



QUARTER FINALS

A HOUSE OF FLOWERS

-Greg Bond

Twenty years ago, the Singh family purchased a large plot of land that was put up for compulsory auction in the regional state of Woodland in the country of Mandovia. The auction was conducted due to the land being unused for decades, as the former owners had left the country and left the land untended. The state authorities attempted in vain to trace their heirs, then, after, due legal process, put the land up for auction.

The Singh family built a large family house and the main premises of their flower-growing business on this land. The business has been in the family for generations, and the plot of land in Woodland became the site of its headquarters. Meanwhile, the next generation has taken over the business. The family house is lived in by Peter and Petal Singh, the senior owners of Petal Flowers, and Jo and Ali Singh, their two children, who now run the business, as well as Jo's spouse and their two children. The business is highly successful and exports flowers to neighbouring countries as well as selling in local markets.

Three years ago, the Singh family received a letter from a lawyer in the country of Farmland, claiming that their client, Sydney Gupta, was the rightful heir and owner to the land in Woodland. The Singh family replied via a lawyer that they had rightfully purchased the land. Sydney sued for return of their land, and the case went through several lower and higher courts in Woodland in Mandovia. It transpired that the land had indeed once belonged to the Gupta family, who had left the country in a time of political unrest when the country was gaining independence from its former colonial power (the country of Regalia) some sixty years ago.

Addressing Sydney's claim, the courts noted that the authorities of Woodland had done what was legally required to trace any prior owners before the land was sold to the Singh family. At first instance, the courts ruled that Sydney therefore had no rights in the land. Sydney appealed, and at second instance, the court ruled that the Singhs must not only return the land to Sydney but also restore it to its pre-sale status and thus pull down the house and business buildings they had built, as well as remove all the flower fields. The Singhs then appealed, and the higher court ruled that Sydney had a right to return of the land but must compensate the Singhs for the cost of the buildings and business premises upon legal transfer of the land ownership.

This is the point at which mediation has been requested, by the Singh family, and accepted by Sydney. The mediation takes place in the neutral third country of Treeland,



and is attended by Jo with external counsel and Sydney with external counsel. Both Jo and Sydney have full settlement authority. Jo and Sydney have never met, as Sydney was always represented by lawyers in the court hearings to date and never attended personally. If mediation does not reach settlement, then enforcement of the court ruling seems likely.