

# An Earth Day Carol

*Written by*

*I. M. Nehemiah © April 2011*

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

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I credit Charles Dickens with the inspiration of this ghostly story, and I paraphrase him liberally and at times even copy his old style English writings. Dickens sought to entertain with stories of the past, present and future of a stingy man named Ebenezer Scrooge. Instead my story is a broader account of the realities of our society, as seen through the life of a man named Edward Rouge. Rouge is not at all like Scrooge; he is far worse. Rouge is like you and me. He is stingy and self-centered without realizing it. And he and we are like our neighbors and our ancestors, all creating our own destinies. If you see yourself in the characters, then I may have succeeded in my intent to reach you. Only the main historical events and the lives of famous people are factual. Unfortunately, our ghostly story foreshadows what may become of our children, our society, and our world. Some would say that there is not a ghost of a chance for us to escape our madness. Let the ghosts show us what we cannot see, or what we choose not to see.

Your faithful Friend and Servant, I.M. Nehemiah

April, 2011 (Written for Earth Day, more than one year before the days of this story.)

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# Farley's Ghost

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Professor Farley was dead. There can be no doubt whatever about that. The funeral was a massive affair. Dignitaries from every corner attended. Behind the coffin walked twenty honorary pallbearers, among them Edward Rouge, the most prominent of Farley's former students. He had been either classmate or tutorial instructor of several others in the procession who were now solid friends despite representing competing countries: Hao Chen from China, J.K. Srinivas from India, Luiz Bastos from Brazil, and Ivan Strofsky of Russia. They all knew each other, and they all knew that Old Farley was as dead as a doornail.

The entire world knew that Farley was dead. For over forty years he was among the world's greatest economists, an economic advisor to Presidents and dictators alike. His books, articles, speeches and even ramblings attracted everyone's attention. As the quintessential authority on modern capitalism, Professor Farley was courted and rewarded by every financially involved entity, from billionaires and journalists to nations and alliances. And his former students carried his messages literally everywhere that money was exchanged or even mentioned.

Rouge had been for years a classic protégé of Old Farley. A prominent man of business and former Governor of Oklahoma, Rouge consistently cited Farley's wisdom as justification for his own policies and attitudes. And recently others had begun citing Rouge. Nobody could replace Old Farley, but Rouge was close to having that honor.

Governor Edward Rouge. Even after his term of office concluded in January 2011, he still liked being called Governor. Rouge was a combination of old wealth and new money. On his paternal grandfather's side, the money ran deeply into the American South with cotton, textiles and clothing. His paternal grandmother had newer money from oil in Oklahoma, plus computers and banking. So Pappy Rouge, Eddie's father, was loaded from birth, and so was Eddie.

On the other hand, Eddie's wife was a commoner schoolteacher with some Hispanic and American Indian ancestry. Against family opposition, Eddie married Lois, and they proved to be a great couple. And in financial and political realms, Eddie prudently used his wife's "minority status" whenever it was convenient.

Edward Rouge was an iconic citizen of American conservative society, strongly associated with the right wing (but not the radical right), church-attending, pro-life, anti-tax, tough-love, Republican, family-oriented, and a champion of capitalism. He regularly gives thousands of dollars to the churches and causes that he advocates. Smart, handsome at age 55, quick-witted, and forward-thinking, he served on many corporate and charity boards and was well placed with politicians. Couple that with his money, and the words "powerful and influential" were appropriate for him.

The Rouge household was once featured on television about the rich and famous. Husband, wife, three children, and 4 dogs occupied his substantial estate, and all were cared for by six workers, excluding the five office staff who cared for business and other issues. Private schools for the kids and chauffeured cars helped shield the Rouge family from the public eye, for Eddie was certainly well known and recognized when with the general public. And this was exactly the life that he wanted, continuing how he and the wealthy side of the family had been raised for generations.

As our story unfolds, Edward Rouge has accepted a Presidential request to lead the US delegation to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), commonly called "Earth Summit 2012," being held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He arrived two days ago and was already established in a very nice hotel suite at Copacabana Beach. The large windows on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor offered a stunning view of the blue ocean, broad white beach, distinctive black and white sidewalk, and six lanes of divided boulevard in front of the sidewalk café near the hotel entrance.

With him in the office area of the suite was Andrew Philips, his assistant on this trip. Andrew was a quiet conservative aligned with Rouge, but was different in most other ways: 29 years old, single, African American, and certainly not wealthy. Andrew earned \$42,000 per year as a research assistant to Bill Parker, Rouge's confidant chief-of-staff for 25 years. But Parker became ill and could not travel, so Andrew was a last-minute replacement.

Andrew closed his cell phone and said: "Mr. Chen called to confirm that he will have dinner with you tonight at 8:30. He will be in the south lobby then. And Ivan Strofsky is also in this hotel and will stop by tomorrow afternoon at 1:30."

"Happy Earth Summit, uncle!" interrupted a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Rouge's nephew Jonathan Stillwell, who entered the room so quickly that this was the first intimation Rouge had of his approach.

"Rubbish!" said Rouge, "And the Earth Summit is not until the end of the week. Who let you in, anyway?"

"It was easy. Everyone knows you have a nephew here, and the hotel staff thought you would be glad to see me. They don't know that we are on opposite sides of the Earth Summit debates."

"Opposite in points of view, yes, but not opposite at the table where I am a chief delegate and you are in the streets and side events as a munchkin cub reporter for an insignificant protest group. Take your idealistic "save the world" and "save the whales" rubbish back to the streets."

"Respecting our Planet Earth is never rubbish, uncle!" said Rouge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I'm sure."

"I do," said Rouge. "God made this planet for mankind, and it is for our use. And I do respect it. You and the likes of you would lock it up, and then everyone could be poor. Poor like you, and like your mother. Is she still living on the dole? Don't answer. I know she is. She's visiting my house while I am on this trip. My dear wife is still a sucker for her poor sister's stories. Proper utilization of resources should not include leaching off of relatives."

"Come on," returned the nephew gaily, ignoring Rouge's comments about his mother. "What right have you to take advantage of Earth's limited resources? What reason do you have? You're certainly rich enough already."

Rouge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "There are many people more wealthy than I am. I am still far short of billionaire status."

"Don't be cross, poor uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this Earth Summit crowd. You march around and waste your time, but you cannot pay bills without money. Every summer you find yourself a year older, but not an hour richer."

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"I am indeed your uncle, and you are the son of my wife's older sister!" replied the uncle, sternly. "Do not abuse our family relationship. And keep the Earth Summit in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

“Keep it?” questioned Rouge’s nephew. “But you don’t keep it.”

“Let me leave it alone, then,” said Rouge. “And I do not want your lectures.”

“Uncle, I came here to give you these Visitor’s Passes into the speakers area backstage at tomorrow’s ‘New World Economics Rally’. That way you will not need to be in the crowd. We are expecting 8000 people.”

“As I said, I do not want lectures from you or any of the other wild-eyed ‘New Economics’ people. Now, get out of here.”

“I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel. So I’ll keep my optimism on sustainability to the last. A Happy Earth Summit to you, uncle!”

“Good afternoon!” said Rouge.

“And I hope you will enjoy Rio! It’s a great day to hit the beach,” Jonathan said, directing his words as much to Andrew as to his uncle.

“Good afternoon!” said Rouge.

His nephew stopped at the outer door to hand Andrew the backstage passes, and then left the room without an angry word.

The clock showed 3:05 PM. Andrew said that the last of the afternoon’s appointments were completed, and wondered if he could get to the beach while there was still good sunshine, if it was convenient.

“It’s not convenient,” said Rouge, “and it’s not fair. If I were to dock your salary for you to have amusement time, you’d think yourself ill-used. But letting you leave early, I am ill-used.”

The clerk smiled faintly and mentioned that he had never been to Rio before, and that he had worked well into the evening the two previous days.

“There’s more to be done that is not on the schedule. I have dozens of things to do. Oh well, get Parker on the phone for me, and then you can leave. But be here by 7:30 tomorrow morning, and be ready to work a full day.”

“I certainly will, sir. Thank you, Governor,” said Andrew. Within a minute, Bill was on the phone, and Rouge gestured to Andrew to head out.

Rouge and Parker spoke for 40 minutes. Their topics ranged from Bill’s health (“nearly fully recovered. Sorry I’m missing Rio.”), to Andrew’s work (“He’s a keeper, but he likes the beaches.”), to several business deals Parker was handling. One was with the Eight-Fourths Bank of Tulsa that was making great gains with the small banks it acquired at half price when the FDIC closed them in 2010. Another was the oil-futures leveraged trading, with some comments about Bill’s discussions with an oil sheik that makes it all look extremely profitable. Bill’s summary was that the \$400,000 net gain this quarter should be superseded easily in future quarters. Clearly Parker and Rouge had some substantial income headed their way, and they talked about sheltering it so that they would not pay much in taxes

“I want to pay less than the 17% tax rate that is average for the 400 highest adjusted gross incomes in the USA. Over \$340 million average INCOME for each of them in a year. And that is AFTER adjustments. Makes us look like slackers, Parker, real slackers. But we’ll get by, right?” Rouge said with a broad grin as they ended their call.

A short while later, Rouge phoned his wife Lois at their luxurious home in Oklahoma. They talked about common things that couples discuss, but then the topic turned to Marion Stillwell, older sister of Lois, a slow learner, and unwed mother of Jonathan when she was twenty.

Rouge began, “Marion will be gone before I get back, right?”

“Of course,” Lois replied. “I know better than to have the two of you in the same room for more than thirty minutes.”

“Has anything changed?”

“Not really, except for the worse,” Lois said. “She is on a ‘downer’ right now. She stopped taking her medications, her fears came back, and she’s as stubborn as before. Same story as 4 years ago; she wouldn’t do the minimal paperwork, so her food stamps card was not renewed. And this year she did not send in her income tax form, even though it means she would get some additional support money. It will take me days to get those two things corrected, if she lets me.”

“Don’t give her any money!” exclaimed Rouge. “She wastes her SSD support on unnecessary stuff that she wants, and then cannot do basic repairs on her car or trailer. No money. Promise me.”

Lois countered, “Just a bit, to fix part of the trailer, but no money into her hands. She is my sister. I really feel sorry for challenged people who do not have some concerned family member who tries to look after them.”

“Rubbish,” Rouge snorted. “Once these people get on the dole, there is no way to get them off.”

The news from home about Rouge’s sons was nothing new at all: they continued to be a bit wild and big spenders. Not that the latter caused Rouge much concern – Rouge’s influence and money had set them up with lucrative jobs.

When Rouge was finally off the phone, he decided to look around outside before meeting Chen for dinner. He felt comfortable that he was not so readily recognized outside of America. But his feeling soon proved wrong because the Earth Summit had attracted many Americans and Europeans seeking to deal with issues of poverty and the environment. Once outside the hotel, he was promptly approached by two portly gentlemen who clearly knew Rouge as one of their targets. They were pleasant to behold, and now with their hats off. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

“Mr. Rouge, we are delegates from the Coalition of International Charities, the CIC. Just one minute of your time, please,” said the taller man.

“At this Summit,” said the shorter gentleman, taking up a pen, “one focus is the eradication of poverty. We are taking donations for the ‘Summit Project’ for homeless children. It is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.”

“I gave already this year. \$4000 in fact, specifically for homeless children, in Africa, I think,” Rouge replied. “Are there no shelters for the poor?”

“So many that we cannot staff them,” said the gentleman, fiddling with the pen again.

“Are there no food pantries still in operation?” demanded Rouge.

“They are. Still,” returned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were doing a better job.”

“The charities are fully active, then?” said Rouge.

“All are very busy, sir.”

“Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to keep the donations from them,” said Rouge. “I’m very glad to hear it.”

“What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!” Rouge replied.

“You wish to be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left alone,” said Rouge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I was hoping to be able to step onto a public street without being pestered for impossible solutions. I do not wish to donate so that people can be idle. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned; they cost enough. And those who are badly off must go there.”

“Many can't go there, and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Rouge, “that should please those attending the Forum on Population Growth. They want to decrease the surplus population. Oh, excuse me, that was harsh. I really don't know about that.”

“But you should know it,” observed the gentleman.

“It's not my business,” Rouge returned. “It's enough for a man to understand his own business and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Your minute is over. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Rouge resumed his stroll with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual for him.

As the twilight progressed and the streetlights came on, Rouge met Hao Chen in the hotel lobby. “We haven't had time together since Farley's funeral, but I hear things are going well for you.”

“Of course,” replied Chen.

As they headed for their private dinner, they passed some disco nightlife and some evident wealth in Rio. Rouge declared: “It is good to see the spread of affluence around the world.”

“It is now like this in China. We have everything, including a Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream store in the Bund of Shanghai. Boutiques, cars. And some very spoiled children,” smiled Chen.

Rouge pressed, “But what about the hundreds of millions of Chinese rural and industrial workers and their families?”

“We are bringing them the better basics. They see personal progress and are happy,” Chen assured.

“Or do you mean “content” to have something after getting so little for so long?”

“That too,” said Chen. “Farley would be proud. We have Capitalism the Chinese way. It seems to be working nicely. We are producing much of what the world is buying. And we are so successful that China today has a new affluent class. People such as me.”

“Yes,” Rouge replied, “and that is why so many of the protesters here are critical of China's contributions to pollution and climate change, etc. They say the Earth cannot support a billion more middle-class consumers.”

“But that applies to India too. And why should that quality of life be limited to only the North Americans and Europeans? China's economic growth will bring benefits to all the Chinese people, like what the Americans have. This is our type of Capitalism, but we will have mass transit instead of just cars and parking lots,” retorted Chen with a sly grin.

Rouge also grinned. “It is interesting how we argue but still stick together. Just like our competitions when we were in the university, but everyone seeks the same goal of maximized profits. I remember the debates between you and Strofsky. China versus Russia, and then we would all go out to drink together. Now we all come here to pay lip service to the Earth Summit goals, but our paths are set and what we want is what will actually happen, especially when there is so little progress for the idealistic goals of the protesters and economic revisionists.”

“China will not be pushed to yield its sovereign rights to chart its own destiny. And America certainly is not going to do that either,” Chen replied.

Lifting their wine glasses, they made a toast “to our sovereign rights.”

After the meal Rouge returned to his suite. A Brazilian wall decoration attracted his attention, and while peering at it he saw the face of Professor Farley. “So strange,” Rouge said with a burp. “Spicy foods really do give me indigestion.”

Then he thought he heard Farley call his name. He glanced around, was a bit confused, but not shaken.

Entering the bedroom, he locked the door very consciously and looked down from the large window to the night scene of the ocean, beach, and traffic far below.

After completely checking the bedroom several times, including the bathroom, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell that hung in the room, evidently to communicate for some forgotten purpose, now serving only as a decoration. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every device in the room with its own sounds, including the alarm clock, Rouge’s cell-phone, and the television set.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bell and electronics ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, from outside his window, as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over casks in a wine-merchant’s cellar. Rouge then remembered having heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains, and he remembered the beginning of Dickens’ *Christmas Carol*.

While Rouge was looking out the window high on the hotel with the beach below, slowly Professor Farley appeared outside the window. Impossible!!

“It’s rubbish still!” said Rouge. “I won’t believe it.”

His color changed though, when, without a pause, the ghost entered the room through the closed window and stood there before his eyes.

The same face — the very same. Farley in his long hair, his usual three-piece suit, and tasseled shoes. The tassels were bristling, like his coattail, and the hair upon his head.

The chain he dragged was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Rouge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, textbooks, and heavy purses wrought in steel.

His body was transparent; so that Rouge, observing him, and looking through his suit coat, could see the backside of his belt behind him.

No, nor did he believe it even then. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

“How now!” said Rouge, caustic and cold. “What do you want with me?”

“Much!” -- Farley’s voice, no doubt about it.

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I **was**.”

“Who **were** you then?” said Rouge, raising his voice.

“In life I was your professor and mentor, Jonah Farley.”

“Can you – can you sit down?” asked Rouge, looking doubtfully at him.

“I can.”

“Do it, then.”

Rouge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and he felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on one of the two armchairs, as if he were quite used to it, clanking his chain near his feet.

“You don't believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don't,” said Rouge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don't know,” said Rouge.

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because,” said Rouge, “a little thing can affect them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them untrustworthy. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”

Rouge was much accustomed to cracking jokes, but in his heart he did not feel by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror, for the spirit's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed, glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play the very deuce with him, Rouge felt. Rouge could not feel it himself, but though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and jacket, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapor from an oven.

“Well!” continued Rouge, “I only have to order some spicy foods, and every day I do, I can be persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Rubbish, I tell you, rubbish!”

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chains with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Rouge held on tight to his chair.

“Mercy!” he said. “Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”

“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Rouge. “I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”

“It is required of every man,” the Ghost returned, “that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world — oh, woe is me! — and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”

Again the ghost raised a cry, and shook its chains, and wrung its shadowy hands.

“You are fettered,” said Rouge, trembling. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. I wear these chains and feel their weight. Each link has special meaning; all of them are torturous. All are symbolic of my cumulative shortcomings. But the real grief you cannot see. It is the pain I suffer inside, at every moment, day and night, endlessly. It is anguish, unrelenting anguish for what I did in my life and for what my life has caused and will further cause. I fear the decades ahead with world conflicts, economic disarray, environmental devastation, and harsh suffering of my own grandchildren and of all later generations. And I contributed to that, even while in my splendor as a world authority. Foolish me. I could not see. But I see now. And I am in torment, continual torment.” He screams horribly, thrashes around, and then continues with pain in his voice.

“The physical pain is but a fraction of that torment. Is this hell? Or is this purgatory? I do not know. How much longer must I bear this? And I see other Spirits who are in this state for decades and even centuries because of their overt actions and even mere attitudes of disregard for the well-being of others.

“Is this pattern of chains strange to **you**?” pursued the Ghost. “Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full and heavy and as long as this several years ago”, the Ghost gestures. “You have labored on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!”

Rouge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable, but he could see nothing.

“Jonah,” he said, imploringly. “Old Jonah Farley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jonah.”

“I have none to give,” the Ghost replied. “It comes from other regions, Edward Rouge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. In life I hardly walked beyond the realms of Wall Street, banks, and businesses. Now my spirit struggles with these weary journeys and what lies before me!”

“Over three years dead,” mused Rouge. “And traveling all the time?”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”

“You travel fast?” said Rouge.

“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.

“You might have covered a great quantity of ground in these years,” said Rouge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chains hideously against the dead silence of the night.

“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labor by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is capable is all developed. Any person is unaware that its mortal life is too short for its vast means of usefulness. They do not know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jonah,” faltered Rouge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

Rouge was very much dismayed to hear the ghost going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

“Hear me!” cried the Ghost. “My time is nearly gone.”

“I will,” said Rouge. “But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!”

“How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.”

It was not an agreeable idea. Rouge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

“That is no light part of my penance,” pursued the Ghost. “I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Edward.”

“You were always a good friend to me,” said Rouge. “Thank'ee!”

“You will be haunted,” resumed the Ghost, “by Three Spirits.”

Rouge’s countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jonah?” he demanded, in a faltering voice.

“It is.”

“I -- I think I'd rather not,” said Rouge.

“Without their visits,” said the Ghost, “you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tonight when the clock shows One.”

“Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jonah?” hinted Rouge.

“Expect the second an hour later. The third when the last stroke of four has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.”

When it had said these words, the spirit took its scarf from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Rouge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him, toward the large window. It beckoned Rouge to approach, which he did. Through the window he heard confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spirit, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge, and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Rouge followed to the window, desperate in his curiosity. He looked out and did not see the expected ocean and beach.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Farley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Rouge in their lives. Another he instantly recognized from the US twenty dollar bill, President Andrew Jackson. His chain was exceedingly long and included the icons of rifles, tomahawks, Indian artifacts, and a covered wagon. Another, to whom Farley’s Ghost had flown, might have been President Ronald Reagan, but he was mostly facing the opposite direction. Together they cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom they saw evicted from her home. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, Rouge could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together, and the night became as it had been when he had been out that evening.

Rouge stepped back from the window and examined the door of the room; still locked. He tried to say “Rubbish!” but stopped at the first syllable. And being tired either from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, he pulled closed the heavy window curtains and went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep in an instant.

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## Chapter 2

# The Spirit of Times Past

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When Rouge awoke, the urban glow around the edges of the curtains of his 14<sup>th</sup> story window gave enough light for him to see that he was alone in his hotel room. On the nightstand, the digital clock showed 12:58 AM, and then blinked to 12:59. “In a minute I will know that my vision of Old Farley was only a dream, or nightmare,” he thought. “It was just my imagination. I know the Dickens’ *‘Christmas Carol’* so well; there is even a Muppets version. Just the power of suggestion. Soon I can sleep again.”

But even as he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, “Was it a dream or not?”

Rouge lay in this state until the clock flashed 1:00 AM. But nothing happened. Rouge fumbled for his cell phone to see the time. Still only 12:59. “Rubbish,” he muttered.

At last the cell phone flashed 1:00 AM.

Rouge noticed a glow increasing around the edges of the closed, heavy curtains, apparently some light was just outside his window, and then it passed through the curtains and increased at the foot of his bed.

It transformed into the figure of a gentle matronly woman. Her hair, which hung about her neck and down her back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and a tender bloom was on the skin. She wore a tunic of the purest white and round her waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. The dress was trimmed with the four seasons, spring blossoms, summer flowers, fall foliage, and winter ice.

But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright, clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a conical extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

“Are you the Spirit I was told would come tonight?” asked Rouge, suddenly aware that his words were the modern equivalent of the older English of Dickens.

“I am!”

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

“Who, and what are you?” Rouge demanded.

“I am the Spirit of Times Past.”

“Long past?” inquired Rouge.

“No. Your past.”

“Why are you here?”

“For your welfare!” said the Ghost.

Rouge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately in a reprimanding tone:

“For your reclamation, then. Take heed!”

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

“Rise! and walk with me!”

It would have been in vain for Rouge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that the bed was comfortable, and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose. The Spirit waved for the heavy curtains to separate as they moved towards the window which was now open.

Clasping the Spirit's robe in supplication, Rouge remonstrated: "I am mortal and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand **there**," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this! I can take you anywhere in the past."

As the words were spoken, they passed through the window and soared high to see the panorama of Rio de Janeiro, with the statue of Jesus illuminated on Corcovado.

"Take me to see the true Jesus," requested Rouge.

"I could take you to him or Buddha or Mohammed or Krishna or Moses at the burning bush. You could hear Jesus say, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." But you already have that message and do not heed it. All great religions condemn excesses and greed. Instead, I will take you to someone else whom you follow with religious fervor, the great Adam Smith, the father of your beloved capitalism."

Then the city of Rio entirely vanished, and Rouge and the Spirit were standing in a room with men meeting in Scotland.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

A slender man spoke. "Adam, have you heard that the American colonies declared independence in July? They want something called democracy. King George will squash them like insects."

"I heard," replied a short, plump man wearing a high-collar shirt, dark coat, and white wig. "But that is not my concern. My writings get more attention than any uprising of struggling colonialists."

"A great book and fitting title," added another. "*The Wealth of Nations*. The modern world, and I do mean Britain, has set the pace for commerce and the growth of capital."

"Oh yes, the *Wealth* book," responded Smith. "My earlier book on *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* should be equally recognized, but is neglected, as are the unfortunate souls in society. I observed in that book that as some of us become wealthy, we lack sympathy with the poor class. Though our brother is in horrible conditions, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. Our senses never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person. It is only by imagination that we can form any conception of his sensations. People can only relate to what they themselves should feel in the like situation, but they do not share the experience because they build shields and distance between themselves and the poor. Thereby, they are blind and without sympathy."

Rouge was incredulous. "You are making up the past, just like Dickens made up Tiny Tim."

"Not so," said the Ghost. "I cannot alter the past, and you can read virtually those same words Smith published in his first book. They are on the Internet; check Wikipedia. And while widely available, Smith's early concerns are seldom taught in economics classes. But it is true that the father of capitalist thoughts about competition and wealth accumulation was highly concerned about the disparity between the wealthy and the poor."

Smith continued. "Our sympathy is not from the actual experiences of the disadvantaged — rather, it is only the impressions of our own senses of seeing, hearing, *etc.* which our imaginations copy. By the imagination, we place ourselves in the other man's situation, but imperfectly and incompletely. And when the wealthy have no immediate experience of what other men feel, they can form no idea of the manner and degree in which the poor are affected."

The Ghost of Times Past slowly swept her arm and revealed to Rouge scenes of abounding poverty, but with pockets of substantial wealth practicing the arts of capitalism of the Eighteenth Century and into the 1800s. "This is the British world of Adam Smith and Charles Dickens. Tens of thousands of real people were living the lives Oliver Twist, The Artful Dodger, Fagan, David Copperfield, and Tiny Tim, but without storybook endings."

"And Dickens did not even consider other societies of that time," said the Ghost, sweeping her other arm to show the ravages of poverty while continuing to speak to Rouge: "China. That hungry coolie is Chen's ancestor." "India. Srinivas' forefathers are in that village." "And the slave trade took many from Africa to Brazil and America. Andrew is a descendant of that slave woman, and Luiz' ancestor is conducting the auction."

Rouge was clearly moved by the scenes, and the Spirit continued: "Smith spoke of the need for 'sympathy,' but that there should be more than just a cringe and a tear at this moment of seeing such want. You have a little pity, yes, but you are hardened against such misery." And then she touched Rouge's arm and transferred them to an open courtyard of a university campus.

Rouge's eyes sparkled. "Ah, Ivy University, the way it was when I studied here. A fabulous time of my life."

"We are here to attend Professor Farley's famous lecture of 1987 that helped solidify his dominance in economics."

"I was a graduate student then, one of Farley's chosen assistants. It is over there in Buckley Hall."

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Rouge with fervor; "I could walk it blindfolded."

Responded the Ghost: "Let us go there."

In an instant the Ghost and Rouge were in the hall, almost touching the people who entered the room without noticing them. The jocund students and faculty came in; and as they came, Rouge knew and named almost every one.

A young Rouge himself entered. "There I am! And there is Chen, just a freshman, but in one of my tutoring groups. And Ivan and Luiz and Srinivas."

The large lecture room filled to overflowing, and eventually Professor Farley was introduced by the University Provost.

Farley began: "Our time is short, so my explanations are brief. But we want to capture the essence of modern Capitalism. First, let us recognize that Capitalism is dynamic and has evolved. Nobody can discuss Capitalism without defining what flavor he is discussing.

"For thousands of years there were forms of Feudalism in which power rested in the hands of a few who were born to rule or who took command by force, shrewdness, or as representatives of God. The vast majority of people lived in simplicity and ignorance while cooking meager meals on smoky fires in cold huts or tropical thatched shacks. At night, if they were fortunate, they had candles. Perhaps one change of clothes. Still today such poverty exists for two billion people, but the economic structure around them has changed.

"As recently as the 1600s," Farley continued. "there was Mercantilism where the tradesmen and merchants prospered and gained power. Europe was a leader in this, and from it

sprang the origins of Capitalism, especially in the 1700s. America was just an outpost of European colonialism, with mostly farmers and isolated frontiersmen.

“Curiously, it was in 1776 that the Scotsman Adam Smith published the famous book *The Wealth of Nations* in which the fundamentals of basic Capitalism were spelled out — An economic system in which the means of production, that is, businesses, are privately owned and operated for profits that come after the payment of wages to workers and other costs. Businesses are in economic competition, leading to improvements and progress.

“Although Smith had other, earlier writings, mainly *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, his fame comes from being the first expounder of Capitalism.

“We can refer to this as ‘Capitalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century’, or as ‘Capitalism18’, or just ‘C18’. Competition was king. Classic illustrations of life under Capitalism18 can be found in popular literature. In the 1830s to ’50s, Charles Dickens tells us of *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*. *Mr. Macawber*, *Ebenezer Scrooge*, and *Bob Cratchet*. People were flowing into the cities, and industry was providing jobs. In England, there was a booming textile trade using cotton and wool from the colonies. And it sold the fabric back to the colonies for a handsome profit for the business owners. For the workers, life was not easy, wages were low, and extremely few benefited from the likes of *Oliver Twist*’s wealthy grandfather. While some did prosper through hard work and good fortune, others were forced into the poor houses, debtors’ prisons, or onto the streets.”

The Ghost interrupted: “Come Rouge, there is more to see. We can come back to Farley’s lecture any time we want.”

With a touch of the Ghost’s robe, they were transported to a rustic, rural scene. A small distance away was a striking two-story, multi-room home with glass windows and a full-length porch.

“Good heavens!” said Rouge, clasping his hands together as he looked about him. “This is the old Rouge homestead in northern Georgia, built in the 1820’s by my ancestor Samuel Rouge. I have seen it in old drawings and photos. It survived the Civil War, and the land is still owned by some distant Rouge relatives. This house and plantation were the foundation of the family’s cotton business.”

“This is September 1838. And there is Samuel Rouge coming to the house,” said the Spirit.

Samuel was a scruffy man in dirty overalls, about 35 years old, and missing one front tooth. He was carrying an ax and leading thirty men and women; one brought a horse and a farm wagon. They were not a pleasant group, but more like a mob. Samuel was shouting and leading, along with a portly man wearing a sheriff’s badge.

The noise had brought the residents of the house to the front porch. A stately, elderly man in a waistcoat, his wife in a pleasant dress, and five of the younger generation, including a clearly-pregnant, young woman, plus three small grandchildren. Their most distinctive characteristic was that they were clearly red-skinned American Indians.

The sheriff spoke: “Mr. Cloud, it is final. The orders from the President are perfectly clear. You and your family must leave now. You have known for months, even years, that this day could come. You will be escorted by Sergeant Williams.” Williams and three soldiers stepped forward.

Mr. Cloud started to protest, but Samuel Rouge stepped behind the Cloud family and occupied the door to the large house. “You heard the sheriff, you must go NOW. And I am taking this house and land. I won it in the lottery. Besides, I worked for you for 18 years bossin’

your slaves, so I figure I earned it. Richard already got the Huff place, and Josiah gets the next farm. This is my house and land now.”

Edward Rouge was aghast!! “What is this all about!” he shouted. But nobody heard him.

“They cannot hear or see us, Edward. And this is what actually happened. I can show you anything of the Past, but I cannot change it. It is the result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, pushed through Congress by President Andrew Jackson. Tens of thousands of Indians were moved from the eastern States to lands across the Mississippi River, mainly in Oklahoma.”

The Indian family and the guards were soon walking away from the house. Meager possessions were carried in the wagon along with the pregnant woman.

As if a mist swept past them, Rouge and the Ghost were transferred to a bleak, wintery woodland. A wagon train of Indians was stopping for the night in a clearing. A few soldiers milled around them, but there was no threat. The sojourners were too cold, hungry and weak to cause any problems. Mr. Cloud and some of his family were gathering around a small campfire trying to get warm.

“They are the Cherokees, expelled from their lands by President Jackson and the American Congress. As law-abiding Americans, they had appealed various rulings all the way to the US Supreme Court.”

“And this?” queried Rouge.

“They are on the ‘Trail of Tears’ from Georgia, through southern Illinois, and on to Oklahoma. During the trek in the winter of 1838-39, about 4000 Indians died.”

In the background, a newborn child cries, and her young mother dies. “Chief Cloud has lost a daughter and gained a granddaughter,” stated the Ghost calmly.

Rouge was on the verge of tears. “Absolutely unfair. Does the baby live?”

“Oh yes,” said the Ghost. “She has a miserable life as a child on the reservation. Minimal schooling. But she does have children and descendants living even to today. Most are now lower middle class Americans. One is Marion Stillwell, Jonathan’s mother, your sister-in-law. And another is your wife.”

“Your lip is trembling,” said the Ghost. “And what is that upon your cheek?”

Rouge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where she would.

They moved as if through a mist and into the scenes being described by the Ghost. “Sometimes, small events will alter the courses of many lives, with some being extremely favored and others suffering consequences beyond their control. About the same time as Samuel Rouge took over the Cloud family’s farm, there were twin sisters in eastern Africa, age 12. Agna and Beeta lived in a stick and mud hut with a thatched grass roof. They helped their mother by bringing water and cooking food over a three-stone smoky fire with wood they had carried in heavy bundles on their heads.” As the Spirit spoke, Rouge could even smell the smoke, and coughed, but was not heard by the family.

The Ghost continued: “Both Agna and Beeta had children before age 16, and both have many descendants who, in general, are quite representative of current populations where they live.

“As they were returning one day with their firewood, men of a competing tribe grabbed them to sell to slave traders on the coast. In the ensuing struggle, Beeta managed to break free and ran for help. The twins last saw each other in a fleeting glimpse. Beeta’s good fortune was told and re-told for several generations. Agna disappeared.

“Aгна was hauled away into slavery in America. She was sold three times, the final one when she and her husband were separated from each other and from their two oldest children. Those poor unfortunate souls. In her old age, Agna did gain freedom after the American Civil war. Her many generations of descendants no longer know each other, and they cover the full spectrum of the Afro-American community. A few are bad-apples, dealing in drugs and other crimes. Unemployment plagues 20% of Blacks seeking employment. Many others are hard-working factory and service-industry laborers with modest, American-style homes and cars and entertainment.” Again, Rouge is immersed in the quickly passing scenes. “And a few have pressed forward, run businesses, and some with scholarships have done very well in universities. One of them you know. Andrew is from Agna’s side of the family. Descendent of a slave, now reaping the benefits of the American dream while others are unemployed and under-educated. Should the quality of life be such a lottery?”

“Likewise, Beeta, the fortunate twin who escaped slavery, has many descendents. About one-third of them do manual agriculture and still live in rural houses like Beeta’s nearly 200 years ago. And they still fetch water and firewood. Most do not have electricity. Their life expectancy is less than 35 years because of poor diet, lack of health care, strenuous workloads, and impoverished living conditions which still include smoky cooking fires in their houses. Schooling is mediocre at best.

“About half of Beeta’s descendants are in the cities of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. Their small houses with irregular supplies of electricity range from slum shacks to apartments. Unemployment is 15 to 35 percent, depending on the city, and those with work earn very modest wages, from 1 to 3 dollars per day. Their life expectancy average is now over 50 years, but is not rising much.

“The remaining are doing relatively better, especially if they get further education. But even for them, there are sacrifices all around. Here is one line of Beeta’s family tree, back in 1950.”

The Ghost takes Rouge to a small town in western Kenya where a family is gathered at the local bus station. A man with permanent physical deformities speaks to his 13-year-old son who shows the sorrow of leaving his family.

“Study hard, son. It is a great honor to our family that you will study at Maseno boarding school. We will miss you greatly, but it is worth the sacrifices we all must make.” They embrace. The boy then hugs his mother who is struggling to hold back her tears, and he climbs onto the old bus and sits next to an open window facing his family. As the bus pulls away, the boy waves goodbye and one brother in the waving, noisy family clearly says: “Goodbye, Barack.”

Rouge was incredulous. “Barack Obama?”

“Senior,” replied the Ghost. “The father of the President. Small events can have far-reaching consequences. Some are blessed, and some are not. Some become millionaires, and some live in poverty. Is that how society should be organized?”

With an extension of her arm, the Ghost returned them to Farley’s lecture.

“By the 1880s, the face of Capitalism<sup>18</sup> was seen in the magnificent fortunes of great families such as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Schwab, Fisk, Morgan, Gould and a dozen others. They were making America great. It was the Gilded Age of “laissez-faire”, to leave business alone to do what it wanted to do. But the wealthy were under attack, being called ‘Robber Barons’ and far worse names. They were distinctly not touched by Smith’s concept of ‘sympathy’ for the less fortunate. Monopolies were still legal, and the injustices by the rich and powerful over the

enterprising new capitalists and over their laborers were becoming legendary. The working class had incremental gains, like slightly improved kitchens and some coal-burning room-heaters, but long workweeks and low pay were standard.

“It took decades, but restraints were eventually placed on unrestricted Capitalism18 practices. The result was Capitalism19, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and extending deep into the 1900s. Imagine, government regulations were being placed on Capitalism over one hundred years ago.

“A multitude of new businesses was flourishing. Some amassed great fortunes, like Henry Ford, the great champion of consumer markets. He helped Americans learn how to spend their improving wages. Many others became comfortable business owners. Labor struggled, but eventually gained collective bargaining. The ‘Roaring Twenties’ were underway.”

Again the Ghost and Rouge faded from the room, reappearing in a factory area in North Carolina. “Rouge Textiles, Inc.” was written above the door of a large building. Inside they saw scores of women at sewing machines making clothing. Other rooms held busy weaving machines.

“That’s my great-grandfather’s factory back in the 1920’s,” said Eddie Rouge. “We expanded from growing cotton to weaving fabrics and making clothes. This is the essence of productive capitalism, bringing quality, American-made products to the public at affordable prices. We paid good wages to all of the workers.”

“Yes,” added the Spirit. “And with your profits your family was diversifying. Your grandfather Rouge’s marriage shifted your line of the family into Oklahoma. I could show you some of his dealings to obtain Indian lands, and the wheeling and dealing with the oil industry, including Aramco, the Arabian American Oil Company. Your grandfather on your mother’s side spoke to you about some of those dealings. Do I need to remind you of the manipulations of using money to make more money?”

“It was all legal,” snapped Rouge.

“Of course it was. The wealthy wrote the rules. Since I do not need to remind you of those events, let’s go back to Farley’s lecture.” And they returned to the classroom.

“During the Great Depression, government regulations were increased, and the Keynesian flavor of Capitalism19 took hold. There were more controls on banking, and parts of the recovery efforts included deficit spending, mainly for infrastructure. Americans bought American products, and capacity was gained during WW II while other major economies were literally being bombed to pieces. Then onward into the 1960s there was great American productivity. And great increases in jobs in the service sectors and eventually in high technology.

“America has grown strong, and our Capitalism19 helped greatly. But now we are faced with greater opportunities. During the Nixon administration, the economy grew substantially. Carter’s years were an economic throwback, and high inflation rates have shown the insufficiencies of Capitalism19.

“So, this brings me to today’s main topic, the description of the evolving Capitalism20, for the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. This is sometimes called Reaganomics because the election and policies of Ronald Reagan have put us on the right path. The strength of our business and industry, coupled with our great American ingenuity, lead us now in these strongest times in 1986.

“A. America’s prosperity is legendary. We represent 20 to 25 percent of the entire economic activity on Earth today. This size protects us. We are our own markets and suppliers. We are a major breadbasket of the planet.

“B. For further growth, we will unleash American business. Deregulation is a tool. Expanded financial activity yields greater revenues.

“C. With greater revenues we can reduce our taxes, thereby stimulating even more economic action by leaving money in the hands of the citizens.

“D. Control of the money supply will regulate the economy via interest rates and inflation.”

Rouge interjected to the Spirit: “Professor Farley was an expert on that. He became a major advisor of the Federal Reserve Board. But you know that already.”

Farley continued as he placed a graph onto an overhead projector.

“Under President Reagan, the American economy is blooming and will continue to bloom because of the benefits of lowering the federal income taxes. Those taxes originated in 1913 with a maximum rate of 7% on earnings over \$500,000, which would be equivalent to multi-millions of earnings today. In 1917 the tax rate rose to 54%, and to over 70% until 1921. The wealthy were taxed to finance much of the cost of World War I. During the prosperity of the Roaring Twenties, the rate was only 25%, but shot up to 61% and then 72% during the 1930s, and then to over or near 90% of taxable incomes over \$200,000 even as late as 1963. Money was siphoned from the wealthy to pay for Great Depression expenses and World War II. Government was clearly into the wallets and purses of the American citizens. Maximum rates then held at 70% until 1981. To stimulate investments, the Reagan administration has progressively lowered the maximum tax rate to be only 28% for the coming 1988 tax year. You are seeing here the true mark of Capitalism<sup>20</sup>. Reduction of government regulation and lower taxes leaves money in the pockets of citizens — the economy grows, the stock market sets record highs, and there is prosperity for all.”

Rouge to the Ghost: “This was so exciting. Thank you for bringing me here. I am a product of and a promoter of Capitalism<sup>20</sup>.”

“Yes you are,” said the Ghost with a faint smile. “And your time with me is quickly ending.”

Rouge concluded: “I like you. I feared you at the beginning. I remember too much of Dickens’ tale of Christmas Past. I shall sleep well tonight.” And Rouge was again in the hotel room in Rio, and could hear the Ghost say: “Sleep well, Edward Rouge. My brother will come for you at 2:00 this morning.” Rouge was asleep in an instant, still in his clothes from the previous day.

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## Chapter 3

# The Spirit of Times Present

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Rouge slept comfortably after his encounter with the first Spirit. But the sound of the toilet flushing in his bathroom brought him awake. Peering toward the sound, he saw a light begin to show under at the closed bathroom door. The intensity increased to great brilliance as he got up softly and stepped cautiously to the door. The moment Rouge's hand was on the knob, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own living room, back home in Oklahoma. There was no doubt about that. Beside a couch stood a jolly Giant, glorious to see. He held a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Rouge, as he came peeping round the door.

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Come in, and know me better, man!”

Rouge entered with great caution.

“I am the Ghost of Times Present,” said the Spirit. “Look upon me!”

Rouge reverently did so. The Spirit was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure that its capacious breast was bare, as if showing off its powerful size. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free, free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanor, and its joyful air.

“Nice home, Rouge,” said the Ghost, taking in the grandeur of the mansion. On the walls and tabletops were photos and plaques of Rouge with family and famous people and Arab oil men and some unknowns. But all are known to the Ghost who made some casual comments as he looked at the photos and plaques.

“You were ‘Sponsor of the Year.’ They named a room after your mother because of your donation.”

“You were only 13 when your dad introduced you to President Nixon.”

“Safari to Kenya.”

“Your friend Rudy has four boats that are larger than this one. Paid for them and more with money from some business with these guys. Rudy told you he suspected they might be drug dealers, but he never really wanted to know, and you let that pass.”

“Srinivas’ brother spent 1.2 million dollars for his daughter’s wedding in Hyderabad.”

“You, Professor Farley, and Ivan Strofsky at the Kremlin.”

“Nice family portrait, Rouge. It does not show the ugly scene required to get your kids to pose for the photo. You bribed your youngest son with a new car. He learned young how to handle you and your wife.”

“You and that oil sheik, M. Abdul, after you signed those papers.”

“Ah, yes, your Grandfather Rouge, the banker. He had a real eye for making money.”

“And your Pappy Rouge in his Air National Guard uniform. No Rouge has been in a combat zone since the Civil War.”

Turning to Rouge, the Spirit says, “Yes, I do know everything of the past as well as the present.”

“Governor Rouge, at the signing of the legislation that stopped collective bargaining by state employees, including professors and staff at public universities.”

Rouge added: “Those four years as governor were challenging. We have so much to do in America. We need to tackle problems of education, roads, jobs, crime, health, energy, military security, taxes — which are killing us — and national debt.”

“So how are you tackling them?” asked the Ghost. “Certainly not with any sacrifice by YOU.”

Wanting to change the subject, Rouge pressed forward: “I built this house myself. Actually, one of my companies built it. Over 3000 homes constructed. A few were even bigger than this one. Most were of the larger sizes, like in these photos. Good profit on each one.”

“And how many did you build for people with moderate to low incomes?” asked the Spirit, pretending not to know the answer already.

“We did one multi-unit project with HUD money, but none on our own. You can make much more profit on 4 large houses than you can on 40 small ones. And far fewer headaches.” Rouge continued, proudly. “In America the **average** size of new homes is 2400 square feet, or 24 sq meters. With land plus basic furnishings, these are about \$250 K up to \$900 K houses because of price variations between different cities and regions. Even our new, multi-unit constructions average 1200 sq. ft. per unit. Very good living.”

“That is evident,” said the Spirit. “With four people per household, that would be about 600 sq. ft. per person, or 30 by 20 feet. And to heat them in the northern states you use \$4000 of energy per year, plus air conditioning in the summer.”

“Don’t worry, these folks can afford it.”

“But what if their grandchildren cannot? And what if the reason they cannot is traced back to this extravagant lifestyle you defend with the words: ‘we can afford it.’ Ancient Rome could afford the coliseum and its games. Before 1947, the Chinese upper class could afford their drug habits. And dictators in recent decades can afford their lavish ways. They all ‘can afford it’ at the expense of others around them. Allow me to cut off the electricity so we can take a look at houses elsewhere. Oh [in darkness] we really are dependent on electricity, aren’t we?”

Through a progression of views of houses, including people living in them, the lifestyle range from extravagant to modest was displayed while the Ghost offers some remarks: “Literally, America is ‘over-built’ and has an indulgence in housing. One result for the lower-class citizens is literally hand-me-down housing with less insulation, less features, and, well, less of everything. Small houses, as we see here, are still very comfortable, but the progression continues onward to smaller units, trailers, people cramped in very tiny units, and finally, homeless shelters. And any new housing that is small and economical must be built in poorer neighborhoods. Zoning laws make sure the wealthy do not have to be near the poor.”

Then, with a wave of his arm, the Ghost showed views of other housing around the World: Several homes appear with birthday parties, with far fewer material items. No electricity. Only practical gifts. Sisters share dolls and make doll clothes themselves.

In India, the range includes palatial homes down to single-room worker houses, and continuing to make-shift tents and the homeless in the streets. Many in the dark have only candles.

“In China, many homes in cold regions have inadequate heating.

“In Brazil, we see tropical huts.

“In Africa, there are huts and refugee camps.

“This is what **they** can afford,” said the Ghost of Times Present.

Rouge was irritated by this Ghost, and said: “But the Americans have worked for their money. I have worked hard for my wealth. I am sorry for those other people, but that is neither my fault, nor the fault of America.”

The Ghost took on a reprimanding demeanor. “It is the fault of an unjust world. And you, Rouge, and those like you, contribute to that injustice through the ways that favor those who already have money. And money makes more money in your current configuration of Capitalism. You did not and could not work hard enough to truly earn your millions each year. Your money is doing the work for you, and you still cannot get enough of it.

“I think Professor Farley would now call that “forging links in your chain.” Were you not touched in your heart with what you saw of people living in totally inadequate housing? Farley is watching those people now, up close and personal. Now he has his own anguish of being unable to assist them. Professor Farley is dead, Rouge. You are not.”

“Touched, yes,” replied Rouge. “But as Jesus said, ‘The poor you will always have with you.’”

“The poor, yes. But miserable and wretched conditions were not acceptable to him. Nor were the differences between rich and poor so great 2000 years ago. I don’t think you can use Jesus to defend your lifestyle.”

“Let’s get down to business,” said the Ghost. “There is barely enough time for these matters before your third appointment shall be upon you. You are very knowledgeable of the Dickens’ *Christmas Carol*, so let me say that things here are different. I am the Spirit of Times Present, but not only of this instant in time. My time covers the recent past of even a few years, including your years as governor.”

“Good, let’s get on with it. I rather liked the Ghost of Times Past, and I look forward to our time together,” Rouge replied. “Dreams can be pleasant affairs.”

“Yes,” said gently the Spirit of Times Present. “Touch my robe.”

Rouge was again taken to the front of the Rouge Textiles factory, but now it is boarded up and has tall grass around it.

“We closed it in the 1994. Wasn’t sufficiently profitable, with union wages getting higher and low cost imports getting even less expensive. Earlier we stopped making clothes, and then we halted the fabric weaving. Most of the equipment went to Central America, I think, and so did the jobs. We only kept the marketing side of clothes and textiles. Our surplus capital was invested into a giant waste disposal company. That generates **lots** of money.” Rouge was clearly pleased with himself.

“You do certainly live for the moment, don’t you? Your family’s profits matter more than your nation’s well-being. The Rouge family started as cotton growers when cotton was more than half of the total American domestic exports. This contributed to the national development. But the US mainly supplied British textile industries that made even larger profits. Then the family added textiles and clothing, increasing America’s productivity, again helping the country grow via job creation and increases in wages, but with increasing inequality between the workers and the managers and owners. But now you have closed all of that productivity. Your business (still with substantial personal profit) is a sales arm of foreign suppliers of fabric and clothing to people in a fashion-hungry society that discards so freely, and you grow cotton with heavy federal crop subsidies. Do you not see that something is inherently unsustainable? And this scenario applies to many aspects of your capitalistic business model, where profit for the individual is supreme, government subsidies or protections against major losses greatly reduce risks, and the national economic well-being is hardly considered. Rouge, you are trained as an

economist. But you do not see your own complicity in the decline of America's economic might."

"I am a businessman," protested Rouge. "I have other shareholders who expect profits. I work within the established laws of America, and I personally and through my companies pay thousands and thousands of dollars in taxes. Are you blaming me for the current economic problems?"

The Spirit replied slowly: "Yes. You and others like you deserve much of the blame. Not totally, but much. The collective 'affluent you' with your political influence have created a system that favors everything that you want. And it is going down."

"Rubbish," snapped Rouge angrily.

"Really?" questioned the Ghost. "Come. What does Professor Farley say? You asked him in October 2008 at his home, remember?" And they transitioned into Farley's home in Virginia.

Farley was old and seated in a lounge chair with a walker beside him, with the afternoon sun shining into the room. The Rouge of that day was seated near him, and the Ghost and Rouge were standing unseen beside them.

"Governor," said Farley. "Governor of Oklahoma. You have done well, young man. Thanks for coming."

"Always a pleasure to see you, Professor."

"Maybe not this time. I am struggling with the issues of what has gone wrong these past two years. I feel some responsibility; after all I was an advisor to Alan Greenspan for many years. He is getting a lot of heat these days, and must testify to Congress on Thursday. We talked on the phone just last week. He is in a state of shocked disbelief. He's very distressed. He said he found a flaw in the economic model of deregulated business, low taxes, and control of the money supply.

"I told him it was not just his doing. I did not see it coming either. And I said there are probably more flaws. The housing loan bubble has done its damage. There is talk of a commercial loan bubble. We already had the Savings-and-Loan crisis in the 1980s and '90s. There could be several of these unexpected time bombs coming our way. And these are 100% American-made problems, not from some financial collapse in another country, or a mega natural disaster, or a biological/disease catastrophe, or even warfare and terrorism where people are actually trying to hurt us."

"Could it be that bad?" asked Rouge. "I have never heard you so negative as now."

"I have had some time to think, and I am seriously concerned. I believe that America lacks defenses against such gigantic disruptions of our economy. And even worse, the political leadership is not only devoid of solutions or even inspiration, it is divided into two ideological camps that are intent to make the other one fail. It does not matter if McCain or Obama wins next month. Neither one has a real solution. America needs a new economic model, a new paradigm. Imagine me saying that. Scary, because I do not have a solution, either. But I will work on it. I have time to think while you must do the work of a governor." Farley smiled and wished the Governor good luck as they parted.

Rouge turned to the Ghost and said: "But he didn't have time. He died two days later. So, no new paradigm from Professor Farley."

"But there are new models and actions being proposed," replied the Ghost. "Your nephew, Jonathan, has tried to tell you, but you do not listen because they are not from your

mentor and do not fit your model. Come, I want to take you to a meeting that happened just yesterday in Rio.”

As they entered in the back of a modestly-sized auditorium, the Ghost and Rouge swept past a sign:

Earth Summit Side Event  
“Alternatives for America’s Future”  
Today: Melissa Brody discusses “*The Nehemiah Papers*”

The session was not well-attended. Rouge noticed Jonathan seated in a fifth row aisle seat, already taking notes as a cub reporter. As the session moderator came to the podium, a man in a brown striped shirt who was seated in front of Rouge said in a low voice to his companion, “That’s him. That’s Rob Mitchell, the fancy Boston attorney who leads the Pro-Choice movement there. His business card should read ‘Abortions Unlimited’.” Overhearing that, Rouge took an instant dislike to Mr. Mitchell.

Rob Mitchell started to speak: “America is heading for a life-changing decline. Many can argue that the decline is already upon us. Others are still in total denial, believing their favorite political party will solve the problems. The impending decline is the first postulate of I.M. Nehemiah. He starts from that premise, and then seeks to understand the cause of the problems, and then proposes actions to overcome the current situation.

“Nehemiah identifies Five Realms of Power: **Governance, Economics, Religion, Justice, and Love**. And he discusses at length how they are out of balance in America. The current form of American Capitalism<sup>20</sup>, with disproportionate distribution of money, incorrectly dominates American democracy. In response, the impending decline can be averted through democratic revisions of our laws, placing service as a currency to balance the power of money, and by implementing Capitalism<sup>21</sup>.

“Here to speak to us about these ideas from the *Nehemiah Papers* is Ms. Melissa Brody, Associate Professor of History at East Lincoln Junior College.”

Ms. Brody was in her mid-50s, plump, with thick glasses, and plain clothes. Her strong, clear voice was her greatest qualification.

“A growing number of us have become interested in the writings of I.M. Nehemiah that are subtitled “Building a better American and a better World.” The actual author or authors chose to remain unknown for personal reasons and to focus all attention onto the content and not upon the authors.

“To provide you with the briefest summary of the focus of the *Nehemiah Papers*, I will quote with minor changes from the very first paper, available on the Internet via the Capitalism<sup>21</sup> website.”

As she read in a clear voice with appropriate intonations, a series of PowerPoint slides with key words were shown on the large screen.

“The *Nehemiah Papers* are directed towards Americans and are about America’s future in both domestic and international affairs. The following eight statements comprise a very condensed summation that unfortunately runs the danger of being overly simplified.

“1. **The American dilemma:** America is facing an impending (or already started?) decline with massive consequences. The nation is seriously challenged from outside and within, and what needs to be done requires some introspection and then actions different from the standard alternatives currently offered by the two major American political parties.

“2. **The proposed actions borrow the best from both political parties** and reject the worst from each. Building a stronger and better America is not as simple as liberal Democrats (the moderate to far left) and conservative Republicans (the moderate to far right) would have us believe.

“3. **Concerning economic issues, American capitalism presents a dilemma with two sides:**

A. As proposed generally by the left, have more government influence and social control on wealth (as in higher taxes and more government-directed programs), versus

B. As proposed generally by the right, have less government control of capitalistic business (as in lower taxes and less government-sponsored assistance or protections).

“4. **Concerning issues of governance, American lifestyles (including religious, moral and legal-protection issues) present another dilemma with two sides:**

A. More “lifestyle latitude” and freedoms (as proposed generally by the left), versus

B. More morality and social constraints (as proposed generally by the right).

“5. **The Nehemiah writings advocate a combination** that is primarily liberal left on the economic (capitalism) aspects and primarily conservative right on the life-style (democracy) aspects. That might seem like a strange combination, but there are rational explanations in the *Papers*.

“6. **The Nehemiah proposals reject the extremists** at both ends of each set of issues.

A. On capitalism: There is no intention to destroy or even modify the core components of capitalism in America as experienced by the middle 80% of Americans. Assistance programs for the poor are not to be free handouts without requiring responsibility in appropriate ways. But at the other end, the powers of the wealthy are challenged and controls are sought via voluntary actions backed up by tax laws. The wealthy should bear increased social responsibility as a consequence of their good fortune.

B. On democracy: There is no intention of allowing religious zealots to impose their morality on everyone. Likewise, the extreme attacks on America’s core life-styles and values by secular liberal efforts in courtrooms, profit-obsessed media, and vice-peddling criminals are rejected as being detrimental to the well-being of Americans and the country. A democratically-determined preservation and strengthening of the core ethical values upon which America was founded is of immense importance.

“7. In the final analysis, **the Nehemiah Papers are about controlling a range of excesses, both in capitalist economics and in democratically-definable social behavior.** The two go together because the extra revenues (tax reform with targeted deductions) from the excesses of capitalism can be used to resolve (perhaps with “charter neighborhoods”) the critical social ills of American poverty. The ultimate benefit would be a stronger American economy with new and sustainable employment, usefully-directed cash flows, and less waste. Volunteerism is to be raised to new heights in America, including compulsory national service for all men and women who do not volunteer. Strict term limits on elected officials will help bring America’s governance back on track — that is, back into the hands of the people. And international policies that are more equitable (less domestically-biased) will promote worldwide cooperation and peace.

“8. **The international implications** of these approaches should be notably beneficial to every person and nation that collaborates with the efforts for 21<sup>st</sup> Century reforms of democracy and capitalism.”

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Melissa Brody stopped reading and looked up. “The ten available *Nehemiah Papers* do indeed expand upon each of these statements in very convincing ways. Three years following publication on the Internet, these Papers remain virtually unread, yet their content is more applicable today than when they were first written. We are seeking to bring them to light and discussion, especially those which describe the ‘Five Realms of Power.’ Again I provide an abridgement of I.M. Nehemiah’s summary statements.”

**“The five realms of power are Governance, Economics, Religion, Justice, and Love.** The realms are not necessarily equally weighted, and the balances can be fluid or dynamic.

“Each realm has several expressions. For example, the expressions of the realm of governance include democracy, theocracy, monarchy, and dictatorships. One expression of each realm is dominant in America’s culture: Democracy, Capitalism, Christian Faith, Law, and Caring. Other countries might have religious dominance of governance and justice. Even at the household level in America, the expressions can easily be different from the national expressions of one or more realms, as in despotic, brutal control of everything, or in faith-based sharing of resources and responsibilities. The expressions and the balances can and do vary greatly.

“Each expression has one or more ‘currencies’ which represent the most tangible and quantifiable ways to measure the amount of power in each realm.

“In the following table, the realms and expressions and currencies are overly-simplified to facilitate this important, introductory discussion of key concepts.

TABLE OF REALMS, EXPRESSIONS AND CURRENCIES:

<b>Realms of Power</b>	<b>Expressions in America</b>	<b>Currencies in America</b>	<b>Additional Expressions and Their Currencies</b>
Governance:	Democracy	Influence by/upon Voters	Dictatorship w/ Edicts; Theocracy
Economics:	Capitalism	Money & other capital	Socialism w/ Labor; Feudalism
Religion:	Faith: Christian	Prayers & beliefs	Non-Christian faiths, prayers & beliefs
Justice:	Law	Enforcement	Anarchy w/ Brute force; Scriptures
Love:	Caring	Service (Helpfulness)	Selfishness w/ Self-service.; Hate / Jealousy

**“The five realms of power are out of balance in America.** The imbalances have already partially crippled America and are major factors in America’s current crises and impending decline. These imbalances must be addressed to avoid cumulative, accelerating damage to the nation.

**“Economics and Capitalism:** [The second realm and its expression are discussed first because of their dominance in America.] Money is the ‘currency’ of capitalism within the economics realm of power. And in America, the extraordinary power of money has tainted all other realms of power. Democracy in America is so overwhelmingly influenced by money that it is almost a mockery. Money in America severely impacts the legal system, many aspects of service, and even the religious fiber of our country. Therefore, several of the proposed solutions to the current crises are directly related to bringing the power of money under control. This is not an attack on capitalism and not against money. But today’s capitalism and the current abusive power

of money should be modified in serious ways to become 'Capitalism for the Twenty-first Century', abbreviated as 'Capitalism21' or simply 'C21'.

**“Governance and Democracy:** Democracy in America is based on the 'currency' of votes for elected officials who then have further democratic functions to propose and vote on legislation, with the elected executive branch implementing those laws. Unfortunately, America's democracy today is literally controlled by professional politicians who are repeatedly re-elected as 'serial incumbents' and are severely influenced by money from both the left and the right. This situation is certainly legal, not because it is correct or fair, but because the laws passed by serial incumbents have set the stage for this travesty of democracy under capitalist control.

**“Religion and Faith:** Religion is the set of beliefs about God, while Faiths are the diverse practiced or functional expressions of religions. Beliefs are the “currencies” of religion. We should marginalize the extremes and concentrate on our shared core values, as found in the 'reasonable person standard' that is already part of American legal traditions. [The complexity of the Realm of Religion requires reading of the full Nehemiah writings.]

**“Justice and Law:** Justice is the concept that fairness should prevail. Laws are formalized rules to govern a nation or state or city or club. There can be great laws, good laws, poor laws, and unjust laws. A law created by a designated authority is not necessarily a fair law. Powerful people make laws, in part, to maintain (and perhaps advocate) their view of fairness. Laws in America too frequently tend to favor those individuals, groups, and businesses that have money and/or influence to affect voting in general elections or the subsequent actions (votes) of elected representatives. Fortunately, laws in America are forever subject to improvement, if done according to the laws about changing laws. The processes and decisions about what is and what is not allowed in America will be the ultimate battleground that will decide the future of our nation. Choose poorly and long-lasting decline will be upon us during our lifetimes. Choose wisely and greatness will continue or even expand (probably in somewhat different forms), and then future generations will take over the responsibility to preserve the nation. Proper democracy, appropriate capitalism, ethical beliefs, and a sense of caring service can combine to accomplish law-based justice to keep America on the correct path for all citizens to enjoy a more perfect union (with fairness). Be thankful that in America we still have time to choose our destiny. But it will not be easy, and it will require vast changes that impact everyone.

**“Love and Caring:** Perhaps the truest expression of love is the caring that people are willing to give for the benefit of others. And the main currency of love and caring is service. Service can be almost synonymous with caring. Except for some minor efforts relative to environmental protection, almost nothing in current American capitalism (C20) favors love and caring. Caring must be a key component in Capitalism21. Compulsory national service by all men and women periodically throughout life is important to ensure equitable participation. And service can be a major ingredient in America's recipe to regain and maintain its position in World leadership, and thereby avert crisis and decline. America should utilize the power of love through its expression as caring, with 'service as a currency' to be a major alternative and balance to the power of money.

“In summary, when the I.M. Nehemiah authors speak of changing the balance among the five realms of power in America, they are calling for these re-balancing efforts:

- 1) reduce the power of capital (by dethroning money as the measure of success),
- 2) redirect the power of democracy (by involving more voters and curtailing 'serial incumbents'),

- 3) shift the emphasis within the power of faith (away from the extremes),
- 4) strengthen the power of law (toward compliance with laws against crime, drugs, waste, greed, etc.), and
- 5) elevate the power of caring (by providing additional meaning to life through good and meaningful service). This is where the greatest potential for change is found.

“The one Super-Goal of I.M. Nehemiah is:

**“Define a minimally acceptable standard of living and elevate all people who are below that level through the implementation of Capitalism21 by re-balancing the Five Realms of Power to improve the future lives of all Americans by avoiding the otherwise inevitable serious decline of America.”**

Melissa finished her reading, looked up, and continued with her own words: “In the Nehemiah Papers there are many valuable statements to assist us. Capitalism21 is not defined by details, but by guideposts. Ten specific proposals are given in Paper No. 10. I recommend them to you.”

As they faded from the auditorium into the darkness of the evening, Rouge turned to the Ghost and said, “Long and boring. Idealism on the Internet. Anonymous author or authors. Little Ms. Melissa hasn’t got a prayer of spreading this message. The politicians will tear her to pieces. And the powerful money-people that she and Nehemiah criticize will smother her and those writings. To dramatically raise taxes on the wealthy smacks of socialist income redistribution that conservative media commentators would crucify. That is, if it ever reaches the media. That was a ‘side event’ at the Rio Summit. Ha!! And Jonathan is so naïve and wet behind the ears, he cannot do anything to bring about Capitalism21. His small article will not even make the local newspapers in Brazil or in Oklahoma. Besides, this stuff is complicated. The five realms breakdown is good, but Nehemiah is going up against everyone, including the religious right, the liberal ACLU, and every incumbent politician. *Nehemiah Papers*. Rubbish!”

Patiently the Ghost listened, and then replied: “Earlier this evening you were reminded that Professor Farley told you that a new model could be needed for America. You now hear a new model, and you disregard it immediately because it is complex, lacks leadership, is only a side event, and faces overwhelming opposition from the established sectors, including yourself, that are clearly much of the cause of the problems facing America and the World. We know that the Nehemiah approach is not perfect and that a major change in America would need quality people to implement any steps. But do you mock the fight because you are incapable, or because you do not see the threat to society, or because you are afraid to fight?”

“I am certainly capable, and I see the threat to America’s future, and I am not afraid to fight,” Rouge exclaimed, raising his voice. “But I have other business to attend to.”

“Oh,” said the Ghost calmly. “Other business? Like Farley had? I thought you heard him say ‘Mankind was my business.’ I thought you heard and saw his chains.”

“Dreams. Ghosts. Nightmares. I have had enough of you,” snarled Rouge.

The Ghost rose to his towering height, turned cold and thundered: “Not quite enough! Not yet! Do you not know what is under my robe? Do you not remember Dickens’ Christmas Carol. Look here.”

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children: wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at the Spirit’s feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

“Oh, Man! Look here. Look, look, down here!” exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meager, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shriveled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dreaded.

Rouge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

“Spirit! are they yours?” Rouge could say no more.

“They are Man’s,” said the Spirit, looking down upon them. “And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!” cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards Rouge, who responded:

“These are not my children. America does not have these problems. And I give liberally to world relief charities.”

“Ah, you have dared to deny this reality of the Present. You have taken refuge in your sanctimonious prosperity. Earlier tonight Professor Farley told you that your business is the world, your business is Mankind. Touch my robe. We have places to visit.”

Rouge timidly placed his hand upon the arm of the Ghost, and they immediately entered a slowly-transforming collage of scenes, each appearing as the Ghost spoke and pointed.

“Ignorance abounds in America, in every under-funded and insufficiently-staffed school, in every child who cannot find stimulation for learning. Add in the gangs and drug users who consider education to be a chore to be avoided. Look also at the self-indulgent youths who do not put forth effort. See the inequality of resources and different efforts between the States and between the schools. Observe the pressure for the grossly-insufficient number of ‘charter schools’ and ‘vouchers’ that permit at least a few, but only a few, to have a chance to rise up to their potential. America, with its outlandish financial abundance, is being passed educationally by many countries. There is a financial crisis now, and the all-too-frequent response is to lay off teachers. Stupidity is in control of government when construction of highways and buildings has a higher priority than education. Instead, hire many more teachers and stimulate enrollments to reduce unemployment; end up with a real investment in the people themselves.”

Rouge began sputtering to himself: “Awake, awake. This is not my dream. I do not want this to disturb my sleep.”

“It is not your dream, Rouge. It is your reality; it is America’s reality. And behold, there is more ignorance.”

Again a collage of images streamed past Rouge. A class of students meets under a tree in rural Africa, and another in a dilapidated urban building in India. A student squints to read at night by the light of a single candle. Classrooms have three students and one textbook per desk. Girls are not allowed to go to school. Teachers of primary students have only seven years of schooling. Children come to school hungry and do not study well. In a better-looking school, eight students crowd around each computer terminal, but only when there is electricity. And the numbers of these cases are measured in the hundreds of millions.

“And if you still wonder why so many of these people have no reason to like America, look upon the child of Want. Lack of good food is not always evident in the physical

appearances of the children and adults. Clothing and shelter can be grossly deficient, but the bodies somehow survive. That lady cooking with a three-stone fire is poisoning herself and her small children with the smoke, because she is unable to have a simple but clean-burning stove. Sometimes the 'want' is for seeds to plant, or for a water well, or a road that is less than a three-hour walk away. While a quarter of the World's population has no electricity, and half has it intermittently, sparingly or at considerable expense, the affluent quarter squanders electricity for every imaginable convenience. Consider the 'want' of America, or Europe, or any affluent people in any country. Theirs is not 'want for lack of', but is 'want' as in greed or self-indulgence. Beware of 'Want', because she can transform masses of people into unstoppable tides for change."

"I do care about the well-being of these people. And I will do more, now that I have seen this," said Rouge with emotion.

"It is good that you have some compassion. But as Adam Smith, your champion of capitalism, expressed in the very first paragraph of his earlier book, all humans, ranging from hardened criminals to those with humane sensitivities, have pity and sympathy when seeing the misery of others. But some people need to be made to conceive the misery of others in a very lively manner. Some, like you, Edward Rouge, are shielded by distance and affluence from seeing such misery.

"Behold," said the Spirit as he opened the fold of his long robe a second time. "See the siblings of Ignorance and Want. They are War, Hunger, Disease, and Environmental Destruction."

Four more children emerged and gathered closely around the robe of the Ghost.

"Hunger is seen in flesh and bones, but it is also malnutrition that saps the energy and even the development of small children. Their brains are damaged in the first five years of hunger. They can live for decades with their deficiencies, unable to ever effectively compete in your world where money is your god."

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Rouge.

"Are there no shelters?" said the Spirit. "Are there no food pantries?" Rouge cringed at hearing his own words come back to him.

"Disease stalks the weakest, and picks them off one by one, or leaves them debilitated for days, months, years and lifetimes. River blindness can now be treated because medicines were developed for pets and cattle of the wealthy, not out of concern for alleviating human suffering. Malaria, many respiratory diseases, parasites in drinking water. All of these problems have been eliminated from your affluent world, but stalk the weak and poor overseas. When the vaccines against polio were approved in the 1950s and '60s, the affluent world was spared the crippling of limbs and whole bodies. But only now, more than 50 years later, is that dreaded disease finally being eradicated among the impoverished people of the world. While the Rouge family became increasingly wealthy, people suffered for no reason except the failure of society to deliver inexpensive medicines. Do not ask for mercy, Rouge. You have failed to be humane. And if you say you did not see it, try blaming your society for causing your blindness. You and they chose not to see it.

"Environmental Destruction is a newborn child that is growing by leaps and bounds. In the past couple of centuries, this daughter of Mother Nature has grown stronger for spreading more havoc than ever before. Soil erosion, expansion of deserts, polar melting, and depletion of raw materials are all upon us. You do not need to believe in anthropogenic global warming, you just need to acknowledge that the societies of man are growing in number and damaging the

planet. After all, because the future of mankind is what we seek to benefit, it is preferable that the changes are caused by humans so that people might find solutions or alter their ways. Indeed, if the changes were being caused by the will of God, we would have no ways except by prayers to hope to counteract the destruction. Through science, Man has measured the damage caused by modern conveniences. The perils have never been more clear in these present times: increasing CO<sub>2</sub> and water vapor and less ozone in the atmosphere, deforestation, the near exhaustion of phosphorus needed for modern agriculture, and the inevitable depletion of oil supplies. Add in the natural occurrences of hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, floods and droughts, and Mother Nature's little child of destruction can bring whole societies to their knees very quickly. Fear her as you should fear each of these children in your future.

“And finally we have our dreadful companion, War, where humans as organized societies intentionally do harm to each other. Protection against aggressors is sometimes necessary. But people dare to justify wars as actions to preserve something of value, such as their extravagant and wasteful lifestyles – or even their personal perceptions that God wants them to win. And some people, especially the most wealthy and powerful, wage wars in which others do the fighting and dying. Sick. Wasteful. Tragic. The child named War carries a bag with weapons. Just one or two of the nuclear, biological or chemical weapons could spin the world economy out of orbit. But even without using weapons of mass destruction, the bag contains enough devastation to alter the course of history of America and the whole world.

“Ahhh, look at them. Six children with us already at this present time, and who represent the future of mankind, each one waiting for his or her times to emerge again ... and again ... and again. Ignorance, Want, War, Famine, Disease and Environmental Destruction. Take them into your heart, Rouge. Take them into your home. Take them from their misery and give them love and hope. Then they will threaten you less, and everyone can have better lives, including your own children. And you and others like you could do it, you with your millions and billions and trillions of dollars. Better spent on mankind than on shovel-ready highway projects, bailouts of banks, or tax breaks for the wealthy. Spend it on education, health care, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, social services, crime prevention, peace initiatives, and employment to do truly meaningful work for the advancement of all people, not just for some select, privileged few.”

Rouge was visibly shaken, stammering, and inwardly numb.

A distant bell struck four.

Rouge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jonah Farley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

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## Chapter 4

# The Spirit of Times Yet to Come

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The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Rouge bent down upon his knee, for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible but one outstretched hand. Except for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

“Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Times Yet To Come?” asked Rouge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

“You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,” Rouge pursued. “Is that so, Spirit?”

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well accustomed to ghostly company by this time, Rouge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly remain standing when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit, observing his condition, paused a moment, and gave him time to recover.

But Rouge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own eyes to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any phantom I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

“I will speak. Just because Dickens did not give me words does not mean that I am speechless.”

Stammering, Rouge asked: “Are you Death?”

While pulling back his hood to reveal a hairless head of a gaunt elderly man, the Spirit replied with an icy voice: “No, but Death is always nearby,” indicating a shadowy figure off to the side. “He has been so from the beginning of mankind, and will be so into the future.”

“What will the future be for me? When will I die?”

“I see you still alive in the year 2050,” said the Ghost. “You are old and frail, but well aware of things. You are without your family. None of your three children and only one of your four grandchildren is still alive. Your wife, daughter and two grandchildren perished when terrorists nuked the stadium they were attending. Retaliation was swift, and America spent trillions to reap revenge, in the process weakening its economy. Your older son died in that conflict. Your younger son, who gave you two grandchildren, committed suicide when the big

economic depression hit in the 2030s. One granddaughter died of narcotics that were supplied to her by her brother who is now in prison. You are alone.”

Rouge, in tears and terrified and angry, blurted out: “You have given me the worst possible future, which I cannot accept. This future must not be allowed to happen! Answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be?”

“The future is yet to be decided, but it must be compatible with things of the past. And what you have seen just now is not the worst that could happen. Come.”

Touching his robe, they shifted to a bleak, rural location with people manually seeking food and fuel.

“Exploit the world and reap the whirlwinds of nature,” said the Ghost without emotion. “By 2025 it became clear that the once-hypothetical danger of Man’s contribution to global warming was, in fact, reality and not just natural cycles. But by then there was no recourse. Methane released from the former permafrost zones skyrocketed the atmospheric greenhouse gases problem. Sea level was up two inches by 2030, storms were more fierce, and the world was in turmoil then. By 2050, which you live to see, the ravages of conflicts over water, food and fuel have engulfed everyone. Americans can barely feed themselves, much less provide food for others around the world.

“Because of storms and tidal surges, all coastal cities have been damaged and have lost virtually all assets below sea level. The subways of New York have not worked for years. Efforts to protect underground services have either failed or been judged to be economically infeasible. Some services were brought above ground, some even stretching between the 10<sup>th</sup> stories of skyscrapers. But those efforts were futile, and most of the great coastal cities are becoming ghost towns.”

Rouge shouts back: “Rubbish. It’s not true. You show that because you believe in global warming, don’t you?”

The Ghost of the Future replies calmly: “I can see all the possible future paths of this world. And every path that neglects the welfare of the Planet Earth is filled with suffering. It is only a question of when. And the options for corrective actions are fading fast. In short, if you can now survive without something that would cause environmental strife, then live without it. You do not need multiple cars. In fact a bicycle would improve your health. You do not need giant houses that consume your financial resources and fossil fuels for heating; so make them into multi-unit dwellings. And sweat a bit in the summers without air conditioning. America is over-built. You have placed your wealth into things, not into people. Use your schools 12 months of the year. Use your churches for multi-functions, not just for several hours a couple of days per week. Invest in your people. Impose safety in your neighborhoods and quality in all of your schools. If you will not do those minor sacrifices, do not expect others to cooperate for what is needed to have a decent future for your grandchildren.”

“Those are not minor sacrifices,” Rouge retorted. “You are trampling on the rights of American citizens.”

“Americans and other affluent people have no rights that supercede the welfare of everyone else in the world. You are indeed foolish and greedy, Edward Rouge. Deny my message and you, your grandchildren, and everyone in America and around the world will pay a price far in excess of what you are seeing here with me. Instead of seeing it, you will feel it in personal anguish that can include hunger and cold and foul air and thirst and physical pain by

your own actions, plus whatever is inflicted upon you by others. And your mental remorse will be unceasing.”

Continued the Ghost: “Nevertheless, let us assume that environmental devastation is not occurring faster than possible remediation. Similar havoc to your precious, extravagantly-wasteful lifestyle can be accomplished simply by the insufficiency of supplies of energy and raw materials. Peak oil is so well-documented before 2020 that it is an established fact. Also, peak phosphorous has made fertilizers so expensive that agricultural production has fallen dramatically. And the growth of human populations would not have peaked at 8.5 billion except for the increase in the death rates from wars over resources, and the starvation of the defeated. America is not immune to disruptions around the world. The economics of affluence fostered by Capitalism<sup>20</sup> is not sustainable. Neither you nor your family will enjoy the future unless massive changes are made soon.”

A humbled Rouge pleads: “Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!”

“Rouge, you speak the strange English of Dickens,” said the Spirit with a faint chuckle and pause. “And you are correct, it is thus. Mankind can alter its destiny. But that possibility does not solve your problem of **how** to alter what is to come. For even with massive efforts by you, you must pick the correct actions. With current thinking and actions, you and America can hold out a little longer, but with much less, while riding a crushing, downward spiral. Choose the correct actions, and still America’s future will be almost unrecognizable to you know now, but it could be tolerable, or even better, if you can define life in terms of peace, sufficiency and service instead of competition, excessiveness and money.”

“The decline of America,” the Ghost continued while providing short glimpses of each mentioned detail, “is as inevitable as the declines of ancient China, India, Greece, Rome, France, England, Russia, and Western Civilization in general. And it will happen sooner rather than later. Capitalism<sup>20</sup> has failed, the indulgent lifestyle is not sustainable, and America’s financial debt to others has placed its future in jeopardy. America produces too little and consumes too much — far, far too much. China has taken the whip hand by 2020. By 2030 the military might of China, plus its control of so much of American foreign debt, results in the uncontested, peaceful takeover of Taiwan, similar to the takeover of Hong Kong.

“Here I see two scenarios. One is a massive Depression that cripples America and the rest of Western Civilization. It is far worse that the Great Recession of 2008, and even America cannot generate by further indebtedness the funding needed to sustain its economic processes. But it also isolates China as a producer that then lacks sufficient markets for growth. The whole world enters into a slump without resources to combat increased environmental and resource problems that could appear on the horizon.

“In the second scenario, the real problem is that the Chinese have sown the seeds for their own future failure. Although the central government has control of their economy, they have been replicating parts of the American model of excessive wealth and power in the hands of a few, as advocated by your friend Chen. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of common people have greatly increased expectations. Can the Chinese growth continue when the expectations of its people become a problem for their government? And any growth there would face the same problems of global warming and resource depletion as currently seen. In short, the victors in the future will become their own worst enemies, just as America’s super affluence and abusive

consumerism have been sowing the seeds for its weakening even as it was becoming powerful in the Twentieth Century.”

Rouge opined: “Spirit, you might as well be Death itself. Have you no future that is palatable? Something with potential for being desirable?”

“Yes. There are two options,” said the Spirit. “One I call the ‘Technology Ranger’. Like the Lone Ranger riding to the rescue, scientific and technological advances could facilitate any number of solutions. Fusion of hydrogen for virtually unlimited energy is one. Another is efficient collection and conversion of solar energy. And a third is the creation and full dissemination of plants that give food, fuel, structural materials, medicinal benefits, and more, in almost all environments. While one or more of such technological breakthroughs might occur before 2030 and might by 2050 be selectively utilized by privileged societies, there is not any evidence that the benefits will filter down to those people who have the most basic needs. Essentially, any realistic solution needs to be economically and environmentally sustainable at the level of the needy people. And the definition of ‘needy’ does not include gigawatts of power to provide more luxury for already-affluent people.”

“You could be wrong,” snapped Rouge.

The Ghost warns: “You shouldn’t bet your grandchildren’s welfare on technology to save them and America. Globalization impacts every society, and we see clearly how slowly benefits reach the needy. Mobile phones and handheld Internet access are great examples of technology reaching the masses. But even a billion happy users does not compensate for the several billions living out of reach of the basics of life. Do you need again to be shown the conditions of the unfortunate in our societies?”

Subdued, Rouge asked, “What is the other option?”

“At best I can show you a future life where justice and fairness are the guiding principles of Capitalism. In your language, it would be Capitalism21, or C21. Within twenty years you personally would have expended much of your wealth and privileges, but would have created a reasonable, fair and acceptable life-style and society for you and your descendents. To accomplish that, life and society must also be reasonable, fair and acceptable to virtually all of the other humans on earth. For billions of them, that would be life’s maximum blessing, for they are truly suffering needlessly at present. They would have clean drinking water, sufficient food, respectable education, modest health care, safety, peace, and prospects for a reasonable future. And they would need to follow China’s lead for limiting their population growth and comply with world norms. Otherwise they would face isolation until they did so. Leaders do not have a right to abuse and starve their children or fellow citizens.

“For America and the world’s current affluent population, they would have decades of industrious service throughout the world, providing water wells, improving sustainable agriculture, educating hundreds of millions, bringing widespread health, safety and peace. To do this, the monetary impact would be devastating for the wealthy and difficult for the middle class that has grown soft in America, but life would be quite tolerable. For example, you would still have running water, basic electricity, food, shelter, fun and laughter. But most important, you would have peace brought about by active willingness to share with others. It would be Adam Smith’s “moral sentiments” put into practice as the new Capitalism21. There would still be significant differences in the qualities and benefits of life among and within the different societies, but nothing like the inequalities that currently exist.”

Rouge ponders. "I am not pleased. You, along with Professor Farley and two other ghosts, have abused my soul tonight and have left me exhausted. I hope to awaken tomorrow from this nightmare. Will you now release me?"

"Only a few more minutes. Today there will be another Earth Summit side-event about Alternative Societies, New Economics, Smith's moral sentiments, and the *Nehemiah Papers*. See the conclusion of it with me," said the Ghost, extending his arm for Rouge to touch.

They were promptly standing at the far edge of the stage where a series of presentations were underway. Nephew Jonathan was assisting near the podium as the same moderator as before, Rob Mitchell, begins to speak.

"We have heard our four distinguished speakers lay out their views of where the world should be headed, with comments about Adam's Smith's writings on *Moral Sentiments*, as well as comments about the 2010 writings which comprise the *Nehemiah Papers*.

"Nine recommendations have been tabulated into three groups. These are NOT complete, and are mainly focused toward America and the affluent populations around the world. But they carry implications and responsibilities for the non-affluent people of the world, also. They are appropriate starting points for further actions. Remember, any one recommendation might seem impractical or even absurd, but the nine taken together can bring harmony between conflicting positions. In order for everyone to win, everyone must surrender something. We seek a true transformation of our world, for the benefit and even the survival of people everywhere."

Rouge listened as the key statements were projected on the giant screen as each was explained. They were divided into three groups: Employment, Benefits, and Funding.

**"Employment worldwide:**

"1. **Create an unprecedented number of new jobs in the human services fields** of education, health, safety/police, and social services. The wages are modest and not subject to unionization, but benefits of health care, retirement, and purposeful living are provided. These become prestige jobs because of the value of the services provided. And this work also qualifies for the person's service requirement in the next item.

"2. **Compulsory national service** is required at various times throughout every person's life, from youth to old age, and is often performed locally. This includes traditional military training and defense preparedness, but also includes non-military activities such as construction and international development. A 100-fold increase in the Peace Corps and similar programs by other nations increases direct contact between the affluent and the needy. Many people will have mandatory training incorporated into their work and service.

"3. **Substantially empower watchdog efforts over abuses** through the involvement of many people. This is not necessarily "big government" because some regulatory functions can be conducted by private entities according to appropriate guidelines. It is involvement of the people, by the people and for the people. It can be Capitalism<sup>21</sup>, with service being valued as much as or more than monetary transactions."

Rouge turned to the Ghost and said, "Hmmm. Job creation related to people instead of things. That could work."

**"Benefits and entitlements:"** continued Rob Mitchell.

"4. **Revise all benefits and entitlements**, with the purpose of fairness and access without favoritism or prejudice. Full quality public education and reasonable health care will be provided for all. This includes the revision of all welfare programs, including scrutiny of recipients to maximize benefits with the least expenditures. Participatory activities are required

for all but the most severely incapacitated recipients. Unskilled people will also have work to do under this initiative if they cannot find regular employment. Their work would serve in part as their ‘payment’ for the services they receive.”

Rouge smiled. “Yes, my sister-in-law would be required to take her medicines and do something useful.”

Mitchell continued.

“5. **Crack down on corruption, crime, drugs, and other abuses of society**, including curbing of freedoms that violate the well-being of others. This includes harsher punishment of criminals, including hard labor in extreme environments for repeat offenders. Elimination of problem neighborhoods is a major goal.

“6. **Restore the balance between the Five Realms of Power** (as outlined in the *Nehemiah Papers*). This includes term limits for all elected and appointed positions in public leadership, initially on a voluntary basis to meet the demands of the voters, but eventually made mandatory to include the die-hard serial incumbents. Limits on lobbyists and on preferential treatment will be enacted. Improve the established legal system through the democratic selection of necessary laws, even Constitutional amendments if needed.

“**Funding sources:**

“7. **Enact laws to accomplish Capitalism21**. Many taxes on the poorest are eliminated, but rates escalate as income and increasing net worth pass established norms of what is sufficient for reasonable living. Accumulation of wealth becomes more difficult and is presented as less desirable than the provision of service to others, which can be partially accomplished through the spending of excessive wealth.

“8. **Allow tax contributors to influence** where their money is applied. For example, a multi-millionaire sport star could dramatically improve the neighborhoods around his stadium or near his childhood home. And a celebrity in news media could sponsor investigative reporting to accomplish compliance with the laws. And a wealthy community could help develop clear water sources for a distant nation. If high-income earners choose not to do such good deeds, the tax structure will accomplish the same ends. Service through financial contributions is not optional; it is required by the laws of the land.”

Rouge was pensive when he spoke to the Ghost. “That would be a fight, but to allow the wealthy people to be responsible for the proper applications of their money — that might just fly if the rules were applied to everyone and the benefits of the earlier recommendations could be accomplished.”

“And the final recommended funding source,” said Mitchell.

“9. **Tap into the spirit of the people**, allowing everyone to spend of their time and energy as well as of their tangible wealth. The greatest resource of every society, rich or poor, is its people. All people must and can contribute to the overall good within the structure of Capitalism21. There are no recipients of free handouts, and there are no super-privileges for the custodians of wealth.”

During the presentation of these nine recommendations, the Spirit of the Future pointed out to Rouge a man in a brown-striped shirt who moved purposely forward in the audience. Rouge vaguely recognized him as the strong anti-abortionist at Melissa Brody’s presentation yesterday that he saw with the previous spirit. As the last of the nine statements was completed, he jumped to the stage, drew a gun, and shot at the moderator. Jonathan, seeing the events develop, rushed forward to protect the speaker and was struck by two bullets. Bleeding profusely from his chest, he slumped to the floor.

Rouge shouted and surged forward, but he and the Ghost were neither heard nor seen.

Still saying “No, no, no” with great sobs, Rouge found himself sitting up in his hotel bed, wide-eyed and looking around frantically.

“Nightmare,” mutters Rouge to himself as the Spirit of the Future, standing unseen behind him, sprinkled star flakes on him from his horn of plenty, and said: “Sleep well, Eddie Rouge. Sleep well.” As he departed through the closed window, he pulled shut the heavy drapes.

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# Chapter 5

## The End of It

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His first recollection in the morning was a gentle knocking on the bedroom door, and Andrew's voice courteously calling "Governor. Governor." The heavy curtains were drawn shut on the window, so the room was dim.

"Yes?" responded Rouge, still in his clothes from yesterday. He rolled over in his bed and saw his digital alarm clock showing 9:33 AM.

"Governor, it's 9:30. Are you okay? You don't usually sleep in, sir."

Rouge was instantly seated upright. "I'm fine. Call my nephew, Jonathan, immediately."

A moment or two later, Andrew handed a mobile phone to Rouge.

"Jonathan, I want you to come to my hotel room immediately. I would like to talk..."

"Impossible, Uncle. The New World Economics Rally is starting at 10, and there is not enough time now."

"Then I want you to stay at the back of the audience. Do you understand?"

"Uncle, you are sounding like my mother. No. I have duties up at the stage. Sorry you cannot get here now. Rio traffic can still be terrible as this hour. But the presentations will be live on the Internet. And I will call this afternoon to see when we can get together. Bye, I have to go now."

Rouge was trying hard to separate realities from dreams, and not being successful.

"Andrew, line up a car. If an official car is not available immediately, get a taxi. Get a good one with a driver who will move fast. I will be at the main hotel entrance in 5 minutes. And take those back-stage passes with you. We are going to the Rally." Rouge was up in a flash, taking off his shirt to get ready.

The taxi ride was wild. Rouge promised the driver one-hundred dollars for more speed. Andrew was puzzled, but Rouge only said, "Stay with me, and be ready to move fast and to clear the way for me if needed." Rouge intently watched the broadcast of the presentation on his mobile phone, listening to each of the speakers and seeing the key recommendations being added slowly to the list on the big screen. They were already at the fourth speaker and recommendation number 7 when they entered the Rally area at the 'VIP ONLY' gate. They flashed their passes and quickly struggled through the crowd.

They approached the stage from the right rear side, the same side where Rouge and the Ghost had stood. The moderator was starting through the final review of the list of nine recommendations. Rouge muttered to himself, "It is too similar. What if it is real?" And then, as the moderator said, "Recommendation number 5," Rouge saw the man moving forward through the audience.

Rouge pointed to the far side of the crowd and said to Andrew: "See that man in the brown-striped shirt moving forward? You are to get close to him where he gets near the stage, and if he tries to climb onto the stage, you grab him. Be careful, he might have a gun."

"What?" exclaimed Andrew.

"Just do it."

Andrew moved down into the audience and tried to make his way to intercept the man. "Faster, Andrew," Rouge whispered to himself, but it soon became clear that Andrew would not make it in time. On hearing the speaker say "Recommendation number 7," Rouge stepped back

from his vantage point, turned, and ran behind the backdrop of the stage. “8.....” And finally, “9.....” As Rouge came to the speakers’ side of the stage, he noticed Jonathan 20 feet in front of him, facing away.

The movements were fast. Andrew’s progress had caught Jonathan’s eye, and then he saw the man in the brown-striped shirt. Andrew sensed the problem and positioned himself closer to the speaker. When the attacker jumped to the stage, Jonathan quickly rose to shield the moderator. Rouge made a frantic dash and reached Jonathan as two shots rang out. Shielding Jonathan, Rouge received the two bullets directly in his back, lurching with each impact, and falling heavily into the arms of the astonished Jonathan.

Assistance came quickly, the gunman was subdued, and Rouge was gently rolled off of Jonathan. Rouge faintly gasped: “Can’t breath, open shirt.” Doing that, Jonathan saw the front of a bulletproof vest, which he also opened. “That’s better,” said Rouge softly. An attending medic slipped his hand down Rouge’s back and found no blood. “I’ll be fine,” smiled Rouge. “A former Governor packs a vest on his public trips.”

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The news spread fast around Rio, and even faster internationally. By the time Rouge arrived back at the hotel, he was walking normally and holding up the vest with the two bullet strikes in the back. “Quality American product” was all he said to the reporters and onlookers in the lobby.

Back in his room, Rouge took the phone from Andrew. “Yes, Mr. President, I am fine. But I will need to talk more with you later. ... About the Earth Summit issues. But I need a little time first. ... Yes. Good-bye, sir.”

“Andrew, please call Chen, Bastos, Ivan and Srinivas. Ask them to come here at 1:30 today.”

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On time, the five friends were gathered in the hotel suite.

“Friends,” Rouge began. “Please don’t think I am crazy, but I had a dream last night.”

Unintentionally, but in near unison, the other four men said, “I had a dream too.” Startled, the five men looked at each other.

“It was a horrible dream.”

“A nightmare.”

“Spooky, with three ghosts.”

“No, there were four ghosts in my dream.”

“Yes. Three, plus Professor Farley.”

Then again together, all five say: “And you were in my dream.” Again, astonishment.

Rouge said: “Okay, something is spooky. But let’s agree that we do not say anything in public about seeing ghosts, or nobody would ever believe what we might tell them later.”

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That evening, on a television news broadcast: “In a surprise change of events, the chief delegates of America, Brazil, China, India, and Russia have turned over their Earth Summit duties to their deputies while they have been holding private meetings in a Rio hotel.”

The next evening broadcast: “Unexpectedly, Edward Rouge was seen in Washington this morning. His wife flew in from Oklahoma to be with him. There is speculation that he might step down as the American Chief Delegate to the Earth Summit in Rio where the official meetings start in two days.”

The next evening: “Ramping up to tomorrow’s key opening speeches at the Earth Summit, eyes have turned to the Chinese delegation after a confidential source indicated that Chief Delegate Hao Chen has been meeting privately with leaders of several of the protest groups.”

The next day, at a large press conference, Rouge spoke publicly for the first time since the shooting. “I am speaking to you today as Eddie Rouge, a private citizen. I am no longer a governor, and I would not even be a Chief Delegate except that President Obama refused to accept my resignation. I have his permission to speak today as a private citizen, as long as I make it clear that American policy is made by the President and by Congress, and some matters do take some time. But I will hint that there could be some changes coming down the line soon. Mr. Obama will be here for the final two days of the Earth Summit.”

Applause by the audience.

“Speaking for myself, when I have finished my duties at this Earth Summit four days from now, I will become an activist for the new model of economics called Capitalism21. I will personally head a new effort to revamp America and work with others around the world, including my good friends Chen, Bastos, Srinivas, and Strofsky, who are each making their own statements within a few hours. We have nicknamed ourselves ‘the Farley Five’ in memory of our professor and mentor, Jonah Farley. Maybe the movement will become the ‘Farley Fifty’ someday.”

The polite chuckles provided a convenient pause as Rouge adjusted his stance at the podium.

“I will be advocating the ten proposals of the ‘*Nehemiah Papers*’ that have been published at [www.capitalism21.org](http://www.capitalism21.org) since September of 2011. They are not perfect, but the spirit is right. America must shift to Capitalism21 as soon as possible. We must attain balance between what are defined in these papers as the Five Realms of Power. Most specifically, the inordinate power of money must be controlled, and service must become a strong currency in which we can maximize our profits of service to others. This is definitely not socialism, but is capitalism appropriate and sustainable for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The tasks ahead are monumental, but they must be done and can be accomplished through hard work by dedicated people.

“And I will practice what I preach. My business ventures will be progressively sold, and I will be putting at least half of my money into appropriate activities for Capitalism21. Together with pledges from other donors, we already have \$1.3 billion in hand to start immediately. To get America to change will not be easy, but this is an election year, and every candidate will be comprehensively informed about Capitalism21, and he or she will be evaluated according to his capacity and commitment to accomplish this change. We seek to elect those who support these goals, regardless of their party affiliation, be it Republican, Democrat, Tea, Libertarian, Independent, or any other. And that includes the President, the Senate, the House, the judges, the governors, and all state and local officials.

“I intend that the Capitalism21 proponents of all political parties will join together as a major force to overcome the inertia of our old ways in finance, diplomacy, social structure, and personal actions. Through democratic processes, we will transform our country. And with cooperation from other nations and individuals, the entire world can and must be transformed, because our future well-being depends upon it.

“So, that is the path I choose for myself, and I hope that it becomes yours also.”

The applause was thunderous.

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# Epilogue

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We do not have the assistance of the ghosts to tell us what really happened next, certainly not with any specific detail. But in broad terms, we might agree on three alternative outcomes.

First alternative: Rouge attempted to lead serious reform, but the American middle class was resistant, thinking that only the lives of the poor and the wealthy would be altered. They resisted compulsory service and tax increases even for a family of four earning over \$40,000 adjusted annual income. They did not value the increase in stability and benefits. As is typical of human nature, they did not endorse the good aspects, but instead put their efforts into vigorous attacks of whatever part they disliked. The serial incumbents used their powerful positions to block reforms, and the country remained politically divided. Finally, when word leaked out that Rouge had seen ghosts, he was progressively ignored and eventually brushed aside. America went on its merry way for the fortunate and on its miserable way for those without resources. And their grandchildren would face whatever consequences were awaiting them at the hands of the six children who clung to the robe of the Spirit of Times Present.

Second alternative: Rouge and his four ghost-seeing friends were able to influence their countries to undertake some watered-down variations of the proposed reforms. The forces of tradition, inertia, and resistance combined to divert and smother the efforts for major paradigm shifts in economic policies, leaving the realms of power out of balance in America and around the world. Democracy by self-centered people was a deficient opponent against the Economic power of money in the hands of those who make the rules. Some other nations took advantage of the exodus of considerable money that unpatriotic Americans sent overseas, further weakening the half-hearted resolve of those who wanted Capitalism21 to prevail. Because half-hearted efforts seldom accomplish their goals, prospects for the future lacked promise for the well-being of America and the world.

Third alternative: In a Dickens-style epilogue where true reforms came not only to Rouge, but also to our Planet, the American election of 2012 marked a true turning point. Many candidates who advocated the Capitalism21 reforms, whether incumbent or not, or from existing or new political parties, won their elections, and a major shift of power was underway. China, India, Brazil, and Russia were also accepting their own variations of the needed changes, and additional countries joined in as well. In a good sense, it was like a war for service, with massive efforts to accomplish the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The efforts bolstered employment in the best way, the way that builds people and their society. Interestingly, professional athletes, their teams, and their cities entered into competitions measuring the greatest and most innovative improvements to solving their most serious local problems. And everybody was a winner, except the criminals and troublemakers.

Internationally, cooperation for service grew rapidly wherever the affluent, local populations adopted Capitalism21 guidelines and the political leadership had the best interests of their people in mind. There were pockets of resistance, as would be expected in times of such dramatic changes, but success elsewhere increased local pressure for bringing the benefits to needy cases. Yes, some governments were toppled, as happened in northern Africa in early 2011, but service assistance from outside countries prevented re-establishment of self-serving elites in the ranks of power.

In these efforts we find that Rouge was better than his word. He devoted his life and fortune to the efforts for Capitalism21, and did become the true successor to Professor Farley,

influencing his country and the entire world. And to Jonathan, he was like a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old country knew, or any other good old place in the good old world.

Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little-heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset. And knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, instead of showing less attractive faces. His own heart laughed, and he saw his grandchildren live good lives with justice in the world, and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further contacts with Spirits, but lived upon the Principles of Capitalism21 ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he possessed as well as any man alive the knowledge of how to keep Earth Day well, and Earth Week, Earth Month, and the ongoing Earth Years. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as observed Tiny Tim nearly two centuries earlier, “God Bless Us, Every One!”

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The full Nehemiah Papers are available at: [www.capitalism21.org](http://www.capitalism21.org)