

The Satirical Nightclub
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About 11,500 words

Mike LaMonaca sat in the Italian nightclub with a glass of red wine. He'd gotten over his surprise at finding out that there was no minimum drinking age in Italy. Back in Kansas City he would have to wait four more years, until he was 21, before he could drink in a club like this. He could imagine what his friends would say if they saw him now.

Would they believe him if he told them it wasn't all fun and games? Probably not.

He'd been on a quest for the past three months; a quest to find his father. His grandparents, who he was living with in Rome, were actively supporting his search. They were helping Mike – and keeping the search a secret from his mother. Fair is fair; she kept his father a secret from all of them.

The fact that it required going to nightclubs almost every night was probably a good thing to keep from Mamá. As he appraisingly looked over two lovely girls entering the nightclub, he had to admit, it wasn't *all* hard work and it certainly was a big difference from the seminary where he'd been just three months ago.

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He broke the news to his mother in Kansas City at the end of the semester, "Mamá, I'm not going back to the seminary. I've decided it's not for me."

"Michele, (Me-kay-lay)," when she called him by his Italian name, it was a sure sign she was upset, "it's only been one semester, how can you know so soon? Maybe you should give it a year. Take another semester to think about it. Talk to Father Jeffries."

"Mamá, I've already given it a lot of thought. I decided to finish finals then drop out. Finals are over. It isn't for me. More thinking or talking won't change anything."

"You skipped your senior year of high school; do you think it's because you're the youngest one there? You're only 17 and most of the other freshmen are 18 or even 19."

"Eighteen soon, and I don't think more maturing will help."

"I just don't want you to give up too soon. If you're not going to go to the seminary, what are your plans for the future?"

"I haven't figured that out yet. I've burned all my brain power thinking about whether I should stay doing something I don't want. Now, that I've made that decision; I'll start working on my future. Mamá, I'm not like you. You always knew what you wanted; college in Italy and then your doctorate in Art History at Yale. Now you keep getting better and better curator jobs at bigger and better museums."

"Michele, I know exactly what you're going through. I was a nun in my novitiate and had

to make the same decision you did. That's when I came to the US."

"Really? You never talk about it."

"And I don't want to talk about it now, but I understand."

"Thanks Mamá. I called Grandpa Alessandro this morning about dropping out because he and Grandma Pia are always asking me to come and spend time with them. He told me I could come over to Italy and live with them while I try to figure out what I want to do. I would like to do that." He smiled at her. "It would also give me a chance to improve my Italian."

"Let me think about it and talk to your nonno and nonna about it. If you do go to Italy, you'll have to call them nonno and nonna instead of grandpa and grandma."

"See, I do need to work on my Italian."

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Two weeks later he was on his way to Rome to stay with his grandparents. Their house in Rome was perfect for his purpose. He loved their country home in northern Italy on Lago Maggiore, but he knew his search would be in Rome.

He remembered raising the idea of his quest with his grandparents. He had just finished playing Mozart's Piano Sonata no. 14 for them. It had quickly become a tradition for him to play a piece for them to begin their cocktail hour.

They were relaxed with their beverage of choice in the music room when Mike broke it to them. "I have to be honest with you, I want to find my father; and I don't want to involve Mamá. She has always been so secretive about it. I've asked her about him and she always refuses to talk about it. Sometimes she changes the subject. Sometimes she just says she doesn't want to talk about it. Other times she gets angry."

Alessandro looked at Pia with raised eyebrows, then back at Mike "We would like to help you but we have no idea. Caterina refused to talk about it with us, too. We would also like to know, but don't know where to start."

"My last name is no clue. I've discovered that she made it up as part of her story. She's been telling people that she divorced Mr. LaMonaca. As you well know, la monaca means "the nun" in Italian. I just found out she studied to be a nun. I think she gave me that last name when I was born because she was one when I was conceived." Nonna Pia glanced at Nonno Alessandro and said "You didn't know about her time in the convent? We always wondered about the name. It is not an uncommon name in Italy, but..."

"She will never talk about my father, but I've come up with some clues. That's all I have are clues. I thought she had been married in Rome, but I don't believe she was since she was a nun when she left Italy. I haven't been able to find any records of her marriage or divorce in the US either. I overheard her tell several people that she met my father in a nightclub and that's why she doesn't go to nightclubs. I thought that was part of her made up story. But, more recently, I overheard that his family owned the club where they met. That detail convinced me that the nightclub story is true. There is no need to make up that kind of detail. If those are true, then I know the club is in Rome and not the US."

Pia looked doubtful "Even if it was in Rome, there are hundreds of nightclubs in Rome. If that is the only information you have... I don't know." Alessandro shook his head and shrugged. "How do you know it was in Rome?"

"I found her old passport with entry stamps. I can do the math. When she left Italy, she was pregnant with me, so I know the club where they met was here. Of course, that eliminates all clubs not in existence when she left Italy. It narrows the search a lot. I thought I would start with clubs near the convent and college she was attending before she left Italy."

Alessandro nodded. “Good bit of detective analysis. That will be a good start, but what if they moved and started a new club or it went out of business?”

“Like you said it is detective work. My understanding of detective work is that it takes a lot of work, most of it not pretty. It requires steady effort looking for leads, talking to people, picking up clues to paint a bigger picture with the hope the picture eventually makes sense. Perhaps if I am successful in this, I will join the police to become a detective.”

Pia smiled at him “A very mature attitude for a 17 year old. We wish you the best of luck. If we can help, just ask.” Alessandro nodded agreement.

Mike thought for a moment. “The first thing I need is your understanding when I come home late. I can only search the clubs when they are open. My late nights will be in furtherance of the quest – well, there may be some fun involved also.” Mike glanced up and laughed.

Nonna Pia smiled at him and his Nonno rolled his eyes “What’s that saying about all work and no play?” They all laughed.

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Alone in his room after their talk, Mike thought about what he hadn’t talked about with his grandparents or his mother. In fact he never discussed it with anyone, not even all the psychiatrists his mother sent him to. When he was ten, he’d overheard his mother talking about his “problem” with one of her girl friends. She didn’t know that Mike, who had gotten out of bed and came down the stairs, could overhear his mother saying “... Mike was pretty normal as a baby and toddler, if you call a baby who started reading at age 4 and picking out tunes by ear on the piano normal; but he seemed socially accepting and really enjoyed being around people. Then just before he turned six, he changed and became withdrawn. He didn’t want to interact with people. He withdrew from people.”

“He withdrew? How did he withdraw?”

“He just didn’t want to be around people anymore. If people came over, he went to his room. Before he withdrew, he used to hang around when people came over. It was cute; like he was afraid he’d miss something. The change was the same at school. The teachers told me he stopped interacting with the other students. He had been a leader in activities; then he changed and didn’t want to participate.

“The psychiatrists diagnosed him as overly sensitive. He told them that some people didn’t like him and others were “too happy” and it scared him. Others, he just felt uncomfortable with. Unfortunately, that included any guy I brought home that I was dating.”

“Too happy? I wonder what makes someone too happy? It seems like happy would be a good thing. Do you think he was resentful of your beaus?” asked her girlfriend.

“I could live with it if the boyfriends were the only thing that bothered him. He didn’t want to participate in team sports. He loves sports, but he didn’t want to participate with a team anymore, not even soccer, which he used to love. He does individual sports like Tae Kwon Do now, and according to his teachers he excels at it. He’s one of the youngest at his belt level, but I can’t get him interested in soccer or baseball or anything like that.”

“He is such a graceful child; I would have thought him a dancer rather than a martial artist. His long graceful hands look to be more suited to music rather than striking others.”

“His early interest in the piano has continued. He plays the piano beautifully. His teachers have always said if he keeps at it, he could be a concert pianist someday, but he refuses to play recitals. I often come home to hear him playing the piano here but he says he doesn’t want to play in front of people.”

“What do the psychiatrists recommend that you...?”

Mike crept back upstairs before he heard her answer.

Thankfully, she eventually stopped sending him to the psychiatrists. He could never explain his problem to them, or they couldn't understand what he told them. For that matter, his mother never understood either.

How do you explain when you are six years old or even ten or fourteen years old that you have started feeling emotions like they were being broadcast at you? It would be like telling people that you can hear colors. There was no common experience and no language to explain it. How do you tell someone what happy feels like, when it is being broadcast by a bunch of five and six year olds? It was like suddenly finding himself in a perfume factory after an earthquake; all the bottles broken, overwhelming scents coming from everywhere. He even tried describing it as funny tastes and smells; but saying that someone smelled funny had a totally different meaning to someone who didn't sense emotions.

The emotions blasted out by a pack of six year olds could be overwhelming. Anger, happiness, jealousy, greed were new experiences all coming at him at the same time. It was worse when directed at him. When the little girl and her three friends started blasting anger at him because he took the toy they wanted to play with; he didn't know how to deal with it, so he withdrew. He kept withdrawing.

With grown ups it was just as bad, if not worse. Suddenly, he was feeling lust broadcast by his mother's dates – and sometimes being broadcast back at them from his mother. He was shocked when the same lust was broadcast at him by “Uncle” Teddy, one of his mother's college chums, and the emotion grew more intense when Teddy picked him up and cuddled him on his lap like he usually did.

His mother's friends who didn't like children, unknowingly made their feelings known to him. It caused him to withdraw further. More withdrawal caused people to find reasons to dislike him when his growing uncertainty wouldn't allow him respond to their attentions. It was a spiral that turned him into a child hermit.

Going with his mother on shopping expeditions became like walking through a multicolored web of emotions. At least at school or home, he could tell where they were coming from. In large crowds they ambushed him from all directions. He couldn't tell the source or the direction; they sprang at him unexpectedly and vanished just as quickly.

The only place involving large crowds where he felt some sense of comfort was in church. The feelings were less intense, somehow muted. Whether it was the singular focus or the fact that a good percentage were dozing at any one time, he didn't know; but it became a sanctuary for him.

The sense of peace he associated with church was the principle thing that drew him to the seminary.

But the seminary was so much different than being in church. It was almost like being back in grade school with the same mix of strong, sometimes almost violent emotions. They were all there; greed, jealousy, envy, anger, fear, joy, the entire emotional scale. Lust was also dominant.

That was like high school. He should have expected it wherever a group of young boys and men gathered. What was unsettling to Mike was the fact that it radiated from some of the faculty and staff towards the students. Nothing like that ever emanated from Father Jeffries, Mike's parish priest, or any of his assistants.

His dissatisfaction with seminary life had nothing to do with any change in his view of God. He still believed in God, but he was beginning to doubt organized religion. The sanctuary

he was seeking wasn't there.

If the seminary wasn't going to provide the haven he sought, then it couldn't overcome the main drawback – Mike liked girls – a lot. When Father Jeffries counseled him about becoming a priest he used a play on words; “Don't become a priest unless you understand what 'none' means.” Mike liked the way girls looked and smelled and felt; he even was beginning to accept their emotions when he could absorb them one-on-one. Their “texture” was subtly different from male emotions.

The lack of a safe haven from emotional overload, plus absence of girls, made Mike reject the seminary. The musical words of George Thorogood “I really, really, really, really, really like girls” summed it up pretty well for Mike.

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The two good examples of why he left the seminary had approached and were now sitting down at the next table in the nightclub. Mike had already run through his standard list of questions with the waitress; how long since the club opened, was it family owned, how long with the current owner, etc. It didn't look like this was the nightclub he was looking for. The biggest clue – it has only been open for 10 years. If it wasn't open at least 18 years his mother wasn't there before he was born. He had been preparing to leave when the two very attractive young ladies walked up. He needed to continue his quest but... he found himself easily distracted at times like this.

The club was very nice. There was an attached restaurant with smells of the basil, tomatoes and other lovely Italian food smells wafting out; pleasant but not overwhelming. The lights were turned up high enough that he could still admire the warm wood walls contrasting with the stacked rock pillars. Later when the music started, the lights would dim, but for now he could easily see the girls who were now seated at the next table. He wondered if it would be worth spending a little more time in this nightclub tonight. After the waitress left with their order, the girl with curly dark brown hair and vivid green eyes turned to catch him looking at them and said “Buona notte.”

Mike smiled “Buona notte. Good evening.”

She flashed Mike a big smile “You speak English? Perhaps you would help me to practice.”

“I've been hoping to practice my Italian. That's the reason for my trip to Italy.” Mike said.

“Oh, I need practice in English for my classes in università.

“That would be university in English. Perhaps we can make a deal.”

“What is a 'deal'?”

“A deal is l'accordo in Italian.”

“What kind of 'deal'?” she said, prettily arching an eyebrow above her lovely green eye. She did it so well, she must practice. He liked it.

“I will buy you drinks and we will converse in Italian while you drink them. Then you will buy me a drink and we will speak in English while I drink that. I am assuming your friend speaks English as well?”

“She has some English.” The other nodded and smiled and finger waved at Mike.

“The arrangement would be in your favor. Two drinks for Italian in return for one drink to speak in English.”

She looked at him for a moment then signaled the waitress and asked for another drink for Mike. “English first, she will bring your payment.” She laughed melodically and Mike and

her friend joined in. “Come sit with us so we don’t have to scream when the music starts.”

Mike pulled his chair over and they made introductions in English. Mike let her take the lead. “You know what you need for classes at the university so please begin.”

Mike was surprised upon coming to Italy to find he was considered good looking. He grew up with the nickname “Horse face”; the result of his long thin face dominated by a long, somewhat flat nose. His mother called it an “Aquiline nose”; it was long and full, although not hooked. His friends called it a honker – when they were being kind. Apparently, while he wasn’t paying attention, his face grew into his nose. During his time in Italy he was told his nose looked strong – instead of immense. Girls seemed to like his dense, curly, sable hair with auburn highlights and distinctive widow’s peak. They encouraged him to let it grow out from the almost military coif he brought to Italy. He particularly liked when they ran their hands through it as it grew longer. Wearing his hair to cover the tops of his ears made his peaked ears less noticeable. Kids frequently made fun of his ‘elf ears’. Longer hair meant out of sight, out of mind, for his ears.

Recently girls also made a big deal about his long thick eyelashes and the way they contrasted with his amber eyes. He learned to enjoy the emotions generated from girls he met in the bars when he focused his eyes on them as if they were the only one, which they often were – at least for that evening.

He and his new companions this evening were into their second English language drink, having completed one Italian language lesson beverage, when Mike felt anger and jealousy beaming at their table. He looked up and three men were walking towards their table; the one in the lead radiating anger; the other two, who were bigger and had the look of people who enjoyed causing pain, were projecting eagerness and hostility. The lovely Isabetta of the green eyes, who sat next to him, looked up at the man and Mike felt her anger and disgust switch on. It was reflected in her expression as her lips tightened, but she didn’t say anything.

The man didn’t show the same reserve. He growled at Isabetta in Italian. Mike caught most of it and it wasn’t very nice. Feeling the shock and anger that she registered, Mike could tell she agreed – it wasn’t nice. Mike rose from his chair to ask the angry man to leave. Before Mike could say anything to him, he shoved Mike in the chest with both hands, knocking him backward. Mike managed to land back in his chair without overturning it while the man pointed at Mike and shouted curses in Italian. Mike didn’t understand most of it. Apparently he’d seriously neglected that necessary portion of his Italian lessons.

Mike didn’t want to get in a fight in the club. He swung his legs to the side and stood up, stepping back, looking around for some support. Just then a large man, whose chest and arms were straining the seams of his dark suit, walked up and tapped the angry man on the shoulder. He slapped the hand off his shoulder and spun toward the large man. He found himself looking at the bouncer’s chest. The angry man looked up and up at the bouncer who said something to him and pointed towards the door. He started cursing at the bouncer who turned and waved another very large man over. Seeing another large bouncer coming toward them; the angry man gestured to his two compatriots to leave with him. Mike felt fear seeping through the man’s anger. The three turned to the door, but not before throwing angry looks along with feeling of intense frustration back at Mike and Isabetta.

Mike sat back down and looked at Isabetta and her friend. “A friend of yours?”

Her girlfriend transmitted fright, but Isabetta continued to radiate anger signals. “An old boyfriend who will not accept we are broken.”

“Do you mean broken up?”

“I mean, I tell him we are finish.”

Her friend leaned over and whispered to her. They spoke for a few moments and Isabetta hugged her and said “Vai. Sto bene.” Her friend smiled weakly and waved at Mike as she stood to leave.

Isabetta turned back to Mike. “Veronica is frightened. I told her – go. I am fine.”

“I understood that. Why is she frightened?”

“Bernardo is sometimes violent. His is very brave around women with several large friends behind him. That is one of reasons I broken up with him.”

Mike didn’t bother to correct her language this time. “Is she OK leaving by herself?”

“I told her to have the, the, ehh... buttafuori... get a cab for her.”

“Ah, the bouncer.” Mike was getting very good at nightclub Italian. “That’s a good idea. And you will take a cab too?”

“No, my car is near. I drive it home.”

“You aren’t frightened as well?”

“A little, but I stay in here and leave later. Let his anger go down.”

“I will stay here with you and walk you to your car.”

“You don’t know Bernardo. It could be dangerous for you.”

“Does he carry a gun?”

“No. I don’t think so. But as I said, with two friends he can be very brave.”

“I think we’ll be OK. After all there are two of us to their three. Your car’s not in a dark alley is it?”

“No it is a little way around the corner.”

“We’ll be OK.”

She smiled at him and he could feel relief flood out of her. He patted her shoulder. “You’ll be OK.” He felt other emotions starting to flow again that made it look like a promising evening. Lately, he’d been thinking that what he always considered his curse, feeling others’ emotion; did have its upside. It took away some of the guesswork in situations like this. It didn’t solve all of his relationship problems, but at least it gave him clues. Of course, he found he could have the best clues in the world and still be surprised at girls’ responses.

Even if he didn’t have his emotion detector, he still would have enjoyed the way he tingled when she laid her hand on his arm or chest when they were talking; or the look she gave him from under her thick lashes when they began dancing after the music started. The way she laid her head on his shoulder and hummed and breathed against his neck, while they danced to slow music, sent further signals.

The band took a break and they walked back to the table. Isabetta reached up to his cheek, pulled his head close and murmured into his ear “I must go. I have a morning class tomorrow. We come for quick drink and talk. I was not to stay this late.” The last brought a smile to her face.

Mike smiled back “I’m glad you did. I’ll walk you to your car.” He turned and signaled the waitress for their checks.

On their way out the door, Mike stopped by the bouncer at the door and handed him a folded five euro bill “Grazie”. The bouncer nodded, he was the one who told Bernardo to leave. He nodded and stepped outside to watch Mike and Isabetta walk arm-in-arm down the street toward her car.

As they walked, Mike leaned his head toward Isabetta “I thought if I tipped him, he’d keep an eye on us. Is he still watching us?”

Isabetta looked back over her shoulder and smiled and waved. “Yes he is watching.”
“Good we’ll have re-enforcements if needed.”

At the end of the block, she pointed down the cross street to the right “My car is there.”

They arrived at her car, a very small yellow one of a type he didn’t recognize. It seemed like all cars in Rome were small, but they zipped through the streets like crazed bees. Isabetta leaned her back against the car with her eyes closed and lips parted as he leaned toward her. Mike felt her lust, simmering in the cool evening breeze, begin to boil higher. Hopefully it would flare to match his. He suddenly detected other intense feelings beaming at him.

Some people say they never forget a face. It was emotions for Mike. He recognized the jealousy and anger he now associated with Bernardo. It was coming from the direction of the alley over his right shoulder and coming rapidly. Mike pushed away from Isabetta and spun. Bernardo was two steps in front of his two friends. He was swinging a roundhouse at Mike’s head, trying to catch him by surprise.

Mike continued to avoid team sports and studied martial arts until he went to the seminary. He attained black belts in Tae Kwon Do and Judo. When they found in the seminary that he was a holder of dual black belts, they asked him to teach a martial arts class. He did it to keep in shape and for the extra spending money they paid him for teaching. It was the only part of the seminary he missed. Although he hadn’t worked out since he came to Italy, it came back instantly.

He blocked Bernardo’s punch with any arm grab and continued into a Tsurikomi Goshi, translated as the Lifting Pulling Hip – a hip throw that lets the thrower maximize the throwees impact with the ground. He used Bernardo’s forward momentum to flip him over his hip and into the air to slam to the sidewalk. He landed with an explosive woof of air. To keep him down, Mike stamped his heel into Bernardo’s solar plexus, causing him to double up and gasp for air.

When Mike looked up, Bernardo’s friends were charging toward him. They were big; taller than Mike’s 5’11” and heavier. One came at him with a metal club. “Get in the car and go!” Mike shouted at Isabetta, not looking at her to see if she did. The club wielder on the left made an overhead swing at Mike’s head. He dodged to the left. The swing missed and the club wielder slashed back at Mike, aiming at his head. Mike leaned down and sideways into a side kick. The edge of his foot slammed into the knee of the club wielder just as his club caught Mike in the shoulder. All of the man’s weight was on that leg as Mike kicked. There was a satisfying crunch and the man’s leg bent unnaturally. The leg buckled and he collapsed to the ground with a yelp, grabbing his leg. Mike turned to the others as he stepped away from the downed man. His shoulder felt numb and it was hard to raise his arm.

The other large man was helping Bernardo to his feet. Bernardo shook him off and reached into his pocket and came up with a knife. He snapped it open with a snick. Mike looked over at the car. Isabetta had started the car and began to pull away, but stopped; looking back at Mike. He waved her away “Go!” as the other two came at him. As he turned to them, he was pleased to hear her car accelerate away. Now he only needed to worry about himself.

He wanted to finish this quickly. He couldn’t worry about hurting them. In fact, it would be best to put them out of commission. If he played around to prevent injuring them, someone could get lucky with the knife and *he* could get hurt, badly.

He moved quickly to put Bernardo between himself and the other man. He feinted a kick with his left foot at Bernardo’s knee. As Bernardo slashed at his leg, Mike pulled his leg back and stepped into a spinning hook kick; trying for a knock out blow. His right heel caught Bernardo in the temple with all the force generated by the spin. Bernardo dropped to the ground

like a sack of sand. The knife clattered on the sidewalk as it dropped from his limp hand. Landing in a fighting stance, Mike shuffle stepped toward the third attacker.

The man's eyes expanded with surprise. He looked down at Bernardo, unconscious, and the other man, still gripping his knee and moaning. Fear radiated like a beacon. He backed away and then turned and ran into the alley. His fear faded with him.

Mike watched to make sure he didn't come back, then looked over the two lying on the sidewalk. It didn't look like they would be following him. He rubbed his shoulder, as he jogged back toward the street where the club was. At the corner he slowed to a walk and crossed the street, away from the club; headed toward the Metropolitana, Rome's excellent subway system.

His shoulder was going to be stiff tomorrow. Women! Was it really worth getting in fights over them? Maybe he should reconsider the seminary. Yeah, right, when all the fountains in Rome run dry.

Before going underground to the Metro, where he would lose cell phone reception, he called the number Isabetta gave him and left a message. "This is Michele, from tonight. I just wanted you to know that I'm OK. Bernardo isn't doing very well. Watch out for him; he will be in a very bad mood. Buona fortuna." He figured, she'd need the good luck. Too bad; it had looked promising. But the last thing he needed was a violent, jealous boyfriend hanging around. Ah well, there were a lot more clubs in Rome to cover. Hopefully they all wouldn't all be filled with beautiful women with violent, hot blooded Italian boy friends.

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He got his big break in his quest a few days later, after he was in Italy for a little over three months. Out for dinner with his grandparents; they were standing in a restaurant bar waiting for their table, when a beautiful woman caught him staring at her in the mirror over the bar. She smiled at him in the mirror. He turned toward her "Excuse me for staring." The amusement she flashed at him was encouraging.

"I'm sorry I was looking at you as well. From your accent, are American?"

"Yes, I live in Kansas City, but I am here visiting my grandparents here in Rome."

"Do you know the DeAngelos family?"

"I don't know anyone by the name DeAngelos."

"I was looking at you because you look like you could be Gabrielle DeAngelos' younger brother. He runs Club Odysseus."

"I've always wanted an older brother. Where is this Club Odysseus? Perhaps you could show me there?"

"I can't. I'm meeting a friend here tonight. He is late."

Mike grabbed a napkin off the bar and handed it to her, then reached for a pen in his jacket. Nonno always wanted him to wear a sports jacket when they dined out. "Here you could write the address of the club, or you could write your telephone number and we could go to the club together so you could introduce me to DeAngelos."

She took the napkin and the pen with a smile just as his grandfather tapped him on the shoulder. When Mike turned back she handed the napkin and pen back. "Your table must be ready." He felt her combination of humor and pleasure.

He smiled "Yes, I must go now, thank you for the information". He put the napkin in his pocket; then followed his grandparents to their table.

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The next day he remembered the napkin and pulled it from his sport coat. On it was the name and address of the club along with the name of the owner that she mentioned. She didn't

give her number. He wasn't surprised that an elegant lady like her didn't give a teenager her number, but hope springs eternal.

He wanted to research Club Odysseus so he got his laptop out. That was a much bigger event than one would expect on the face of it.

He'd been dragging his grandparents into the 21st century. When he got to their home, they didn't even have a computer; which was OK... sort of. He had his laptop. Of course since they didn't have a computer, they didn't have any reason for an internet connection.

Nonno Alessandro kept a cell phone, but it was old and he left it turned off except when he wanted to make a phone call. He not only never texted anyone – he didn't know what texting was. Their technical innocence was amazing.

Of course Nonno didn't need a computer. His secretary and accountants took care of all his letters, email and bills, etc. He got his news from the newspaper, magazines, television and talking with friends. Nonna Pia didn't really have any concept of computers; she reigned over their home and their society. Computers didn't have a place in her life.

When Mike first arrived and asked them about their broadband connection; they looked at him like he was speaking one of the rarer bushmen dialects from South Africa. At first he didn't think it was a big problem, there were WiFi spots nearby. Then he found out about Italian coffee. All the WiFi hotspots in the area served coffee. In Italy, coffee like Mike was familiar with in the US was called Café Americano. Café Americano was half a cup of regular Italian coffee and half a cup of plain water. He got tired of the funny looks the baristas gave when he ordered Café Americano. He felt like a whimp, so he started drinking regular Italian coffee – espresso. Switching to espresso quickly resolved any problems staying awake while canvassing nightclubs.

Between the late nights in nightclubs and the mid-day espressos, Mike got in the habit of coming home late and sleeping until the crack of noon. When his grandparents mentioned it, Mike teasingly blamed it on their lack of broadband connection which forced him to drink espresso all day in the internet hotspots. Mike knew though, that complaining wasn't the way to escort them into the 21st century.

Since he needed an Italian cell phone, he got one that could connect to his laptop and allow access to the internet. Instead of going to hotspots, he started using his laptop and cell phone in the kitchen; slowly drawing Nonna in. He started with recipes, since he and Nonna shared an interest in food and cooking. Then he set her up with a Google email account and helped her send emails to her daughter, Caterina, back in Missouri. The seven hour time difference made talking on the phone difficult, and snail mail was too slow. Email was perfect.

He then showed her how to search for information with Google. Maps came next, then theatre information. She was an avid theatre buff.

It took about a month to really set the hook; then he started going back to Internet hotspots, of course taking his laptop with him. He used the excuse that the cell phone connection was too slow. Sometimes when he returned, she would meet him at the door and ask for his laptop. She'd found other friends with email accounts with whom she wanted to communicate. Of course, when he went out in the evening, searching nightclubs, he took his phone with him; and with it their internet access.

Finally, she made Mike go with her to the computer store to buy a laptop, multi-function printer and wireless router. She picked up a cell phone for herself while she was there. The next week an ADSL line was installed for broadband access and Nonna strode grandly into the 21st century. Nonno remained baffled.

Mike's days were filled up for the past month, getting Nonna hooked enough on computing to want her own computer. After her computer was set up and she was OK with the basics, Nonno invited him to lunch and began quizzing him about computers. After a few days, Nonno also took Mike out to buy a laptop. In the store, Mike explained to him that he didn't need his own printer and wireless router. What Nonna had bought could be shared by everyone. Nonno, however, insisted on getting a color laser printer. Someone told him they were the best. When Nonna heard; she rolled her eyes but her merriment was broadcast to Mike loud and clear.

Mike was amazed that everyone on the block couldn't feel Nonno's pride and satisfaction that accompanied his leap into the 21st century blasting out.

Mike spent the next month working with Nonno then Nonna and Nonno to advance their expertise. Getting them on Facebook was one thing, but Mike dreaded them asking about *God of War*, *Street Fighter* or *Gran Turismo*. He made sure he never mentioned any computer games around them.

Going to nightclubs was actually becoming restful to him.

#

That evening, he went early to Club Odysseus for dinner in the attached restaurant. The food was very good. When he arrived at the restaurant and asked about the proprietor, Gabrielle DeAngelos, he was aware of feelings of curiosity beamed his way throughout his meal. Everyone thought they were being discreet, but their curiosity was loud and clear to Mike. He was told that Mr. DeAngelos was normally in by now, but today he wouldn't be in until later in the evening. His standard questions about the restaurant – how long it had been opened, etc. – increased the level of curiosity around him. He didn't have to catch people looking at him to know the curiosity was there.

After dinner, he went into the nightclub. First he went to the bar and asked for Mr. DeAngelos and was again told that he wasn't in yet. Mike asked to leave a message that he would like to speak with Mr. DeAnglos; then retired to a table in the club and made ready to wait.

The sense of curiosity surrounding him was joined by anticipation radiating through the room. Mike felt anticipation begin to peak around him; keeping pace with his growing anticipation.

The décor was interesting. There were frescos around the room depicting scenes of ancient revelry. There were also some excellent paintings with the same theme, strategically located around the club. Having a mother with a doctorate in Art History, let Mike recognize a good bacchanal when he saw one. The frescos featured naked or near naked women and men dancing, lounging and drinking. He remembered a painting of a Bacchanal by Zuccarelli he saw in Venice when his mother studied the last time they were there. There was a painting here that reminded him very much of the Zuccarelli, but the satyrs looked much more human than he remembered from the Venice painting.

Interspersed about the room were statues in niches. Mike went around the club and looked at some of the statutes while the lighting was still bright enough. The labels said they were of satyrs. An interesting choice for a nightclub; the objectives of wine, partying and song carried out in art.

Shortly after the music started and the lights dimmed, Mike was appreciatively watching a table of young women nearby. He turned back toward the band and was startled that someone was standing at his table. In its absence he realized that he usually received forewarning in the form of an emotional projection. There wasn't any now.

He looked up and a man was looking at him intently. “Mr. LaMonaca?”

“Yes, I am Michele LaMonaca.” Said Mike.

“I am Gabrielle DeAngelos. You asked to see me.”

Mike was in turn staring at DeAngelos. Something about him looked familiar. He was slim and elegant looking with wavy brown hair. He was dressed in the height of Italian fashion, in a perfectly cut dark tan sport coat with a muted dark brown check pattern; dark brown, almost black slacks and a creamy silk shirt. There was a silk handkerchief in his coat pocket that matched the shirt. His hands were long and slender, with fine, long fingers. They looked like the hands of a musician. His well groomed goatee was the same color as his hair. His lips were full and well shaped. They parted in a smile, showing large, straight white teeth. Mike still felt no emotion emanating from him.

“Yes, I’ve come to Italy to locate some relatives and someone suggested to me that perhaps you could be of assistance.”

DeAngelos’ smile grew wider, but still no emotions were signaled. “Perhaps, you would like to join me in my office? We can discuss whatever you wish there without disturbance from others, and the music will not be so loud. My office is upstairs and much quieter.” He stepped back and motioned for Mike to follow him.

Mike started to pick up his mostly empty wine glass. DeAngelos said “Leave it.” He turned to the waitress “Please bring a bottle of the 1999 Tenuta Oliveto Brunello Riserva to my office along with two glasses.” She nodded and smiled.

As DeAngelos escorted Mike along the side of the club Mike noted that DeAngelos was an inch or two shorter and carried himself very gracefully, almost like a dancer. Mike indicated the familiar painting as they passed it “That is a beautiful piece. It is reminiscent of Zuccarelli.”

DeAngelos stopped and his eyes widened. “You are an art enthusiast?”

“My mother studied art extensively. She received her doctorate in Art History and is a museum curator. I don’t have to work very hard to have a little of it rub off. We were in Venice three years ago and there was a Zuccarelli she studied, so I remember it well. Although it is reminiscent, there are differences.”

Out of the corner of his eye he saw DeAnglis appraising him intently as he said. “Yes, my father commissioned it many years ago. There were certain things that he wanted changed to make it, I don’t want to say realistic, but perhaps modeled more in a manner he felt would be right.”

“The satyrs here are much more human, less goat-like.”

“That is exactly the change he desired. The original was modeled on the Roman myth of the satyr. He desired that the Greek version of a satyr be depicted.”

“I wasn’t aware the Greek and Roman versions were different.”

“That is another subject I would be more than happy to reveal to you. There are a number of depictions of satyrs around the club; statues and paintings. All are modeled on the Greek physical representation. I like to think that the Greek sculptor Praxiteles captured the essence best. The Greek satyr was a comely, virile young man, aging like any human; growing through noble middle age and into feeble old age. The Romans took the legend of the satyr and added goats horns and hoofs along with an ugly visage, as if what satyrs brought to the world was ugly. In the Grecian view, the comely satyr was dedicated to the good life; bringing pleasure, enjoyment and gaiety. Wine, good food, music and a pleasant setting were tools used to overcome the burdens of everyday life.” He smiled at Mike “I must make it sound like the satyrs were the nightclub owners of ancient Greece. My grandfather came to Italy from Greece. He

changed the name from the Greek *Angelos* to *DeAngelos*.”

“You appear to be very knowledgeable regarding satyrs.”

“It is a hobby of mine. But come; let us find a comfortable place to chat. If you would like an art tour; it would be better when the lights aren’t so dim. You are welcome to come back tomorrow or we can arrange another time at your convenience. Perhaps your mother would be interested in hearing of it.” He gave Mike an appraising glance.

“Thank you, I would like that.” There was still no emotional output that Mike could detect... he didn’t know what to make of it.

In the back of the club, they entered a stairway through a thick ornately carved door that DeAngelos unlocked with a key. The navy, red and gold patterned carpet on the stairs looked rich and plush. The air in this area of the club carried a light scent of spices. At the top of the stairs, DeAngelos turned right and walked to the last door on the right. He unlocked it as well. As Mike entered he noticed that the eight panels of the door were each carved with images of men; then he looked closer and saw that they could be satyrs.

The office was simple but warm. There was a light citrus and cinnamon scent. A large desk sat by the windows in the far right corner. The curtains were drawn. A sitting area was nearer on the right. Two pale tan leather couches faced each other across a glass and stone coffee table. To the left was a table with seating for six. On the table was a large crystal vase with roses of various colors; some yellow, some yellow blending to a light red or orange and some orange. Behind the desk, over the credenza was a large red and white sketch of a man’s head. The man in the sketch had a rugged face with a large flat nose and full lips. His hair was curly and looked like there were flowers or perhaps tufts of fur woven into it. On the credenza was a black and gold painted vase. On the vase was a depiction that looked like – yet another satyr – of course. It was man shaped with normal legs and feet, but with what looked like a horse’s tail. It was a very stylish office; like the man himself.

DeAngelos caught Mike looking at the painting over the credenza and said “It’s a reproduction of a Michelangelo sketch titled *Satyr’s Head*.”

“Satyr’s seem a logical choice for a nightclub. They are all about partying. I’m surprised more people don’t choose them.”

DeAngelos nodded “Yes and no. We can talk more of it after you tell me your problem.”

A knock came at the partially opened door and the waitress entered with a bottle of red wine, a decanter and two large stemmed glasses. She set the decanter down and poured the wine into it and left; shutting the door behind her.

DeAngelos picked up the decanter “good red wine should always be decanted and not poured from the bottle. It allows it to breathe, reducing the acidity and freeing the bouquet to float from the glass to your nose.” He poured the wine from the decanter into the two glasses. “If someone in the restaurant asks for their wine to be decanted, we are always pleased to do so. So few ask; it saddens me that so few know how to truly enjoy good wine.” He handed Mike a glass and gestured for him to take a seat on the couch while he sat on the couch opposite.

As Mike sat, he found the couch to be as soft and luxurious as it looked. He ran his hand across the leather. He would describe it as buttery feeling.

“So, Michele, you wanted to ask me some questions about family here in Italy?” He gestured with his glass. “Do you like the wine?”

Mike took a sip and held it in his mouth as he breathed in through his mouth over the wine. He swallowed and made sounds of appreciation. “That is probably the best wine since I’ve been here or perhaps ever.”

“Brunellos are some of the finest wines produced in Italy. 100% Sangiovese grape from Tuscany; this is a particularly good representative of an excellent year. My family has long been interested in wine. We have ownership in several wineries here in Italy and in Greece. I have to admit, the Italian wines are better. But forgive me; I keep interrupting your questions. Please continue.”

Mike set his glass down and leaned forward; elbows on his knees hands clasped in front of him. “As you may be able to tell from my accent, I grew up in the US. My mother, however, came from Italy. In fact when she came to the US she was pregnant with me. I have some free time before I start, or restart college, and I came to Italy to find my family.”

“You don’t know your family? Was your mother an orphan?”

“No, I know the family on my mother’s side. I am looking for family from my father’s side. My mother would never talk of my father. I only have a few clues about him. I know that he was from Italy.”

DeAngelos took a sip of wine and looked at Mike over the rim of his glass. “I see... Since you don’t know anymore about your father, tell me a bit about your mother.”

“My mother was studying to be a nun. She was a novitiate. She also was in college studying art history. Her parents still live here in Rome, I’m staying with them; but she moved to the US to finish college with her doctorate and stayed there and made a career as a museum curator. She is very well respected and keeps moving to museums with bigger and better reputations. She is now at the Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City. She travels quite a bit; arranging loans, shows and transfers of artwork between her museum and others.”

“La Professoressa sounds like a very smart woman. What is her name?”

“Caterina Ciccone, that’s her maiden name. She never married.”

DeAngelos rose from his seat and went to the window. He moved the curtain aside and looked out. He turned back to Mike “She never married, yet, your eh... cognome... is LaMonaca.”

“Yes, surname in English. I believe that she picked that name when I was born because she was a nun when I was conceived. She apparently wanted to give me a different last name to make it seem she was married and then divorced, but it was not the real name of my father. She always kept it a secret.”

“I see, yes, la monaca... nun in Italian. Anything else?”

“I understand that she and my father met in a club; his family owned the club in which they met. I believe the club is here in Rome, near the college she attended and where she was living in the convent.”

“She told you of this club and the family that owned it?”

“No, I overheard some her conversations over the years which she had with others. I’ve pieced the information together from that.”

“We have a saying in Italy that little ones have rabbit ears. I know what you mean. I used to listen to my parents when they didn’t know I was there, also. Anything else you can tell me or do you have a picture?”

“That is everything I know. I only have recent pictures of her; none from almost 20 years ago.”

“I know many of the club owners in Rome. Let me think about what you have told me. Are you still interested in an art tour?”

“Yes, please. I would like that very much.”

“Come tomorrow. I will give you the tour. Bring one of the recent pictures of your

mother with you. It might jog some old memories or maybe I can show it to some other club owners.”

Mike was flattered that this elegant man with such obviously impeccable taste was willing to help him. They agreed to meet tomorrow at one o'clock and Mike went home feeling excited. He had another ally in his search. He'd go to bed early tonight, so he could get up early – before noon. The early bird catches the worm.

#

Mike surprised Nonna by joining her in the kitchen at ten a.m. She was at the large table in the center of the kitchen that served as an island. She was working on her laptop and looked up with a smile when he came in. “You're up early. It's still morning. Something interesting today?”

“I met a club owner who is going to try to help. His art collection is amazing and he invited me to see it today, before his club opens. I am going to take a picture Mamá to help him. He said he'd talk to the other club owners and show the picture around. I will print it this morning.”

“My friend Dolce told me about World of Warcraft. She said she is a princess warrior avatar. Do you know what it is? I am going to Google.”

Mike felt dread; his grandparents getting interested in online gaming. He thought maybe they would do poker or solitaire. Septuagenarians playing WoW; he wondered if he had stepped through a time warp. “Nonna, I have some familiarity with it, but it will take more than just a few minutes. I'll help you look at it when I get back tonight or tomorrow. Meanwhile you can research it.”

“I already am. See?”

He looked and sure enough she was on the WoW web site. “Nonna, you are amazing. See this menu on the left? You can research all these topics. We can talk about it later.” That should keep her busy for the day, but he could be busy for days if she got interested. He feared that he had created a monster.

#

Mike showed up at a little before one p.m. The front door was closed but it was unlocked so he walked in. He didn't see anyone in the club so he went into the adjoining restaurant. He heard noises from the back and walked into the kitchen. A lady looked up from where she was preparing some vegetables and smiled at him “Posso ajudarLei?”

He told her that yes, she could help him by letting Gabrielle DeAngelos that he was here for his appointment. She picked up a phone and called. Gabrielle showed up a few minutes later.

“Good morning Michele. I'm glad you could come. Are you ready for the grand tour of satyr art?”

“Yes I am eager to see it in the light and learn from you.”

“Good, I am eager to teach you.”

“Oh, here is a recent picture of my mother. I printed it this morning.”

Gabrielle took it and studied for several moments. “Ah, she is a beautiful woman. Is this mine to take?”

Mike nodded. “Please. Perhaps it will lead to my father.”

He scrutinized Mike's face. “We shall see.”

He led Mike to a niche containing a statue in white marble. “Most of these are reproductions of course. A night club presents too many risks for original masters. This is entitled *Marsyas Under Apollo's Punishment*. Marsyas was a famous satyr who found the flute

that Athena threw away, then challenged Apollo to a musical duel and lost. He lost his life and his skin for having the hubris to challenge Apollo. Marsyas was the son of Olympus; part of the myth of satyr descent from gods. I don't hold with the birth from gods. I feel that like many myths, there may, however, be a basis in reality. I think satyrs were a human mutation still able to interbreed with normal humans but carrying strong genes passed along to their progeny."

The statue was of a muscular looking man with a full head of hair and beard and a mostly hairless torso and legs. His head was down and his arms were raised, as if perhaps they were tied above his head. Like many ancient statues, the arms and legs had been broken off at the elbows and knees.

Gabrielle stopped at another niche. "Here is another vase, like the one in my office. It is Greek and depicts the satyr with a horse tail, and long narrow feet, as was common in early Greek art."

"I see the similarity."

"Satyrs of course, were known for their musical abilities starting at an early age. Of course musical ability is most admired in anyone who comes by it naturally. Do you play any instruments, Michele?"

"I've played the piano since before I can remember. I picked up the guitar when I was in high school when I wanted to be in a rock band. Nothing ever came of it." He smiled shyly as he said this.

"I also play. There is a piano here in the club where I sometimes play my troubles away. You are welcome to try it." He motioned Mike on to the painting Mike had noted before. "Here is the reproduction of the Zuccarelli that you mentioned yesterday. As you noted, the satyrs have a more human form; like the Greek myth instead of the goat-like Roman satyr. They do have horse tails and horse like faces and, of course, are at a party with music, women and wine."

"Why is there a difference between the Greek and Roman satyr? Where did the goat features and the evil visages come from?"

"There are several theories. In one, the image of the satyr was combined with the Roman Faun myth. The mythical Roman Faun predated the arrival of the Greek Satyr legends in Rome. The Faun from the beginning had goatish characteristics. Since both were associated with revelry, the two were combined in Roman mythology. It is interesting that although they were combined, the Satyr remain the more memorable and even formed the basis of the word 'satire'. In another theory, Prudery and conservatism wax and wane. Sometimes festivities are good – then satyrs are represented as good and pure. When festivities are viewed as evil, the horse features morphed into goat features. The myth survived through the dark ages and changed with them. In another theory, whenever someone isn't invited to a party – that generates bad feelings. Satyrs were at all the best parties, so maybe they were blamed by those who weren't invited." He said this last with a broad smile.

He led Mike to another statue in a niche. "Here is a famous statue of Athene and Marsyas in which she is berating him for taking the flute she had thrown away, never to be used again. He went on to use it to challenge Apollo. Note Marsyas' horsetail in this representation."

Mike laughed. "At least I don't have a horse tail. Your talk of musical abilities, long narrow feet and horse faces had me wondering if perhaps I was a satyr. When I was young they called me horse face."

Gabrielle studied Mike's face. "You have a strong face with strong features. Some could perhaps label it horse-like. I would assume that women appreciate it now, true?"

"There seem to be a few who do now. Not many years ago I grew up thinking I had a

face only a mother could love.”

Gabrielle laughed “I think you will see more appreciation now. You have the kind of face you have to grow into.”

“That is what I have been thinking, but it was my nose I thought I had to grow into. You are so knowledgeable about satyrs. It is a pleasure to listen to someone who really knows a subject and is willing to share the information. I’m surprised that someone as young as you has so much information.”

“It was my life work. If you are interested come to my office and we can speak more of it if you have time.”

Mike knew he should listen to him further if he was going to help him find his father. But, more than that, he found himself very interested. He was puzzled, but glad that this charming, apparently very intelligent man was willing to spend the time with him and help him.

In Gabrielle’s office, he gestured for Mike to take a seat on the couches as he went to the desk. “Would you like a glass of wine? I’m going to have one.”

“Yes please. I still taste that Brunello from yesterday”

DeAngelos called and requested two glasses and another bottle of wine then hung up the phone and came to sit on the couch across from Mike. “I ordered an Amaronone; one of my favorites. It only recently became an official Italian wine appellation. It is made from grapes that are partially dried like raisins, and then turned into wine.”

“I look forward to it. I am learning so much from you.”

After the wine was served and properly appreciated. Gabrielle settled back on the leather couch and crossed one elegantly clad leg over the other. “So, more about satyrs and then we discuss your parentage.”

“You have some information?”

“I know a little. Let’s finish the history lesson and proceed to that.”

Mike was glad that Gabrielle didn’t have his curse. He was sure he was broadcasting anticipation and disappointment. Gabrielle, however, still remained an emotional black hole to Mike. “Very well, please guide me.”

“One of the main reasons my grandfather came to Rome was for the historical resources available here; among them, the Vatican library is one of the greatest in the world. I said that satyrs have been my life. In actuality, it began far earlier in my family.

“Satyrs were invited to all the best parties in ancient Greece; not because they were party animals but because they influenced the atmosphere of the party. You see, satyrs could broadcast emotions which influenced the emotional state of the revelers.”

Mike sat up straighter on the couch.

Gabrielle continued “Think how much better a party is when everyone suddenly starts feeling joyful or, depending upon the intention of the host, if they all feel lust. Satyrs could do that.”

He took a sip of wine and continued as Mike leaned forward. “If the party was going well a satyr could absorb the feelings of some of the guests and amplify them, for those guests and other around them. If someone was particularly happy or really horny, the satyr could amplify those feelings and broadcast them to the rest of the guests. Satyrs didn’t have to feel emotions of lust, wantonness or gluttony as they were often characterized; although in absorbing the emotions, the satyr of course felt them as well and if the opportunity presented itself... I don’t mean to imply that satyrs were saints.

“But the main point was they could take those emotions and feelings from others and

broadcast to people near them, making everyone at the party feel them. As others began to feel the emotions broadcast, the satyr would further amplify them. They supercharged the party. As I said before, satyrs could be the nightclub owners of ancient Greece.” He laughed and put his wine glass down.

“We have learned in our studies that the satyr genes are recessive and are only expressed in males. It is like color blindness, a recessive trait which only shows up in men. It is rarer, however, than color blindness. Because the gene for being a satyr is recessive, it doesn’t show up in all of the offspring of satyrs. The mother must also have a recessive satyr gene to match that of the father.”

Gabrielle leaned forward putting his forearms on his knees. “As you have seen, in early Greek vase paintings, satyrs had horse tails and very long narrow feet. Think about it, if someone with long narrow feet stands on his toes, the leg could be thought to resemble the lower leg of a horse or goat. I believe that characteristic encouraged the myth of horse legs. In Roman times that characteristic became goat legs.”

Mike looked down at his shoes; size 15 triple A. “I know exactly what you mean. With these boats I wear, I’ve noticed the similarity when I stand on my toes.”

Gabrielle laughed. “I’ve the same problem. It is hard to find shoes for long narrow feet. I have to have them handmade.”

Mike looked at Gabrielle’s fine Italian leather shoes. “I didn’t notice. It looks like we could trade shoes, but I’ve never had shoes that fine.”

“Italy is known for fine leather shoes. As a successful nightclub owner it is expected that I wear fine Italian fashion.”

Gabrielle continued, “Of course, in many situations a satyr would need to mask his emotions. He wouldn’t want to broadcast lust in the middle of church, for example.”

Mike chuckled at that. “No, that would not do at all. I know when I was younger and an altar boy; I saw some things that raised my lust. The way women dress – even in church.”

“So you understand what I mean.” Gabrielle said with a smile.

Mike nodded and returned his smile.

“And of course, satyrs recognize what emotions people around them are feeling.”

Suddenly Mike felt like the air had been sucked out of the room, it was hard to breath.

Gabrielle looked at Mike levelly. “I felt you broadcasting anticipation yesterday; when I walked into the club. I knew you were a satyr. As I talked to you I realized you don’t know what you are and haven’t any training in your abilities. Do you even know that you broadcast emotions to others?”

Mike exhaled raggedly. He was hanging on Gabrielle’s every word. “Broadcast emotions? No, I don’t do that. Do I? How can I do that?”

“Yes you do. When you told me your mother’s name and I saw her picture today, I knew. I knew what had happened to her. She left without telling me anything. I didn’t know about you. Your mother disappeared. I couldn’t find out anything about where she went; and then yesterday, you showed up.”

Mike suddenly felt a blast of joy and love like he’d rarely felt before. It came from Gabrielle!

“I’m sorry I wasn’t there for you.” Gabrielle stood up and walked around the table and sat down next to Mike and put his hand on his shoulder. “Michele, like you I am a satyr. I am your father. Let me help you learn to use your gift.”

Mike just looked at him – stunned.

“I can teach you to shield your emotions, to control the projection of your emotions, how to amplify emotions and most of all to read emotions. With training, you’ll be able to read all the fine nuances of others emotions, even detect the emotional aura they leave behind. Are you ready for that?”

“I’m just so glad to find out that I’m not alone and there is a name for what I am. I’m glad to meet you father. If you are ready to teach me I am ready to learn.”

#

The End