

Chapter II

School ended early. The school was abuzz as parents and teachers had IMed each other at the turnaround at the Farmer's home. Karma and Maya were eager to get back home.

The school bus dropped the kids off near their home. They ran inside their modest house to drop off their books. Lollipop greeted them lazily as he was very comfortable on the Magic Rug. The kids ran by the dog and into the back of the house to get their bikes.

"Last one down the hill is a rotten egg", yelled Maya.

She took to her bike and Karma followed. When they got to the top of the hill, they did not notice Ran Rold's Rolls Royce (of course leased from Ran Rold Rolls Royce, Bentley & Land Rover, Golden Mountain's largest luxury car dealer) following them.

Ran Rold was looking at the lushness of the Farmer's 10 acres. He became angry. Not only had

the Farmer stolen Chutney from him at Cornell but he was now going to best Ran Rold in agriculture. As Chairman of the Board of Ran Rold Hybrid Seed Corporation (a Bermuda mail box headquartered in Ireland to avoid US taxes), he was not going to allow that.

"Oh, Chutney, the dynasty you would have been mother to", thought Ran Rold salubriously.

"Boss?" asked the burly minion.

"Boss?"

Ran paid no mind to the mutterings of his employees. They were all doing his bidding. They had no intelligence. From the CEO of the Ran Rold Oil Company to the Board of Directors of Ran Rold Bank, they were idiots. Ran Rold knew it. After all it was Ran Rold's College Testing Service that made sure idiots would get perfect scores and the bright students would do poorly. This way the brightest people would fill menial labor (such as nuclear reactor guards and farmers) and absolute morons

would fill the executive positions of his corporations.

The simulacrum that Ran's ancestors built meant that wage workers on Golden Mountain would get frustrated and drink themselves to oblivion each weekend. During the week, those who considered themselves to be part of the chattering class would gamble away their life savings on get rich quick schemes.

Ran Rold was not worried as Buddy Airlines brought in new workers every day looking to climb the social ranks of Golden Mountain. His corporate workers would never catch on. Unaware of their innate aptitude, they would torture their children to be smarter. How could they be smarter? Each day these children would wonder why the immigrant gardener was smarter than their executive Dad. Ran could not stop laughing at how perfect it all was. Everyone in Golden Mountain envied him except the Farmer.

He did not know how the Farmer got into Cornell. How did he beat the test? He got a perfect score

on the standardized test to get into college. The sycophants who worked for him at the Ran Rold College Testing Service reviewed the materials and could not determine why there were tic-tac-toe patterns all over the exam paper.

"How did the Farmer beat the test?" asked Ran to himself. "Who taught him to beat the test?"

"Boss?"

"Yes, Sharma," replied Ran Rold, arbiter of all that Is on Golden Mountain.

"Boss, did you want me to grab the kids and ask them some questions?"

"Why...that is an excellent idea," said Ran. "Let me out here."

Ran knew the law well. After all the District Attorney of Mojave County was a graduate of Ran Rold Law School, a school that Ran Rold XVI founded nearly two centuries ago. Full scholarship

of course. Of course! The professors taught future do-gooders what attempted kidnapping was.

He did not want to be accused of attempted kidnapping. And if he was, he would fire the driver to correct any act of wrong doing. Sharma had been convinced by so many of his peers that he was not smart. The driver never ever minded to read the laws of Mojave County. Thus, Ran loved the law.

Ran looked over the fields. There was no Santa Claus. How was this possible in Mojave County? Did he not cut off the water to the farm? Of course he did not do it himself; an independent contractor did it. This way Ran could not be prosecuted under the laws his lobbyists had written for him. "Those poor fools at the Ran Rold Golden Mountain Penitentiary," he chuckled.

"What sort of hybrid seed could have produced such bounty?" Ran asked himself.

His driver showed up with the kids. Maya and Karma looked frightened.

Ran Rold first thought of his corporations first. "What ya doing", he said in his expert 'gosh-gee wilikers' charm. Karma ignored him. Maya politely answered, "we were riding our bikes until Goliath here nearly ran us off the road with that massive black car".

"Hey! You guys mind if I have some corn?" asked Ran to the children.

He laughed inside at the Biblical methods the Farmer used to raise his children. Ran exploited the kindness of the children for his own benefit.

"Sure, we have plenty", answered Maya.

He grabbed some of the Farmer's corn and told Sharma, his limousine driver, to get some bags from the back of the Rolls. The driver went and got sterile bags with Ran Rold Hybrid Seed Corp. written on it. By getting the children to give it to him, he knew he had plausible deniability in his future patent filings.

Drool was coming out the sides of Ran's mouth. "Like stealing candy from a baby," he thought to himself.

"Boss!"

"Boss!"

Insolence is what he could not stand in his servants. Ran knew everything that was there to know. After all he was the current Chairman of the Board for Ran Rold University. The last thing he hated in his perceived omnipotence was someone interrupting him.

"What?" asked Ran.

Quickly, the driver let go of Maya and Karma. Ran looked up from the children and saw his limousine driver running full speed towards the Rolls Royce. "Bring us back some Cokes, Sharma" Ran ordered obtusely.

Lollipop looked down at the children from the farm. Ridgebacks are not too different from most work

dogs. They are very territorial. Once they feel threatened they do not back down unless their master is present. The Farmer was nowhere in sight. Lollipop gave a menacing growl that even the hardest man would have a hard time ignoring. It was bone chilling to the driver in the Rolls Royce.

Ran didn't notice the standing spine hairs of the Ridgeback as he walked towards the children. Ridgebacks were bred to defend livestock in Africa against predatory lions, the king of beasts.

Lollipop was angry. "Don't mess with the alpha male's pups," Lollipop growled.

Lollipop started to run towards the children and he let out such a menacing bark. Ran Rold, the Ran Rold of Golden Mountain, determiner of all that Is could not speak *Ridgeback*. Shiny two inch teeth covered with dog spit looked pretty scary and quickly made him realize he was human.

Fear soon came into Ran's eyes as Lollipop came closer. He turned and started to run. A bigger mistake. You do not run from Ridgebacks. That is

what Lollipop wanted you to do. Lollipop was doing what he was bread to do.

He ran full speed after Ran. Lollipop did not know what wealth, power and fame was. He only knew that he had to protect the Farmer's pups, Maya and Karma.

The driver opened the automatic Rolls Royce door just as Lollipop opened his jaw and snapped at Ran's Burberry. The dog was upset at itself as he missed Ran's buttocks by an inch. Quickly, once the dog felt danger had passed, Lollipop turned to comfort Maya and Karma. He looked at Ran through the black tinted glass and barked loudly.

"Sharma," ordered Ran.

"Yes, Boss," answered the limousine driver.

"Quickly, drive back up the hill to the Farmer's house," ordered Ran Rold, the Ran Rold, employer of all that Is in Golden Mountain.

"Yes, Boss."