

## Chapter 7

### “EyeBANGing”

“Run kid!”



He didn't have to say it, but the words flew out of his mouth. Micky was already four steps ahead of him.

The Professor heard a gunshot behind him. He could hear and smell the shot. He hoped it was Alvaro and not the gangsters that followed them.

He'd wanted something fresh, something not boring, but this was overkill.

As his feet picked up speed, he pulled his gun and peered over his shoulder. The kid disappeared in front of him.

“Kid?!” The perspiration ran freely down his face and saturated his shirt.

Another shot rang out.

“Bush... wa!” The word rose into the air, bounced off the canyon walls, and echoed in his ears as he slid quickly down the steep cliff.

It happened so fast. He never had control as he bumped clumsily along rocks while trying to slow his speed by grabbing onto the tiny, outstretched tree branches that struggled for life in the heat of the sun. It didn't work. They were too small to get a good grip.

He'd be sore tomorrow.

The scream of Alvaro followed.

He bolted towards an outcrop of trees at the bottom and saw the kid as he was picking himself up and brushing down his clothing.

Alvaro's gun sailed past him, so he reached out and grabbed it. He hung onto his gun when he fell.

He turned his body to the side as the bottom rose in front of him. The Professor did his best to avoid the trees that he raced to meet. Who would you be if you had no fear?

More gunshots rang out. These screams ignored an uncomfortable truth.

The kid moved out of the dirt to assist him. They both took cover behind the trees.

Alvaro was still on his way down. He plummeted like an anvil.



Sarantos peeked around the tree. Five gangster type characters were targeting Alvaro. He pointed and fired. The distance was too far, but it was enough to get Alvaro to the bottom. He then ran behind the trees with him.

“Thanks,” said Alvaro, nodding his head one time. The big vein in his neck throbbed.

The Professor lifted his chin as his head slightly tilted back. “What’s with the gangsters? Looks like we are on the hit list?”

The kid’s voice went to a high pitch. “Doc, they were clearly trying to bump us off. What’d we do?”

Alvaro said, “Nothing. The American gangsters often come here looking for gold, gems, and anything of value.”

Gorilla raised his eyebrows. “Applesauce. That’s no answer. If we did nothing, why do they have a beef with us? We could die out here in the jungle although the lions might find us a tasty snack.”

The Professor ignored the youthful outburst and peered around the trees to see if the gangsters followed them down.

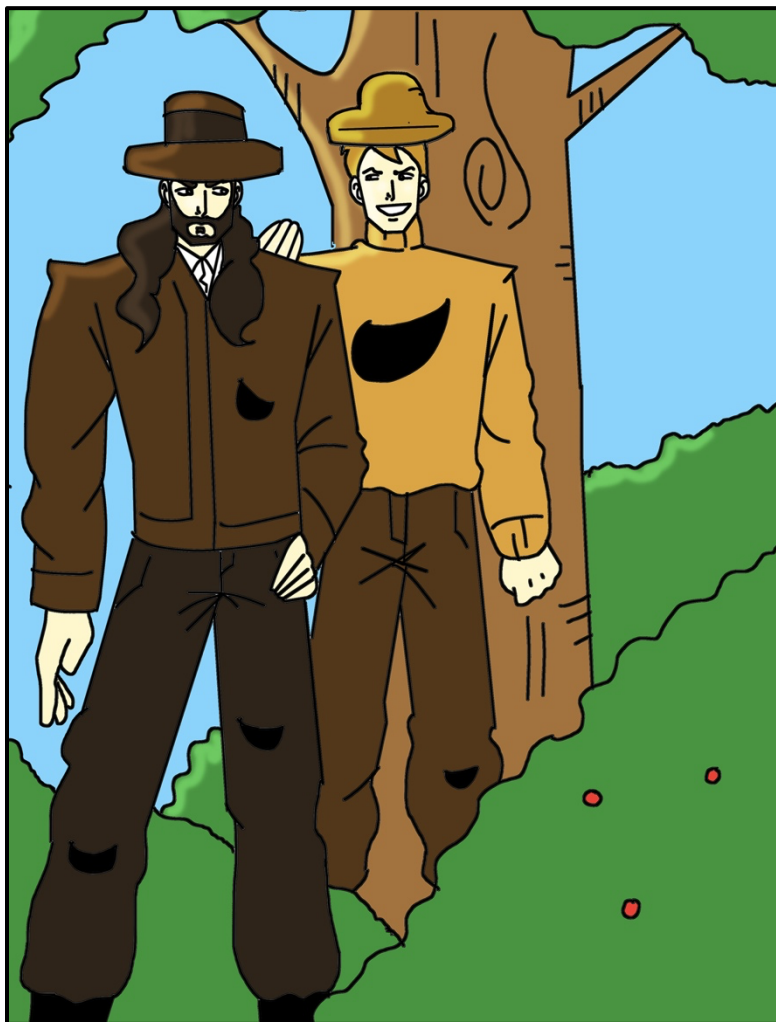
They were still at the top of the cliffside and appeared to be in deep conversation.

The kid scanned over his shoulder.

“Geesh, Doc. Look at those punks. I imagine even holy water wouldn’t wash away their sins.”

“You can say that again.”

“Even holy water...”



He interrupted. “Shut up kid, I was joshing. I didn’t want to hear it again.”

He felt the firm hand of the young boy slap him on the back. His eyes darted, never meeting The Professors.

“Right Doc.” A loud whistle landed in his ear. “Geesh, look at those weapons. They wouldn’t have gotten those across the border.”

Alvaro said, “Sure. Sometimes your gangsters fly in on their own planes, but sometimes they like to purchase new ones down here when they arrive. They have large summer homes here, and storage houses that front their criminal actions.”

The kid’s eyes grew wide. “Holy bushwa. I bet they lace their money with silence.”

Alvaro frowned. “You can say that.”

Before the kid could say anything further, he shut it down.

The kid threw his head back, and the laughter filled their ears. It was good to hear the kid laugh again; it had been a long time. He was too young to not be happy.

The Professor punched the kid's shoulder and joined in.

“We better go,” said Alvaro.

“Right, before they decide they need to come down here and put us in the ground.”

“Why are they after us?”

“Kid, who knows.”

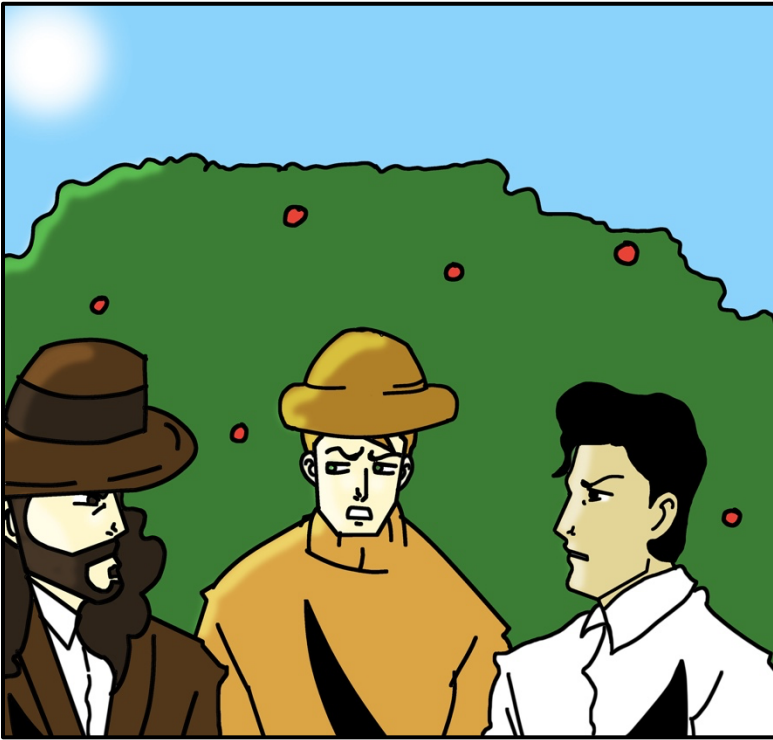
Alvaro looked nervously over his shoulder as he started up a rocky slope filled with plush overgrown brush. “They might have heard about the dragon. Maybe you Americans speak too loud in public places.”

Sarantos didn't take offence to the remark. Sometimes they did speak too loudly in public. It wasn't the first time they'd jeopardized their quest and ran into trouble with their mouths.

They needed to learn ears had a way of hearing things, especially if it involved artifacts or riches of any kind.



The kid's voice sounded a little jittery. "Do you think they'll follow us?"



Alvaro answered before he could continue. "I don't know, but we've lost our trail and have to find another one. We won't want to stay in this mess for long. Poison spiders, snakes and other things move along with us in these jungles. Watch out for colorful frogs, highly toxic. Anything with bright colors is bad!"

"Great. I'm going to die young, right, Doc?"

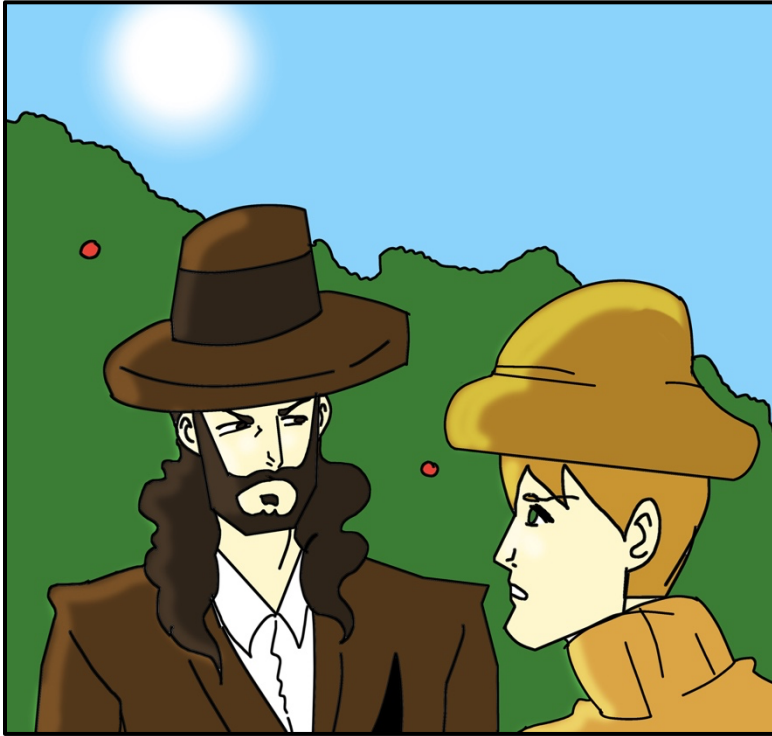
“No kid, we won’t let that happen. Let’s go. The sooner we go, the sooner we go back home.” The secret to doing the right thing is to make it feel like the urgent thing.

Even though his words sounded convincing, his mind wasn’t convinced. The kid could die here, hell, they all could die here. He always thought he’d die on a glorious adventure that would create epic campfire stories, and bars and speakeasies would carry on his life’s work with grand tales of his legendary adventures after his heroic death. But his story had to have a better ending than being bumped off by the mob because they had big mouths!

The thought made him feel wrong. If Charlie didn’t know they were out here, their bodies might just be ravaged by the local wild beasts and never be found again. He tried to rationalize his fears by calming his mind with humor - you become what you want to be?

Luckily, he left Charlie behind. She might live and share at least one of their adventures.

“Doc, what if they catch up to us and riddle us with bullets? We’ll be carrion food. Wow, we do have big mouths.”



It appeared the kid was thinking like him now, and that was scary. The Professor didn't want to answer because he had nothing to add. It was a possibility. He didn't like the word riddled, anyway.

His life was a roller coaster of adventures, but with nothing gained to show for it, at least he never had to buy a ticket. Balderdash, they would even die as thieves. After all, the kid had stolen the map.

He slapped his neck. Something was biting him, and it wasn't a pleasant feeling. "Ten thousand bugs are trying to teach me how to dance!"

"Doc. I'm getting bit up too. Alvaro, will we die of a fever?"

"I hope not, but anything is possible out here."

"Sorry I asked."

"Excuse?"

Alvaro hadn't understood the kid's sarcasm.

"Alvaro, it's a figure of speech. You said something the kid didn't want to hear, so he wished he hadn't asked you the question in the first place."

It was one of those American things, you either got it or you didn't.

Alvaro's handsome face grinned and exposed a beautiful set of teeth. Teeth like that were highly unusual out here. He was still young.

“Oh, I see Professor. A joke. Very funny.”

It was not that funny, but at least he understood the remark. They started to move again.

Pushing through the brush was tiring and Alvaro’s machete came down repeatedly, blazing a new trail every time green life enveloped them. He wondered how long the youthful native could keep it up.



The heat beat down on them. They stayed just ahead of the clouds of mosquitoes as they sidestepped roots, vines and giant ants. The jungle noises seemed to close in on them, but at the same time expanded all around them. Would it ever end? This seemed like a moment.

The kid lifted his hat and wiped the dense sweat from his face. The gods above had made Alvaro for this weather, a native that adapted over the years. His dark skin glistened as though the heat was a gift for it. He floated happily through the jungle, unfazed by the heat and bugs putting their perspiration-soaked efforts to shame.

“Do you burn?”

Alvaro stopped and looked at him. “Yes, Professor. I can burn, but I’m not as sensitive as you pale skinned men.”

Sarantos chuckled. “Yes, and I’m jealous.”

“Me too,” pipped in Gorilla. “I love being out in this weather, but that sun makes me feel a little too weak. It’s one thing I can’t beat, mother nature.”

“Right kid.”

Alvaro changed the subject and smirked. “I think the American gangsters decided their mommy did not dress them for the occasion, sliding down the cliff and trudging through the brush. Most likely, they stuck to the easier trail and hopefully we won’t meet them again.”

“Agreed. I don’t believe they’ve given up on following us. After all, we are the ones with the map,” he said.

“That’s right, Doc. Formal isn’t what one would seek to wear out here and a thick jungle and being normal isn’t what you need to be out here in the wildness.”

“Kid, that’s funny. I think they certainly know the general direction of where we’re headed. So, I think we will have the honor of seeing them again.”



“Yep, but Doc, how do you suppose they got past the tribe?”

Now he worried about Charlie. He hoped they hadn’t shot her. The picture that appeared in his head minutes ago about Charlie being safe was perfect. Now he wasn’t so sure. The piano was no longer tuned, and the day no longer rhymed. He couldn’t help it and said her name out loud. “Charlie.”

The kid turned pale. His eyes bulged, and his mouth stretched to the ground.



“Doc? What about Charlie? Do you think she’s okay? Applesauce! They might’ve killed her!”

He should never have said her name, but she was on his mind. He was worried.

“No,” he said. It was the only word he could muster out of his mouth. The kid’s brain started working overtime. His eyes darted back and forth, matching the movement of his head.

“We have to go back!” The kid would never let it rest.

“Kid, she’ll be fine, it’s Charlie, after all.”

Alvaro came to the rescue. “The Professor is correct, my friend. The tribe would hide from guns like that and the gangsters would never see them. If they wanted, they could dart them all with poison, and the gangsters wouldn’t know what happened. The tribe doesn’t initiate violence like that though.”

“Alvaro is correct. If darted, they wouldn’t be hot on our trail. I think even with those weapons, the gangsters wouldn’t have survived a stealth ambush.”

Tears were forming in the outside corner of the kid's eyes.



The Professor patted him on the back. “It’s okay, kid. Charlie’s a survivor. She’s tough. You know she can handle herself.”

Gorilla wiped his nose. “Yeah, you’re right, Doc. We need to hurry and get the job done so we can check on her though.”

“Sure, kid.”

Alvaro stopped.

“We have to go around.” He pointed to the left of the new trail. “You see that misty webby substance? Nasty spiders, we can’t risk being close to their nesting ground.”

Sarantos hated spiders and bats. “No argument here, my friend.”

He didn’t see the spiders but took Alvaro’s word for it and for the umpteenth time was thankful he was their guide. Alvaro knew his stuff.

They made great time, even though it was tedious and rough on the feet as they climbed over the rocky ground.

“Doc, what do you think the Professors did after they realized the map was missing?”

The kid had a weird sense of timing.



“How the hell am I supposed to know what someone else would do in that situation? If I had eyes on the back of my head, then I would come up with a guess. If they weren’t supposed to have it, they would do nothing. If it was part of the museum at the college, then we might be in for some trouble.”

“Applesauce, Doc. We could pretend we do not know what they’re talking about!”

“Kid, in an alternate universe maybe. You’d have that smirk you always have when you’re giving something away. It’d

be like treading water, kid. We could drown. Especially if we come back with the artifact!”

He dropped his head. “I suppose you’re right, Doc.”

He thought of Catalina, and how much he adored her face, and other things. Those lips that kissed and licked him like he was her candy, and he enjoyed her tasting his candy more than he cared to admit.

He thought back to their time together. Memories raced across the clouds as he stared at them. He smiled. She was more than naughty and he loved that about her; and those twitching thighs every time she eyebanged him. Oh yes, those eyes. How she eyebanged him when they first met from across the room and before she rode him bare and free later that night. He sorely missed her.

He longed for her to eyebang him again.

The kid broke through his dreamy thoughts.

“Sorry to bother you, Doc, but I couldn’t help but notice your delusional smile and mischievous look. I think you need to get your head out of the gutter. Are you fantasizing about Catalina again?”

Bushwa!

