

Chapter Twenty-eight

Monday morning Patty and Condi were the only ones running the Trask corporate offices. Kevin slept in; he was exhausted and sore after eight days of logging. Robert Trask called and extended his Mexico vacation an extra three days. Patty spent about fifteen minutes talking about her Hawaiian honeymoon with Condi and then they got down to business. Aflex insurance called and wanted to have an immediate follow up meeting; they were relieved that neither Kevin nor Robert Trask would be in attendance. Patty agreed to sit in and take notes for Condi. They were a team—no insurance executives could bully both of them.

Sometime after lunch, Kevin took the stairs two at a time, from the top landing he looked to the left. It was odd not to see Patty at her desk. Kevin went down a floor; Condi wasn't at her desk either. The doors to the conference room were closed and Kevin listened before he pulled them open. Four men and two women representing Aflex insurance were on the far side of the table. Condi and Patty were sitting on the other side of the table; they were outnumbered two to six.

"Kevin, please come on in and have a seat." Condi motioned with her arm for Kevin to take his normal place at the head of the table.

Instead, Kevin sat next to Patty and whispered, "How was the honeymoon?"

Patty looked over at Kevin and mouthed the word, "Wonderful."

It didn't take but ten minutes before Kevin realized that Condi was in complete control of the meeting. Kevin excused himself after about twenty minutes. Condi was drilling the Aflex executives hard and Patty took notes and asking her own questions, so to clarify and verify their words and statements.

The Aflex representatives agreed to start paying the Schultz family a monthly annuity as soon as they got notarized signatures. Condi put the Aflex agents on notice about previous insurance claims that had been denied. There was a long uncomfortable period of silence. Patty jumped in and brought up dental coverage for Trask employees, including all contract workers. Aflex insurance was in a receptive negotiating mood—due to Condi's fact checking into their past history of claim denials.

Kevin heard Patty's high heels coming up the stairs. He met her at the top landing. "Did Tina call this morning, before I came in?"

"I don't know Kevin. Let me go check your voicemail." Patty set her notepad on her desk and picked up the desk phone and started listening to messages.

Kevin stood over her and watched as she jotted down numbers and messages. "There is nothing from Tina? "Is something wrong?" Patty asked.

"Probably nothing but I stopped by her new apartment Saturday on my way down

from Oregon and she wasn't there. Then all day yesterday I couldn't reach her at her new apartment in San Jose. This morning no luck either."

"Did you try her parents in San Diego?" Patty asked.

"Yes, but they were kind of evasive." Kevin replied and then walked back into his office.

It was quitting time and Patty stood at her normal position in the doorway. "Is there anything you need before I head home?"

"Yes there is." Kevin replied while he pushed a bunch of papers into a folder." Could you get in touch with Officer Bull Elk and tell him that we're good with the Helicopter logging."

"CP has been telling me all about that logging experiment." Patty walked to the desk and took the folder from Kevin. "Have CP get with that Desert Storm Pilot and Bull Elk and just do whatever is needed." Kevin stood up from the office chair. "Trask Inc. will float the million dollar insurance bond."

"I'll get on it first thing in the morning," Patty replied and headed back toward the office door, she stopped and turned. "Speaking of insurance, it looks like Condi is going to close the Schultz family claim. Ann Marie and her family are going to get almost twice what they had hoped and prayed for."

"That sounds great." Kevin replied, along with a smile of approval. "It looked like Condi and you really had Aflex insurance on the ropes in that meeting."

"We are also negotiating for the dental plan to be added back with coverage for part timers. It's one of the demands in the pending union contract. We thought we would shoot it out there and see how Aflex responded."

"Wow, if we could offer dental coverage to our workers that would go a long way on getting the union contract settled." Kevin picked up the phone on his desk.

"Kevin if we do get the added dental insurance do you want to offer it to the contract workers up in Oregon?" Patty held the helicopter logging folder up.

"Yeah sure", Kevin casually replied in started dialing.

Patty put the file on her desk and then returned to the doorway. "Still can't reach Tina?"

"Yeah, something's wrong! I'm not coming in tomorrow. I'm going to drive up to San Jose and look for that computer virus company Tim Baylor started. Call my car phone if you need anything." Kevin put the headset back onto the office phone cradle.

"Do you know the name of the new business? I can go call directory assistance and maybe get an address for you."

Kevin rubbed his head and thought and then blurted out. “Y2K virus protection!” I think that is what Tina told me they do.”

Patty returned to her desk and called directory assistance. There were over two hundred new business upstarts in San Jose, since the dot com boom. But as soon as she said Tim Baylor the operator had an address for her. Condi wrote down the address for **Baylor anti-virus and on-site maintenance Inc.** and returned to Kevin’s office. “Here’s the address.”

Kevin took the piece of paper and glanced at the name and address. “Thanks. I don’t know why I thought it was Y2K something?”

“Isn’t that what Gus has on his inspection mirror, Y2K?” Patty asked.

“I don’t know.” Kevin replied and put the paper in his wallet. “Let’s go ask him.”

They came down the stairs side by side. Kevin offered Patty a ride home so that they could go over the new helicopter logging business. Gus told them that all the Y2K information was in the red binder that Nick Icorn had helped complete. Kevin didn’t respond, he was at a loss as to where he had put the red binder. They walked side by side to the SL600. On the drive to CP’s and Patty’s townhouse they discussed the union contract and how offering dental insurance might get the contract ratified. One major hurdle out of the way, so to get Trask Trailers sold.

At the Trask mansion, Kevin headed for the guest house above the garage. He dialed Baylor anti-virus and on-site maintenance; it was Tina’s voice that was on the after hour recording. Kevin remembered the last recorded message he had listened to... It had been Danny at the Lake Shasta boat dock stating summer hours of operation. That recorded message had put Kevin on a mission—that mission concluded when the fact that the recording was made before Danny died.

Kevin headed for the den in the mansion to find a map or atlas. Getting around downtown San Jose with all the new upstart high-tech companies would be a challenge. The den was organized by the Dewey Decimal System; every book had a section and a numbered place in that section. There was a map and atlas section that had most any road in North America. Robert Trask’s lifelong dream to motor home from Alaska, crisscrossing Canada from the west coast to the east coast, the United States and in Mexico. Pulling a ‘Made in America’ Trask trailer filled with ‘Made in America’ Harley Davidson motorcycles might not happen if all of Trask manufacturing went to China.

“Could I help you find something?” Marie asked from the doorway.

Kevin turned and looked back over his shoulder. “I’m looking for a map of San Jose.”

Marie walked into the den and moved her fingers down a row of road atlas and pulled one out for California. “Here you go. Make sure to put it back into the exact spot or Mr. Robert Trask might have a panic attack.”

Kevin smiled at Marie and took the atlas. “You know my Dad pretty well.”

“Yes, your Father is a lot like my Father. They have a place for everything and they plan everything out two years in advance.”

“No kidding, our vacations were always planned out,” Kevin replied. “We golfed in the morning, almost always the first group to tee off. Then we had to be someplace else at an exact time. Dinner was always at six no matter what, there was never a moment to relax or just hang out.”

“It’s still the same Kevin. When Robert and Linda are home, it is breakfast at six in the morning and dinner at six in the evening.” Marie said then walked back toward the door.

Kevin followed and said, “My parents are boring and way too organized.”

Marie stopped and looked up at Kevin. “Maybe Kevin, but they make my job easy. I always know when to have their meals ready and I never have to pick up after them, like I do for you.”

“That not true,” Kevin replied with a scowl. “I’m very organized.”

“Are you telling me that big pile of sawdust covered, diesel smelling clothes and those muddy spike boots that I cleaned and picked up in your room is being organized?” Marie chided and returned the scowl.

“Well, I was in a hurry to get into work,” Kevin replied so to defend himself.

“Yeah, I noticed you left for work at noon.” Marie said. “Just leave the Atlas on the nightstand, in the closet or under your bed. I’ll find it and put it back where it goes.

“Thanks Marie,” Kevin said and then headed back to the guest house.

Late Tuesday morning Kevin fiddled with the GPS and tried to set a waypoint for **Baylor anti-virus and on-site maintenance Inc.** With all the wrong turns the GPS gave for Tina’s apartment Kevin was glad that he had the road atlas for backup. The blue display read: **5hrs 35min**; that estimate was without traffic. Kevin wasn’t even fifty miles north of Pasadena when Patty called to set up a meeting for Friday with Mr. Meng, Robert Trask and the new contract law attorney.

Before quitting time Patty called for the fourth time to say that Aflex insurance was adding dental coverage and also including orthodontia to the employee health plan. Encouraging news that would help to get the union contract settled. It seemed like decisive things got accomplished when neither Trask was there. More good news, the Shultz family was pleased with the insurance offer and only had one contingency before they accepted—that Kevin be the Godfather to their new baby boy.

Another item to complicate Kevin’s plan to be done with everything; plus this would required an eighteen year commitment. So far his entire life had been governed by family vacations, prep school, church camp and college basketball. Kevin even

turned down an invitation to try out for the LA Lakers—he wanted to finally take charge of his adulthood. To commit to being a Godfather wasn't in his current or future plans. Patty unenthusiastically agreed to help get Kevin off of the hook for a pending Baptismal in Michigan.

The evening rush hour traffic in San Jose seemed heavier than LA traffic; most likely due to all the new upstart companies in Silicon Valley. Now it was too late to check to see if Tina was at work. Kevin eventually made it to her apartment; he took note that the door looked as though it had been tampered with or kicked in. He scanned the parking lot for Tina's silver Honda; it wasn't there. *"I'll wait until six thirty. That'll be more than enough time for Tina to get home from work, even in heavy traffic.* Tina didn't show up!

Back in his car Kevin checked a map for the San Jose police station and headed there. The desk clerk at the station furnished Kevin with zero information. Even filing a missing person report would require Tina's mother and biological father. Kevin's mind went into investigation mode... *Finding information about Tina's real father could be difficult; Tina never mentioned his name. I forgot Tom is her stepfather? He is creepy; giving her breast implants for a high school graduation gift is weird. Tom was always bragging about the implants and he wanted his friends to see them. Hell, Tom could be a suspect. I never trusted that creep... Maybe, Bull Elk can get me some information about Tina? Maybe get her license plate number or her real birth name or something. I'll call Bull in the morning. I need to get a motel room for the night.*

Wednesday morning Tim was shocked to see Kevin come through the front door of his anti-virus company. "Hey old buddy what's up," Tim said as he stood up from the reception desk and walked across the small lobby area and then raised his hand to high-five Kevin.

"I'm not your buddy!" Kevin yelled and clenched his fist. "Where's Tina?"

"I'd like to know that myself." Tim yelled and then stepped back out of arms swinging range. "The stupid bitch stole twenty-two thousand dollars from me last Friday and I can't find her either!"

"What?" Kevin glanced down the darkened hallway. "What's back there?"

"It's our computer lab. We scan hard drives, install virus protection software and monitor the dark side of the internet."

"Is Tina back there?" Kevin bolted down the hallway and pushed the black doorway curtain to the side. There was just the circle of computer work stations, a work bench and metal cabinet against the wall. "Is this where Tina worked?"

"No, Tina was my outside salesperson. With her looks and that body she could sell ice to an Eskimo." Tim moved around Kevin further into the lab

"That's right!" Kevin said and then rubbed his forehead. "Tina told me you owed her

thousands of dollars in commissions.”

Tim pointed at the pried open metal cabinet door. “Friday, I was watching a video and Tina broke into this cabinet. I didn’t notice until I went to make a deposit that my bank bag was gone,” Tim lied the cabinet wasn’t broken into by Tina.

“How do you know Tina stole your bank bag?”

“A bank teller identified the bitch. He wasn’t going to cash the business checks but Tina worked her beauty and charm on the guy. Now I’m out twenty-two grand!” Tim slammed the broken metal cabinet door so hard that the door sprung back open and two of his 8mm sex tapes fell onto the floor

“Tina told me you owed her thousands of dollars for selling Y2K protection software,” Kevin yelled back so to defend Tina’s reputation. “That was probably her money!”

Tim froze, not because one of the homemade sex videos broke open when it hit the tile floor; but that Kevin mentioned Y2K. Tim knew that Mr. Hung Meng was listening over the microphone bug that Kang Chan planted under the workbench when he still had hands. Tim had planted a web spy camera in the lab the day after Tina started working there—Tim was always one step ahead.

Kevin bolted from the lab down the hallway and out the glass door. Tina needed help and Kevin was going to be her knight in shining armor. Men always covet what they shouldn’t take—be it the neighbor’s wife, their student, or coworker. Kevin’s attraction for Tina was now a mission that had to be fulfilled and finalized with the act of love making.

The Y2K mission was less than two thousand days away but its code name was already spreading like wildfire. The detonation of three nuclear suitcase bombs had to coincide when the internal BIOS clocks in mainframe computers that were updating time into the twenty first century. There was only a six second slot of time that Mr. Hung Meng had to suppress the free and uncensored World Wide Web. North Korea was the model of expurgation. Communist China was already having problems with blocking chat rooms and user groups over the internet. The threat of social networking where millions of people could easily be networked to each other was coming. A free, connected social media could indoctrinate billions of Chinese people to freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and help them petition via the internet.

Kevin returned to Tina’s apartment complex and for two hundred dollars, the apartment manager unlocked her apartment door. It looked as though the one room studio apartment had been ransacked. Another two hundred dollars and Kevin had a copy of the rental agreement. Kevin called Bull Elk on his way back home with Tina’s license plate and driver’s license numbers. Mr. Hung Meng easedropped on the mobile phone call—Tim would be put to the killing test. Bull Elk had too much access to background information

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Friday Morning Kevin was in full speed, private eye, investigator mode. He was careful not to hold the brand new tennis racket by the handle. The plan was to extend the new racket over the conference table to Kang Chan and then bingo—Kang’s handprint would stick onto the new leather grip. Officer Bull Elk had already made arrangements to send the racket to a forensic lab in Denver. That strategy went sideways the moment Kevin entered the conference room. Kang Chan wasn’t present... In his place was a Middle Eastern man that Mr. Hung Meng introduced as a new business partner.

Kevin didn’t hear but three words at the land sale meeting. Condi darkened the room and did a PowerPoint slide show. Robert Trask seemed onboard to everything that she presented and the contract papers she passed around. In the darkened room finding Tina was top priority on Kevin’s mind. The remote possibility that Kang’s handprint matched the one on the fiberglass resin can was less important. Kevin missed Tina more now than ever before.

After the hour meeting and still in a dumbfounded state Kevin wandered into his Dad’s office. “It looks like Condi might be getting the land sale all wrapped up.”

“It looks that way,” Robert Trask said from behind his desk. ‘But, truthfully Kevin if it wasn’t for you getting the Union Contract ratified we wouldn’t be this far along.”

“That was more of Patty’s doing; she understood how important dental coverage was for the workers.” Kevin came all the way in the office and sat in one of the chairs in front of the elaborate wood desk.

“It looks like the last big item to do is to get Gus to move off site.”

“I’ve been working on him,” Kevin replied. “He’ll be taking stats at our city league basketball game this Sunday. We go out to dinner afterward and I’ll just let him know he’s going to have to move.”

“Good luck with that,” Robert Trask replied and looked up from the spreadsheet and other papers that Condi had passed out during the meeting. “Kevin, are you okay? You seem kind of disconnected this morning.”

“Yeah, I’m okay... There’s something going on with Tina. I’m driving down to San Diego tomorrow to talk to her Mom and Stepfather. I’m also trying to locate her biological father.”

“Are you going to ask for Tina’s hand in marriage?” Robert Trask quipped with a smile of approval. “She is a beautiful young woman!”

“No plans to get married at the moment. Tina got a big bonus at work and took off for a private vacation,” Kevin lied not wanting to say that Tina stole twenty-two thousand dollars and went into hiding.

“Okay, but don’t let the gorgeous one’s hang for too long,” Robert warned in a feeble phony tone.

“Sound like good advice.” Kevin stood and headed for the door.

“Kevin one last thing.” Robert’s tone still feeble. “I’m sorry that I backhanded you that day at the club.”

Kevin turned and replied. “No big deal. You had a lot on your mind and I didn’t realize how close we were to losing our company. I’m glad that I started looking over the books to see the big picture.”

“Well, Kevin your cavalier Robin Hood attitude or maybe it is that humanities degree that helped get most all the employees behind you.”

“Dad, I don’t know about that. I think it’s more of the good hardworking people that have recently come into my life.” Kevin replied with direct eye contact.

“Kevin, you sound like your Grandfather. He was all about **do good and die** without regrets.” Robert Trask said in a firm voice and then came around from his desk.

Kevin slightly flinched; same as he had done in the club that tennis match day. But Robert Trask didn’t raise his arm to backhand Kevin; he put it up on Kevin’s shoulder and squeezed. “Kevin, I’m very proud of you.”

Kevin had never heard or ever felt that type of sincerity from his father; he hugged Robert and replied, “Thanks Dad that means a lot to me.”

Not hearing the stairs being taken two at a time caught Patty off guard. When Kevin appeared at the top landing she asked. “Are you okay Kevin?”

“Yeah, I just had a good talk with Robert; he is pleased with how the land sale contract is coming along.”

“Well, Kevin,” Patty said as she stood and picked up a stack of papers. “I hope that you’re going to be pleased with how the helicopter logging contract is coming along.”

Kevin drew a deep breath; he knew that Patty was going to have a bunch of papers to sign and go over. “Okay, let’s do it,” Kevin said and headed for his office.

They worked right through lunch. Patty explained why the insurance bond was so expensive; using a helicopter to log with was dangerous. She went on to say that CP’s war buddy went by the name ‘Shrimp’ and that he was a red-headed one hundred and twenty pound video game addict that could land a helicopter on a dime. Patty assured Kevin that CP knew Shrimp to be the most skilled pilot during Desert Storm, Shrimp flew behind enemy lines to medivac women and children out of Kuwait. Kevin signed and pushed the documents back toward Patty; his mind was focused on Tina—hopefully she didn’t need to be medivaced.

At last, Kevin was back on mission and headed for San Diego just before the Friday night rush hour traffic started. When he arrived at Tina’s parent’s home his gut told

him that Tina would be hiding out there or someplace close by. “Can I help you?” Tom asked from behind the screen door.

“I drove down here to talk to Tina.” Kevin said.

“We told you, that we don’t know where Tina is!” Tom verbally snapped at Kevin. Nancy approached from behind with a cocktail glass in hand.

“Hello Nancy,” Kevin turned his attention off of Tom. “Nancy, I’m just interested in your daughter’s safety. Last Sunday she wasn’t at her apartment and then on Tuesday and Wednesday she wasn’t at work up in San Jose.”

“I know that Kevin. Tina and Tim had a fight; she needed to get away for awhile.” Nancy pushed Tom to the side and opened the screen door. “Come on in.” Nancy took Kevin by the arm and downed her cocktail. “You and I need to talk privately.”

It didn’t take much time before Nancy was swooning over Kevin. She always had strong feelings toward Kevin; not just because of the Trask wealth, but his drop-dead good looks. She was privy to the fact that Kevin was a virgin—she was willing to help him explore and find true sexuality. Cosmopolitan magazine and an open marriage made her an expert in the field of self gratification and pleasure.

After about thirty uncomfortable weird minutes on the backyard patio, Kevin slithered back through the house and out the front door. No way was he going to take Nancy up on the hot tub invitation as she slowly undressed down to her black bra and panties and got in. Kevin did get the full name of Tina’s real father, more information to hopefully locate Tina. Nancy did mention Susan, who she referred to as Tim’s pregnant slut girlfriend that was now living in Ohio at her parent’s home.

Kevin called Bull with the additional information before he pulled away from the curb. Bull said that he would do some more checking and that Interpol was sending him information about Mr. Hung Meng. Kevin headed back home—content that Tina was hiding from Tim and out of harm’s way.

Saturday morning Marie knocked on the guesthouse door. There was no reply, no sound from inside. She knocked again and then opened the unlocked door. Kevin was lying motionless on the bed only in boxer shorts. Kevin was lean and muscular; his V back was more of an Olympic swimmer than a basketball. Marie flashed back to their skinny-dipping episode when they were just kids—Kevin had grown up while she had grown out. But she didn’t care; this was an opportunity to experience again those innocent summer days of adolescence out by the pool. Marie tip toed across the room and was shielded by the bathroom wall. She looked at herself in the mirror and thought that it might not be the right thing to do—but she loved Kevin.

*I have to do this. Kevin never has fun, he has been so tense for too many years. All through college and now going to work for his Dad. I have to do this, just like we were kids again...* Marie slowly filled up a glass with cold water and tiptoed back out into the room. Kevin hadn’t moved... Marie didn’t think about the consequences—

she dumped the cold water onto Kevin's bareback.

Kevin sprang up on all four and Marie was halfway down the stairs before he made it out the door. "I will get you for that!" Kevin yelled from the top of the stairs.

Marie stopped at the bottom and turned around. "Your Father... Wants to talk to you... Out by..." Marie had to point toward the pool because she was laughing so hard.

Kevin looked over at Robert doing his normal Saturday ritual; reading the newspaper and drinking coffee and thought. *I might as well get this over with.*

Marie headed back up the stairs while Kevin was headed down and pulling on a plush white robe that had the Trask name embossed in gold. "I'll change your bed and pick up. It looks like a tornado touched down in there."

"Don't put everything away. I might have to pack for Florida." Kevin replied and rubbed Marie's head so to mess up her long black hair.

"How about I wash all the dirty clothes then fold them up and leave them on the bed."

"That would be great." Kevin replied, continued down the stairs and, then headed toward the pool.

"What were you and Marie doing up in the guest house?" Robert Trask asked from behind the newspaper.

"Oh she booted me out so that she can clean up in there." Kevin answered.

"Good luck to Marie on that chore. You never have been good at picking up after yourself." Robert lowered the newspaper. "Kevin after the land contract meeting yesterday I went over the production numbers, they look good. With the pending lawsuit hopefully not going to court and the union contract being settled Linda and I will be taking the winter off."

"What!" Kevin was shocked. He was the one that wanted to be done at Trask Inc.

"You know your Mother had that bout with cancer a few years back." Robert said and took a drink of orange juice. "That's why we were in Mexico last week."

"What, Mom's cancer is back?" Kevin's asked in a broken and scared tone.

Linda Trask had just come out of one of doors of the big white mansion and jogged across the manicured green lawn toward them. As she approached the patio table Kevin reached out for her—they embraced. "I love you Mom," Kevin whispered in Linda's ear.

This was the first time, in many years that the three of them had such a heart to heart family meeting. Kevin felt relieved that the immunotherapy treatments in Mexico were more cautionary than necessary. Linda was always proactive and

believed in holistic medicine; she would do Chemo again if needed, but her numbers were nowhere close to needing that radical procedure. The family meeting went on for over two hours and Kevin realized that he was going to have to step up. Grandpa Trask's mantra flashed in Kevin's head. ***Do and die...*** *You will be judged by what you do and equally by what you do not do.*