

Chapter 1

Farley's Ghost

Professor Farley was dead. There can be no doubt whatsoever 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, Luis Bastos from Brazil, and Ivan Strofski from Russia. They all knew each other, and they all knew that Jonah Farley was as dead as a doornail.

The entire world knew that Farley died. For more than 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 Professor Farley. As a prominent man of business and a recent past 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 Professor 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. In the world of

finance, he 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, as well as from 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 Native American ancestry. Despite 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, an iconic citizen of American conservative society, was strongly associated with the right wing, but not the radical right. He was a church-attending, pro-life, anti-tax, small-government, tough-love, Republican who was family-oriented and a champion of capitalism. He regularly gave thousands of dollars to churches and any cause about which he felt strongly. Smart, handsome as a Hollywood leading man at age fifty-five, 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 a television show about the rich and famous. Husband, wife, three children, and four dogs resided on 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.

It was two years after Professor Farley died that Edward Rouge 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 had arrived in Rio two days earlier and was already established in a very nice hotel suite at Copacabana Beach. The large windows on the

fourteenth 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 spacious 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: twenty-nine years old, single, African American, and certainly not wealthy. Andrew was a research assistant to Bill Parker, Rouge's confidant and chief-of-staff for twenty-five years. But Parker was ill and could not travel, so Andrew was a last-minute replacement.

Andrew closed his cell phone and said, "Mr. Hao 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 Strofski 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 greeting by 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!" Jonathan said. "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 welfare? Don't answer. I know she is. She's visiting my house while I'm away. My dear wife is still a sucker for her poor sister's stories. Proper utilization of resources should not include leaching off relatives."