

Chapter Eight

Facedown on the heavy smelling disinfected cloth, Kevin could barely lift or turn his pounding head. It took awhile for him to focus on his brown leather wallet on the nightstand. Sunlight was just peeking in between the pulled drapes. He stepped on one of his shoes and bumped into the small round table and rushed to the bathroom so not to pee himself. The foul dryness in his mouth had the strong hint of garlic, catsup and zesty meatloaf. At the sink Kevin pulled the paper off one of the plastic cups, filled it with water and drank the entire amount. As he moved back toward the queen bed Kevin glanced around the dim motel room for his car keys. *Let's see, I stopped at a restaurant... Went into backroom, drank whiskey, shot pool and now I end up here. It must be Thursday or maybe its Friday?*

Kevin found the draw cord for the drapes and pulled; sunlight blasted thru his throbbing head into the room. He looked back at the red digital clock display on the nightstand; it read: **10:32**. The past night started to come together. Kevin looked back out the window—the SL600 was nowhere to be seen. He yanked open the door and headed for the office. The blood to his legs and feet was sluggish; Kevin steadied himself before he pushed open the glass door.

Inside the office a gray haired man stood up from behind the counter. "Can I help you young man?"

"I just came from that room over there," Kevin pointed back out through the glass door.

"Yes, I know Mr. Trask. Big Ed checked you in last night. Sounds like you and the Bad Boys shot pool and drank too much whiskey.

"You mean Randy and Joe?" Kevin asked still running back over the past twelve hours.

"Yeah those two... They think they're the outlaw bikers of Myrtle Creek on their Harley's and all... But really they're just two candy-ass kids," replied the old man.

"Oh, I think they rode in the back of the truck?" Kevin shook his head.

The well seasoned motel manager slid a card across the counter. "Here fill this in. The room was \$62.00 plus tax."

Kevin filled in information and slid the card back. "I need to go get my wallet."

"You do that Junior." The old man reached for the phone. "Dick-head, wanted me to call his shop when you woke up."

Kevin left the office and gradually returned with his wallet.

The man was examining the information Kevin had filled in on the registration card. "Is that big concrete pool and tunnel to the Pacific still there?"

"What?" Kevin asked.

"I lost a Pilipino boy in that hell hole teaching him how to weld underwater. It was three weeks after the attack on Pear Harbor." A single tear rolled down the old seasoned face and splat on the registration card.

"Are you talking about the Cesspool Pit at the far end at the Trask manufacturing plant? Kevin asked in total confusion.

"I'm talking about the 30 foot concrete rings with the underwater side tunnel that runs all the way out into the Pacific Ocean under Navy Way Road, at Long Beach. That's what I'm talking about Junior," the clerk replied.

"You mean the big open concrete cesspool rings that the Navy installed years and years ago?"

"It wasn't all that many years and years ago," quipped the man. "And please don't call that a 'Cesspool pit'... Four good apprentices of mine died in that hell-hole!"

"That open water filled hole, was there before my grandfather bought that old navy building and that was a long time ago."

"That's the problem with you youngsters. Anything more than a few years old gets tossed to the side like its ancient history." The seasoned clerk looked at the gold credit card. "This is a corporate account. I'll give you a discount on the room if you're on business up here in Oregon."

"I'm on vacation; just charge me the regular rate." Kevin replied as he walked to the glass door and scanned the parking lot.

Back at the counter there was the sound of the credit card machine rolling over the card. "If you're looking for your car, Joe said he'd be right down here with it."

"I'm glad someone took my keys last night." Kevin replied to himself.

"Yep... Big Ed looks out after his patrons. It's not the first time he has had to drive those two Dick-heads home."

"Well I owe Big Ed for looking after me." Kevin walked back to the counter and signed the receipt. "I'm going to go take a shower before I check out."

"No problem. Check out ain't til noon." The old man handed back the credit card.

Kevin was about halfway across the parking lot when he heard the screeching of

tires and then a horn blasting. He jumped about as high as he did during any basketball game and then started to run toward the protection of the motel. The car followed with the horn still blasting. Kevin took cover behind a heavy support post holding up the walkway roof.

Joe parked and got out of the SL600 and couldn't stop laughing. It took a few seconds before he asked, "How'd that blasting horn make your head feel?"

Kevin looked back from behind the wood post; shaking. "That old man is right... You are a Dick-head!"

Joe was bent over with his hands on his knees, laughing and trying to catch his breath. "You run like a little sissy girl..."

"What the hell are you thinking?" Kevin screamed.

"I was thinking it's a good thing I fixed your brakes." Joe yelled back, before he started laughing again.

Kevin couldn't hold his mad composure; he finally broke out in laughter. "You Dick-head," Kevin said between broken breaths.

It took awhile before they both quit laughing. Joe walked over and stood under the covered motel walkway next to Kevin and held out the car keys. "Good thing I checked your breaks. Two of the brake bleeder screws were loose. They are not zerk fittings, although they look the same."

"What?" Kevin replied with a serious tone.

"You wrote yourself a note to check the brakes on the back of the fishing brochure. When I was moving your car from the bar to over here this morning. I could feel that the brakes were mushy; so I took your sweet-ride to my shop."

"What did you find?" Kevin fired back.

"I found one front and one rear brake bleeding screw lose. Very, very dangerous if all the brake fluid leaked out." Joe answered with weight and knowledge.

"How would that happen?" Kevin fired back.

"Well this is a proto-type. Not built on an assembly line, probably just an oversight?"

"A... Okay. That makes sense." Kevin paused. "I'm just lucky you saw the note and that you know the difference between a Zerk and brake fitting."

"Well you're not that lucky," Joe replied then swallowed hard before he confessed. "I accidently got brake fluid on the leather steering wheel. When I was bleeding the brake lines the brake fluid got on my fingers and got transferred to the leather steering wheel. Here I'll show you." Joe walked back and opened the car door.

Kevin followed and sure enough there was a dark oily spot on the leather steering wheel from Joe's thumb. "Hey, it's no big deal Joe. I don't even like the car that much. How much do I owe you?"

"Well, how about I only charge you for an hour or don't pay me at all to cover the brake fluid spot on the leather."

"What is your hourly rate and how much time did it take you?"

"I charge fifty dollars an hour," Joe answered. "It took about two hours and just about a quart of brake fluid."

Kevin opened his wallet and handed two bills to Joe. "This should cover the two hours, plus the brake fluid."

Joe peeled the crisp one hundred apart and tried to hand one of them back to Kevin, "Here a hundred is more than enough."

"Keep it." Kevin insisted. "You probably saved my life."

"Thanks, it will really help out with the slowdown of logging trucks needing repairs." Joe shoved the two bills into the front pocket of his overalls.

"I'm going to take a quick shower," Kevin said and looking over toward the motel room. "After my shower I can drive you back to your shop."

"That would be great. I'll go shoot-the-shit with the old fart in the office. Come get me when you're done." Joe headed toward the office.

Kevin let the hot water run over his head and down his back; it helped the pounding in his yet alcohol saturated head. Pulling on his fusty underwear and wrinkled polo shirt reminded him that all his travel possessions were left on the Stargazer. Using his finger to brush his teeth with the small complementary bottle of mouthwash helped to cool the spicy meatloaf and his beer breath.

Kevin pushed open the office glass door and Joe came out of a small side room with a two white Styrofoam cups of hot coffee in hand. "Old Fart made us some coffee." Joe handed one of the cups to Kevin. "You ready? I need to get back to my shop."

"See you later Dick-head," rang out a strong yet frail voice from the side room.

The automatic cup holder popped out from the dash and Kevin placed the Styrofoam cup in it and then moved the driver seat back. "That motel clerk worked at the old navy building before my Granddad turned it into a manufacturing plant."

"Old Fart whose real name is Nick Icorn." Joe added to the conversation, "had a life of a super hero. Some of his World-War-Two stories will make the hair on your neck stand up."

"He did mention being at our plant around the time of the bombing of pearl Harbor," Kevin said as he turned right onto the one-way street .

"Careful." Joe yelled when hot coffee splashed over the rim of the Styrofoam cup. "Take a right at the stop sign," Joe instructed. "My shop is few blocks down Third Street."

"Crap the brakes are touchy!" Kevin replied as he slowed down for the stop sign.

"Three block up on the left." Joe instructed and pointed with his left hand.

It looked more like a junk yard of old logging trucks than a custom repair shop for motorcycles. Kevin pulled between two defunct gas pumps; all four tires skidded on the oil dirt covered concrete pad.

Joe reached for the door handle. "Kevin, what you told me about that little boy Danny last night; while we were shooting pool. About the cops finding him dead in a boat shed and all... Don't try to figure it out. It has nothing to do with you. Just leave it in His hands."

"What do you mean?" Kevin asked with a small jolt back into graveness.

"Something like that happened to me a few years back." Joe swallowed hard; then continued. "This fifteen year old boy named Cory shows up on a logging site that I was foreman on. This young baby faced kid begs me for a job. Said his family was having money problems..." Joe quit speaking and looked off into the distance.

Kevin lifted the white cup from the holder, took a sip of the hot coffee and patiently waited for Joe to continue.

"Well, to make a long story short, one of the choker cables broke. A log got lose and killed Cory." Joe quit talking again.

"I'm so sorry," With his thoughts now in rewind, Kevin took a long drink of coffee. "Joe, I don't see the connection between Danny and Cory.

"Well you stated that you only knew that Danny boy for an hour or so, but somehow you knew he was special. Well that's how this Cory kid was... "I only knew Cory about three days but he had such an influence on my life. Joe paused. "I just can't explain it, but something this kid said to me about praying, just stuck in my mind."

"I prayed for Danny. I didn't tell him that I prayed for him... But somehow he knew that I had or did. It was surreal..." Kevin offered his private actions.

"I know... That spiritual aurora that some young children sometime have is going to change you." Joe replied as he opened the door.

"Like that wad of cash I found in the glove box. If it wasn't for those few hours of

Cory coming into my life, I would have stolen the money and then not fixed your brakes. You probably would have crashed and I'd be thousands of dollars ahead." Joe wiped at a tear, then went on... "Cory continues to speak to me to this day. His words, 'Just do good,' are always with me." Joe closed the passenger door and walked toward his shop; he made the sign of the cross over his chest then looked upward.

Two cups of coffee and two hours later Kevin was just south of Salem; the capitol of Oregon. He turned off at the second exit and headed for a big yellow restaurant sign.

"We only serve breakfast until noon," the waiter bellowed.

"What day is this?" Kevin asked as reached for the menu.

"Thursday," replied the waiter. "Looks like you're on a road trip and been sleeping in your car or something."

"It has been a rough week," Kevin's replied. "I'll have the BLT and a large orange juice." Kevin dropped the menu on the table and headed for the restroom. Seeing himself in the mirror he agreed. *Passing out in my clothes does make for a road trip look. I need to get some new clothes.*

The skinny young waiter gave Kevin directions to a nearby mall—it was past one before he was back on the freeway headed north. The new clothes and fresh underwear was worth the time. On the passenger seat was a new travel kit, a two-hundred dollar pair of hiking boots and a multi pocketed outdoor fishing jacket. In the trunk were two different colored insulated hip waders—the salesman informed Kevin that color was important to coincide with river water temperature for catching steelhead. It sounded like a fish story, but Kevin opted for both the green and brown waders.

Five miles before downtown Portland, Oregon the mobile phone signal indicator flashed 5 bars. The display for the GPS unit beeped, then read, **Take 205 bypass east**. Ten miles down the bypass as Kevin crossed the Clackamas river bridge the GPS unit displayed **Take highway 26 exit**. Kevin got off the 205 bypass and spent about twenty minutes driving around the **Clackamas Town Center Mall** parking lot. Switching off the GPS unit and getting actual directions from a human got Kevin back on track

Finally, the green and white highway sign read, **Zigzag 32 miles**. Kevin hoped that he'd be able to get in an evening fishing session. He set the cruise control for 75 mph—he'd be in Zigzag before 4:00pm. The green signal indicator on the car phone quickly dropped to just one bar.

The town of Zigzag consisted of a Dairy Queen, a grocery store, a Forest Service office and a dozen or so small cabins right off the Mt. Hood Highway. At the far end of town, Kevin pulled to the side of the road to look at the one page brochure again.

Fish the Clackamas River. Guide service available Zigzag, Oregon. Kevin made a U turn and slowly drove west, back through the small town. The sun was getting low and his designer sunglasses were not helping. Kevin tried to read the faded blue sign, on the front of a wood shake sided building. There were two old logging trucks parked alongside the dilapidated cabin like building.

Pushing his sunglasses up onto his forehead, Kevin could barely make out the lettering on the faded sign: **Clackamas, Sandy, and Deschutes Rivers Guide Service.** The wooden porch creaked as Kevin approached the door. The door felt swelled shut or jammed; Kevin bumped it hard with his shoulder. Old cow bells that were hooked to the backside of the door rang out through the dim room. Kevin slowly entered!

In the very back of the store sat a glass display case blocking off a hallway that went further into the building. The wall on the right hand side had some old fishing gear and Polaroid pictures tacked on a cork bulletin board. The wall on the left hand side had snowshoes and skis hanging for display; climbing gear was piled up in the back corner. Kevin walked up to the display case, behind the curved glass were some soccer trophies, some 4H ribbons and a high school diploma. What really caught Kevin's attention was an eight by ten photograph of two people standing on the summit of a mountain. Written across the bottom of the photo in red: **Thanks for taking me to the top of Oregon.** It was signed, **Governor McCollins.**

"Anyone here?" Kevin yelled out. There was no answer. He moved to behind the glass display case and quietly took a few steps into the hallway. Kevin cupped his hand up to his ear so to see if he could hear anybody in the back part of the building. The sound of the cowbells ringing from the knob on the entrance door startled Kevin.

"Can I help you?" asked a grungy, plain, tall blond as she came through the door with a handful of mail.

"I hope so," Kevin replied with his face turning red; embarrassed about his snooping position behind the counter and being caught down the hallway. "I'd like to sign up with one of the fishing guides." Kevin walked back to the rear of the display case.

"Okay," said the lanky woman as she raised one long leg and pushed hard just above the door knob. The hanging cowbells rang out very loud! "Sorry, the door kind of sticks."

"Yeah, I noticed when I came in." Kevin took a few more steps to the side of the display case.

The woman brushed up against Kevin as she passed by, Kevin caught a scent of gas or something off of her coveralls. "Are you the one I need to talk to about fishing?" Kevin asked while noticing how rough and dirty her hands were holding the mail.

"Yeah, you talk to me... But hold on a moment." The blond straightforward woman disappeared down the hallway. Kevin heard another door open and then talking. "Mom, here's the mail. I'm helping a customer right now."

Kevin moved away from the glass case so not to ease drop. *She must be a mechanic or something. I think that's diesel fuel I smelled on her.*

When Lilly got halfway down the hallway she reached up under her chin and pulled down the long zipper on the blue and white striped coveralls. The dirty coveralls dropped down to the floor, she stepped out of them, picked them up and hung them on a deer antler make shift coat rack. Now only in a white cotton sleeveless tee shirt, pair of cutoff jeans and ankle high boots she immersed all the way from the hallway. Her legs were muscular and long, her stomach flat and her small firm breast did not require a bra.

The strip down was unanticipated; Kevin was not the type to stare. Lilly's actions were not planned or intentional—she felt the up and down look over; she now had mixed reservations. Kevin smiled and her stomach knotted. Lilly never considered herself a tomboy but it was the tag that came from being the daughter of a logger. Feeling somewhat violated she folded her arms across her chest.

Yet, Kevin's stare felt different, almost fun. Never had a young movie star looking man gazed at her in this way. Lilly casually unfolded her arms and put her hand on the waistband of her cutoffs and so slightly pushed out her chest. The tips of her breast pushed hard against the soft white cotton. Lilly forced a closed mouth smile; careful not to show her crooked teeth. Kevin's eyes focused down toward her flat stomach away from her chest.

"What are you looking at?" Lilly asked in a demanding tone.

"Your hands," Kevin quickly answered. "I respect women that have working hands or jobs that they get dirty at."

"Working hands and jobs! What do you mean? Is that some sort of sexual insinuation about hand jobs or something?"

Kevin was completely baffled by Lilly's words. "Your hands." Kevin pointed at her hands still resting on her hips. "Your hands look the same as the women that work on the assembly line in our plant."

Lilly raised her strong lean arms and took a long look. Her hands were rough and grubby; her finger nails dirty; some were split. "I'll be right back." Lilly quickly went back around the glass counter and down the hall wanting to hide her now burning red face. *Why did I say that? He must think I'm some sort of nasty hick or a foul mouthed logger's daughter.* Kevin heard the sound of running water.

"I thought we had a customer?" A weak voice echoed down and off the hallway

walls.

"Yeah we do. Just some rich-yuppie-college-type wanting to set up a guide trip," Lilly answered as she scrubbed at her hands and fingernails!

"Oh... Is he gone? Why is your face so red?" A frail voice asked.

"Not so loud Mom?" Lilly was now splashing water on her face. "I just need to clean up a little. I've been working with Dad on the damn logging truck all morning."

"Do you want me to go help that college yuppie person?" Peggy asked.

"No, I got it covered Mom!" Lilly grabbed a hand towel that was hanging on the oven door handle and hurried back down the hall.

Kevin was looking over the guide reservation form that he found on a wall pocket display holder. "Two different contacts phone numbers... Are they really necessary?"

"It is, if you want us to contact you."

I'd like to fish this evening or tomorrow morning; hopefully a guide can fit me in." Kevin flipped the reservation contract over. "I'll pay twice this going rate so to meet the two person minimum if needed."

"That's sounds good. I'll let the fish know that you're going to pay twice as much for them. That news will probably get them to head up stream." Lilly handed Kevin a clipboard that had a pencil connected to it with a string.

"Do you want a business or a home address?" Kevin started filling in the form.

"I don't care." Lilly moved toward the front door and pushed it the rest of the way closed with her slender hip. "Is that's your sports car or a rental?"

"It's mine," replied Kevin as he filled in the Trask Corporate office address in Long Beach, California.

"It must be expensive."

"Yeah, I guess so... The new GPS system sucks," answered Kevin while filling in more lines of information.

Lilly wanted to ask what a GPS system was but didn't want to appear ignorant. "Do you have one of those new mobile car phones in there?"

"Yeah, it's a piece of crap too." Kevin looked up from the clipboard . "How come there's not a box to check for the summer Steelhead season?"

"Any Steelhead that run in the summer are basically in the rivers east of the

Cascades Mountains." Lilly moved away from the door. "I just said, I'll let the Steelhead know you're going to pay twice, so that they'll head up stream."

"Head up stream? Summer run? What are you talking about?" Kevin asked looking up from the clip board.

"Steelhead, you do know that they swim upstream to spawn in the Spring? When they do that they call it a run. We had a real good winter run on the Clackamas River. But that ended in May."

"What!" Kevin was now the one feeling ignorant. "Are you telling me there's no fishing?"

"No. I'm just telling you that the Steelhead are done running." Lilly replied firmly in a confident voice; now that she was in her element.

"You mean to tell me I just drove all the way across the state of Oregon to find out there's no fishing." Kevin quipped, while dropping the pencil on the clipboard. "Your brochure doesn't say anything about fishing only in the Spring"

"Are you talking about this?" Lilly pointed at a green brochure pinned on the bulletin board next to Polaroid pictures of fisherman holding up their trophy sized fish. "Look here," she said and removed the paper off the bulletin board. "Right here on the back, it says call ahead to get the latest fishing report."

"There is nothing on the back about calling ahead!" Kevin was tired from the all day drive and not in the mood to argue; he tossed the clipboard on top of the glass display case and yanked the door open. The fishing brochure was face down on the passenger seat. He snatched it through the passenger window and hurried back into the store.

Kevin knew to push hard to get the door open; the cowbells hanging on the back rang loud. "Look here there is nothing about calling ahead." Kevin held the brochure up.

"I never sent out any white brochures. Are you sure it's ours?" Lilly asked as she took a quick look. Kevin walked toward Lilly; ready for a verbal face off.

"I don't know... You tell me," Kevin snapped in a defensive tone as he pushed the folded paper at Lilly.

Lilly took the white brochure. She flipped it over and she noticed the wide clear packing tape that displayed the thumb and finger print and some hand writing but no commercial print. "This looks to be a one sided photo copy of our brochure. I never sent out this."

Kevin reflected back to getting gas and how he first asked for a blank piece of paper. The attendant was folding papers and there was a photocopier behind the counter...

"Well, it's poor business. Not to put the disclaimer right on the front saying that there is fishing only certain times of the year. I bet a lot of your customers get mad."

"Not really... You're the first person that has showed up to fish for winter Steelhead in the summer." Lilly forced a smile that displayed her crooked buck teeth. "I'm sorry you drove all the way across Oregon. You must be a Californian?"

"What are you implying? That Californians are stupid!" Kevin snapped back.

"No, I'm not saying that. I noticed the license plate on your concept car."

Kevin paused and shook his head. "Never mind about fishing."

"I'm sorry about your driving all this way." Lilly replied in an empathy tone.

"Whatever," casually replied Kevin. "I was getting gas and picked up one of your fishing advertisements. I just needed to get away. Fishing wasn't really on my agenda this week anyway"

"You mean a 'copy' of our advertisement," Lilly injected.

"Yeah whatever," said Kevin as he laid the clipboard on top of the display case.

"You know, we have good lake fishing this time of year. I could point a couple good spots out for you."

"That might be good," Kevin replied with an upbeat tone. "By the way what's your name?" asked Kevin as he extended his hand over the top of the glass cases.

"Lilly... Lilly Saxton," replied Lilly. From the handshake she noticed how soft and clean Kevin's hand were.

"Lilly, I guess I could use a guide. I tried catching some fish a couple of days ago in Lake Shasta; didn't even get a bite." Kevin paused. "But, don't think I haven't caught fish before. I've caught fish in Hawaii, Florida and off the coast of Mexico."

"Well Mr. Trask" Lilly read the last name off the contract for services.

"Please, call me Kevin."

"Well, Kevin." Lilly's blue eyes looked up from the clipboard. "You'd probably do okay in one of the lakes around here. The Rainbow Trout have been hitting on worms pretty good. Unless you want to try a nymph"

"A nymph! I'm not even going there after my working hands statement." Kevin replied puzzled and with caution."

Lilly laughed. "The nymphs are fishing flies" Lilly moved around to the front of the display and pointed at some hooks with different colors of thread and feather tied on

them. "Look down here, at these hand tied nymphs."

"Oh I get it." Kevin felt his face getting red. "They're artificial bugs."

"You got it." Lilly pointed at a very tiny hook tied with yellow and green thread. "Rainbow Trout always hit hard on that one."

"I'll buy it and whatever else the guide recommends."

"Those flies are not for sale. My brother tied them."

"Oh," replied Kevin now looking more closely at everything in the case. Is that your brother standing on top of a mountain?" Kevin pointed at a photo. "And these must be all his trophies and awards."

"Yes that's his stuff," replied Lilly with an almost inaudible response while glancing across some of the other items in the glass display.

Kevin noticed the **Items Not for Sale** folded tent card in the corner and sensed the strain on Lilly. "Can I hire a guide to take me fly fishing?"

Lilly immediately straightened up and replied. "A guide to go fish in a lake? I never had anyone ask that before." Lilly moved to the backside of the display case.

"You said there were fish in the lakes and they like nymph's that look like that." Kevin pointed through the glass.

"I know... But nobody hires a guide to lake fish."

"Well, I could use some pointers. I tried fishing at Lake Shasta a couple days ago with bait..." Kevin's thoughts turned to Danny.

"How'd you do? I hear the bass put up a pretty damn good fight in that lake?" Lilly questioned Kevin.

"A... I only fished for a few hours, then a lot of stuff started to happen. I never even got a bite. I guess lake fishing isn't my thing."

"Lake fishing is okay but there's nothing better than catching Steelhead in a river." Lilly offered with a closed lip smile.

Kevin started thinking about Danny at Lake Shasta—at rest. *I wonder what day they will have the funeral? I should send flowers or something. It just seemed impossible that a boy with cancer would be sniffing glue...*

"Mr. Trask, if you would like, I have some flies of my own that I will give to you. Bring in your gear and I'll rig you up."

I left all my gear on a houseboat, down at Shasta Lake... I don't think I really want to

go back out on a lake for a while. I'll just come back in the fall." The all day drive, plus everything that happened over the past five days was coming to a head—Kevin needed down time.

"Well then make sure you leave a couple contact numbers, so that I can get a hold of you when the Steelhead start running." Lilly noticed how distant Kevin had become after mentioning Shasta Lake.

"Yeah... I'll have to plan a trip up here and give Steelhead fishing a try." Kevin opened his wallet and handed Lilly one of the private Trask business cards. "You can call either phone number and leave a message." Kevin now thought about Danny and being found with one of the business cards tucked in his underwear.

Lilly took the card and put it under the clip on the clipboard. "I'll call when the run starts. It's best fishing three days after a heavy rain."

"Is there anything else to do around here for a day or two?"

"Sure, you can go hiking, go camping or try the dry toboggan run at Ski-Bowl. Or, you might want to drive around Mt. Hood and do some sightseeing."

"Mt. Hood, don't people climb that mountain this time of year?"

"Yeah, people do." Lilly replied in a muted almost inaudible tone.

"I think I'll do that. I see you got some gear over there." Kevin pointed toward a half wooden barrel in the corner with climbing gear in it.

"We're not in the climbing business any longer," Lilly replied firmly. "The liability is too high."

"You have some crampons and two ice axes over there." Kevin pointed again toward the half barrel. "I've climbed before!"

"That equipment is not for rent. And I just said, we're out of the climbing business!"

"I'll sign a disclaimer." Kevin said excited that he had a new mission. "Just rent me those crampons and one of the ice axes. I won't need rope, pitons or anything else. I'll just hike around on the glacier. If I don't make the summit, no big deal. I've heard Mt. Hood is a cake walk."

"Cake walk! What is that supposed to mean?" Lilly snapped

"It means that it was not even a rated climb. I took a climbing course at college. We climbed Mt. Rainier but didn't climb Mt. Hood because it's the most climbed peak in North America. I've climbed Half Dome at least three times and Longs Peak in the Rocky Mountains." Kevin noticed Lilly wasn't listening to his bragging; she was looking back over her shoulder.

"Mom, you should have stayed back in the kitchen."

"I just wanted to see what kind of man would cause you to scrub your hands until they almost bleed," Peggy replied while giving Kevin the up and down once over. "Those are working hands young man."

Kevin returned the up and down once over, wondering why a woman no older than his own mother needed a walker. "Yeah, I noticed."

Lilly turned back toward Kevin "We don't rent climbing equipment any longer!" Lilly's face was getting red thinking her Mom had heard her crude hand-job outburst, earlier to Kevin. "Don't be fooled... Mt. Hood is more than a cake walk!"

"Whatever! I'll be right back." Kevin quipped then pulled hard on the sticking wood door and jumped down two stairs to the parking lot. When he opened the glove box Kevin was stunned. *What the hell... Joe did steal my money!* Kevin pulled the owner's manual and yellow speeding ticket out—sure enough the money was gone.

With the door to the shop wide open Lilly was careful not to speak too loud. "Mom, please don't embarrass me! I said something crude about working hands."

Peggy replied firmly, hoping her voice would carry out thru the open door. "So that is what a rich-yuppie-college-type looks like?" Now in even a louder voice Peggy continued, "he's as handsome as your Father was at that age."

Kevin leaped up the two stairs onto the wood plank porch and immediately did an about-face. *I put the cash in the console after I went shopping for new clothes.* In that split second a large black Labrador took advantage of the open door ran into the shop, around the display and down the hallway into the kitchen.

Peggy followed with her walker as fast as she could. "Outside _ucker," were the words Kevin heard the moment he took one step back into the shop.

"What?" Kevin asked confused and equally shocked to hear the F-bomb from an older lady.

"You left the door wide open." Lilly offered for an explanation.

"Get out _ucker!" The same muffled words rang again only now they were from the end of the hallway.

"Should I leave?" Kevin awkwardly asked. A big black dog came from around the display case, walked across the room, sniffed Kevin's leg and meandered out the door.

"Good boy Tucker." Lilly walked across the shop and shut the door.

Frozen and dazed Kevin said, "I thought your mom was yelling at me to get out."

"No, she was yelling at Tucker. My Brother named his dog Tucker hoping it would confuse people."

"Well it works." Kevin replied with the roll of money in his fist.

"Tucker will eat anything that is left out."

"I can see that, he must go a hundred pounds or so." Kevin was looking at Tucker who now had his nose pressed up against a piece of door glass.

"No, only eighty-five pounds or so..." Lilly answered

"I'll tell you what. I'll give two hundred dollars for an ice ax and two hundred dollars for this pair of used crampons."

Lilly was now looking out the glass at Tucker sniffing the custom wheels on the SL600. She yanked open the door and yelled. "No Tucker!"

"There is no liability, if I buy the stuff." Kevin peeled off four crisp new bills and laid them on the top of the glass display case.

"Do you have gloves and a good parka?" Lilly asked still looking thru the door glass at Tucker. "It gets very cold up there."

"I just bought a bunch of new stuff this morning. I purchased new boots and a fishing vest but nothing for cold weather."

Lily moved from the door back into the hallway and took a red hooded climbing jacket off of the Deer antler rack. "Try this on," she said while handing the jacket over the top of the display case. She glanced at the four, one-hundred dollars bills.

Kevin pulled on the jacket. "This fits good," Kevin said while pulling up on the heavy nylon zipper.

"There should be gloves in one of the pockets."

Kevin felt around the different pockets, found a compass, a whistle some matches and then the gloves. "What do I owe you for this stuff?"

"Nothing, just bring it back when you're done hiking around."

"No problem," replied Kevin.

"You should go lake fishing. Forget going up on that mountain. "

"Excuse me," Kevin rebutted, "mountain climbing is one thing that I do know something about."

Lilly looked deep into Kevin's hazel eyes with true concern." That do or die hook you

got in your gut in this moment; can claim even the most experienced climber."

Kevin sensed something more than Lilly's warning but didn't want to go there. He grabbed the ice ax and crampons before she had a chance to undo the deal.

Lilly glanced again at the four bills on top of the glass counter. They would help to pay for her Mom's prescription—now that the unemployment checks would no longer be coming. Lilly would have rather whored herself out for that money, than what she had just done. When respect for the dead gets out trumped by day to day essentials—it makes for a miserable existence...