

Chapter Fourteen

The Mexican restaurant was somewhat empty; it was between lunch shifts for the industrial section of Long Beach. Kevin placed an order for two salads and made sure one of the burritos didn't have any meat or chicken. About halfway down Navy Way Road, he pulled over to the side. Through a couple of the open dock doors, he could see the bright flashing from the arc welders. The sound of screaming from air tools and banging metal was audible even from this distance. *I'm not sure this is the type of workforce Grandpa Trask would have wanted. It's probably time to sell and outsource. The current production levels can hardly cover our labor cost...*

Gus was back at his post and Kevin hardly said more than two words as the Range Rover got inspected. Kevin shrewdly didn't mention anything about moving out of the apartment but he did intentionally park under the basketball hoop. With the two white bags of Mexican food, Kevin observed what workers were eyeing him as he walked across the parking lot and in through the main employee entrance.

"Did you have a good lunch?" Patty asked as Kevin took the last stair and then rounded the corner.

"Yeah, I played a little basketball and it helped burn off some steam from that signing meeting this morning that went sideways."

"I'm not quite done with the notes from the meeting," Patty said, almost as though she was apologizing.

"Hey don't sweat it." Kevin walked to her small desk and looked for a place to set one of the white bags. "I picked you up a salad and a burrito without meat. I remembered from up at Shasta Lake that you don't eat meat."

"Thank you... I'm surprised that you remember that I'm not a meat eater." Patty replied.

"Oh, I remember. That was the day you told me about the President and not calling it sex..." Patty's face started turning as red as the hot sauce inside the lunch sack. Kevin held out the white bag and said, "Patty, you have only been here a short time. But what is your gut feeling about the workers down on the manufacturing floor?"

"I haven't paid that much attention but morale has to be awful. I'm sure there are a lot of rumors about outsourcing jobs and selling off the business."

"I think you're right. One of workers that I just played a pick-up game of basketball is with is angry and just kept calling me white-boy."

"Kevin, most average working people just want employment security in their lives. All the uncertainty makes the workers frustrated and angry."

"Yeah, I suppose that you're right." Kevin turned and headed into the office.

Almost an hour later Patty was standing in the doorway. "I finished up with my notes from the meeting this morning."

Kevin turned. He had been standing at the one way glass looking down into the shop at all the workers building trailers. "Just put them on my desk. I'll take a look at them before I go home."

Patty walked to the desk and put the four pages of notes to the side of a big pile of documents and said. "Kevin, thanks for the salad and burrito. I very much appreciate you thinking about me."

"Yeah, no problem," Kevin replied not turning while spying on one particular employee.

Another hour went by and Kevin came rushing out of the office with the meeting notes in his hand. "Patty we need to go down to my Dad's office."

Patty grabbed her note pad and could hardly keep up in her new high heels; she followed Kevin down the stairs and then down the hallway.

Condi looked up from her desk. "Kevin, I was just about to call up to you. Your Dad wants to talk before he leaves."

Kevin opened one side of the double doors for Patty and then made sure that it was completely closed after they entered. Condi was getting a little annoyed with Patty's rapid advancement to be included in private meeting in such a short period of time. The four pages of notes were the translated Chinese into English from the signing meeting and was huge game changer for Robert Trask. His anger had to be directed toward someone but he wasn't sure who.

The **line 1** light flashed on Condi's desk phone. "Condi I need you to come in here now!" The tone in Mr. Trask's voice made it evident to immediately respond.

"Close the door and take a seat over there next to Patty." Robert Trask demanded the moment Condi entered the large office. "Condi that outside controller that died in the horrible car accident a few weeks ago do you know what temp agency she came from?"

Condi didn't answer; her mind was in a tail spin. The only thing she knew was that the white bleached blond had slept with her father. The decapitation was horrible, yet seemed somewhat in alignment to what Islam teaches about the law of Zina. In fact decapitation seemed less cruel than being buried neck deep and then stoned.

"Condi, I also want to know if you have had any private one on one meetings with Sam and or Mike our Trask corporate attorneys." Robert Trask's voice was still at full throttle.

Condi's brain was still in rewind. "No, the only meeting I have ever had with Sam or Mike is when I'm taking notes for you."

"Have our attorneys' ever had a private meeting with Mr. Hung Meng or Kang Chan?"

"A..." Condi relied, really feeling under the gun. "I think I scheduled a meeting for Kang Chan and Sam last week? If you want me to go check the appointment book I can make sure." Now Condi was running over in her mind if she ever did have a private meeting with either Sam or Mike. There were some emails about terminating her father but that was it. Plus, there were emails about the union contract stuff—but never any private one on one meeting. Some casual discussion about how good of Muslim her father was, but that was at her desk.

"Go get the appointment book and make sure to shut the door when you come back." Robert Trask demanded.

Condi obeyed the order and had the black leather bound appointment book in hand. She pulled the door shut and walked over to Robert Trask. "Here you go sir."

"Thanks, Condi. Just wait here in case I have any questions." Robert Trask opened the appointment book to the last appointment and started working backward. "What's this entry?" Robert Trask asked looking directly at Condi.

"That's a meeting Mr. Kang Chan set up with Sam right after the first signing meeting." Condi drew a deep breath. "Remember that meeting when Kevin showed up in shorts and moccasins when he flew back from Shasta Lake?"

The words Shasta Lake now had Patty's brain in rewind; she was glad that she finally got to talk with Kevin on a one to one basis at Shasta Lake—but she wished that she had never made the sexual relations comment that the president of the United States told to the world.

"Go sit over next to Ms. Kelly!" Robert Trask ordered.

Robert Trask found two more appointments schedule between the Trask attorneys and Kang Chan! He pushed back in his chair, stood and walked around then sat on the front corner of the lavish large burl top desk. "I know that I can trust Condi." Mr. Trask's eyes moved to look directly at Patty. "Ms. Kelly, I need to know if I can trust you."

"Mr. Trask you can trust me. I will swear on my twin sisters' grave that I can be trusted." Patty spoke in firm reassurance.

"Okay good. From the notes you translated and from some different appointments

that Condi recorded, it looks like one or both of our corporate attorneys' are working with Mr. Hung Meng to destroy the Trask family." Robert Trask walked over and stood directly in front of the women. "I need both of you to not say a word to anybody about this meeting. Do not even talk to each other about our suspicions. It could get ugly in the next couple of months. I just need reassurance from you both."

"You know that I will stand by your side." Condi promptly answered. "I kept quiet when my father was terminated and I will keep quiet now."

"I know, Condi." Robert Trask walked back around his desk and sat back down. For the rest of the afternoon the team of four planned a couple of different ways to draw out the Trask attorney that was Hung Meng's emissary.

Tuesday morning Patty got off the bus and walked down Navy Way Road and had the same everyday conversation with Gus at the guard station. She then walked across the parking lot and entered the building. The starting bell had yet to ring and there were the morning catcalls as she started up the stairs to the offices. The morning ritual to stop at Condi's desk was the same; except when they made eye contact there was a slight nod—the nod of their sworn silence.

"Good morning, Patty," rang out before her feet were at the top landing. She was surprised to see Kevin in the office. This was the first time Kevin had been at work before her.

"Good morning." Patty replied as she headed directly for the small hallway desk to set her purse and lunch on.

"Patty when you get settled in I need to talk to you," rang out from the office door and down the short hallway.

Almost immediately Patty was standing in front of Kevin with notepad and pen in hand. "Yes sir, Mr. Trask."

"Patty there are a couple of things that I'm hoping that you can do for me over the next couple of weeks that are not really business related."

"Okay..." Patty replied. The words, 'next couple of weeks' felt good, knowing that she would be working longer than she expected. The words, 'not really business related,' made her feel like Kevin was going to start using her; hopefully not like Stan had up at Shasta Lake.

"Patty, the first thing has to do with Gus. I have noticed that he likes you a lot and it seems like you are fond of him."

"Yes, Gus is a nice guy." Patty timidly replied.

"In the translated meeting notes you specifically noted that we are going to have to board up Gus's apartment; that it is a must do for the acquisition to go through."

"Yes, it seems that Gus moving off-site is a must do if the deal is to go through," Patty softly replied.

"You don't have to do this but Gus has taken a real liking to you and I've been thinking maybe you could somehow start to work on him to get him thinking about moving to a brand new condominium."

"Kevin, I can try. But getting someone like Gus off routine can be very difficult."

"I've learned that about Gus, but I think I know something that you could do for Gus that would change up his daily routines and get him to trust and like you even more."

Patty's standing tall posture immediately turned to a downturned slump. She had prayed that those days of letting herself be used were behind her. "What is it that you would like me to do for Gus?" Patty asked in a monotone, dejected voice.

"Well, you know those three wheel bikes that adults that don't have good balance ride? They're like an adult trike." Kevin said.

Patty's slumped posture straightened back up. "I know exactly what you are talking about. My Grandma has one that she rides to the open market in Chinatown, twice a week for fresh vegetables supplies."

"That must be the Grandma you learned Chinese from?"

"Yeah, she lives with us, she can't read English and really didn't care about driving, so she never got a drivers license. Her three-wheeler is her life line!" Patty replied in her normal snappy tone.

"Well, Gus used to have a three-wheeler but it got stolen a few years back."

"A few years? Wow! Gus has been without his life-line for that long?" Patty's upbeat snappy voice turned deeply concerned.

"I'm not exactly sure how long, maybe it's only been two years," Kevin replied. "But you did such a great job on finding that replacement inspection mirror for him. I was hoping you could look for a new three-wheeler ..."

"Not a problem," Patty replied before Kevin even had a chance to finish his sentence. "Do you happen to know what color his old-three wheeler was?" Patty asked as she put her pen to the notepad.

"I really don't, but Condi will know and she will cut a purchase order for whatever it costs," Kevin answered. "Make sure you get one with all the bells and whistles."

"Kevin, getting something much different then what Gus had previously could be a problem. But don't worry. I will get with Condi and get what is best for him. The same color will be very important."

"Thanks Patty, I know that you will take care of Gus."

"Not a problem, anything for the Vice President." Patty replied in a relieved and joking manner.

"Not funny... Ms, Patty Kelly; smoking hot body and Chinese speaking chauffer that is supposed to call me Kevin."

"Sorry, it's just that since I will be working a few more week than I expected, it's probably best I don't call you just by your first name."

"Whatever you want Patty." Kevin was slightly annoyed but at the same time understood. "If you want to call me Mr. Trask or Kevin Trask that works for me."

"How about Mr. Trask and I call your father Mr. Robert Trask?"

"That's good," Kevin replied with a slight frown. "Anyway... This next request will require you to stay overnight and it is for me personally and I can pay you overtime or give you time off if you want to do it."

Now Patty frowned, the smoking-hot-body reference a minute ago could have been considered sexual harassment but she had enjoyed it. And no matter what, Kevin was hot. "What did you have in mind?" Patty asked in a sensual tone.

"Well Patty, I know that this is not in your job description, but how would you feel about flying up to Portland and driving my car back?"

"A... I know your car has been parked up there and..." Patty hesitated. "I would like to go up there and drive it back. But..." Patty hesitated again.

"Patty, you can do it on company time. I don't expect you to do it on a weekend or anything. Plus, if you need to stop more than one night and get a motel to sleep that won't be a problem."

Patty couldn't hold back, she couldn't hide it anymore. "Kevin, I don't have my license. It got suspended for a DUI, which I got on New Year's Eve!"

"What?" Kevin was puzzled. "But you drove my Range Rover home from the Mexican bar and grill."

"That was only because you had too much to drink." Patty didn't hold back; it was too late. She should have been upfront with Kevin the first day she came to work.

"Wow, Patty I'm upset and don't really know what to say." Kevin rubbed at his head. "That really explains a lot of things. You don't have to look for that three-wheeler for Gus."

"Kevin, even if you're firing me, I would still like to find Gus a three-wheeler."

"Firing you!" Kevin glared at Patty. "Fire you for having my back? You could have gone to jail a second time for me. First you pissed off that Sherriff up at Shasta Lake and then you drive my drunk-ass home. If we would have got pulled over the other night you could have went to jail for me again!" Kevin was angry.

"But you're a Trask; it would have been better that I get arrested than you."

"A Trask my ass! Where do you get off thinking because my family has money that I'm better than you...?" Kevin was losing it. Patty had cut into the core of Kevin's belief. The reason he gave up his scholarship at Gonzaga and the reason he wasn't going to take over the Trask dynasty...

"Kevin, I'm sorry that I upset you so much. I can go home now or finish out the day whatever you want."

Kevin reared back in the executive chair, drew a deep breath and slowly gained his composure—unloading his personal issues on Patty was wrong. "Patty, I don't know what to say! But, I can't put into words how thankful I am, that I have you for a friend. I'm so thankful that you said yes when I called and asked for some help down here at work. If for some reason I would want to fire you, then I'm a very poor communicator."

Patty let out a deep breath; her legs were shaking. "That means you're not going to fire me for not letting you know about the DUI."

"No Patty, I'm not firing you."

Patty almost lost her balance in her new high heels while walking over to Kevin and wrapping her arms around him. Kevin was the coolest and most compassionate man that she ever met—plus he was hot.

