

Chapter 5

“Mother’s Day”



“Quit eating Babe Ruth bars Gorilla, sometimes you’re too goofy for words. We have a severe problem here, and if I hear one more wrapper being crunched, I’ll flip!”

She glared at him, but instead of Charlie’s beautiful face, Gorilla saw dark demonic eyes that threw heavy flaming daggers at him that penetrated his mind and made him cringe. These newly revealed powers made his knees go weak and forced out a satanic stutter when he spoke.

“Ssssorry. I... knnnnow wwwe have a prrrobllem,” Gorilla said.

She kneeled beside the Professor checking his condition again then jumped up slapping Gorilla in the head. “What’s wrong with your voice? Bushwa, you’re full of bushwa, do you know that?” Before he could answer her, she continued in a frenzy, “We need help, the Professor is delirious.” One tiny tear trickled out of the corner of her eye and fell with the help of gravity onto her cheek. “He could die, Gorilla, he could die.” Her voice quivered.

“I know, sorry, I eat when I’m nervous,” said Gorilla.

“Well, quit being nervous and help me figure out what we can do for Professor Sarantos.”

On cue, the Professor shifted his head side to side, mumbling. “Momma, you picked me up when I was down, you’re the one... momm...” As they tried to decipher his gibberish, he fell silent.

Gorilla said, “What the heck does that mean? All this time we thought the Professor was a rational fellow.”

Charlie slugged his arm as hard as she could. Pain followed.

“Gosh Charlie that hurt, quit hitting me.”

“Well, quit being mean. Maybe you mean it, often you don’t, but I don’t care. He’s a macho man, nothing’s changed. So, he loved his mother, so what. Don’t you?”

“Applesauce. It’s almost Mother’s Day and she’ll wonder what’s happened to me when I don’t ring her and tell her she’s the cat’s meow. I never get to see her now that I’m away at college.”

“I hear you, but we need to worry about our zonked-out Professor,” said Charlie.

The Professor moaned. “Momma, I know you trust me. You always help me get better.” His head spun to the side, and he squinted hard. “Momma, is that you? You always believed I’d make it through. Yes... it’s just what you do.”

Charlie bent down next to him. “Oh, Professor, this is horrible.” She touched his face then sighed. “He’s burning up, Gorilla. What are we going to do?”



Professor Sarantos lifted his arm and touched Charlie's face with his hand. "Momma. You have such an eager smile. You always had the cure for everything." His hand smacked Charlie's cheek as he grinned, nodding his head.

"Good grief, he thinks I'm his mother."

“Okay, I know what to do,” said Gorilla.

Her face lit up for an instant until Sarantos grumbled. “Momma.”

“We need to do something quick, so what’s your plan?”

Gorilla didn’t answer her. Instead, he went deep into his bag and pulled out a small cloth. He went to the water to wet it. Then, he handed it to Charlie. Every day is a journey.

“You keep doing that to his forehead, it might keep the fever down until I get back.”

Charlie’s mouth fell open. She stood up, facing him with an intense stare that made her look bedazzled.

In a high-pitched voice, she said, “Where the hell do you think you’re going? You’re not leaving me here alone with the Professor on this island or wherever the hell we are.”

She considered another sucker punch to his arm. It’s much easier to knock something down than to lift it up.

“Hey dope, I’m not leaving you for good. I’ll be back. Someone has to find something on this world to save the Professor, and that someone will be me.”

“What are you talking about? How are you going to save him? I’m the one staying behind and keeping his fever down,” said Charlie with her fist close to his arm and ready to fire.

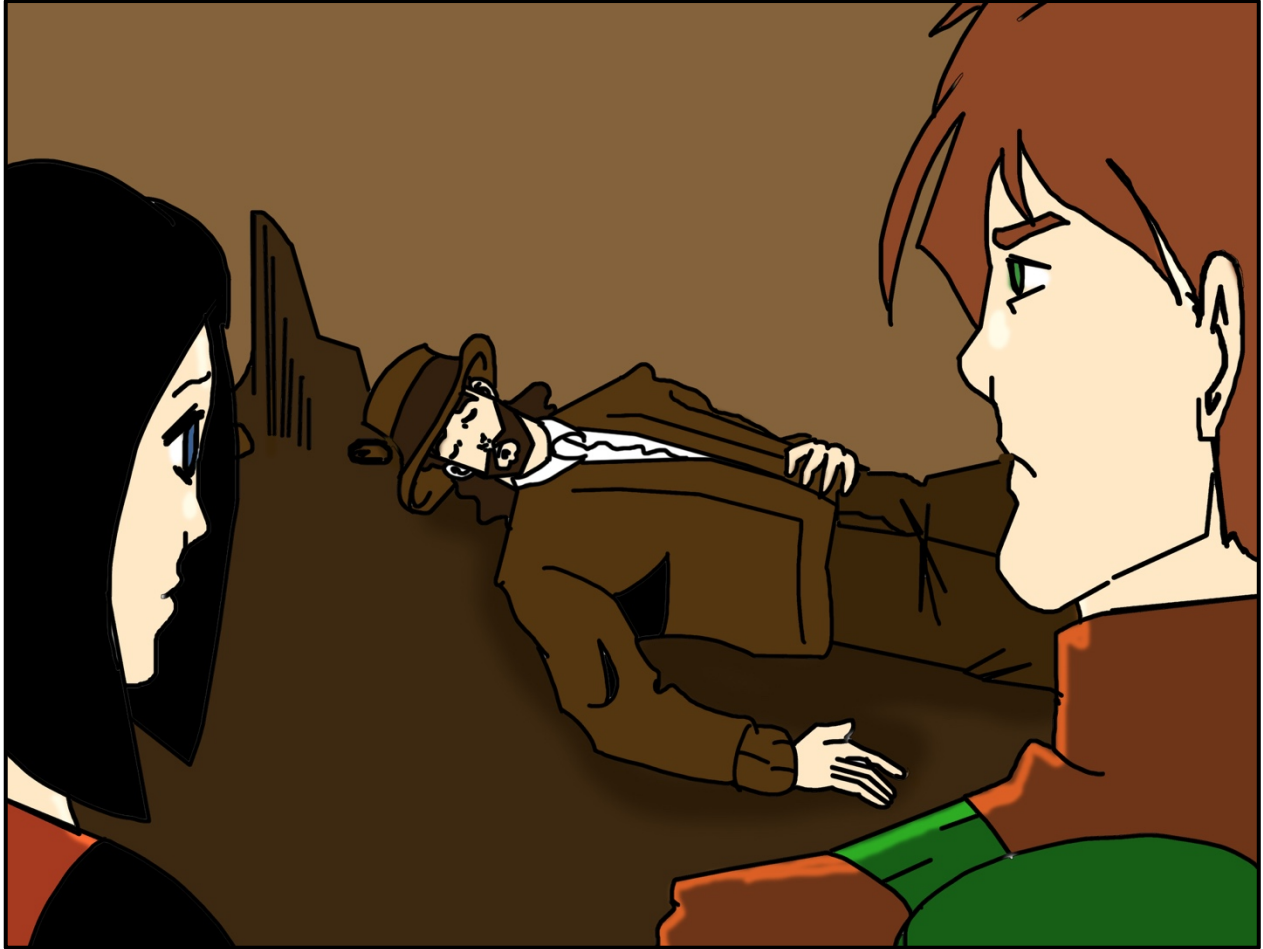
“You really need to curb those anger issues. I bite my nails. I’m so scared of you. I’m sure there’s an antidote, there always is.” His eyes looked up as his brain ran. “I suppose snake, or the flowers could cure him, after all they are on the walls.”

“Just cuz they’re painted on the walls doesn’t mean they’re a cure, and we didn’t see any real ones anyway. Sometimes you’re dopy, did I tell you that today?”

“Yes, you did, but do you have any better ideas Ms. smarty pants?”

She managed a weak smile. “No, Gorilla, I don’t have a better idea. Hey, what about the note, did you read it?”

“Right, the note.”



He looked around. It was on the floor.

“Hurry, Gorilla. Read it.”

“Momma, you worry anyway, but it won’t change tomorrow. Give me a hug...
momma...”

They both turned to the delirious Professor before reading the note.

“Well, there you have it, smarty pants. It says, ‘If you were not smart you could die,
look around the cave, it won’t lie.’ What the hell does that mean,” said Gorilla.

“How am I supposed to know? You figure that riddle out! You always expect me to sort out every puzzle. That’s a lot to carry. I’m tired of being the genius around here all the time.”

“What do we see in the cave? The flowers, the hibiscus, that’s it. They must be the cure, Charlie. The flowers are the cure.”

Her face lit up, and she reached up and kissed him right on the mouth.

She said, “Sometimes Gorilla, I could just kiss you! And I guess I just did.”

“Not that I’m minding your unsubstantiated attack much, but yeah, I think you just did. I’ll go look for the flower, you stay with the Professor. I’ll be thinking about your kiss while we’re apart though...”

Charlie gasped. “Suddenly, I can’t breathe. No, I’m kidding. You wish that kiss meant as much to me as it did to you, Gorilla. Anyway, be careful out there, it’s dangerous, and watch out for snakes you big goofball.”

“Will do, my lady.” Gorilla threw his pack over his shoulder and went out the way they’d come in yesterday. Without enemies around us, we grow lazy. Time for adventure. Time to save the Professor.

The last thing he heard was the Professor telling his mother that she got things done, and Charlie moaning, ‘poor Professor’.

It was warm but not too hot. It felt muggy, though. He tasted the humidity in his lungs every time he inhaled. His armpits were wet. He looked around before jumping to the path but saw no flowers, at least not the ones they required. He needed to be smart. They had no idea how long the Professor had left. Tomorrow's not promised.

He hit the path, jogging at a light speed, marking where he'd been at regular intervals with a chalk he'd brought from home. He always tried to be prepared for the unusual. The Professor had taught him that and talked about being prepared all the time. Gorilla liked that about himself. The last time they were on an adventure, he knew he needed to bring more items. He learned his lesson well. The Professor had taught him to always try to think ahead and anticipate problems.

Gorilla looked up. The clouds seemed to follow him. He watched out for snakes and moved as quick as he thought was safe, not that being here in any form of the imagination was safe, but it helped him keep moving. Life is about timing.

He refocused his mind on the Professor. What if he died? He had taught him so much, but Gorilla still had much left to learn. He couldn't let that happen; the Doc was like a second father to him ever since he'd been away from home.

Gorilla pushed through the brush and stopped when he thought he heard a noise. Nothing. He kept moving until he reached a stream. The water looked inviting. It appeared calm with a gentle downward flow. It was clear, so he drank from it and filled up his loyal flask.

The Doc always took away any doubt that Gorilla had in himself, especially on their adventures together. The Doc taught him how to survive in any jungle, by hunting for food and water while also avoiding danger.

Even though the Doc always called him "kid", Gorilla understood he meant it in a nice way. Professor Sarantos believed in him, and so he wanted more than anything

for the world to know his name, Doc Sarantos, because he was the one, the best teacher and the best travel companion The Doc understood so many cool things that most people wouldn't dream about in their lifetime.

One day it would happen. They would stand together at a podium sharing their historic findings with the world, but not today, or not any day if he couldn't find the cure for the poison that made the man he admired confused, clinging to the edge of an abyss.

Minutes passed quickly. He moved toward yet another cave. Off in the distance, he thought he recognized a Hibiscus flower. Perhaps he had a lil' jungle fever?



restlessly around the cave for what seemed like hours. The Professor remained in and out of consciousness. She would peer out regularly into the jungle looking for Gorilla, or any sign of movement. There was none.

It was too quiet. Her shoulders felt heavy. Her breathing seemed rapid. Anxiety gripped her stomach. Time was ticking, and the Professor wasn't doing well. His fever was climbing.

She knelt again next to him and placed his jacket under his head, gathering the rag and squeezing out the sweat. It was on fire. She took it to the waterfall and let the cool water saturate it before wringing it out. As she walked back towards the Professor, she started to cry.

As she placed the reinvigorated rag against his forehead and rubbed it down his cheeks, the Professor somehow opened his eyes.

“Doc, you okay? I’m here,” said Charlie.

He tried to smile but mumbled something incoherent instead.

She moved the rag to his neck. “That’s okay, Professor. You need not talk. I’m here. Just save your strength and try to relax.” She thinks a million thoughts but only four get through to him.

His hand raised enough for her to take it.

“W... wa... t... er.”

“Oh, right, how silly am I? You probably want some water, sorry Professor. You must be very thirsty.”



She got his water flask, lifted his head gently, and helped guide the water into his mouth like a river emptying out into the sea. The cool water at once must've soothed his throat and parched mouth because he grinned like a happy child. The wind whistled a peaceful melody in the background. She gave him more, then laid his head back down on the jacket.

His tongue slowly licked his lips, and he moved his mouth twice, trying to speak. She waited.

“The no...”

“Don’t talk. I know what you want to say. We read the note, and Gorilla figured out the flower will cure you. I agree with him.”

“Ridd... le?”

“Yes. ‘If you were not smart you’d die, look around the cave, it won’t lie,’ that’s what it said, but it doesn’t mean you were stupid Professor. We were just in a hurry. I know you’re looking out for us.”

He nodded. “I was goo... fy. Goril... la right.”

“About the flower?”

The Professor nodded.

“Yeah, he’s a smarty pants, but I’m worried Professor. He’s been gone a long time. It’s dangerous out there. I know he’s adventured with you in the past, but he’s alone now. Do you think he’ll be okay?”

She asked because she needed the reassurance. She needed to hear it from the Professor that Gorilla would be fine.

“Yes.” The Professor barely got it out before he drifted again into another fit of delirium. Again, he talked about how much he loved his mother.

She paced anew, refreshed the rag, and watched the jungle with eyes that saw nothing but plants and trees swaying in the slight breeze.

She pivoted when the Professor started humming. He was well over the edge. She wasn't sure if they'd get him back; he was burning up.

“Hello momma. Don't worry. I'mm going to wrrriite... a song for you.”

“Oh Professor, we're losing you. Where are you Gorilla?”

Professor Sarantos was sweating profusely. She hurried and replaced the cool water on his rag. This time she removed his drenched shirt and rubbed the cool cloth down his arms and chest. His skin was scorching, and his mind was fiery and feverish.



The Professor groaned. “Momma you’re the..... glue. Yep.”

He sounded drunk. Maybe it wasn’t a poison but a weird drug.

She said, “No Professor, you’re the glue that keeps us together.”

He smiled and nodded.

She went to look out again. No sign of Gorilla. It was getting dusky. The sun began its descent to settle in for the night, sending eerie shadows running along the landscape. It was the only thing that moved. The sun eventually escaped over the horizon.

Charlie screamed. “Gorilla where are you?”

Her voice rang into the jungle, and became forever lost because no one heard it.

The Professor stirred. He was drowning, and there was no one to throw him a lifeline!

She ran back towards him with heavy tears streaming down her cheeks.

Strange noises settled into the sunset's path and caught her attention. She awkwardly dried her eyes, grabbed a dagger, and lined up stones by the cave entrance. She held the dagger tightly. Her knuckles turned white. Perhaps something dangerous was heading her way? Her weapon doesn't have to be good, just good enough.

Charlie, you silly cow. You're braver than that. No more tears. Stand and fight if you need to. You've always been a fighter.

It was getting darker, and the noises increased in volume. The chattering surrounded the cave. Every direction brought commotion.

She tied a rope around the Professor and attached it to a rock in case something got past her and wanted to take him home for dinner. Nope, she wasn't going to let that happen.

She walked back to the opening. Suddenly, she heard it - a loud noise. Then something began climbing up their rope.

Her eyes tried to adjust. Her pupils dilated. Her heart raced. Her fist clenched. She stood steady with dagger in hand and realized she'd have to push it off the edge or cut the vine. Where was Gorilla?

Gorilla raced towards the flowers. He sensed the Doc next to him, and all the lessons came along with him. He imagined them together. Run, but listen, observe, but don't stop. He was doing just that.

Man, he craved noodle juice about now.

The tall flowers finally bloomed in front of him, vibrant, glorious, and perfect against the green background of the lush forested noisy jungle.

They were red, blue, yellow, and orange. He wasn't sure if it mattered which color they used, so he cut one of each. Nature painted the cave flowers like a canvas. The colors varied but that gave him no clue of their significance. You don't know what you don't know.

He didn't want to shove them in his backpack so carried them close to his chest. The sun was lowering, and the looming shadows creeped him out. He had to get back as quickly as he could.

The mouth of the cave stood dark and unnerving, like the inside of a dinosaur's jaw. As much as he wanted to investigate, he didn't have time. The Doc might be dead already.

The marks he'd left provided him a nimble way back to the cave where he had left the dying Doc and his sad assistant.

The universe they were in wasn't on his side. Something with an evil sense of humor pushed the sun-down without allowing it the time needed to drop slowly into tomorrow.



So, there he was using one of his flashlights to see, and it was surely a signal for creatures in the area that their dinner was on the move, and in what direction it was moving. All he can do is try.

The perfumes of the night were intoxicating and stronger than during the daylight hours. Although he ran, he enjoyed their fragrance, along with the beauty of the jungle, until he realized something was following him, or more likely stalking him.

He couldn't tell if he could outrun it, but grasped that he'd lead it right back to the Doc and Charlie. There was nothing he could do about that. He had no choice right now.

Animal or beastly human, he had no clue.

Cries in the trees reached his ears, causing him to run faster and shiver slightly. The cooler air slapped his cheeks, stinging them.

A branch snapped. He ran harder. A purple leaf smacked him in the face, scaring the living bageebers out of him.

"Bushwa," he yelled, almost missing his mark, and turning off onto a road not taken. Thank goodness he caught it in time.

He'd never been this frightened in his life. His wild journeys were always with the Doc, and he depended on him to guide them both to safety. That was far easier. Now the Doc wasn't here and the Doc depended on his strength and knowledge. He couldn't fail, he wouldn't fail.

Another branch snapped, closer that time.

He wasn't far. An ocean of emotion ran thru him as he hurried through the brush.

Snap, almost next to him. He should stand and fight, or it could attack him when he wasn't ready.

He turned, but saw nothing, only a half hour left until complete darkness. It's a box he can't get out of!

He had an idea. He nonchalantly went into his pockets holding the giant flowers out carefully, then pulled out a Babe Ruth bar, opened it up, cringed at the thought of giving it up, but quickly threw it on the path, then turned and ran as fast as his legs allowed.

He picked up loud grunts in front of him and running right into what sounded like a battle. He got closer, turned off his light and approached with caution.

From where Charlie stood, she couldn't see the Professor anymore, but hoped the creature climbing up their rope was too big to get through the slit to get to the Professor. She backed into the darkness of the cave and waited. She calmed her breathing. She calmed her mind. She focused, just like the Professor had always taught her.



The air turned stale. The trees swayed in the distance. It felt like an eternity as her heart pounded louder and louder exploding in her chest threatening to detonate leaving nothing but an empty crater in her chest. She shuttered, imagining that would be a horrible way for such a young woman to go out of this world, but Gorilla might've faced a more horrendous death and had no one to mourn him or hold him while he died bleeding out after some hungry dinosaur spat him out, not quite satisfied with such a small morsel for dinner. Her thoughts raced. Her heart was heavy. Sooner would be better than later.

Grunts, and a language she didn't know. It's possible the cavemen

found them and now she'd have to take them on by herself. She stood ready with stone and dagger.

Suddenly, something came over the edge. The night blurred. She could barely make out the face, but the body was large and muscular, definitely not Gorilla. It was half naked because the flesh glistened from water droplets reflecting off the pale moonlight.

More grunts, the first one turned around assisting the one behind it. Interesting, they had a working with others thought process.

Her mind scrambled, not sure what she'd do if three or four more came up over that edge.

She should've set a trap with a rope, causing them to trip and fall back into the water. Too late!

A loud commotion came from below.

One cave man grunted and beat his chest like a wild animal, like he was claiming whatever they found in the cave. Was he being territorial or was there something else going on?

His action didn't go unnoticed. A horrible scream from below met his challenge. A battle broke out. The one on top grunted and leaped down on the rock next to the one he'd moments before tried to assist.

The rock ledges were slippery, though wide enough for three humans, but these beasts were larger than normal people.

She held her ears. The sounds were brutal, flesh ripping and bone breaking. They echoed into the night. The fireworks were deafening. Moving carefully to the edge, she peered over.

The cave men that had been climbing up were now at the bottom of the waterfall engaged in a fierce battle that was both animalistic and ruthless.

She counted at least seven. They fought with hanging limbs and gouged out eyes. She threw up over the edge, but no one noticed because of the nastiness and intensity of the brawl.

She continued to watch as three more went down. They had to be dead. Then, two more fell off the steps into the water. There were now only two left alive. They washed their wounds and started the grueling climb up the waterfall, needing a sanctuary.

Being injured already, she might have a chance. She steadied herself and held the dagger ready to stab it into an eyeball as soon as the creature came over the top.

Their grunts were barbaric. They might be physically stronger, but she was definitely smarter. She had to use that to her advantage. Sometimes it's just time to stop being scared. You never know when your life will change. She watched closely as the first one appeared over the top just when the one below it screamed and fell back into the water. It was her only chance. It was now or never. She awkwardly shoved the dagger deep into the creature's neck, though it was taller than her and she would never have reached its eye. She figured the neck was probably the place to do the most damage.



It bellowed violently in her face, its breath rancid. It grabbed for her, but she was

too quick. She kicked it in the knee hearing a crack, and it fell over the cliff flailing about while unsuccessfully trying to bring her down with it.

She slowly backed away, swollen, sweaty and short-winded. It hit the water boorishly, the dagger still in its neck.

What happened to the first one?

The rope moved again. She didn't know if she could take another one on. She wasn't over the fear from her last encounter. It was too soon.

She went straight to the shadows where huge rocks clung on for dear life and took one in each hand. Patience. Steady as you go, Charlie. Her eyes stayed open and fixed, not blinking.

The talk of Mother's Day had choked her up before when the Professor was rambling, and her mind drifted to that now. She realized she may never get back home. Charlie always wanted adventure and her mother always warned her to be careful what she wished for. The ever supporting, but cautious warnings her mother routinely gave her, moved to the front of her mind. If she died here, her mother would never know what happened to her. However, she knew her mum would know wherever her adventures took her, it was exactly where she wanted to be, or where her choices took her. Not the same thing.

She whispered. "Love you mum, sorry."

The shadow moved to the top of the opening.

She screamed, threw a rock, and missed. "Damn."

Throwing another one met the same fate. She tried to follow its movements, while grabbing two more stones. She needed the gun. Why didn't she bring the gun from the Professor's backpack? Again, too late.

Her body began shaking, her forearms went into spasms. She felt like she was breathing borrowed air. Her arms couldn't throw any more rocks, so she threw herself at the shadow and took it down.

She screamed vulgarities smacking at the creature. Her arms flailed underneath her attacker until he forced her against the hard cavern floor. She found herself on the bottom.

"Charlie, stop fighting. You almost killed me. My God. It's me, Gorilla. Gosh, if you wanted another kiss, why didn't you just ask nicely?"

Her mouth fell open. She exhaled, relaxed, and finally cried, before slugging him and then kissing him right on the mouth.

"Where've you been, you goof? Sick with worry, I was. The Professor needs us."

"You almost crushed the flowers," said Gorilla

Charlie said, "Let's go then. Do we make him eat them?"

"We have no choice I brought one of each color, not sure if they all work the same or only one specific color works."

“Good job,” said Charlie.

They entered the space where they left Professor Sarantos.

He was still whimpering but noticed their arrival and grinned slightly. He saw the flowers.

He had weird dreams and could’ve kicked himself for not being more cautious. He was smarter than that and had faced worse dangers than that in the past. Sarantos needed to get a grip on his fragile emotional state. Having the kids with him made him anxious. He couldn’t afford to be unreliable.

The kids looked down at him, and Charlie broke off a piece of flower, feeding it to him. He chewed clumsily but did the best he could. She fed him another. From what he could tell, she intended to feed him one of each color. Good girl.

The flowers healed him swiftly, and soon they were sharing stories of their day. The kids told him about his delirious rantings. They ate, they laughed. He shared with them memories of his dreams, making a song for his mother.

He sang the words he’d envisioned. The clouds of sadness lifted.

When he got to, ‘so mamma I put it in a song for you,’ the kids joined in and they sang two more rounds before ending it on a natural high.

“You still protect me, just the thought of you, protects me.”

Charlie smiled and said, “Funny, Professor, when I heard those words from your fitful mouth, I thought of you.” Today was horrible until it wasn’t!

“Ditto,” said Gorilla.

“Enough mush. Tomorrow we still need to find the rest of the stones.”

“Yes, Professor.”

“Sure, ya Doc.”

“Good night you two kids, and thanks. Even when the world explodes, I will never be alone...”

Life had taken an upward spiral.

