



## Once upon a time...

Blaze, Ahimsa, and Krispal had set up camp for the night after flying on their Chi Dragons toward the Temple of Fire. It was the Birchwood Forest so they were glad that Blaze had built a fire. They slept in their canvas tent as the snow flurried outside. Blaze saw a figure approach him in his dream. The Figure said, "I am Zhu Hearth, the First Elemental Master of Fire. It is time you learn about your power."

Hearth explained, "Here is the Sword of Fire."

He handed the vision Blaze the Golden Weapon for Fire. Hearth then showed Blaze a memory of his.

A young Hearth was on a bridge that went over a small pond. He was scorning the lily-pads when he noticed two girls. Hearth explained to Blaze, "The one on the right is Strussie."

Hearth stared at Strussie. The two girls walked across the bridge. The one on the left pulled Strussie along as if not to have her talk to Hearth. Hearth explained to Blaze, "A few years later when I was nineteen the First Spinjitzu Master came to Shaolin."

Hearth showed him another memory of him in a large crowd watching a carriage go by. The carriage stopped in the center of the town. The crowd gathered around it, including Hearth. The First Spinjitzu Master, who was in his early twenties, stepped out. The Mayor of Shaolin, whom Blaze knew was the Mayor because Hearth told him, said to the First Spinjitzu Master, "I will bring forth our young boys with the greatest chastity."

The First Spinjitzu Master looked unmoved. Soon three boys emerged from the crowd and reverently bowed to the creator. The First Spinjitzu Master looked at each of them. He then pointed to Hearth in the crowd and said, "What about that one?"

The Mayor ordered, "Of course, Hearth please present yourself."

Hearth stepped through the crowd of surprised townspeople into the center of the square. The First Spinjitzu Master pulled out the Sword of Fire from his back holster piece. He handed it to Hearth and said, "You are the Master of Fire from now on."

Hearth explained, "I will tell you more when the time is right."

Blaze woke up and rolled over. Next to him was the Sword of Fire.

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Supreme Servant Wu-yin took to the podium before a courtyard of subjects. The wind blasted her in the face, due to the high altitude. She was smartly upwind from the subjects to carry her voice. She began, "Shogun Honourous promised to uphold the way of the ninja. We trusted him with the authority to describe the traits of the ninja to the Sensei's League. When Tsar Kresovy fell and the Central Shoguntu was in chaos, he disappeared. He has not been seen since Tsar Kresovy's defeat. Now that demon Undead X is terrorizing the subjects of the Central Shoguntu. Emperor Ninjara has promised to stop Undead X. The only reason our wise emperor has been put in this situation to leave Circle Castle is because of the failure of Shogun Honourous to restore order to the Central Shoguntu. Shogun Honourous is a pious Tiger. He uses the cover of his heritage with Pithious to extort his subject's wealth for his expensive palace. He has refused to destroy the Daily Zhu's press permit. The Daily Zhu continues to run a biased

account of events and advocate totalitarianism open-malgarsonery. The gloves are off. If a Ninja is to lead Nihon we must not tolerate any opposition to the way of the ninja. Open-malgarsons, the House of Zhu, Shogun Honourous, and Undead X will face the wrath of our wunderwaffe. The enemy is consumed- mind, body, and soul with a gluttonous hoarding of power. They will never let up. I am issuing a zero-tolerance policy for open-malgarsonery. Any case of open self-serving will face the full extent of the law and military and my personal wrath."

Falco asked Ethica, "That's your mother?"

Ethica replied, "She will love you- you embody what she believes in perfectly."

The hooded figure walked from the archway up the stairs to the podium. Falco disappeared with the briefcase down another flight of stairs. Wu-yin looked at the hooded figure. She ordered, "Guards, arrest this figure. He has no business on my stage."

The figure lowered his hood. He was Shogun Honourous. Wu-yin scolded him for his unexpected appearance. He announced, "Subjects of Shee, there being a bottomless pit in someone is a myth. It is an irrational construct of the mind made of fragile foundations. Even in your Supreme Servant there is a bottom to the pit she is filling."

Two constrictai guards wrapped Shogun Honourous in a squeeze. He gasped for air. Falco walked in the other end of the courtyard. He had a gauntlet on his right hand. Wu-yin announced, "He has the Gauntlet of Ultimate Destruction."

Falco pointed the glove with blades protruding from it at the constrictai. Soon a red ooze began to rise out of the cracks in the stone courtyard floor. It formed into a giant red action figure. The action figure was as tall as the tallest tower of Shee. He lowered his palm at the constrictai. A red beam shot from the hundred-foot-tall action figure in front of the constrictai. They released Shogun Honourous, who was trying to catch his breath. Falco took off the gauntlet and the red action figure oozed back into the ground. Ethica screamed, "Falco, you wanted to come here just to steal my kingdom's wunderwaffe!"

Wu-yin exclaimed, "You malgarson. You think I would leave my wunderwaffe unguarded without a security measure?"

Falco replied, "No, I know about the radioactive poisoning if you are around it too long."

Falco swung the gauntlet around like a sling shot. He let go and it went flying off the balcony. Shee was a flying city-state made of helium-pumice. It was over the Viking islands that day. The Gauntlet of Ultimate destruction would fall to the bottom of the ocean. A chi dragon shot passed Falco. He turned his head and saw the dragon and rider dive off the balcony. The rider was Ethica. Her chi dragon resembled Isabelle's but it wasn't the same. Falco formed his wyvern chi dragon and followed Ethica off the balcony. Shogun Honourous jumped onto the wyvern. Falco raced his dragon down at the gauntlet. It was too late- Ethica had reached it. She swooped and caught it on her dragon. Falco formed his puffer-wing chi dragon ready for a fight. She threw the gauntlet at Falco, who caught it. He said, "I don't understand."

Ethica explained, "My mother is a brick-head. She doesn't deserve the wunderwaffe. She would do something stupid with it."

Falco asked, "Then why not just let it fall to the bottom of the ocean?"

Ethica replied, "Because, Serpentes Falco would not do something stupid with it. The weapon is an extension of he who wears it. Getting rid of it would be like getting rid of a piece of you and you have proven your pieces are valuable."

Falco smiled. He was glad he could think of himself in a good light again. He then said, "Come on, we better hide it before the poisoning sets in."

They found an island marked on a map as "Trade-Off Island." After counting three fathoms north from a memorable rock shaped like a horse, they dug a ten-foot hole in the sand and buried the Gauntlet. Afterwards they left the island on their chi dragons.