



Once upon a time...

The Monk house was rich due to Flowious's and Diptidulla's father, Arjuna, being a successful businessman. Flowious and Diptidulla arrived by carriage at their secluded mansion in the forest. The Former Master of Wind greeted them at the door. He said, "Flowious, I saw in your letter you have a girlfriend and have unlocked your true potential. I am sure mother is ripping at the seams with pride. Diptidulla you are looking fine today."

Arjuna had thick curly black hair and beady black eyes. They went inside and went to the smaller living room where a servant brought them tea. Their mother, Winnie, soon arrived. She had blonde hair in a ponytail and was a self-defense teacher who was still in her uniform.

Arjuna asked, "So is there anything I need to know that Flowious didn't tell me in the letter?"

Diptidulla replied, "I think so. Basically, the Fun Dashouse house is no longer a threat. Shogun Honourous has made a task force to investigate members of the house believed to still be radical. They are doing a decent job at not making the innocent criminalized."

Arjuna spat, "Decent? Does that mean there are some who being wrongfully punished?"

Diptidulla replied, "Some. But not many."

Flowious looked up from the coffee table book he was flipping through and revealed, "The Shogun has given lots of money to the Senseis's League since it saved him and Daant. Enough to pay off the debt of Sensei's castle. Not sure they should have taken it."

Arjuna commented, "Must be nice to have a whole big castle for your organization."

Diptidulla remembered the advice from Sage and asked, "Father? Did the Senseis do the right thing by accepting the money?"

"You are the one who has spent all that time with a sensei and you come to me for advice, kid. Ask your sensei, he is closer to the action," Arjun demanded, then answered, "I think there is no better time to settle your debts than the Day of the Departed. Both to the bank, so you aren't stealing, and to the departed."

Flowious put down the book and asked, "So, dad, enough about us, how has the company been going?"

Arjuna ordered, "Please, Flowious, don't put the book down upside down open like that. It costs money I have worked for."

Flowious did as instructed and then Winnie replied, "Monk Industries International just upgraded to the new stock trading system. It will be simpler than ever for individuals to buy stock. Isn't that great!"

Diptidulla asked, "What about the figures who say you shouldn't have written that letter, pretending to be the Shogun of the Maa Shoguntu, to convince Tsar Kresovy to support the Nihon Trade Deal? I know figures who were pretty upset about that."

Arjuna revealed, "I corrected that mistake after seeing how many figures stopped buying from the company."

Diptidulla argued, "But I can't see how you didn't know figures were going to be upset. Why stain your honor when it isn't necessary?"

Arjuna argumentatively said, "I see what you are trying to do. You are using that word to try and make me feel guilty. Honor, I don't like that word. Figures use "honor" when they are trying to convince someone to do something they don't know why is right. Use a different word."

Winnie, the former Master of Amber, added, "What sweetie is trying to say is that in the long run he would be doing more good. He just isn't as good at getting his point across with teenagers as well as with adults."

Arjuna said, "That is true. The trade deal would have made a lot of things cheaper for the Central Shoguntu. Things like soap so you can wash up before meals and not get sick. There was a report in the *Grande Polarizzazione Post* about how many hours of work and school are lost each year through the common cold. Another thing that would have been traded for less tariff was plastic. That would help the next generation to learn STEM concepts."

Arjuna believed everything written in the *Grande Polarizzazione Post* with a passion. Diptidulla commented, "It is like in the short run it would be unpopular but in the long run it would decrease disease and make kids smarter. You should have just been open to him about your intention, because this is brewing into a big mess. Now I am going to get washed up before lunch."

Winnie said, "I have to go to talk to the artist. We got a new pony named Bella and she is being sketched for the cover of *Business Magazine*."

Diptidulla and Flowious left for the washroom and Winnie for the stables.

On the Day of Departed Flowious and Diptidulla were about to leave the Monk estate.

Flowious asked Diptidulla, "Is now a good time to ask Grandma about Silch Levi?"

Diptidulla checked around the corner for their parents and then they popped into the library.

Their grandma was reading in a rocking chair by whale oil lamp. She put down the book and greeted them. Diptidulla asked, "Do you know who Silch Levi was?"

Their grandma snarled, "Asking while alone with me. Think you are being clever. Huh. You're real tough figures when alone with me."

Flowious sighed. He considered the possibility of this being the last conversation with her. He didn't want to be a stick in the mud. Grandma said, "I suppose Winnie had to whisper that name time and time again. She did so not for herself but for Arjuna. It was his second favorite name to hear. Next to the man upstairs of course. One day the three of them were having a tea party. The next he was gone forever. He mysteriously vanished. Five years after he left, he returned. The whole town gathered in our house. We asked him why he was gone. He said, "He created something that figurekind could abuse." He gave your mother a ring, your father a badge and half an hour later he said he was going out to the outhouse. Arjuna and Winnie made sure to say goodbye before this. Arjuna saw him walking away, over the hill but didn't go after him. I saw him too. He just looked into the great beyond and disappeared from our lives forever. Arjuna's conscience beat himself up for years, over not taking someone's horse to run after him. I don't know why he thought riding after him was so important. It would have been rude and it would have gotten him a ticket. He used to be the perfect gentle-figure. His teachers would tell me how much of a joy it would be to have him. During a raging storm, he once jumped into a well, too, because someone else had fallen in it. He would say good-day

and good-bye to everyone every opportunity. Now all he does is grunt like a rude cave-figure and tell you kids to use your manners. So hypocritical. I would have thought he would have been relieved knowing he showed someone who had left him that he could be trusted to be friends with because he was socially sane. All these years Levi has been away he probably knows his friend believes in magnanimous manners, which I can only imagine would mean the world to Levi.”

Diptidulla and Flowious felt a shiver up their spines. Arjuna and Winnie were behind them. Arjuna said, “Rings and badges have nothing to do with it, that figure should still be with us today. Now I want some Fountain of Youth Extract.”

“Sweetie, you don’t need a drink to be comfortable with yourself,” Winnie advised, then scolded him and asked, “First it was being too powerful of a business man, then it was you instead of Levi creating whatever it was he created, when are you going to think about someone other than yourself?”

Arjuna bluntly said, “I already do all the time.”

Winnie gave Diptidulla a small silver ring with a black diamond on it. Arjuna said, “Flowious, Diptidulla, this ring was given to your mother by an old friend. Therefore, it is valuable because it has touched the heart of another. It reminds us there are more important things in life than obsessing over love. It also reminds us to be a Ninja; sometimes you must travel by shadows.”

Arjuna gave Flowious a badge with a lion on it. Winnie said, “Flowious, Diptidulla, this badge was given to your father by a friend. Therefore, it is valuable because it has touched the heart of another. It reminds us to be courageous. It also reminds us that character earns respect, not

title.”

Arjuna said, “Now that we are giving gifts I have some more things for you.”

He left and Diptidulla and Flowious wondered what the gifts would be. They didn’t want something super valuable but a small token would be nice. Arjuna came back and handed both t-shirts with the Monk Industries International logo, which was made to look like it was drawn with crayons, on them. They gladly accepted, as their parents were the real gift.
