

Chapter 6 “Father's Day”



Professor Sarantos sat at his desk, unraveling the wave of emotions washing over him. He stared silently out the oak window of his small study. Leaves were changing colors already; it seemed a little early to him.

“I brought you some tea and sandwiches, Professor.”

His new housekeeper was tall like a mountain, but lively and bursting with a blooming charm. She pulled her dark hair

neatly back into a bun. There were no spit curls to match the latest fashion. She was far too rational for the bandwagon effect, the rage that overtakes the public where everyone adopts a certain fad and they all look alike. Mary Lodge was a woman that played her own horn and didn't care if she was out of tune, even as the orchestra was delivering a well-balanced melody with a pleasing texture.

Sarantos smiled up at her as she leaned down politely to place the sparkling tray in front of him on the freshly polished wooden desk. A flame danced inside her dark eyes like her spirit longed to be set free. "Thank you, Mary."

"Oh, Professor, you're quite welcome. It's my absolute pleasure." She stood up as the outline of her compact frame hugged the sunny dress that fit tightly around her waist. Her breasts were smaller than he liked, but her graciousness fascinated him, and her gams matched those of Betty Grable. He was glad she didn't care to wear the new style of pants for women, the palazzo, which he felt was rather dreary.

"When are you going to move in? I've got plenty of room. It's senseless for you to continue to live in that small flat and travel that distance twice a day."

"Looks like we're going to have an early winter." She was quick to change the subject as she turned away from the open window and said, "I live closer to my father, who needs my help. I buy him groceries and cook meals for him. He's been lonely since my mother passed. I can't abandon him."

“That’s fine and dandy. My father and I don’t have that type of relationship.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Professor. My dad always said it was his job to raise me right and to teach me to understand that life will be full of pain. But I never saw it that way. I’m a positive person. My dad might be a tad too fatherly and a little negative, but I love him to pieces. I’d do anything for him!”



He didn't really know what to say. The most deafening sound is the unrelenting sound of silence. Sarantos looked outside again as he searched for something appropriate to say, finally just blurting out the only thing that came to his mind. "My father said no day goes by without mistakes and you're just smart enough to be dumb. I never understood what he was trying to tell me."

Her smile broadened, and she winked. "I think you know exactly what he meant."

He laughed. "Oh, do I?"

"Yes, you do, Professor."

His brow creased. "Mary, that Professor thing you keep calling me needs to change. Please, just call me Sarantos." Maybe that was too personal for her, but he wanted to be more personal with such a captivating woman. The formality bothered him like sleeves to nowhere.

Mary's soft eyes opened wide, and her mouth curled in one corner. It was a sexy look. "I'm not sure I can do that, Professor. We are here on a strictly professional level and addressing you by your first name might change our relationship."

As usual, he was an idiot. She wasn't the type of woman he would typically go gaga over, but he wanted an actual relationship with her, a genuine friendship first, and then a

happily ever after type of thing. Not that he wanted to propose marriage, that was the furthest thought from his mind right now.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to imply that we should get together. I just hear Professor all day long from my students, and I do have a real name. No big deal. I completely understand and I apologize, Mary, if I made you uncomfortable.”



That comment didn't change her mind. "I'll go make dinner." She abruptly left the room.

Good golly. Maybe she hadn't liked the comment about his dad? He drank tea while daydreaming about the next adventure. Where it might take them. They had the resources

now to go anywhere they wanted. He stopped after a few minutes. He did not want daydreaming to replace real life.

His mind drifted back to his father. Once upon a time, he wanted to celebrate a first Father's Day with his own dad, but changed his mind when his dad nonchalantly told him he'd already celebrated the occasion over the years in every way imaginable and there was no need to cheer. That left a sour taste in his mouth. He wasn't a father yet. Maybe because he hadn't found the right girl? No, that wasn't the truth. He just didn't have time for a long-term relationship – those things demanded too much of his attention. Maybe he would never settle down? Maybe the baggage from his father still affected him?

Over the years, he surely enjoyed many nights of pleasure and if he was married, he would've missed out on some glorious memories. He was getting older now, but a part of him still didn't want to slow down or be anchored to commitments. But life was hard to enjoy without a friend at the table. Again, he flipped. A prison cell was not what he wanted and would clip his wings to fly and squash his freedom to wander like a nomad. He loved to just pick up and head off at a moment's notice. Balderdash, maybe marriage and Mary weren't his type after all.

The Professor needed an adventure and a little time to indulge himself in the worst way. He needed a distraction, but it was Friday night and school would be in session this coming Monday. He might discuss their fantastic journey of securing The Lady, a wonderful legacy.

Someone knocked on the main door, and Mary's footsteps moved towards the big oak door.

Moments later, the kid ran into the study, sat down, and grabbed the other half of his sandwich.

"Hey, ya Doc."

"Hi kid. Did you not think I might want that?"



"Nope. You never eat your other half. Besides, snacking doesn't have to be something you're ashamed of. I'm pretty sure someone famous once said that." He chewed and

between bites said, “Not half bad. What’s with the new hire?”

“Nothing, I needed a change.”

The kid nodded. “Of course you did. She got mad and left?”

He knew his face turned red when the heat rose in his cheeks. “You know me. I have a way with women. No one knows how to annoy them more than me.”

The kid chuckled. “That you do, Doc, that you do. One-night stander!”

“Don’t rub it in. I need a change, but school is in session on Monday. How’s your job going?”

“It’s going. It’s not what I want to be doing if I’m being straight with you, but it pays the bills for now. I got a part-time gig at the newspaper, doing articles on travel. Not half bad.”

The kid sat back, stretched out his legs, put his hands in his pockets and pulled out a Babe Ruth bar. Sarantos smiled and was glad the kid had never changed. It comforted him in a fatherly way. In that moment, he realized he’d always felt like a father to the kid and to Charlie. He had kids, after all! He grinned.

The kid's head tilted. "Okay Doc, what's with the stupid smirk?"

"Nothing, nothing at all."

"Doesn't look like nothing. You look sick. Are you feeling up to par? I'm not gonna argue. An adventure would be great. Between the two of us, I'm sure we can find something. I'll check around today and keep an ear to the ground."

"Thanks, kid. Our souls long for the smell and flavor of an adventure. To be honest, I was just thinking that you and Charlie are like the kids I never had. You know, you both run to me when you're hurt, and you know I'd do anything for either of you."

The kid almost choked on his candy bar. No feeling is final.



“Geez Doc, I’m all shook up.” The kid laughed.

“What’s so funny? I mean it. You’re both more than I deserve. I work too much and sometimes might seem unavailable to you, but no matter what, I’m always here for you both.”

An enormous tree outside the window whistled a tune as he waited for Gorilla to answer. Finally, the kid nodded his head and then searched his pockets for another candy bar. “There it is.” He looked pleased with himself, tore the wrapper off, and stuffed it into another pocket. “Doc, there’s only one thing that makes little sense. I got these baby blues, and you’ve got those giant brown orbs that have flecks of green in them. Oh, wait, maybe my momma had these beautiful blues? Come on Doc, who’s my momma? Don’t hold back. Gimme the dirt.”

“Kid, you’re hysterical. Well, maybe you’re the milkman’s kid and Charlie’s mine – she’s got my adorable puppy brown eyes. You’re definitely a misfit kid, but sometimes you have to allow a flower to be a flower.”

The kid couldn’t stop laughing as the Professor dove into the moment.

Mary came into the room and stood in the doorway with her hands pressed against her hips. “What’s going on in here, then?”

The kid held up his hand. “Can’t talk about it, Mary. Wait, maybe I should say momma? What’s your eye color, Mary?” He tilted his head as if to get a better look.

His side hurt as he burst out laughing. It wouldn’t work. Mary had browns like the Professor.



Mary was a no-nonsense girl and scolded them like a high school teacher. “What is going on in your lame head, young man? I’m not your momma and dinner is ready. Professor, should I set a place for your guest, or was he leaving?”

Sarantos couldn’t answer because he was trying not to burst out laughing, so he nodded instead.

She disapprovingly shook her head as she left the room.

The two of them looked at each other and howled for another five minutes. Life was good.

“Doc, thanks for dinner. My momma isn’t a terrible cook.”

“Okay, kid, enough, please. She’s going to kill me when I take a nap or poison me...”

“Applesauce. It might take me a few days to find out what’s going on out there in the real world. Charlie and I were heading to a showing at the museum tomorrow that has some cool artifacts that were buried in an Englishman’s yard in Yorkshire. Maybe I might get wind of something there?”

“Sounds like a plan, kid. By the way, you never talk about your dad. Why?”



“My old man was strict. He never allowed us to celebrate anything and in his stoic manner, said he does it all because of love. There was never a need to memorialize anything. He told us to move onto the next day and always work hard, every day. Never take a day off. Never take a break. He never even let us celebrate the Father’s Day thing. He got mad at me last year when I made him a card. Well, I told him it was the best day of the year, except for Christmas of course, and the day I met Charlie, and when I got my first ride, my first day at college, my first kiss, and I guess I’ve had a lot of sweet memories and I could just keep rambling on. The other thing, and for reasons I can’t imagine, he said, forget Father’s Day in this house. So, I did.”

“Oh, kid, you’re a noble son and I’m sure he is proud.”
Success in life is far from guaranteed.

“Doc, that sounded like you’re making fun of me. Were you joking and being sarcastic?”

“Of course, I was joking, kid. Your dad was probably a mess with worry. All dads probably fret about their kids and families nonstop. But I’m sure when they have a little alone time to catch their breath, their heads race with memories of the past... like when you drew your first breath, said daddy for the first time, all of that would make him beam I’m sure. I know I would if I were your dad. Dads probably feel selfish to celebrate a day about them, a day like Father’s Day.”

“Yeah, okay, Doc. Thanks, what about your dad? You two don’t get along at all. What’s that about? You don’t think he appreciates you, and realizes he hasn’t made mistakes?”

“What? Kid, you’ve met my dad. Not even close. He always tells me he can’t believe I’m his son. We have nothing in common except our name. The fact he sits on the board at the university, and I don’t, it’s always rubbed him the wrong way. That group of old boys hold their heads so high in the clouds, no one can reach them without a jet.”

“That’s funny, Doc. I gotta hand it to you, but you know, maybe you never had kids because of your relationship with your father? But you know better! It’s hard to raise kids when you feel frustrated by your own parents. Did you get along with your mother at least?”

“Sure, kid, me and my mom were okay. I’m a laugh a minute, but I suppose you’re right. I’m sure I shied away from commitment because of my dad. If I failed them, then it meant I learned nothing at all. That would’ve made me run further into any jungle in the most remote place on this earth.” He stared at the kid. “I might not have come back.”

“Balderdash, Doc. You wouldn’t have left Charlie and I trying to figure things out on our own. We would’ve been dead and long forgotten. I’m glad you’re like a father to us. You watched over us and looked out for us since the first day of school. We felt the nurturing of your wisdom with each baby step we took.”



The Professor's heart warmed. That kid had the touch. He stood up and walked over to where the kid sat and hugged him while sneaking a candy bar out of his pocket.

The kid's face turned a pinkish hue as his smile became an impish grin. "Shucks, Doc. Now you made me uncomfortable and misty eyed. I feel like Charlie." A good laugh is sunshine in the home.

Sarantos trudged back to his desk, sat down, smiled, and unwrapped the Baby Ruth bar. He had a sneaky evil grin, like a kid who just got away with stealing a cookie from the cookie jar when his mom wasn't looking.

"Thanks, kid. You never asked if I wanted one. I was happy to help myself."

The youth's eyes bulged and then dropped to his coat pocket. He leaned back in his chair, nodded, and smiled sheepishly. "The same trick will never work twice on me, Doc! I have warned you."

The candy was tasty; he had to admit.

"Well, Doc. You're the bee's knees." The kid nodded and checked his pockets again.

"What's the problem? You worried I took the last one?" The thought that he had more made him chuckle.

"Doc, not nice. I sense a little evil in you today. And I wouldn't say you took the last one, more like stole it."

The kid's frown deepened.



“What’s bothering you, kid?”

“I thought I had more in there, not just one. Better go. I’m meeting up with Charlie.”

Sarantos busted out laughing. “Well, I say you did.” He held up five bars.

“Baloney, Doc. That’s not right. Once, the world was perfect, but now...”

Sarantos interrupted. “Oh, don’t look so sad, my son and young apprentice. Dads tease their kids after all. Don’t they?”

“I already have one that does that, and tomorrow I need to bring a gift over to Charlie’s. He’s coming there for dinner with my mother. My father once told me he stands tall, and he sits weak. He needs me. Those are his words, not mine. I don’t think he does, though. Maybe he wants me around more than needs me around. I don’t know Doc, maybe he’s changing in his old age?”

“Okay, kid. Have a good one and enjoy your dad and enjoy the moment. My dad doesn’t celebrate that Father’s Day thing either.”

“Why don’t you join us for dinner, fivish, and I won’t take no for an answer, daddy number two.”

“Fine. I’ll be there. Here’s your candy back.” The kid grabbed them and darted to the door.

“Hey kid.” Gorilla turned. “Thanks,” the Professor said warmly.

When the room was quiet, Sarantos pulled out three more candy bars, laid them on his desk, and reached into his pocket to grab one more. He unwrapped it as he picked up the phone. “Hey Dad, it’s me. No, nothing’s wrong. Just wanted to talk to you and tell you how much I love you. Happy Father’s Day, dad.”

