

Chapter Twenty-four

God-speak can get to the best of people—it is a spontaneous spiritual reaction that causes people to do passionate things. Kevin was up all night hoping for another sign. Sorting out God's plan is where most people mess up, but Kevin had not felt so sure of the direction he needed to go since giving up the Gonzaga basketball scholarship. He was surprised to see Lilly and Patty down in the hotel breakfast bar so early—but it felt like a part of the spiritual route.

Kevin walked directly to the small square table. "Patty, I need to go up to Shasta Lake and check something out this morning."

"Okay, but what about the basketball game this afternoon in LA?"

"Oh yeah... I forgot about that." Kevin pulled out a chair and sat down. "If we left right now do you think we could make it up to Shasta Lake and then back to LA by four?" Kevin asked and then noticed CP coming into the hotel breakfast bar.

CP pulled the chair out across from Kevin, sat down and started fishing for information he already had. "I wonder what happened last night? The fire department and police were here past midnight."

"I don't know. I didn't see or hear anything when I came back from the Crocker Art Museum," Kevin said while he rubbed at his forehead.

Patty silently breathed a sigh of relief and said, "I didn't hear anything either. I stayed with Lilly last night. I think the lobster or something made her ill."

Kevin looked over at Lilly and said, "You don't look that good. I feel bad you came all the way down here only to get food poisoning."

Lilly barely could mumble out the word, "Thanks."

CP and Patty glanced at each other. They both knew that it was not the lobster; that Lilly was most likely given a date rape drug.

God's plan was working on Kevin. "CP can you drive Patty back to LA today? And then take my place in the basketball game later today?"

"Take your place! Hey bro you are filling in for me. Not the other way around," CP replied in a serious and warning tone.

"I can try to get a hold of the Trask private pilot and have him fly you back up here or to Oregon Monday morning." Kevin was rambling off the top of his head.

CP and Patty glanced at each other. They had no alone time last night and maybe if somehow something could work out? "What about Lilly?" Patty asked.

"She could ride down and then fly back with CP." Kevin suggested. "Your truck holds

three, doesn't it?" Kevin asked and then quickly said. "The company plane holds six."

"I could take a bus from here, back to Oregon. Don't worry about me." Lilly responded, while holding up her throbbing head.

"Or, I could drive Lilly home after I stop at Shasta Lake," Kevin offered; throwing stuff out trying to make the plan work. The spiritual pull to get up to Shasta Lake was intensifying by the minute.

"That should work!" Patty jumped at Kevin's offer. "I'll take care of everything." Patty was happy and excited that she would have some private time with CP. Last night hadn't worked out quite like they both had hoped.

"I'll go get my bag and stuff." Lilly was not mentally in a place to put up an argument; she had to steady herself when she stood up.

Kevin waited until Lilly was out of the breakfast nook area. "Do you think it was the lobster or that she drank too much last night?"

"Must have been something she ate! I watched over her the entire night," CP replied in defense to Kevin's doubting question.

Kevin stood up. "Call my mobile phone if there are any questions or problems."

It took less than five minutes for Lilly to get her overnight bag and formal dress. Kevin was anxiously waiting under the hotel awning. The passenger seat was still in the reclined position. "Do you want the seat up? Kevin asked.

"No," Lilly replied and then balled up the red dress and used it for a make shift pillow. Kevin reached over and switched the passenger heated seat switch to on. Lilly was out before they even got onto interstate five.

A cool fall fog filled in about fifty miles north of Sacramento. Kevin stopped at roadside rest stop and put up the top. Lilly moaned, re-balled the red dress into a makeshift pillow and then rolled onto her other side. With the top up and no cold breeze she fell into an even deeper sleep. Kevin expected the God speak conversation to be less one sided, but the spiritual pull made up for not actually hearing God.

They made the Bridge Bay marina before 11:00am. Kevin headed directly down the ramp onto the dock and to boat rental shack; it was closed. Something wasn't right. The plan was already off to a bad start. Kevin looked around and then remembered the waitress in the resort restaurant.

The sign on the door of the Big Dipper Grill stated: **Fall Hours: Noon — 5:00**. Kevin jogged across the lot and back to the car. Lilly had returned the passenger seat to the upright position had been watching Kevin. "Is everything okay?" Lilly asked as Kevin got back into the car.

"Yeah, we're about an hour early before anything opens," Kevin answered. "Do you

mind if we take a short drive up to a nearby campground."

"Sure, no problem." Lilly reclined the seat only a few notches and closed her eyes. The Rohypnol was not entirely out of her system. On the drive up to Trinity Loop campground Kevin described in detail how the brakes went out and how Danny pulled up on the hand brake. The campground was open and there were about half a dozen fall hunters filling campsites. When the SL 600 meandered up the backside of Trinity Loop Lilly got a full view of Mt. Shasta and immediately thought about Billy dying on Mt. Hood. Mt. Shasta was in Northern California and Mt. Hood in Northern Oregon. Mt. Shasta was taller than Mt. Hood but Lilly was sure that more people had died on Mt. Hood. It really didn't matter Billy had been gone for over three years—mountaineering statistics wouldn't bring her baby brother back.

Kevin drove the loop twice and could feel that a miracle was ready to unfold. Probably at noon! Everything that had happened back at the beginning of summer felt like a distant bad dream—like it never did happen? Kevin pulled back in the parking lot, parked and jogged down the dock plank. He pulled open the sliding glass door. Out of no place a young teenage boy rose up from behind the counter. It looked like Danny! Slightly older and with shoulder length hair. "Can I help you?" the young man asked.

Kevin took a double take! A knot formed in his stomach! The voice was similar to the one on the answering machine but it wasn't the same. "A... I'm here because of the message on your answering machine."

"I'm sorry that we haven't changed the message to our off season hours yet. I hope that you didn't come by earlier?"

"The knot in Kevin's stomach turned to disappointment; he already knew the answer to the next question, but asked anyway." "The voice on the answering machine is that you?"

"No, that was my younger brother, Danny... That's kind of the reason we haven't recorded another message yet."

"I understand," Kevin said. "I was the guy that took your brother for a ride earlier this summer."

"You're Kevin Trask!" Danny told me that you let him drive that SL600 concept car. That is all he could talk about the next day. He told me how you guys drove Trinity Lake Loop three or four times. How you did some sideways slides up on the curves up there and then smoked the tires doing a controlled rear brake stop at the bottom of the straight away. I was so jealous."

"Well, I was scared to death." Kevin immediately replied. "Thank God your brother was there to pull the brake and push the steering wheel in the opposite direction. We both would have died." Kevin wished he would have chosen better words.

"We spread Danny's ashes over the entire Trinity Loop Road. That's where we rode

our bikes and camped all the time."

Kevin felt down and up at the same moment. The sign he was expecting was somehow that Danny didn't die but then at the same time to hear that Danny's ashes were up where he had just been thirty minutes ago—maybe that was the sign. "I think about your brother all the time," Kevin said careful not to say the wrong thing.

"You know they found different fingerprints on the fiberglass can. They don't think Danny was sniffing the fumes. They think..." Conrad immediately quit speaking. The detectives had told him never to mention to anybody that the medical examiner's report has been changed from suicide to undetermined.

"Are you telling me that Danny wasn't sniffing fiberglass fumes and that they think it was something different?"

"Mr. Trask, I told you more than I should." Conrad said in a shaky voice; knowing that he should have never mentioned a word.

The sliding door opened behind Kevin and Hank walked into the office with a toolbox in hand. "Conrad when you get finished with this customer I need your help in the shop."

"No problem Dad," Conrad said.

Kevin slowly turned around.

Shock came over Hank. "Oh, it's you Mr. Trask. I've been meaning to send back the balance from the Stargazer railing repair but we've been running a little short during the off season."

"What?" Now Kevin was the one with puzzlement on his face now.

"You know? Trask Inc. sent a check for five thousand dollars. The repair was only around two thousand." Hank said and then moved to behind the counter. He pulled out an invoice with a brown money envelope stapled to it. "Here's about half of the balance. I still owe you about fifteen hundred dollars."

Kevin took the envelope from Hank and said, "Okay thanks." He left the rental shack and it felt as though he was being pushed up the dock ramp; that this was not the place. Danny was at peace--something else lie ahead.

"Is everything okay?" Lilly asked out the passenger window as Kevin approached.

"Yeah..." Kevin replied. "Do you want to get lunch? They got pretty good food in the restaurant over there."

"Sure," Lilly replied and slowly stepped out of the car.

Edna motioned Kevin and Lilly to take a booth and followed them with a pot of coffee. She had recognized the SL600 out in the parking lot. "Hey college boy are you back to finally give me that ride in that fancy Mercedes?"

Kevin tossed the invoice and cash envelope onto the table and slid across the bench seat. "I forgot I did promise you a ride."

Lilly slid in across from Kevin and turned a coffee cup over. "Is that decaf?"

"No it's the real stuff," Edna answered.

"Good," Lilly replied.

"I'll have fresh squeezed orange juice," Kevin said as he picked up the menu.

"How about juice from a can?" Edna said and walked back toward the counter.

"They've got a good BLT here" Kevin said glancing down through the menu.

"No, I'm hungrier than that," Lilly replied as she started looking over the menu. "If they have lobster, I'm definitely not having that."

Kevin put down the menu and picked up the repair invoice. Five thousand dollars was the first line item; it looked like the railing repair came to less than two thousand dollars. Inside the cash envelope was over thirteen hundred dollars.

Edna returned with a water picture and filled Kevin's glass. "I watched you go down to the boathouse. Did you meet Conrad?"

"Yeah, he looks and sounds a little like Danny." Kevin answered.

"Yeah he's a good kid. He has really stepped up since Danny..." Edna couldn't finish her sentence about Danny.

"I heard they found different fingerprints on a can of fiberglass or something?" Kevin was hinting at a better answer than what Conrad had given.

"I don't know. I do know that Deputy Ty Prichard came in couple times and asked if Conrad was a glue sniffer. But Danny never ever would do drugs or..." Edna couldn't finish the sentence again.

"When was the last time the deputy was here?" Kevin asked.

"Oh it's been at least a month." Edna answered then looked at Lilly. "Do you know what you would like young lady?"

"Can I still order breakfast?" Lilly asked.

"No problem," Edna replied and put her pencil to the order tablet.

"I would like the ham and cheese omelet with hash browns and could I have pancakes instead of toast."

"No problem," Edna replied and looked at Kevin.

"I'll have a BLT," Kevin said and now looking back over the repair invoice.

"Okay." Edna headed toward the order-up window and snapped the order onto the chrome hanging carousel and twisted it one-eighty so the cook could read the order.

"Is that all you're having, a BLT?" Lilly asked.

"Yeah there's a place up in Myrtle Creek Oregon that serves the best meatloaf. If I get hungry again maybe we can stop there." Kevin folded up the invoice and slipped it next to the cash in the brown envelope.

Edna came back with orange juice and refilled Lilly's coffee. The gossip started about how Conrad was now going to community college and was hoping to get into an apprentice program. Kevin asked again the name of the deputy that had been snooping around and asking about Danny and glue sniffing. Edna was good with gossip; she avoided any words that would even hint that it was a possible suicide.

When Edna brought their food she mentioned how Hank still had Danny's message on the boat rental phone line and that she would call that number during off hours just to hear Danny's voice. Kevin asked for a pencil and piece of paper and wrote down the name **Ty Prichard** on the small paper. He then took the brown envelope and wrote **Paid in Full** on the outside.

As the restaurant started to get busy; Kevin felt a new sign and different mission in sight. He waited for Lilly to finish her pancakes and then pulled two twenty's from his pocket and placed them on the table. Kevin caught Edna between customers and forced the brown envelope into her hand. "Would you make sure Conrad gets this? I hope it helps him with community college or an apprentice program."

Kevin and Lilly didn't even make it to the exit when Edna yelled above the din of the restaurant. "God bless you!"

Kevin just made it down the stairs when Lilly reached over grabbed his hand and squeezed it. "That was a nice thing to do."

"No big deal," Kevin replied and then asked, "You don't mind if we stop at the sheriff's office in Redding do you?"

"No, you're the driver." Lilly stopped and pulled Kevin to a stop and give him a quick peck on the cheek. "For a rich college boy you're a soft touch."

"I'm not in college anymore." Kevin replied and then started pulling Lilly at a fast past toward the SL600.

When they pulled in front of the Redding Sheriff Office Lilly asked, "Is it okay to use your car phone and let my Mom know what's going on."

"Yeah you can try to call, but when I was here this summer I couldn't get a signal." Kevin hurried into the building.

Lilly got through to Peggy to let her know she was getting a ride home with Kevin Trask and that it would be late. After about thirty minutes she went into the building. Kevin was getting fingerprinted!

Lilly stayed her distance and watched Kevin use handi-wipes to clean the ink off of

his fingers and palm. Kevin came over. "They want to compare my finger and hand print to the one's they pulled off the fiberglass can." Kevin said quietly.

Something just didn't feel right. Lilly whispered to Kevin. "Shouldn't you have a lawyer present before you volunteer fingerprints?" What is going to keep that deputy over there from swamping finger prints with the ones they already have."

Kevin panicked! He rushed back to the counter. "On second thought I don't want you to have my hand and fingerprints."

"Too late I have already scanned them into the computer data base." Deputy Ty Prichard said and then flashed a sinister smile. Kevin remembered dealing with him and Sheriff Matt Wilson on the lake; the day that he and Patty got hauled off and Patty ended up behind bars in just her bikini.

Kevin grabbed Patty's hand and pulled her out of the station. Her intuition was in high gear. "Can I use the phone again?"

"Sure..." Kevin plopped down behind the steering wheel, dumbfounded about what he had just done without a lawyer present.

"Hey Bull, could you do me a favor?" Lilly spoke into the handset.

"Whatever you need Lilly," Bull answered.

"Could you check the Redding Police Department's records to see if they just entered anything into an evidence file?"

"Sure I can do that. Do you have an address, phone number or the evidence file number? Something that I can get me pointed in the right direction."

Lilly looked through the windshield and read the address off the Redding Police dept building. Bull said that he would look into it. Kevin didn't say anything. Fourteen hours ago the message of Danny's recorded voice played over the mobile phone. Now that sign from God seemed most likely a mere coincidence. Kevin expected a miracle—but got a reality check about evil and deception.

They were almost to the Oregon border when the mobile phone rang. Lilly took the handset from the black canvas bag. Bull informed her that there had been images scanned into the Danny Erickson's evidence file at 2:52 pm that day. Bull planned to do some additional investigating and said that he would have to wait until Monday, when more staff would be on duty in Redding.

Jumping the gun and expecting immediate observable results was God-speak 101 gone wrong. *It felt like God was speaking directly to me... Now I'm not sure, if He even knows that I exist. At least Officer Bull has on record when my prints were scanned.*

Kevin discerned back over the incident with himself and Tina in the passenger seat. Finally, he opened up to Lilly all about the houseboat party and how Tim made the

move on Tina and how hurt he was. He shared that Patty was the only one that had his back and how they prayed for Danny while sleeping on the top deck of the Stargazer. He shared the Trask Inc. buy out and the pending lawsuit with Ann Marie against the Trask insurance company. Kevin even backtracked ten years to when Grandpa Trask made him cut the lawn at a home for unwed mothers; Kevin didn't go far into the skinny dipping part but did say how everyone made fun of him about that day in the pool--especially the hired help.

After about three hours of solid listening Lilly wanted to yell at the top of her lungs to Buck up and just deal with life. How could some rich kid that had everything be whining to her... Her dad had been out of work for over a year, her mother had not been taking medication for her hip. For herself, living with crooked teeth was what poor people did. Kevin probably had braces in middle school because all the other rich kids had them, just for status. The Saxton's, the Johnson's even the Erickson's were everyday working stiffs—living one paycheck to the next. No matter how hard Lilly tried; she resented Kevin! He was the privileged, affluent, upper class that the middle class worked for—the have and have not's are just part of life.

A road sign ahead wasn't a sign from God, but maybe it could be a reprieve for Lilly. "Isn't Myrtle Creek the place you wanted to get a meatloaf sandwich?" Lilly asked.

"Yeah, it is." Kevin replied and merged over to the right lane.

"I should give my Mom a call and let her know that it will be dark before we make it back to Zigzag."

"You can call her on the mobile phone? Your number is in the call log?" Kevin no sooner got the words out when the message from God popped backed into his head. *The Bridge Bay Boat Rental number isn't in the call log. I never called them from my car phone. But, maybe Danny did when we almost crashed. How could Tina's knee redial a number that wasn't in the phone log? Maybe Danny used the phone... If he did, he would have called his parents home number not the rental line. That message with Danny's voice wasn't an accident...*

Tina broke into Kevin's reflection. "Your phone won't work. I don't think there is a signal around here."

"Yeah, those mobile phones only work around big cities." Kevin responded and then dived back into his brain quest. *My phone didn't work in the Bridge Bay Resort parking lot and there is no way it would have worked way up by the Trinity Loop campgrounds... Danny never did try to use the mobile phone.*

Tina broke into Kevin's brain quest for a second time. "I'll call mom from this place with the famous meatloaf."

"Yeah, okay." Kevin casually replied and went back to thinking. *I wonder if the mobile phone company has a record of my phone calls? They probably keep records! I know that it was more than an accident when Tina's knee jammed down*

on the keypad and dialed Danny...

"The place looks closed," Lilly said when they pulled into the parking lot.

"The bar in the back should be open," Kevin replied. "I'll be right in. I want to check something first."

"Okay, I'll go see if they have a payphone so to call my mom." Lilly got out of the car went into the dark restaurant and spotted the door to the bar. There was a payphone in the short hallway along with a foul smell reeking from a room that had **Buck's** on the door. The door directly across the hall had a sign that displayed **Doe's**. The long distance phone call was short and sweet. Peggy sought all the details about the formal dinner and dance but Lilly didn't have change to keep feeding the payphone.

By the time Kevin exited through the foul smelling hallway Lilly had already struck up a conversation with another female logging peer. "You didn't tell me that your rich college friend and driver was Mr. Cute boy from the Trask family. Linda immediately came out from behind the bar and went over to Kevin. She hugged him for the longest time and then rose up on her toes to kiss him directly on the lips.

The kiss temporary pulled Kevin back to earth. Is it just you and your Dad? Is it too late to get a meatloaf sandwich?"

"Hell no it not too late!" Yelled big Ed as he busted through the swinging doors between the kitchen and bar. Big Ed gave Kevin a bear hug that could pop ribs. "Hey what you did for Nick Icorn fixing up his old motor home and sending the comic books to the Philippines and all was a huge impact for so many people.

"Yeah, my personal assistant told me the super-hero books made it all the way to the Philippines. I'm glad that they're back in the families hands.

Nick told all of us the story about Gus your engineer and the footlocker and the spec they finalized in the red engineering book."

Kevin's mind was back looking for another sign from God. The red engineering book must have something it it... "Yeah Nick and Gus hit it off pretty good."

"You know Gus signed his motel over to the two dick-heads?"

"No, I didn't know that." Kevin replied as he tried to remember where the red binder was.

"Yeah, Randy and Joe have been fixing the place up." Big Ed replied. "Hey come on into the kitchen and I'll fill you in."

Kevin followed Big Ed into the kitchen and they did some hard shots; toasting Nick Randy and Joe with their future endeavors. Lilly got filled in about Kevin wandering into the bar at the beginning of summer and found out the prayer that she wrote for Kevin was on the back of Lilly's fishing guide service brochure. The four of them stayed an hour past closing—this was Kevin's night for needing help.

Lilly made a second call from the hallway payphone so to keep her parents informed. Kenneth wasn't worried; she was always the responsible one. Plus the log truck broke a hydraulic hose and the Monday plan was to start Richard falling trees, which is safer when no one else is around. Lilly got a hold of the car keys and Linda gave her directions to the motel.

Randy came out of the back room using his cane; he was somewhat stunned to see Kevin steadying himself at the motel check in counter. "It's good to see you again Mr. Trask."

"It's good to see you again. We just had dinner with Ed and Linda. He filled me in on the motel deal and all, we toasted you and Joe." Kevin said while pulling out his wallet. "Ed showed me where he keeps his Kentucky whiskey in the kitchen."

"Looks like you're lucky to have had a designated driver," Randy said after watching Lilly park the Mercedes and then come through the motel office door.

Kevin held onto the counter and looked over his shoulder. "Yes sir, Randy. I'm lucky to have Lilly as my designated driver, my backup dinner date and lookout. She's the best big sister a guy could ask for." Kevin hiccupped and turned back toward Randy.

Lilly felt like a bag of concrete, unable to move, standing there behind Kevin. She always was the responsible one, the one always expected to do the right thing and at times she even resented being the big sister to Bobby, and now...

"Do you need one or two rooms?" Randy asked as he put a pen to a registration card.

"Two rooms," Kevin replied.

"Okay. I'll give you rooms nine and ten. There is a connecting door between." Randy put two keys up on the counter.

Kevin turned around. "Here you take room ten since you're older and I'll take room nine."

From the glare Lilly gave Kevin; Randy could tell that the Kentucky bourbon wasn't helping Kevin to win over Lilly. "Do you need a wakeup call?" Randy asked.

"Yeah, probably at six am. I need to be in Zigzag before noon to pick up our log truck and then load and run some trees to the mill.

"You can operate a self-loader and haul logs?" Randy asked.

"Yeah, I've had my CAL since I was eighteen." Lilly replied.

"How long ago was that, big sister? Maybe it was the bourbon or maybe Kevin's inept way to actually find out how old Lilly actually was..."

The attempt to find Lilly's age struck a nerve. She snatched the motel key from Kevin's grip, turned and left the office and then hurried across the parking lot to room

ten. She slammed the door!

It took awhile for Kevin to get some stuff from the trunk and settle in to room nine. He could hear the TV in Lilly's room, but not her crying. Kevin conked his head against the headboard and was about ready to pass out when he thought he heard a knock. Kevin listened; it was a soft knock on the connecting door.

Kevin couldn't believe his eyes when he opened the door. Lilly was standing there barefoot and eye to eye with him. The red bra and panties were a turn on that Kevin wasn't expecting. "Kevin, I want to tell you something."

"I know," Kevin immediately replied. "You want to tell me that you take birth control."

"No, I don't." Now Lilly was upset and angry; she yelled, "Don't call me big sister!" She pushed Kevin backward all the way into his room and then onto the bed. She crawled onto the bed behind him and started rubbing her hands all over his chest and stomach. Her disdain for Kevin was growing but wasn't even one tenth what she felt toward Tina. *At least, if I ever run into Tina again I'll tell her that I was in a bunk and a motel bed with her beloved boyfriend. Screw her calling me a bucktooth bean pole and all... I should get my camera and take a picture.*

The thinking to get her new camera was short lived. Lilly had hardly touched Kevin for thirty seconds and only on the outside of his boxer shorts when he bolted from the bed for the shower. The warm water and cleaning himself up had somewhat of a sobering effect. Somewhat embarrassed Kevin came out of the bathroom to find an empty bed and closed passage; he could hear the TV channels being changed on the TV in Lilly's room.

Kevin slept like a rock. The 6:00 am wakeup call started the day off with both feet on the ground. It was just the opposite for Lilly; she didn't sleep but for two hours the entire night. A shower didn't help. Lilly came out of room ten, put her bag into the trunk and then got into the passenger seat. She laid back the seat and balled up the red dress for a pillow. The heated seat did help her doze in and out.

Before they got to Salem, Kevin asked. "Do you want to stop for breakfast? The GPS says will be in Zigzag way before noon."

"No, I'm good." Lilly mumbled and then rolled on to her other side. The sooner the ride was over the better and she needed the rest. She had committed to picking up the log truck at the mechanic shop and getting at least one load of logs to the mill in Warm Springs.

Driving on Interstate 5 just outside of Salem the mobile phone rang. Kevin hit the hands free button on the keypad. "Hello."

"Wow, Kevin I finally got through. Those mobile car phones don't work that good." Officer Bull Elk's voice came out the speaker.

"What's up, Bull?" Kevin asked.

"I looked into the evidence file for that Danny Erickson boy and found some interesting stuff, which I'd like to share with you."

"That sounds good. Maybe we could meet up at Timberline Lodge where we had coffee the first time we met." Kevin suggested.

"Sounds good," Bull replied. "I'm going to be calling in a favor from you."

"What's that?" Kevin asked. "Could you float some additional insurance for helicopter logging on the Rez? We'll need some trees cleared out of the Metolius watershed. There are no roads in this area."

"Call my personal assistance and have her renew and up the Bull Elk Logging insurance bond."

"I'll give Patty a call right after I talk with Kenneth. Talk later." Bull hung up and Kevin reached over and pushed the hands free button to off.

Lilly had been day sleeping but she did hear most all of the conversation. She was laying sideways with her face toward the passenger door and right ear on the balled up red dress. During the drive from Myrtle Creek she was dreaming in and out trying to resolve a good reason to dislike Kevin. The phone conversation she had just overheard wasn't helping her in the hate department.

Kevin was back on his quest looking for more signs—everything that was happening seemed to be for a reason.

"Lilly," Kevin softly said.

Lilly moaned and rolled on to her back and rubbed at her eyes. "How long have I been sleeping?"

"Pretty much since we left the motel," Kevin answered. "I'm going to get coffee at the next fueling station."

Lilly raised the back of the seat and didn't say a word. How she played Kevin last night was wrong. At least she didn't screw him like some women do to get back at other woman. Realistically; she probably would never run into Tina to brag about how good Kevin was in bed—fast would be a better adjective.

"You want coffee or a muffin or anything? Kevin asked as he pulled up to the pump.

"Maybe, but I gotta go pee first." Lilly was out the door and into the deli-store like a bullet.

Kevin was at the counter paying for gas when Lilly got in line behind him and pushed her knees into the back of his knees. Kevin almost fell backwards, turned and laughed. "You almost got a chest full of hot coffee!"

"I'd rather have a full chest than a coffee chest," Lilly blurted out fun words, that didn't make any sense.

"Okay?" Kevin replied confused. "Hey, grab a box of those mini-donuts over there." Kevin motioned with his head.

"How about one of these big blueberry muffins too?" Lilly asked.

They no sooner got back onto the interstate when Kevin asked. "What is the difference between a full chest and a coffee chest? I don't get it."

Lilly took a long sip of hot coffee. "Well, if you tell me the reason for the taking birth control insult last night. I'll tell you about a full chest."

"That's a deal," Kevin quipped. "First of all, it was a crude thing to say and I'm sorry."

"No big deal. I should have not said that I had to go pee. I should have said I needed to use the lady's room." Lilly responded.

"Last night I took too many straight shots with Big Ed. Whiskey make me weak."

"Okay you're forgiven on both counts," Lilly said and then broke the muffin in half.

"When you were standing in the doorway in your sexy red underwear, I thought of Tina. She always tells me that she takes birth control when we are about to... The birth control words just slipped out."

"Why would she tell you about the pill? You've been a couple for a long time, haven't you?"

"Yeah, all through college," Kevin answered and took a drink of coffee. "But she was at Pepperdine and I was at Duke, we were thousands of miles apart."

"But you two still got together for your basketball games and breaks and stuff."

"Yeah we saw each other quite a lot... But we just never got together." Kevin quickly quipped.

"What..." Lilly was trying to get things straight in her head. *Last night Kevin did seem to be alarmed and he was spontaneous.* Lilly carefully asked, "Are you saying that Tina and you have never gone all the way?"

"Yes! It's not that I don't want to... It's just a hang up that my Granddad put me on when I was fourteen; after he caught me skinny dipping and..." Kevin went on to explain the whole cutting lawns at a home for unwed mothers and holding on to an old fashioned virtue. Lilly kept feeding Kevin pieces of the blueberry muffin while getting fed a dissertation of childhood to adulthood of a rich kid. Her chronicle was coming up next but it was simple—being poor now seemed less complex.

The GPS made a beep and Lilly looked at the display. "Take the 205 exit. This thing says we'll be in Zigzag in an hour and 4 minutes.

"It's your turn now," Kevin said. "I want to hear all about the chest full verses coffee full statement."

"You know a full chest. You have noticed that I don't have big boobs, haven't you?"

"A... yeah I guess." Kevin was somewhat dumbfounded; he liked how open Lilly talked. "If that bothers you why not get implants. That is what Tina did for graduation."

"How flat was Tina?" Lilly asked.

"I don't know. I never knew her then."

"Didn't she just graduate from Pepperdine?"

"Yeah, but she got her breast implants when she graduated from high school. They were a graduation gift from her stepfather."

"That is weird." Lilly said quietly to herself. "Her Stepfather?"

"Yeah, I know. Her dad is always talking about them."

"Are you referring to 'them,' as Tina's boobs?" Lilly asked.

"Yeah," replied Kevin.

"That's creepy," Tina stated. "I would never trust her stepfather around my daughter."

"Do you have a daughter?" Kevin immediately asked.

"No," Tina answered immediately. "If I had a daughter, I wouldn't trust her within a hundred yards of an old guy focused on a high school girl's boobs."

"Yeah, Tom is sort of creepy," Kevin agreed. "Her mom, Nancy is the same way. That whole family worries way too much about that kind of stuff. Tina is beautiful without all the fingernail, tanning and spa stuff that they do for her."

"No kidding!" Lilly replied and then softly said. "I would have been happy with getting braces for my high school graduation."

"Why didn't you get them?"

"They cost a lot of money." Lilly quipped. "Probably as much as breast implants."

"Doesn't dental insurance cover braces?"

"Kevin we don't have dental insurance." Lilly said while feeding Kevin another piece of muffin. "Plus braces would probably be considered a cosmetic procedure, just like implants."

"Oh..." Kevin chewed and swallowed the piece of muffin, and then he took a drink of coffee. "Do you think insurance companies try to screw over people?"

"Hell yes," replied Lilly. "That's' like asking if rich people are concerned about poor people."

"That's not fair," Kevin firmly replied. "My parents are rich and they do a lot for the

poor."

"That's great Kevin. I was just making a general statement."

"My mom just started a tennis scholarship at the club for some families that are struggling with college tuition." Kevin spoke in defense of wealth.

"Kevin, those parents' could relinquish their club membership and send their poor spoiled kid to community college." Lilly sarcastically replied.

The next hour turned into a heated discussion about class warfare. Lilly started to see that Kevin just didn't get it. It wasn't his fault; the working class was just that, people that worked day to day, to just put food on the table and a roof overhead. Kevin's family and friends were different, they had their tables of plenty and castles to shield them from the meager.

Kevin pulled directly in front of the fishing guide shop and shut off the SL600. He continued to try to sway Lilly that not all wealthy people are creepy or self-centered.

"I need to go into the shop. My Mom just looked out the door window for the third time."

"Okay, but I'm mostly right about the social impact of different classes and cultures around the world. Humanities was my major at Duke." Kevin boosted.

"I thought it was basketball." Lilly reached for the door handle.

"That's not fair." Kevin replied.

Lilly let loose of the door handle and looked directly at Kevin. "Okay, Mr. College humanities expert, that just went on all about himself, his rich friends, and beautiful girlfriend for the last two hours. What was the one thing that I told you last night when you opened the door between our two rooms?"

"A... You told me... You told me..." Kevin rubbed at his forehead and pondered for at least thirty seconds. "I'm sorry Lilly I don't remember."

"Exactly, Kevin! I wanted to tell you that I don't like being referred to as the big sister. I've had a whole life of being the responsible one. The big sister is always elected to get everyone home on time, always making sure..."

"Well, it bothers me when people call me the rich college kid!" Kevin interrupted Lilly.

Lilly opened the car door and ran into shop. Peggy Saxton threw her arms around Lilly and immediately sensed that the dance had not gone right. "Are you okay?"

The bells hanging on the door knob rang out again. Peggy looked over and said, "Mr. Trask, Office Bull Elk has called three times looking for you."

"Thanks Mrs. Saxton," Kevin replied and he now sensed Lilly's distraught.

"Please call me Peggy, not Mrs. Saxton. You can use the phone in the kitchen."

Peggy motioned toward the short hallway.

"Thanks Peggy, please call me Kevin," Kevin said as he moved past the women.

"Mom, make sure never to call him the rich college kid." Lilly said while moving back toward the front door so to go get her stuff from the SL600.

Kevin was talking on the yellow wall phone rubbing Tucker's head when Peggy came into the small room. "Sounds good Bull, I'll meet you in the Timberline lodge parking lot at two."

"I hope that you will join us for lunch? I have leftover ham from Sunday dinner." Peggy asked.

"That sounds good." Kevin replied now rubbing and petting Tucker with both hands.

Lilly came into kitchen tossed her stuff in the corner, poured a cup of coffee and then sat at the table. "Tucker come see me."

"Lilly some secretary from a Byron Sherpard's office called and wants you to testify at a subcommittee about the spotted owl. She said something about your logging and fishing background would be helpful."

"Oh," Lilly said softly, somewhat discomfited that she had been so outspoken when the Senator was giving his speech.

"Senator Sherpard probably wants you to fly back to Washington DC to testify. He said that they would be back in session next week." Kevin injected into the conversation.

"I wonder how much airfare to the east coast is these days?" Peggy immediately said as she used her cane to walk over to the counter.

"If you go back to testify before a Senate committee, I'm sure they pay the airfare, put you up in a nice hotel and probably have a daily food stipend," Kevin said. "You should call his secretary and find out."

"A... I wouldn't even know how to get around in a big city," Lilly said.

"Getting around DC is no big deal. Just stay on Constitution Avenue. The trees in Memorial park are breathtaking in the fall. Most of the museums you can walk to or take a cab." Kevin was now down on one knee petting Tucker.

"Which airport would she land at?" Peggy asked.

"Probably Dulles International in Virginia," Kevin replied.

"We used to hub at LaGuardia when I flew for Midway Express out of Chicago," Peggy said as she started making lunch.

"Long Island to Washing DC would be like a 5 hour drive." Kevin replied.

"Is it that far?" Peggy asked as she sliced ham. Tucker moved next to Peggy; she

tossed Tucker a piece of fatty ham.

"Our basketball teams had to land at La Guardia once and then drive down to play Georgetown University. It was a long drive in bad weather."

"Lilly wouldn't have to worry about bad weather this time of year," Peggy said and then asked. "Do you like mustard and mayonnaise?"

"Both will be fine." Kevin answered.

"Wait a second you two! First of all, if that senator wants me to fly all the way back to the east coast, I'm going to decline."

"On no Honey, you need to take this opportunity and see something different than Zigzag Oregon."

"Yeah, you should go Lilly. If they want you to testify in DC go for it!" Kevin injected.

In a show of defiance Lilly crossed her arms across her chest. "And what would I wear to go back there to the capital" All I own is jeans and outdoor gear."

"What about that red dress?" Kevin immediately replied. "You looked smoking hot in that dress. You were turning heads at the fundraiser."

Lilly's folded arms went limp; she let them drop to her side. "I don't think that is what someone would wear into a congressional meeting room," Lilly said.

"We could go shopping and get you something honey," Peggy turned and sent a smile of encouragement at Lilly.

"Yeah that red dress and that matching red sexy underwear would overheat congress. Probably best you go shopping. Or, let me call Patty and have her buy you an outfit for coming down and being my date and all."

Peggy looked directly at Kevin and asked. "How do you know about the red matching underwear?" Peggy was coy not to include the word 'sexy'.

"A... When Lilly got into my car she had to pull that long dress up and her long legs came out of the slit up the side. I saw everything." Kevin's face started to turn red.

"Lilly has never been modest," Peggy replied and then turned back toward the counter; she sliced off another piece of ham for Kevin's sandwich.

Over lunch Kevin and Peggy talked about all the places to see just around Capitol Park. Peggy mentioned the Lincoln memorial and the reflecting pond. Kevin stated that the Smithsonian Museums take two days just by themselves. They talked about the view from the Washington Monument. Peggy questioned Kevin about the Vietnam Wall; it was constructed in 1982, after she gave up her career as a stewardess to marry Kenneth.

Lilly wasn't worldly like her mother had been--this opportunity was too good to pass up. "I think I will call the Senator's secretary and offer to testify."

"You absolutely should." Kevin replied as he fed Tucker the last part of his sandwich under the table. Make sure that you call Patty and have her help with something for you to wear. She was the one to suggest that CP wear his Dress Blues, which was a great call."

"I hope that I meet CP's new wife someday," Peggy said.

"CP and Patty are living together, but not husband and wife," Kevin replied.

A spark shot through Lilly's brain; her thoughts were already running at full speed. Kevin wasn't supposed to know that CP and Patty got married before he came up to Oregon. "A, Mom... There is one thing that I need to tell you and it is real important."

"Oh, what's that Lilly?" Peggy asked as she started to clear off the table.

"Well it's about Kevin and how he doesn't want to be called a rich-college boy anymore."

"Okay, I'm listening," Peggy said as she put a plate of fresh baked cookies in front of Kevin. "You're not allergic to peanuts are you?" Peggy asked Kevin.

"No, these smell delicious," Kevin answered Peggy while taking a bite of a warm chocolate chip cookie with peanuts.

"I think we should start calling Kevin, Mr. Soft-touch or just soft touch-Kevin."

Kevin almost choked on the cookie. The teenage skinny-dipping with Marie was something he lived with all through adolescence; now the spooning and lack of self control from last night would haunt his adulthood. Kevin jumped up from the table. "I'd better get up to Timberline Lodge to meet up with Officer Bull Whitefoot!"

Lilly wasn't going to let Kevin off that easy. "Mr. Soft-touch has a couple of secrets, he doesn't like to share." Lilly pointed at Kevin.

Kevin froze; his face felt as though it was on fire.

"A week ago, Mr. Soft-touch flew back to Michigan to visit a little girl that got into a car accident. Yesterday, I witnessed him give a family, money for community college. Then this morning, I overheard how he helped with the insurance bond for the Bull Elk logging operation. Maybe this rich college kid is just a big softy."

"I think I'll just keep calling him Kevin," Peggy replied.

Kevin breathed a big sigh and patted Tucker on the head and then stood up from the table. "Thanks for lunch."

The bells on the front door of the shop were meant to be heard all the way back in the kitchen. Lilly had the balled up red dress in her hands. "Mom do you think we need to get this dress dry cleaned or can we get the wrinkles out ourselves?"

"I'll take care of it Lilly." Peggy took the dress. "You need to go haul a load of logs to the mill for your Dad."

"Sounds good Mom. Would you say a prayer that I get to do that trip back to Washington DC?" Lilly rushed down the hall to wave at Kevin.

Peggy put the dress up to her nose and smelled Lilly's scent—the same way that she often would take one of Billy's old sweaters and pull his scent into her heart. Praying for the trip for Lilly was already happening—along with the prayer that someday she might call Kevin by a different name. Not, Mr. Soft-touch but son...