Clara?”

“Yes, Professor. You startled me, what’s going on?”
She saw the disappearance of the cookies and gave a frown of disapproval.

He ignored it. “Clara, I have to leave town immediately. Please see to packing my essentials. I’m going to Columbia. Oh, and it’s our secret. I will also need you to get a hold of Professor Tonkin. He’s in class tomorrow but see if he can do my morning class for me. Inform him that he must come by here and pick up these graded papers to pass out to the students. He should pick them up and deliver them to room 210 no later than 10:15 AM. Thank you.”



She’d barely nodded before he ran back to grading the papers.

The kids walked into his study, hand in hand.



“We’re here, Doc.”

They both carried baggage and backpacks. His suitcase was already by the front door. Tonkin will take his class tomorrow and pick up the now graded papers.

“Oh, you two with your young love. I love the way you glow but remember, you won’t be young forever. I am glad you both finally got together, but no mushy stuff on this business trip. I need you both focused.”

“Sure, Professor. Our hearts are bound tight on this crazy wild ride, but we promise to behave and concentrate on the prize at hand.” They were both smirking.

He stuffed the map in his jacket and thanked Clara, who promised to take care of the house when he was gone.

“Don’t know when I’ll be back. Remember, it’s our secret where I’ve gone, and you haven’t seen the kid or Miss Charlie.”

“Right, Professor. I’ll see to things.”

He smiled politely and knew she would do just that. She always took care of him.

The kids seemed so happy. They deserved it. They knew each other forever, from when they were both young. Gorilla was always in love with her. After their last adventure, Charlie realized things can change in a heartbeat. They didn't have limitless time left, you just never know. She decided they should take a chance on love before time ran out. Even though it felt right and for the past month they were never apart, life offered no guarantees their love would last.

The Professor wasn't sure what exactly happened between the kids, but it didn't matter now. He thought about Clara all the way to the airport until they were in their seats waiting for the plane to depart. She was still valuable to him and once in a while he thought about hugging her but worried it would mean more than it should.

He felt the rumble of the plane as it started moving, eventually taking off into the deep blue sky. He preferred flying at night.

The kids were settled in when he heard Gorilla whisper, "I'm hungry for your soul, Charlie, we should enjoy all of our nights together."

“I agree, this could be a sexy trip.”

She laid her head on the kid’s shoulder and dropped asleep as he continued playing with her hair. He loves the smell of her hair. The kid was in mad love, always had been, with that passionate spitfire Charlie.



The plane smoothed out. Sarantos thought it best to spend some time studying the map. The journey ahead looked a little dangerous according to what

the map was showing. Cliffs, bridges, jungles, and people... he was leier of people than a hazardous terrain.

He brought rope and 3 unique knives, not to mention a gun. They might need it.

The dragon was an ancient piece of art that mysteriously disappeared after there was talk they left a message inside of it from Genghis Khan, after his wife hollowed out the interior. According to unorthodox and unverified information, it never arrived at its destination.

Of course, no one in his field believed in the hoax, at least that's what they called it. He always believed in everything unless they proved it. His adventuring into the fray to prove it was true was a natural result of his personality. It was the way he was. He was proud of it.

The adventure was exciting.

In further studying the map, it appeared they'd have at least a full week's hike through some scary areas. They might run into aborigines, who depending on how they judged their purpose, might make this undertaking life threatening. This was a familiar situation for all of them again.

He never thought about the danger he often exposed the kids to, until now.

The kids were like him, a part of the world's crazy journey to find ancient artifacts or stumble across unknown objects.

The Professor leaned over the aisle and asked what Gorilla was reading. He was quiet, so he didn't awaken Charlie.

“Hey, Doc. I'm reading up on the area we're going to be trekking through. Before we land, I want to be prepared. After I looked at the map, I gathered some items I thought we might need.”

He patted the kid on the shoulder. “Good job, kid. It’s always wise to think ahead.”

Gorilla was an unusual lad. He was fiesty and full of energy, maybe it was those candy bars that gave him so much energy. That was what Gorilla attested to.

He needed a drink and asked the flight attendant to bring him a glass of whiskey.

It might help him sleep. She brought it to him, and when she smiled her big toothy grin was worth staring at. She was attractive, a redhead. He always had a thing for the blazing red hair. In his mind, redheads were raunchy and wild.

“If you need anything else, just let me know.” Her voice was soft and her eyes steel blue. As she walked away, his mind wandered to places it shouldn’t. He thought about joining the ranks of the mile high club...

He could get on board with that one.

Clara came back to haunt him though, blocking his view with her own bright face and dark black eyes.

Those eyes held him longer than any other woman he'd ever met, at least for a continued relationship.

The Professor felt in love with lots of others, but it wasn't genuine love, just an infatuation, a primal need for sex, and possibly a desire to have someone to talk to. He was never sure. He often fantasized about a life where he found a soulmate, someone who had it all. Someone he could talk to for hours, someone smart but also sexy.

His life was useful though, and he was mostly glad he was on his own. He was always taking off and traveling. Most women wouldn't like that, nor would they tolerate it. He also didn't think having children would do anyone any good, including him.



His youth had come and gone so quickly. Memories raced across his eyes.

Clara once told him she'd never leave his side, and she really hadn't. They'd still go to the movies occasionally, sometimes dinner, even breakfast, on picnics, and ball games, but just for a moment. Never more than just for a moment.

Hell, he wasn't as attracted to her as some other women he'd meet and immediately spend a night with, but did it ever last? No. He never lasted with anyone except Clara. They lasted, he and her.

He'd never had sex with her and thought he should change that if he got back. She was gorgeous in a common sort of way.

Sarantos knew her, and that scared him a bit. No attachments he had emphasized repeatedly over the years.

But now, trapped in this airplane, he decided that he wanted to do all kinds of things with Clara, to cut loose. Their vibe wasn't a fluke, it was a strong never-ending relationship. They had survived the test of time, just like all the ancient artifacts he always chased.

He knew of a private lake where they could drink some booze to loosen up and then swim nude. The Professor's upper lip broke in a sweat. He felt excited thinking about it. His cheeks turned red.

He honestly had nothing left to lose. The Professor was older now, but still was young enough to enjoy the benefits of a woman. Being with one could make him feel like he was wrapped in the arms of young

love again, if only young for one day. He stared out at the clouds below and thought about young love...