

The Rise of the Baker's Dozen

Chapter 6:

Ringo the Party Ring



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Avatar
English



Chapter 5:
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Chapter 1

Ringo kept his hands far away from the vicious animal trap sitting on his dining table. Blood stains still marked some of the razor-sharp teeth from its last victim, reminding him of the device's lethal potential.

His friend, Dougie, stared at the trap with rage in his eyes and slapped his palms on the table.

"Where the hell did you find this?"



Ringo took a deep breath. "It found me. In the forest." He pointed to the side of the device. "Check the marking on it."

The white triangle over the black circle was unmistakable. Dougie snarled, extending the long wrinkles on his aged face. "The Teabags! They know hunting wild animals is forbidden. We must stop them." The elderly biscuit carefully ran his finger over the red stained teeth of the trap. "Is this your blood?"

Ringo shook his head. "I've fallen for many of the Teabags' traps, but not this one. I used to work for them as a D.J. and a promoter for illuminice-tea. You have to understand, Dougie, once that drink arrived, it had biscuits my age dancing from sunup to sunup."

Dougie put his hands on his hips. "I might be ancient, but I still remember what it was like to be young. We partied too, you know, but with better music and more stylish clothes."

A contradiction of information made Ringo pause. Rumour had it that Dougie had miraculously arrived to Biscuitville as a young adult. He'd been found face down on a riverbank, close to death, and was rushed to hospital. When he finally came round, the doctors had asked him who he was and where he had come from. Dougie had claimed he couldn't remember anything apart from his name.

Ringo's curiosity ate at him. "I thought you don't remember your past?"

Dougie's face went blank. "I keep my past a secret for a very good reason. Tell me your story first, laddie. What did the Teabags do to you and what has this trap got to do with it?"

Ringo winced. "It all started about three months ago." Telling his story, his mind drifted back to the bitter memories.

Chapter 2

Behind his desk in his bedroom, Ringo's foot tapped as he looked at the clock. There was a knock on the door, and his mother entered.

"Darling, I'm off to bed now. Would you like some dinner?"

Ringo scribbled notes on a piece of paper. "No, thanks. I'm preparing for the maths test tomorrow. I'll study through the night, so don't disturb me."

She placed her hands over her heart. "That's my boy."

"Good night, Mum."

"Good luck, my dear."

He heard his mother close her bedroom curtains and get into bed. Once there was silence, he instantly tip-toed to the window. Outside was a telephone line, and Ringo tied his dreadlocks around it. He removed a bottle of illuminice-tea from under his baggy vest and took a giant gulp before jumping out of his room and down the cable.

Zooming through the air, the strong wind blew against his face. The route took him directly into town. He untied himself and sprinted towards the Bisco nightclub.

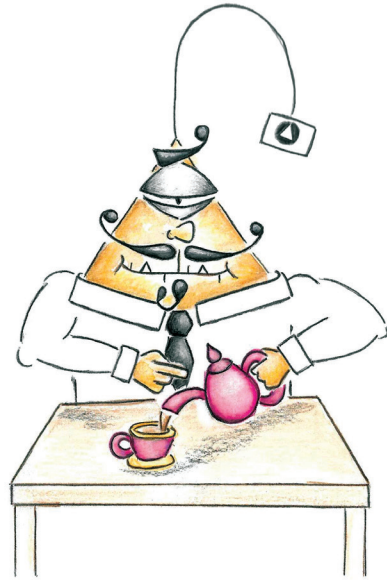


Le Nag Bag was waiting for him as he arrived, serving free tast-ers of illuminice-tea to everyone who entered the Bisco. "You're late."

"Sorry. I got held up."

Le Nag Bag passed him another bottle of illuminice-tea. "If you want more, you will have to convince twenty people to come to le after-party."

Ringo smiled. "Just twenty?" He drank half the bottle and ran directly to the DJ booth.



The dance floor was packed with biscuits who screamed and chanted his name as he approached the turntables.

He grabbed the microphone and pointed at his fans. "Are you ready to party?!" Long cheers confirmed their desire.

From his first song to the last, the dance floor filled with biscuits dancing, jumping, stomping, and whooping, the floor vibrating from their intense movement. The energy was pure euphoria, and Ringo devoured every second of it. The masses depended on his music to keep them raving, and he would not disappoint.

Towards the end of his set, Ringo took the microphone and again addressed the audience. "After-party in the tea bar at two a.m.! I'll be playing an extra special mix. Don't miss out."

Wild screams of support echoed throughout the night-club. The crowd again chanted his name. Le Nag Bag approached with another bottle of illuminice-tea. He gave a wink and a thumbs-up. Ringo took the bottle and went to the dance floor where hordes of fans approached him, congratulating him on his incredible DJ set. Surrounded by his admirers, Ringo bounced from side to side, fuelled by rushes of energy and blinded by the lights.

Next to him, Butter breakdanced, stealing the limelight as he spun upside down on his hands. Ringo only knew the Teabag as Le Nag Bag's friend, but was forever jealous of his impressive moves.

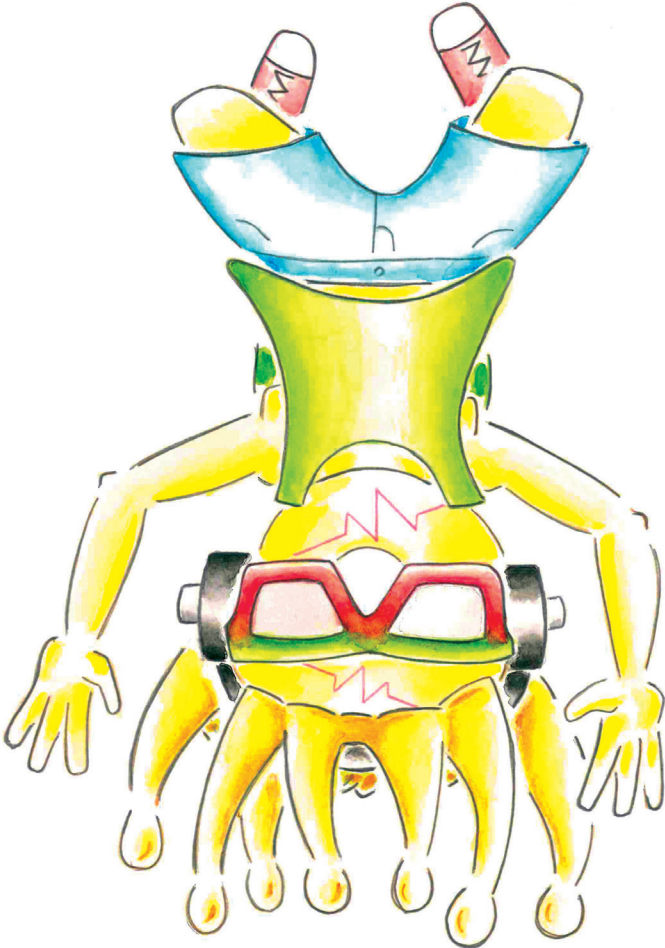
“Can you teach me
how to do that?”



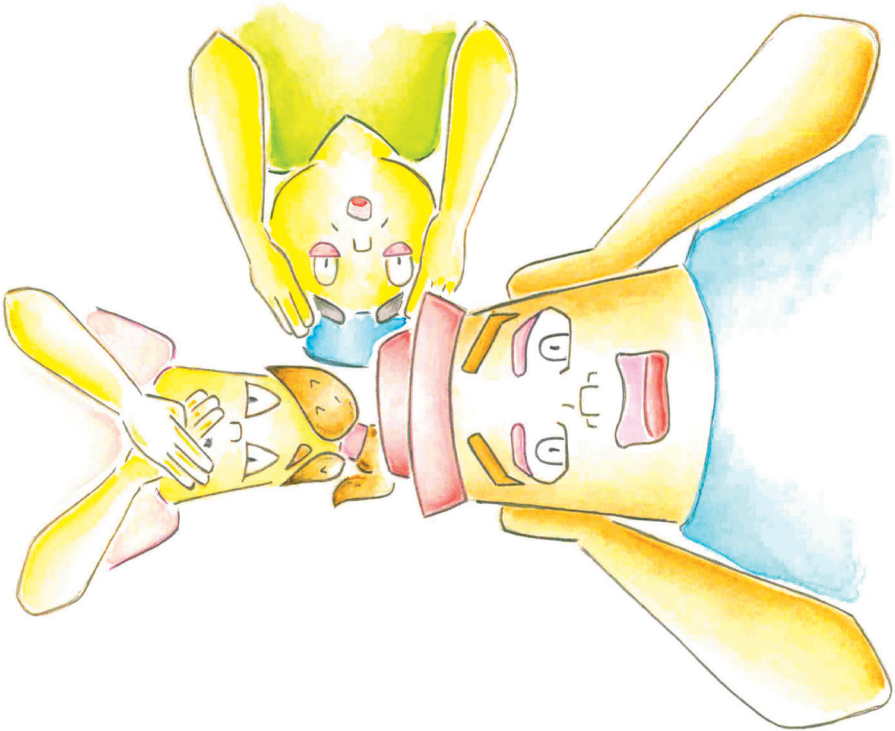
“I bet you a bottle of
illuminate-tea that
you can't do a
backflip!”

The crowds again cheered Ringo's name, encouraging him to take the bet. He threw back his head, drank the entire contents of illuminice-tea, and then held the bottle upside down to demonstrate its emptiness.

He ran towards a wall, pushed off it with his foot and back-flipped through the air-



And heard a crack as he landed crooked. An agonising pain in his leg had him instantly screaming. Biscuits surrounded him as he lay on the floor, their expressions worried and horrified.



A woman held Ringo down. "Don't move."
Ringo roared in pain. "But I have to get to the after-party!"
"You need to get to the hospital—now!"
Ringo looked down. The horrific sight and excruciating pain made him faint.

Chapter 3

Ringo woke up the next morning in a hospital bed with his leg in a cast. A clock on the wall read 5:00 a.m. He had missed the after-party. He tried to sit up until a voice stopped him.

"Where do you think you're going?" his mum said.

Ringo hung his head. "I'm sorry I lied. But I got a job now. I need to get back to the Tea Bar. I made a promise to Le Nag Bag."

"You're not going anywhere until you make a full recovery. And I'll be staying here the whole time to make sure."

Ringo slammed his hands against the bed. "But I'll lose my job!"

"No, you won't. I've already spoken to Le Nag Bag. He's outside now with Butter."

His mother opened the door and the two teabags entered. "I'll give you boys some time alone," she said before closing the door behind her.



Ringo tried to sit up, but any slight movement was torturous. He leaned towards the Teabags. "Can you fix me? Whatever the flaw, illuminice-tea has the cure, right?"

Le Nag Bag removed a hit flask of illuminice-tea from his back pocket and passed it to Ringo. "A cure for a broken leg would cost 500 doughs."

Ringo choked on the tea he was drinking. "That's two years of work!"

"And my magic potions are a lifetime of my efforts."

"I'll pay it back over time. Just get me outta here."

Le Nag Bag sniggered. "We're tea makers, not banks, and you already owe me for that illuminice-tea you just drank." The teabag snatched the hit flask from Ringo and placed it back in his pocket. "Why don't you ask your mummy to lend you le money?"

Ringo laughed. "Dream on."

"Why not? Does she not approve of your behaviour?"

Ringo's stomach twisted. "She doesn't need to know."

Le Nag Bag patted him on the chest. "While you're under le control of your mama, you're not much benefit to us. We need a real man to rely on, not a mummy's boy. Besides, we have many other DJs to replace you."

Butter loomed over Ringo and made baby faces. "We'll come and pop by soon. Promise."

Ringo grabbed Butter's giant arm. "You gotta get me outta here."

Butter called out for Ringo's mother, and she entered the room. Ringo released Butter's arm before she saw.

Le Nag Bag smiled. "You focus on your recovery. You should consider yourself fortunate to have your mummy to look after you." The Teabags left the room.

In his mother's hands were his D.J. decks. "I brought your turntables so you can practise while you're in hospital."

Ringo lifted his arm. "Perfect! Let me be alone so I can practise every hour."

His mum installed herself in a chair and removed a knitting set. "In your dreams."

If Ringo didn't find a way out soon, his career would be over before he recovered.

Chapter 4

Over the next few days, Ringo watched the clock from his hospital bed. Each tick of the second hand signalled his career slipping away a little farther.

Time alone to make his escape was non-existent. Doctors visited every hour, checking his condition and filling him with numerous medications. The pills eased the pain but made him nauseous, so his ever-present mum would prepare herbal remedies that turned him drowsy. Daily exercises with the physiotherapist left him physically exhausted.

Even with all the medical attention and treatment, there was only one substance he really desired—illumince-tea. Not a minute went by where his mind didn't fill with cravings so strong they made his muscles tense and clench. The Teabags never returned, as they had promised, and so Ringo went days without tea. If he didn't get out soon, he would lose his mind and his job.

From down the hall, the sound of children's lullabies played aloud. He wanted to scream at them to shut up, but in that instant, his great escape plan suddenly came to him.

"I want to throw a party," he said to his mum. "A special thanks to all the staff and something to cheer up the patients."

Mother placed her hands over her heart. "That's my boy." She called the nurse and informed her of the plan.

It wasn't long before Ringo's hospital room filled with patients of all ages. He started his DJ set with funk and soul music that had everyone dancing and smiling. Even the elderly joined, using their walking sticks and zimmerframes to groove to the music.



Ater thirty minutes of upbeat music, Ringo lowered the tempo, playing softer love songs that had the crowds hugging and slow dancing in pairs. Then, ever so subtly, he mixed in some hypnotic meditation music that was excellent for sleeping. The effect over the audience was almost instant—many biscuits had sudden urges to sit down before randomly fallling asleep on top of each other or in the seated positions.

With everybody fast asleep, Ringo quietly got out of bed, holding back the screams of pain from each movement, and silently made his way to the window. A phone line was just a small stretch away. He reached out, grabbed the cable and tied his dreadlocks around it. With a small jump, he escaped his hospital room and left his sleeping crowd and mother behind.

Flying through the air, the wind blew against his face. The sweet sensation of freedom had him smiling. Zooming along the cable, he passed Biscuitville, seeing the Bisco nightclub and hearing the pumping music from inside. Next to it was the Tea Bar, which was surely packed with biscuits drinking illuminice-tea. A grand temptation to untie himself came over him, but the large fall below would surely cause much more than just another broken leg.



The telephone line continued out of town and towards the forest, leading directly towards tall pines. Ringo covered his face and braced himself. Branches scratched across his arms and body as he rushed through the trees.

The end of the line left him deep in the forest. He untied himself and tried to walk back to Biscuitville, but with no clear path, he soon became lost.

Exhausted and stressed, he leaned against what he thought was a tree but turned out to be a large cactus. Sharp pains stung throughout his body, the plant's spines piercing his skin all down his arm.

"Stupid cactus!" he cursed.

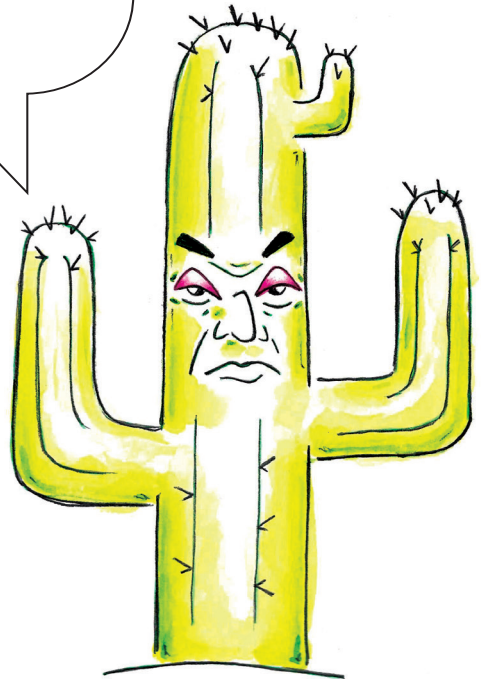
"Who you calling stupid?" a voice said. Suddenly, a pair of eyes, a nose, and a mouth appeared upon the cactus and looked directly at him with a stern face.

Ringo hyperventilated. "A talking cactus! I must be tripping!"

The cactus frowned.

"The mystery is not that us plants can speak, but why you biscuits choose not to listen. And yes, you are tripping. My spines are hallucinogenic!"

The cactus looked at Ringo's leg in a cast. "You should be careful with your body. Body is your temple."



Ringo pulled out the countless spines. "It's my life, my body, and I'll do what I want!"

The cactus laughed. "Not true. Most of the time, you do what others expect you to do or what others teach you to do. Worst of all, you listen to desires of mind, not needs of body. Food consumption is good example. How many times when you eat is it because of hunger or habit? Comfort or craving? Survival or addiction? Your mind is soft, like jelly. Easy to manipulate, tells you many strange things, has many traumas. You can't control thoughts, so they do not define who you are. But actions are in your hands and leave a permanent mark of your existence. Your body is a wonderful gift from Great Spirit. It is home of intuition, which never lies and is never deceived. Sometimes, not easy to listen to, like advice from mother, but always right!" His face then disappeared and the plant returned to being a normal, non-speaking cactus.

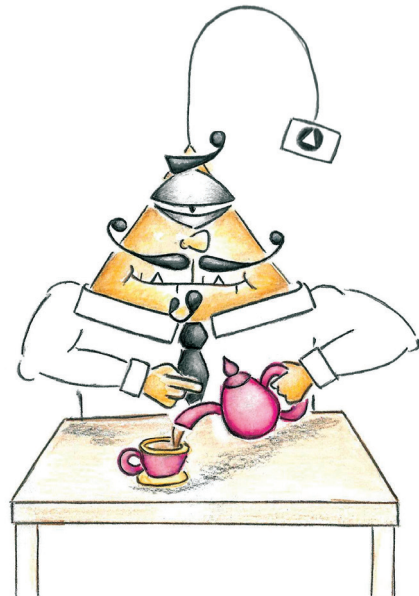
All the colours around Ringo took on an intense new edge. He could see the trees breathe, getting wider as they inhaled and thinner as they exhaled. He hobbled through the forest trying to find an exit, when his mother suddenly appeared.

She ran towards him with her hands clasped together. "Please, darling. Stay in hospital until you make a full recovery."

Ringo tried to calm her down, but the moment he touched her arm, she disappeared into a thin cloud. As she faded, a family of deer drank from a well a few metres ahead. Thirsty, he stumbled in their direction, but when he arrived, the deer ran away and the well turned into Le Nag Bag serving illuminice-tea on a table.

The sweet smell of the brew had Ringo licking his lips. He reached forward, but Le Nag Bag moved the cup away from him.

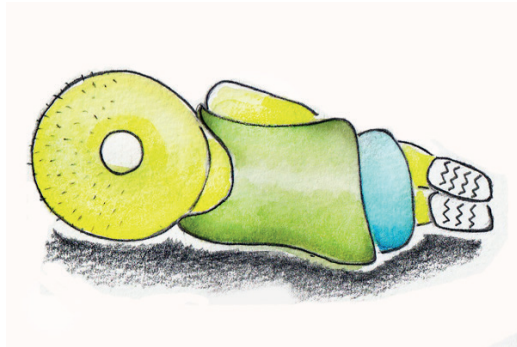
"Money first," he demanded.



Ringo checked his pockets. "I got nothing on me. Can I pay you tomorrow?"

The Teabag shook his head and walked away, taking the illuminice-tea with him. Ringo gave chase, until seeing Dougie laughing hysterically at a bald biscuit in fetal position on the floor.

"HAHA! Looks like Mister spaghetti head finally got a hair cut!"



As the figure turned round, Ringo realised it was a vision of himself. Huge bags surrounded his eyes, his face gaunt and zombie-like. His stare stretched a thousand miles into the unknown.

Ringo winced. "What happened to my dreadlocks and sunglasses?"

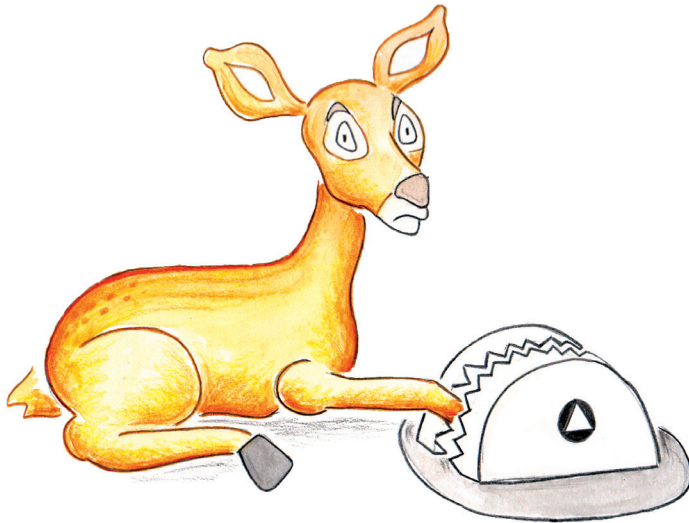
His ghost groaned. "I sold them for more illuminice-tea!"

Dougie's laugh grew louder and louder. Ringo turned and charged at him, but tripped on his cast and seethed in pain on the floor.

The old man stood over him. "You're a mess, Ringo. Get your act together!"

Ringo went to grab Dougie's leg, but just like his mother, he disappeared into mist upon contact. His laugh continued as the wind carried him away.

A sudden deep wail from behind had Ringo frozen stiff. Was it his ghost again? He slowly turned his head. To his horror, a young deer lay on the ground, his leg caught in a vicious trap.



Ringo dragged himself towards the animal ran his hand along its back, feeling its soft hair. The deer flinched and squealed in pain. This was no apparation.

He checked the device, trying to find a release button. In its centre was a white triangle over a black circle, the design an exact match of the Teabags logo. He pressed it and the trap snapped open.

Blood dripped from the deer's leg as it stood up and hobbled towards his mother, who was standing in the distance. Ringo followed the animals as they walked through the trees.

Deeper and deeper into the forest they wandered until arriving at a river. Ringo crouched down and quenched his thirst. In the water's reflection, he saw his face.

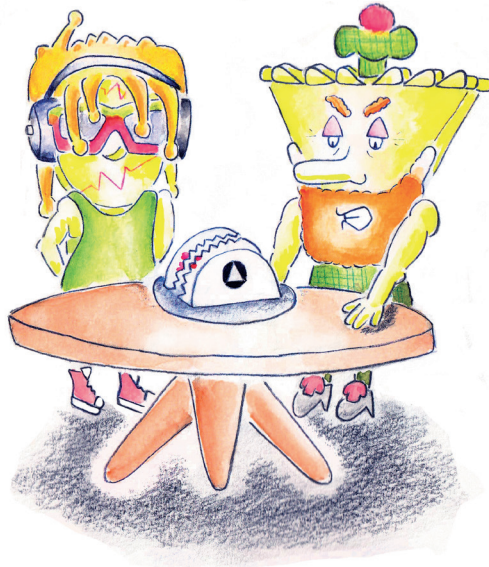
The voice of the cactus suddenly came to him. 'What life will you choose?'

The sound of a wagon passing nearby came to his pleasure. Ringo cried for help, and two men came rushing towards him and carried him towards their cart.

"We're going to the Tea Bar. Where would you like us to take you?"

Ringo took a deep breath. "To the hospital."

Chapter 4



With his story finished, Ringo poured himself a large glass of water and slowly drank it.

Dougie stared at the trap and growled. "What are ye going to do about the Teabags, lad?"

Ringo shrugged. "There ain't much I can do. I've warned my friends about Le Nag Bag and illuminice-tea, but most people think I'm mad! After all, I used to be the guy convincing everyone to go to the Tea Bar for afterparties!"

"So you're just going to do nothing?!"

"I'm focussed on my life now and what's best for me."

"That's great, Ringo. But how are we gonna make the rest of town see the dangers of the brew and the Teabags?"

Ringo shrugged. "Guess they'll have to figure it out for themselves, just like us."

Dougie scratched his beard. "We can't be waiting for miracles. We need to take action, and with that trap, we might just have the perfect piece of evidence against the Teabags."

Ringo's previously broken leg shook uncontrollably. "I dunno, Dougie. Doing so could send this town into a war. Is that what you want?"

Dougie frowned. "Don't talk about war, laddie. You've no idea what it's like."

"And you do?!"

The pensioner sighed. "Before I arrived here in Biscuitville, my hometown was invaded by a foreign army who wanted to eradicate our culture. We engaged in battle. Innocent victims, including women and children, lost their lives, as did many of my friends. I was captured by the enemy but I managed to escape. I ran and took my chances by jumping in a rapid river. The last thing I remember is bumping my head against a rock while being washed downstream. Days later, I woke up in Biscuitville hospital thinking I'd been granted a new life. I thought if I never mentioned the war, I could make it all disappear. My plan was as foolish as covering up an infected wound and hoping it would heal. For years, I managed to hide the truth, but when I stopped drinking illuminice-tea, my mind filled with the horrific scenes of war."

His head hung and he covered his face. "I lost control and destroyed half my room in the process."

Ringo placed an arm around him. "And no-one else knows about your past?"

"Not a soul. I'm only telling you as it seems we'll be comrades from now on. Our first job is to report the Teabags to the Grand Kernels of Justice."

Ringo felt a rush of anxiety. "You sure you want to start a conflict here in Biscuitville?"

Dougie's head rose and he stared at Ringo straight in the eye. "What's worse...to die fighting for a cause that in your heart you know is right and true, or to live a slow death where you betray your soul? As a comrade once said to me, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.' There is no greater duty than to fight injustice. Unless we take actions, we will forever live under the tyranny of the Teabags. Do you wish to surrender your rights, or fight for them?"

Ringo huffed. "So what's your plan?"

"The Teabags are in court next week. It's the perfect opportunity to let everyone know about their antics and their illegal animal traps."

And just like that, Ringo's life took on a whole new purpose.