

Chapter Thirty-two

Thanksgiving Day has many different meaning for different countries all over the world. But Kenneth Saxton only knew the oral story of a day set aside for prayer; a day that the pilgrims and Native Americans shared a meal and gave thanks. Being illiterate made it impossible to do any fact checking. Ken had to rely only on spoken words; all the years of taking his wife to church helped him to understand the Christian faith and now Richard Johnson was helping him to understand the Islam faith. It didn't make sense that both faiths shared similar stories about Jesus and his mother Mary but that they had been enemies for almost 1400 years. Ken didn't much care; he was just happy that Richard agreed to come to Thanksgiving dinner and promised not to talk religion.

Bull Elk knew the more factual history of Thanksgivings. About how Squanto taught the Pilgrims that were weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers and avoid poisonous plants. Squanto also helped the settlers forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a local tribe. That alliance would endure for more than 50 years and remains one of the sole examples of the story of the first Thanksgiving. Tragically, Squanto died at the age of 42 from smallpox's. Historians often refer to European epidemics like smallpox, as Indian Fever so to shift ownership and blame.

Blaming all the Native American's problems on the Whiteman wasn't in Officer Bull Elk's DNA. It was the Tribal Elders that voted to legalize gambling against Bull's warning of all the added problems a casino would bring. Already, crack cocaine addicts overloaded the Warm Springs alcohol and drug rehab center. Bull had to use his influence to get his niece a bed in the overburden halfway house and also got her the flagger job up at the helicopter logging operation. Aiana hadn't checked in for five nights and had not been reported missing from the halfway house.

Tim never celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter. He was raised atheists; his parents drilled into him and his brother that the Baylor's were their own god onto themselves. Cunningness, intellect, athleticism and good looks were all genetic traits to be used so to rise above the everyday man. Tim had all those traits plus an abundance of pride. He considered himself the most elite white male that could out play a short, older and disgusting dark half-breed like Mr. Hung Meng. What Tim was never taught, was a fear of a God—that thought didn't fit into the atheists' belief system. So, having no fear of an evil entity that exists forever was never contemplated neither. Tim would do battle with Hung Men, when the time was right...

Officer Bull Elk took the 911 call about someone shooting Bald Eagles up at the

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logging site. He told the caller that he'd be there in less than an hour. He checked out a truck from the motor pool and snapped a shotgun into the floor mounted gun holder.

Tim fine tuned his shrewd and evil plan as he waited. Purchasing the 22 caliber rifle at an outdoor store in Madras didn't require a three day wait like a handgun would have. The store also had the RV sewer flex hose that he needed. The thought of killing another Indian had a more powerful feeling than the big game hunts the Baylor's went on in Africa. Tim had everything worked out. The plan had to be flawless because a dead police officer would warrant an investigation—a dead Indian wouldn't.

Tim waved his arms over his head when the white police truck rounded the last corner and busted out through a cloud of red cinder dust. The smell of the overheated engine flowed out from under the hood. Officer Bull put a firm grip on the shotgun in the holder mounted between the floor the dash.

Tim jogged up to the passenger door. "The dead eagle is up the hill behind that log deck past a huge helicopter."

"What color is its crown?" Bull asked.

"I think brown or gray." Tim answered quickly.

"I didn't think a Bald Eagle would be way up here. There's no fish for them to hunt." Bull Elk took note of the long and steep trail up to the helicopter landing area.

"I'm not really sure what kind of eagle it is. But aren't all eagles protected?" Tim asked.

"Not on a reservation. The **Eagle Feather Law** allows my people to use eagle feathers for spiritual and cultural practices. Now, if a Whiteman kills an eagle we can fine him up to twenty five thousand dollars." Officer Bull pulled the shotgun out of the holder. "You don't mind if I look in your car for a long gun do you?"

"No go right ahead." Tim had hid the 22 rifle up inside the belly of the Chinook helicopter, inside a chest full of smoke jumpers parachute harnesses.

Bull looked through the windows of the rental car, and then asked. "Could you open the trunk?"

"Sure not a problem." Tim opened the trunk and stepped back.

“What’s the RV sewer hose and broom for?”

“I’m staying over at Camp Sherman in a RV,” Tim replied immediately and then opened the lid on a red cooler. “I have water and other drinks if you’re thirsty.”

“No thanks.” Office Bull replied. “Show me were that dead eagle is.”

Tim’s fine tuned plan was right on track. By time they made it up past the helicopter landing area to the base of an old dead snag Bull was gasping for air. “There’s the dead bird.”

Bull used his walking stick to turn the eagle over. “Looks like a twenty-two was used. Probably shot the eagle when she was in her nest.”

“Don’t know? But that is a big bird!” Tim replied with another lie.

“The females can weigh up to fifteen pounds,” Bull answered. “Could you carry that Golden Eagle back down to my truck?”

“Not a problem.” Tim said. “What are you going to do with it?”

“My sister is a medicine woman; she will make sure that the spirit and feathers of this great bird don’t go to waste.”

Tim grabbed the eagle by its neck. “You really look pale. And you’re sweating like a storm. I have drinks in the car.”

“Good, I’m going to need a sugar bump after all of this hiking.” Bull replied; now feeling lightheaded. “You wouldn’t happen to have fresh orange juice or a non diet soda in your cooler would you?”

“I have Pepsi, Gatorade or beer.” Tim replied.

“I’ll take the soda! I need sugar... I forgot my diabetes kit on my horse,” Bull rambled just before he steadied himself with the walking stick. *I feel Grandfather Eagle Eye watching... I can see Aiana on her pony up on Mt. Jefferson ... Way up north I see an elk shed on top of Mt. Hood like a crown... All this must mean something but, but ... By the time Bull Elk staggered back to the white police pickup he was in full diabetes sugar shock!*

“Here you go big guy” Tim handed Officer Bull Elk a Pepsi through the passenger door and watched Bull gulp down half of the brown soda from the sixteen ounce bottle.

While the sugar was balancing Bull's blood glucose the Rohypnol took over his muscles. Bull hadn't felt this relaxed since sitting in the warm Jacuzzi after his last high school football game. He dreamt all the way back to when the White Buffalo's played in the state championship game. Billy Saxton made the only touchdown that day, which kept the game from being a shutout. Losing by thirty points didn't matter—he'd played his hardest and offered the sixty minute life-lesson to the spirit in the sky.

The only thing Tim had in common with Bull Elk is that they had both played in a championship game. Bull always gave credit to Billy Saxton for making the one and only White Buffalo touchdown. Tim never ever gave credit to Kevin Trask for passing him the ball for the final winning slam-dunk. Pride that you played your hardest on a team is good pride. You might lose the game but didn't surrender your soul. A well fought battle is an inner conquest...

Tim boosted silently for thirty minutes about how smart and powerful he was. Finally, it was done! He pulled the flexible sewer hose from the passenger side window and then off the exhaust pipe. Diabetes shock is what the coroner would list as the cause of death. The double dose of Rohypnol and the carbon monoxide would never be tested for. Tim used the broom to cover up all his footprints in the dirt around the police truck. He wiped down the passenger door for fingerprints, raised the window and pried the plastic Pepsi bottle from Bulls grayish fingers. The truck would probably run a few hours before it ran out of gas. By that time Tim would be back in his motel room watching a Turkey Bowl football game.

Ken and Richard were sort of watching a football game. Ken was snoring in his wore out recliner and Richard was sprawled out on the couch; going in and out of consciousness. Amazingly the apple pie plate didn't slip off of Kenneth's chest from the loud snoring. Richard would let out an occasional moan or yip depending on who had the ball when he'd open his eyes. Mary was cleaning up in the kitchen and helping Lilly with what shirt she should wear under her fishing vest. The real decision was rather a bandana around her neck made her look taller. Mary's expertise suggested flannel shirt, red bandana and Khaki shorts. Mary was doing her part and put extra Turkey and a big piece of apple pie in the cooler for Lilly's steelhead client in the morning. But then, Kevin felt more like family than a customer paying for guide services.

The number of souls on the last plane on Thanksgiving into the Portland International Airport was less than fifty. The traffic had thinned out and Kevin made it to the Zigzag motel just before midnight. It was too late to call over to the Saxton's. Kevin wanted to double check with Lilly; that she still wanted to guide as opposed to her and her mother heading out on a black Friday shopping expedition. The last six

months of logging contracts finally gave the Saxton's some extra money to spend. But Mary didn't care if they had a million dollars to spend; it was more important that Lilly teach Kevin about the outdoors—maybe more.

Early in the morning Kevin was out of the shower and waiting. Lilly pulled into the parking lot and flashed the headlights on the 4WD; an aluminum drift boat was hitched behind the orange truck. Kevin pulled the motel door shut and jumped into the truck. "Think we'll catch fish today?" he asked.

"Don't know." Lilly answered with a smile full of braces.

"How's your mouth been feeling?" Kevin asked returning the smile. "You smell good," Kevin added.

"Oh, my mom put perfume or something on my bandana. I need to be careful not to transfer any of that perfume to the bait."

"Steelhead can smell? Kevin asked.

"Yes, they olfact with their nares." Lilly replied.

"They do what?"

"They can detect odors with the small holes above their mouth." Lilly turned on the right blinker. "The summer run in the Sandy and Clackamas is almost over. We're going to go fish the Deschutes. Are you good for camping overnight in a tent, if the fish are biting?"

"Yeah, that sounds good." Kevin replied. "I'm really looking forward to catching a steelhead and ... Kevin stopped midsentence. "There's a police car in front of your shop."

Lilly couldn't talk. Mary had been up early filling the ice chest with food but Richard had slept in his recliner all night because of his acid reflux. She hadn't gone into the front room, so not to wake her dad before she left. *I hope it's not my Dad...* Lilly yanked the steering wheel to the left, bolted into the parking lot and ran up the three stairs. The bells on the back of the doors alarmed the sheriff deputy that was in the kitchen talking with Mary and Kenneth.

Kevin waited outside on the porch petting Tucker and politely waiting. The bells on the back of the door rang out again. "Kevin, the deputy wants to talk to you!" Ken said. Kevin followed Ken around the showcase down the hallway into the kitchen.

“Mr. Trask there was a terrible accident up on the helicopter logging site. Being you are the silent partner and major financier of Bull Elk Logging the elders on the Rez want to talk with you.”

“No problem.” Kevin replied. “What happened?”

“Well yesterday Officer Bull responded to a call about someone poaching Eagles up at the loading site and he slipped into a diabetic coma.”

“Is he okay?” Kevin immediately asked.

“No he died before we got up there last night...”

The small, well used kitchen was filled with heavy emotion, tears and unknown fears. Mary made a pot of coffee and everyone sat at the table. They talked about how Bull had been one of Billy’s best friends and now they were back together playing on the big field in the sky. There was uncertainty on what was going to happen to Bull Elk Logging Inc. Lilly felt the loss of such a good friend while a strong feeling of resentment was raging deep down. To find out that Trask money was behind all of the Saxton’s logging contracts from the beginning hurt. Another case of the poor being indebted to the rich and powerful. Both Kevin and Patty had been deceptive and worked behind her back to float the million dollar bond; no tribal money was used. The Saxton’s were connected to the Trask’s by obligation and debt—this new information hurt Lilly’s pride.

Instinct along with the Trask DNA gene told Kevin that business comes before pleasure. “I’m going to head over the mountain to the Warm Spring Tribal office and talk with the Elders.”

“Maybe you two can go fishing tomorrow morning?” Mary said, with as uplifting of a tone that she could get out. “That’s what Bull Elk would want.”

“Maybe,” Lilly quipped. “But, Bull didn’t like the rich and powerful people that built the casino and brought all the other crap onto the Reservation. I’m not sure why he brought Californian money to the Rez, just for logging.”

There was a long awkward silence. “I’m going to head over and let Richard know all what happened. Let him know there ain’t a Bull Elk Logging anymore. We probably won’t be working come Monday.” Ken stood up from the table and Kevin followed him out into the parking lot. “You need a ride back down to your motel?”

“No I’ll jog! It will give me some time to clear my head.” Kevin yelled back over his shoulder. He was already out of the parking lot and headed west down Highway 26.

It took the better part of the day for the Tribal Chairman, Tribal Council Representative, Warm Springs and Wasco Chief's to come to a tentative agreement. Out of respect for Bull Elk; AKA Mike Jones, Kevin agreed to their last demand on just a handshake.

Fortunately, the new cell phone worked from the Tribal government offices parking lot. Patty said that she would work over the weekend to make sure that first thing Monday morning insurance and other paper work would be rolling. Next, Kevin called Condi at home on the work cell phone. He filled her in about the mishap at the logging site and that her dad was okay. Mostly Kevin wanted to know when the next meeting with Hung Meng was scheduled. His long term plan wasn't to sale off Trask Trailers only to become CEO of Bull Elk Logging. Condi totally understood Kevin's desire not to get stuck behind a desk like Robert Trask had been for the last thirty years. At the end of their conversation Kevin slipped in how Richard had spent Thanksgiving Day with the Saxton's. Condi's response to that information about her dad was cold as ice.

The front door to the guide shop was locked. Tucker heard the bells on the door knob and ran down the hall; he pawed and licked at the glass. Kenneth came around the display case, pushed Tucker to the side and opened the door. "How'd it all go with the old timers on the Rez?" Ken asked.

"Okay," Kevin replied sadly. "The Elders were fair but want more than I want to give. Bull did a lot for his people. I can't take his place."

"Bull was a great person. And what Lilly said about Bull not liking rich powerful people I don't know nothing about that. Mike was just a straight up guy to me.

"Mike Jones," Kevin said under his breath and now thinking about how Lilly went off earlier that day. "I had to sign off some documents today. I noticed Bull's legal name was Mike Jones."

"I do most my deals on a handshake, no document signing. I'm not good at reading or writing." Ken said.

"I didn't know Bull was an assistant football coach." Kevin said.

"Yep, for the White Buffalo's. He drives those Indian boys to practice most every day. They're in the state playoffs this year. Not a chance in hell they beat that Portland team. The playoff is next weekend."

"Yeah, I just found that information out." Kevin replied. "Where's Lilly? I need to put

off any fishing for awhile.”

“She’s spending the night up at the cabin. The passing of Bull brought back memories about Billy and other stuff. It’s been a sad day for all of us...”

“I can’t imagine how hard losing a son and a brother was on your family.”

“Yep, it has been a couple of years now.” Ken replied. “Being busy out in the woods has helped.”

“Well you’re still going to be busy. When the snow shuts down the logging operation up on Mt. Jefferson the Elders want fifty cord of firewood for the Casino.”

“Damn! We’ll have to cut Juniper trees out on the desert if it snows big time.”

“Anyway, it’s part of the deal. Both Chiefs made me shake and sign a contract. I’m hoping you won’t let me down.”

“No, I’ll put a crew together.” Ken answered. “I need to head back over and let Rich know we got work for winter.” Ken grabbed a jacket off a hook in the hall.

Kevin was getting back into the rental car when he heard the bells on the back of the door. “You think I can make it in on the dirt road to the A-frame with this car?”

“Maybe.” Ken snapped back. “But if you get stuck this time of year you could freeze to death. There’s already been a dusting of snow up at the cabin. Not smart to be driving that road when it gets dark.”

“It’s not dark yet.” Kevin replied and then dropped down behind the steering wheel. No sooner did Kevin get the car started and Kenneth was tapping on the driver’s window. Kevin lowered the window.

“I’ll drive you up to the cabin...” It was getting dark when they crossed the creek and pulled out into the clearing. Lilly was all bundled up setting on the deck watching the sunset. Three empty beer cans were on the table made from a cable spool. She gave them both a look that she wanted to be left alone. The look that dad’s who had lived through the teenage years with hormonal girls knew. “Hop out! Lilly can bring you home in the morning!” Kenneth didn’t even shut the truck off and immediately headed back down the mountain.

Lilly slammed her beer down on the make-shift table. She met Kevin at the top of the stairs and started to pound her fist into Kevin’s chest. “We Saxton’s don’t need all your Trask money! We can do just fine by ourselves!”

“What!” Kevin grabbed both of Lilly’s wrists so to stop the chest beating.

“All you rich and powerful people show up and flash your money around thinking were all a bunch of uneducated, low life, white trash.”

“I’ve never said that!” Kevin pushed Lilly back.

“What about the million dollars you secretly gave to the Bull Elk Logging operation.

We don't need a Californian handout out up here in Oregon.”

It took four more beers, three turkey sandwiches, stuffing and an entire bottle of wine before Lilly quit glaring at Kevin across the table. She halfway listened to how Kevin's Grandfather worked every day of the year only taking Christmas and Easter off until a trailer fell off a rack and crushed his chest. His father Robert was a workaholic; his mother a pro tennis player and her recent health scare was a life changer for the Trask family. Kevin swayed Lilly that he wasn't going to follow in the Trask's footsteps and that on Monday; Patty would be in Warm Springs working to dissolve the partnership of Bull Elk Logging.

The picnic basket and cooler Mary had packed for their failed fishing trip turned out to be a blessing in disguise—at least the food was. Both of their heads were spinning and there was still more beer and another bottle of wine in the cooler. Lilly's resentment toward the rich and famous was deep down in her gut—Kevin's words fell on deaf ears.

Darkness had pushed out the light and a brisk coolness settled in. Kevin looked over at the wood-fired cedar tub. “Why don't we heat up the old soak tub? I'd just like to get in there with you... Relax and think about Bull and what I got myself into today.”

“I got my period. So I can't get in.” Lilly said and then popped opened another beer. “But I can fire it up for the rich city boy if he needs to get all hot and heated up...”

Kevin was having a hard time opening the last bottle of wine. “They don't make cork screws like they used to. I'm usually great at unscrewing a cork.”

Lilly faked a laugh. “What about screwing? Are you good at that? The questions were meant to hurt and faze Kevin. Lilly wasn't sure why she always had to dig at Kevin. “A... I didn't mean that... Like, I meant are you good at putting the cork back in?”

“Now, Kevin faked a laugh; the resentment did hurt. “So it's that time of the month when you can't go swimming, ride a bike or have fun?”

Lilly laughed. “No, I could go swimming and even ride a bike... But soaking in hot water wouldn't be smart. I could get a yeast infection.”

“Oh...” It was taking a long time for Kevin to put things together. “Heat and yeast... Sounds like you could make bread.”

“Don't be a stupid drunk.” Lilly quipped. “Now you're sounding like my younger brother. Billy would say stupid stuff like that all the time!”

“Well if you were my Big Sis... I'd be pranking and pulling your chain all the time. You'd be the best big sister and ...”

Lilly's face turned somber; she missed Billy so much. Plus she never ever liked being called Big Sis. Even Bull Elk had thought of her that way. “I'll get the wood heater fired up so you can soak the night away.”

“Nah,” Kevin tried to stand up but fell back into the chair. “I think I need some food. Is it okay that I have that last bit of your mom’s turkey stuffing?”

“You want to eat it cold?”

“Yeah... Why not?” Kevin’s head veered to the side and he hiccupped.

Lilly had paced her drinking better than Kevin had; probably the big sister thing to do. “There’s apple and pumpkin pie in the picnic basket.”

“Soon as I can stand up, I’m going to check out that basket Mom packed... I mean the basket your Mom packed... Linda doesn’t cook. Marie is our cook she’s almost as good as your mom... She bakes pies too...” Kevin tried to stand again and fell back into the chair.

Lilly picked up the picnic basket and put it in front of Kevin. “Marie your cook, didn’t she teach you how to skinny-dip.”

“Not funny, Big Sis.” Kevin said and hiccupped.

“Eat whatever you want! I’ll get the bedding and sleeping stuff ready.”

“Are you going to bed? Already...” Kevin asked and then yawned.

“You said you wanted to sleep out here under the stars.”

“Oh yeah... Just like I did the night at Shasta Lake...” Kevin hiccupped again. “I saw a magical shooting star that night with Patty.”

“I thought Tina is your girlfriend?”

“Oh she was. Or I mean is. And a... Oh never mind,” Kevin stuttered out the words. “It’s a long story. Tina needs twenty thousand dollars. That’s if we ever get hooked up or get married.” Kevin was full on intoxicated. “She’s hot and...”

Lilly disappeared into the cabin for about ten minutes. When she came back out onto the deck Kevin’s head was hanging over the back of the chair. The stars are so beautiful... Like, there are so many of them. Like I haven’t seen a shooting star yet... And like, I got to pee!”

“Great,” Lilly replied and then helped Kevin over to the edge of the deck so he could get rid of some wine and beer. “You better aim over the top of the railing, so the pee doesn’t splash back on us.”

“Thanks Big Sis,” Kevin said and canted forward. He almost went head first over the railing and could have broken his neck if it weren’t for Lilly.

The sun was just peeking from behind and over the top of the A-frame cabin. Kevin felt an instant chill all the way from his heels up to his butt and over his back. He rolled over; the zipper was down on the other side of the sleeping bag. Kevin pushed the pillow to the side and looked back through one of the French Panes. Lilly’s long legs were headed for the door. She came out onto the deck with a two steaming hot

cups of coffee. “How’s your head this morning?”

“Not that bad.” Kevin said. He was just about to crawl out of the sleeping bags but noticed he had absolutely nothing on. “What happened to my underwear?”

“There drying out...” Lilly pointed at Kevin’s boxers and her bandana hanging over the railing. “I told you to aim high! But you peed right at the railing and pee splashed all over. I used my bandana to clean you up...”

“Oh?” Kevin replied. Then he took his eyes off the railing and looked back at Lilly. Now it did felt like a wave was splashing around in his skull.

Lilly bent over and handed Kevin a cup of coffee. “I’m sorry about last night.”

“What?” Kevin jerked his head up and watched Lilly sit down at the table and cross her long slender legs.” More waves inside his head along with a brain recall strain.

“You know last night,” Lilly said while looking past the dead snag into the clearing. The vine maples were already dropping their fall colored red leaves. “Last night, remember? I told you it was my time of the month. That’s why I was mean to you at the shop yesterday morning. And why I was mad when my dad dropped you off last night.”

Kevin took a big drink of the hot coffee. “Yeah I remember in the morning when we were headed to go fishing you seemed upset or mad. I remember your rich and powerful, soapbox rant. There were a lot of emotions yesterday with Bull Elk passing and all...” Kevin took another long drink of coffee. “Most of last night is fuzzy.” Another drink of coffee. “I hope I didn’t say anything to hurt your feeling.”

“No not really,” Lilly replied softly and turned her eyes back on Kevin. “How about I refill your coffee and bring you a piece of my Mom’s homemade apple pie.”

Back inside the cabin Lilly cut a piece of pie and wiped a tear from her eye. Her feelings last night were hurt when Kevin kept calling her Big Sis.

Kevin was just pulling his sweater over his head when Lilly came back outside. They drank coffee, ate Mary’s apple pie and watched the sun fill in the shadows on Mt. Jefferson fifty some miles to the south. Kevin told Lilly that Bull Elk had given him a permit to climb Mt. Jefferson starting off on the reservation. Kevin planned to climb the mountain in honor of Bull Elk. Lilly knew telling Kevin how dangerous mountain climbing was would fall on deaf ears. Just like her little brother—Kevin wasn’t going to listen.

But, the first honor Kevin had to do in Bull Elk’s name was the promise he made the day before with the Warm Springs Tribal Council. It took both Patty and Condi’s efforts to get Gus on a plane. The suggestion that Gus could fly like a bird, in something more powerful than a locomotive and almost as fast as speeding a bullet worked. Condi also promised Gus that he would make it to church and if something happened she would teach his Sunday school class. Gus, Patty and CP all landed at

Portland, Sunday evening.

Monday Patty and Gus met up with Kevin in Warm Springs. The basic plan was to let the Saxton's buy out Kevin's interest in Bull Elk Logging. Maybe put up their logging equipment or even the A-frame for collateral. Kevin didn't care how the money was raised; he wanted to be done with Bull Elk logging before, even before Trask Trailers was sold off. Lilly was right; they were from different sides of the track and that fact couldn't be changed. Kevin wasn't a good fit in rural Oregon

CP was up on the southwest corner of the Reservation setting dangerous sling chokers on the C-47 helicopter. The cooler fall weather helped with lift and loading. Unlike the hot dirty air during Desert Storm; Shrimp wasn't worried about lifting oversized loads; as long as he didn't have to hover for more than ninety seconds. Ten tons of logs matched what the log trucks could haul. CP and Shrimp had been a team in battle and that experience was paying off. Ken and Richard could barely keep up with the additional two log trucks that they hired All the years of managing crews at Trask Trailers paid off for Richard Johnson. He set a bonus each day for the worker that nubbed the most trees. Native American men were as competitive as any other race. Kenneth could just look at a few logs and guess the weight. The heli-logging operation was running like a well oiled machine without everyone watching out for Kevin's reckless and careless work.

Richard pulled Kevin to the side after the second time he got knocked off a deck of logs with the sling choker. The mountain climbing invincible bug inside Kevin made him too dangerous to himself and others. Richard asked Kevin to stay off-site until they were back to cutting Juniper for firewood. Not only did Kevin come from the other side of the tracks he wasn't a fit just being a day laborer either. Kevin was more lost now than the week after he graduated. That early summer attempt on Mt. Hood could be a do-over if the snow held off. Maybe climb Mt. Jefferson—there had to be something Kevin was a good fit at. But he was still tied to a handshake that he made three days ago with the Native American Elders

Patty worked with the Warm Spring Tribal council so to get insurance and proper paper work filed and recorded. It seemed harsh with Bull Elk passing just four days before; but snow could start falling any day up on the east side of Mt. Jefferson. The Council was happy that seven tribe members were getting experience with helicopter logging plus having the additional logs brought to their mill was all good. She unwillingly respected Kevin's desire to cut all the ties to any logging in Oregon. A mutual agreement was reached as long as the name Bull Elk Logging was left in place.

There was only five days left before the State Championship Football playoffs. Kevin had only agreed to filling in Bull Elks assistant coach and driver position if he could bring along a friend that was good with charting player stats. The tribal elders didn't care as long as their players got home from after practice. Any hope of a win over a Portland team was far removed from any tribe member's mindset.

Being done with team sports and/or running any type of business was now Kevin's mindset. He was tired of always being treated like the rich-kid that couldn't do anything right. When Richard Johnson asked him to stay away until the helicopter logging contract was wrapped up Kevin was hurt. Sure he took chances but that is what made Kevin feel alive deep down in his gut. Kevin didn't have to worry about making a living, having a place to sleep or ever just putting food on a table. Lilly was right they were raised on different side of the track. Kevin was done with trying to convince Lilly that he wasn't a privileged upper class snob.

The challenge of mountain climbing could fill that hole deep in his gut. A Mount Everest assault was a tiny notion forming deep in the swallowing abyss. The average Mt. Everest expedition, including the virtual village of sherpas, porters, cooks, and guides along with permits could run over a million dollars. The climbing team in college always hinted that if Kevin wanted to put together a team that they would be for it. Hopefully, by next climbing season Kevin would have a surplus of cash on hand to fulfill a dream. Putting together a team; along with practice and training would probably take at least another year. Most recent college grads don't start a bucket list—to Kevin it was the do and die list his Grandfather always talked about...