

## Chapter Thirteen

**The** beeping alarm blasted around the room and then to inside of Kevin's skull, the roof of his mouth felt like a dried up leather tennis shoe. Kevin hit the snooze button then pulled the sheet up over his head. The second time the alarm blasted, Kevin rolled out of bed and made it into the shower. The hot water helped, but even the most experienced college frat drinkers couldn't wash off two pitchers of Margarita. Bending over to tie his running shoes sent the big steak and eggs breakfast back up into Kevin's throat. Outside on the landing the fresh morning air helped clear out the brain fog; Kevin used the railing to clamber down the outside stairs then jogged toward the pool.

"What time did you get home last night?" Robert asked as Kevin approached the white patio table.

"I don't think it was too late, maybe eleven or so." Kevin answered while looking over the top of his Dad's head at light blue water in the swimming pool.

"When are you going to get the Mercedes back?" Robert asked stalling about the real reason for their scheduled breakfast meeting.

"I'm thinking about having our pilot fly me up to Portland this afternoon, maybe spend the night and drive it back tomorrow." Kevin answered and then slowly inhaled the cool morning air. "If I don't get feeling better," Kevin inhaled some more fresh air, "I will have Patty drive it back next week."

"She is the temp that I met on Friday; the one with an Irish last name?" Robert continued to avoid what he really needed to talk to Kevin about. "Is she a good driver?"

"Yeah, she drove the Range Rover last night." Kevin paused and thought about how carefully Patty drove on all the side streets. "In fact she is a real cautious driver, always uses turn signals and comes to a full stop at all the stop signs."

"So you must have been too intoxicated to drive?" Robert Trask looked up into Kevin's bloodshot eyes.

"Yeah, it was good that Patty drove until I got food in my stomach and drank a bunch of coffee."

"That was a smart move! There is never a good reason for driving drunk..." Robert Trask stood and looked sternly at Kevin. "Another smart move you made yesterday was finding those clauses in the acquisition contract. I think you might have prevented our family from possibly losing everything." Robert Trask dropped the

newspaper on the patio table and then headed back toward the Trask mansion, without saying another word.

Kevin's hung-over slump turned to a ridged standing tall motionless stance! A thank you from Robert would have been great, but just the acknowledgement that he had done two things right in one day was shocking... Kevin slipped off his shoes and shirt, walked to the edge of the pool and dove in, a swim would be a good start to the weekend.

Kevin took the stairs on the side of the six car garage two at a time. While rinsing off the chlorine in the shower he thought back just a few weeks when Tina was in the shower with him. *Tina is flawless head to toe with or without clothes. I should hurry up and give her a call to see if she wants to fly up to Portland and spend the night.*

Kevin sat on the bed with only a towel wrapped around his waist and dialed. "Hello," A deep voice came over the handset.

"Is Tina there? Kevin anxiously asked.

"No, she went down to Mexico to do the Fiesta of **Saint Peter** and **Saint Paul** celebration thing."

"Oh, I thought she was doing that with you and Nancy."

"No way," Tom replied, "her Mom and I haven't been over the border for over fifteen years."

"Oh, I was sure that she said she was going with the two of you..."

"This is Kevin Trask, isn't it?" Tina's stepfather asked.

"Yeah, Tom it's me." Kevin answered somewhat confused.

"We thought she was going to Tijuana with you." Tom replied with a worried tone.

"Tina mentioned a Duke Basketball player and doing the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Fiesta. She said not to worry and that it was the Mexicans version of St. Patrick's Day."

"No, it wasn't with me. We were going to fly up to Portland and get my car." Kevin replied.

"Hold on for a second." Tom put the handset down. About thirty seconds later he picked it back up. "Kevin, Tina will be back late Sunday night. That all I know. Thanks for calling..." *Click*, the line went dead.

Kevin hung up the phone and lay back on the bed. Not exactly positive, but Tim Baylor was probably the one. Tim was not only the highest scorer on the Blue Devils Team he was a big scorer with the women. The earlier feel good moment of praise

from Robert Trask was wiped out by the short phone conversation with Tina's stepdad; the deception was a stab to the heart. The fact that she lied about who she was going into Mexico with blurred Kevin's already blurry hung-over head.

Tim Baylor was going places and nobody dare stop him. His place on the pedestal of all-mighty-athlete was set before he even became a starter at Duke. The town's high school alumni helped destroy the freshman girl that called rape on him; it was worth it, because without Tim Baylor they would have never won the state championship. Tim quickly learned that he was above the law and to drug all the wide-eyed rally type—so as not to jeopardize a winning team.

The trip over the Mexican border wasn't for a celebration or a fiesta; it was to resupply his stock of Rohypnol. Tim was okay with Tina's telling him that there would be no sex and that she still had feelings for Kevin. Tina even suggested that Tim might want to try to contact Sue to see how the pregnancy was going. Listening to Tina vent all the way into Mexico and about how Kevin finally took VP position only made Tim more determined—Tina would be his new trophy.

The solemnity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul was the furthest thought from Tim's mind. No sooner did they check into their motel room he suggested that Tina get some sun at pool side while he went for supplies. A fifty dollars cab ride, a few sharp corners down a long dark alley and Tim had his bogus prescription filled. Most men would never go where Tim went, but at six foot four and almost two hundred and thirty pounds he was intimidating. The wide, deep set black eyes, under a thick brow was equally intimidating. Tim was known as the enforcer on the basketball court and was preparing to earn the same reputation back in the motel room.

From Saturday afternoon to Sunday evening was a thirty hour period that Tina would hardly recall and never be able to testify to. The bright yellow pickup truck pulled up in front of her parents' home; Tim lumbered up to the door to get help. The explanation that Tina was weak from something she drank or ate in Mexico sounded plausible. Tina's stepdad got her undressed and into bed. Drugged, intoxicated or supposedly ill Tina was still beautiful; her body was as perfect as any playmates on any centerfold. Tom gazed at her for the longest time...

Over the weekend Kevin never made it up to Oregon to get the Mercedes SL600. Instead he went into work and studied the land sale contract and acquisition paper work more closely. In the fine details the so called joint merger was appearing more like a hostile takeover. Gus was the only other person at the Trask manufacturing plant and Kevin observed him walking all the way down Navy Way road to the ocean and back several times. The back and forth walking was part of Gus's weekend routine, along with going to the Laundromat, grocery shopping and most importantly attending church. Gus's one room apartment on the west end of the Trask manufacturing plant would have to go after the papers were signed. The thirty day eviction notice was included in all the paperwork.

Monday morning Kevin prepared for the signing meeting by dressing like a vice president, in tan dress slacks, an open-collar blue silk dress shirt with corresponding brown leather belt and shoes. What Kevin didn't prepare for was the dreadful Monday morning traffic on the 405. It was almost nine o'clock when Gus saw the distressed look on Kevin's face as he whirled the Range Rover into the parking lot. Gus immediately raised the guard rail and nodded at Kevin as the Range Rover blasted by the guard shack and skidded to a stop under the basketball hoop.

When Kevin rounded the top stair to his office, Patty jumped to attention. "Here you go; I organized all the yellow hi-lighted papers in the red folder! The land-sale contract is in the blue folder and the..."

Kevin snatched the colored folders and said, "Grab a note pad. You're coming with me." Kevin turned and headed back down the stairs and waited for Patty to catch up.

The sound of Kevin's clicking brown Italian leather oxfords were in unison with Patty's new high-heels as they approached the open double doors to the conference room. Condi was just pouring the last cup of coffee; when she looked up and took a double take. Kevin looked like a model for business week magazine and it was obvious Patty spent her first paycheck on a new outfit and high-heels. Condi was relieved that Kevin had showed up within the acceptable meeting starting time. Patty at his side with paper and pad was an intimidating, almost threatening look.

"Well, let's get at this," Robert Trask said as he took his seat at the end of the long conference table. "Kevin, why don't you start with your concerns?"

Kevin had his concerns listed down but the traffic delay on the I405 left him zero time to mentally prep. "A... Okay just one second," Kevin stood at the far end of the conference table opposite Robert Trask. Patty quickly sat down and slid the first contract page with yellow high-lighted bullet points that Kevin had marked: **Priority 1**, in front of Kevin.

"Thanks Patty," Kevin started to study the paper and then said. "Gentlemen, before we get started I'd like you all to meet my personal assistance, Ms. Patty Kelly."

Patty stood and smoothed out her skirt and confidently walked all the way to the end of the table. Kang Chan stood and shook her hand from across the table. Mr. Hung Meng looked up, didn't stand and wouldn't shake her hand. The two Chinese attorneys would not shake her hand neither; they stayed seated and gave a slight head nod. The two Trask corporate attorneys stood, introduced themselves, shook Patty's hand, then sat back down. Vincent Eger, the Trask trust attorney stood and introduced himself. Condi moved away from the serving cart walked up to Patty gave her a light hug and whispered in her ear, "Thanks for looking after Kevin."

The long conference table had Robert Trask on one end and Kevin Trask on the other; almost twenty feet away from each other. On Robert Trask's right was Hung Meng, Kang Chan and the two Chinese attorneys. Across from those four sat Condi,

the two Trask corporate attorneys, plus Vincent Eger the Trask family trust attorney. It was an unfair match two on one end of the conference table and nine on the other.

The introduction was over and Kevin was up. "Gentlemen, my first concern is with the land sale contract." Kevin said while reading off the first paper that Patty has slid to him. "Granted the offer to purchase this Long Beach commercial property is fair but we have over eight hundred other properties located all over the United States and not one of those properties are included in the acquisition."

This lit the fire and an intense conversation in Chinese erupted from the one side of the table. That conversation went on for at least five minutes; Patty was busy taking notes and slid a second paper to Kevin.

"Another concern is the outsourcing." Kevin was looking at what he had highlighted on the second page. "There is no guarantee that some or any of the manufacturing remains here in the United States. Hung Meng imports could build complete trailers in China if they choose to."

Now there was a heated conversation going on in English with Robert Trask and the Trask corporate attorneys. He wanted to know if what Kevin had just pointed out was true. Both attorneys were flipping through their copies in pretend mode; they both knew Kevin was absolutely correct. Mr. Hung Meng had paid a hundred thousand dollars to have them bury certain conditions with legal jargon in the documents.

Condi watched Patty taking notes feverishly—it seemed like overkill. Patty circled a something on her notepad and then slid a third document paper to Kevin.

Now, Kevin almost had to yell so to be heard. "Another concern is the performance clause on page eight of the proposed merger. If projected trailer sales don't hit double digit increases by the year two-thousand, the Trask Trust could not only lose everything..." Kevin took a deep breath. "The Trask family would be liable for any labor contracts not fulfilled."

Mr. Trask exploded out of his high back leather chair and grabbed Vincent Eger by the arm and pulled him out of the conference room. The two Trask Corporate attorneys were silent; the hundred thousand dollar bonus to bury and tighten up wording in the legal documents wasn't a bribe—it was just concise brevity that was needed to get the deal completed.

From one side of the conference table a firestorm of Chinese dialog was being exchanged. At the opposite end Patty was writing on her yellow notepad as rapidly as the four men were quarrelling.

In all of the years Condi had worked for Robert Trask there had never been a meeting like this. The four Asian men were at each other like mad dogs! Robert Trask was demanding answers from his own lawyers! Condi stood up, went to the back of the room and poured a glass of water. Patty was still taking notes zealously

while Kevin stood silent waiting to finish with the rest of his bullet points.

As the four-way Chinese language commotion intensified, Condi walked to the far end of the table and approached Kevin. "Thanks for going by to see my parent's yesterday."

Condi's words broke Kevin's concentration on the six men remaining at the other end of the table. "No problem, Condi. I needed to drop off a few things I came across in Richard's office."

"Kevin, my relationship with my Dad is strained but it's like what you just did to your Dad." Condi said in a concerned tone.

"Condi, I just thought we should clear up a few things before we sign. Some of the conditions could affect every person that works here; especially Gus."

The Chinese screaming match ceased when Robert Trask busted back through the double doors. Vincent Eger was two steps behind; they took up their positions at the conference table again. "Is there anything else Kevin?"

It was now so silent in the conference room that manufacturing sounds way out in the plant could be heard. Kevin picked up another paper. "There is one last minor item, on page seventy-one, Item 4, sub-item B." Kevin waited for everyone to page forward through their copies to that page. "The no onsite apartment allowed sub-item B has to go!"

Robert Trask zeroed in on the sub-item clause. It was obvious that this clause was meant to be buried. Both Trask corporate attorneys' were stunned that Kevin had gone this deep into all the Legal jargon.

Kevin continued, "Grandpa Trask is the one that wrote into his will, that Gus Watt would have a life-long place at the Trask manufacturing plant." Kevin took a deep breath. "Grandpa's last words specifically included an on-site apartment for as long as Gus Watt needs or wants..."

The Chinese fireworks started all over again. Both Kevin and Robert Trask were surprised at such a violent reaction from Hung Meng. Gus was harmless and although his repeated, ritualistic pattern from mild autism could be an annoyance; he was an excellence security guard and was barely being paid minimum wage.

Kevin sat down as Mr. Meng berated his side of the table in Chinese. It was worse than what some college coaches do to players when their team is losing. Patty Kelly was frantically writing on her yellow notepad.

Condi concluded that she would not be passing out new blue ink pens for a contract signing. Watching Patty at the other end of the table looking and acting busy was bothersome; but Patty did drive Kevin home after drinking too much and overall she

seemed genuine.

Mr. Robert Trask stood; his red face reflected his elevated blood pressure... "This meeting is over!"

Condi followed Robert Trask out of the conference room. Mr. Hung Meng continued his Chinese ranting. The two Asian attorneys put all the documents into their brief cases and lined up behind Mr. Meng and marched out of the room. Kang Chan gave Kevin a look that could have killed a lion and fell in line behind the trio.

Kevin looked over at Patty and asked. "What are all those notes that you have been writing down?"

Patty looked up and answered, "My grandmother is Chinese. I'm not fluent in the language but I wrote down most of the important stuff."

When the two Trask corporate attorneys overheard Patty Kelly say to Kevin that she had written down Mr. Hung Meng's conversation, they both exited the conference room in a panic; not knowing if they would be implicated in her notes!

Vincent Eager, the long time Trask Trust attorney approached Kevin and shook his hand. "Your Grandfather would be proud of you, Kevin. I remember how emphatic he was that Gus would always have a place to live."

It was just Kevin and Patty left in the conference room. "This meeting didn't go as expected," Kevin said, "I thought that there would be a few changes that would get changed and the signing would happen.

"Kevin to me it looks like this is not a merger; it looks more like an underhanded take-over." Patty realized that she had said too much for someone that had only been on the job for a week.

"I guess," Kevin replied. "I thought maybe another week to change a few things, it would be a done deal and then I could head up to Oregon." Kevin pushed back in the chair and joked. "I think I need to go have a couple pitchers of margaritas for lunch."

"Okay, Mr. Trask, when you get back I should have my notes and the bullet points from the meeting on your desk." Patty replied.

Kevin went down the stairs and out a heavy metal fire door at the NW corner of the Trask building. The back of the building looked more like a junk yard of old Trask Trailers, stacks of rusty old wheels on rotted rubber tires and just years of accumulated junk. As a child, the out-of-site back of the building junk yard area is where he played, build forts and escaped into a young boys world of make believe. Old rusty trailer carcasses became forts, hideouts and places that monsters might hide. Kevin spent about forty-five minutes reliving his backyard explorations.

The west side of the building yielded a cleaner more organized view; the one hundred foot by forty foot double thick cinder brick wall only had two windows and two doors. There was one window way up on the crow's-nest that over looked some of the Long Beach water-ways and Freeway 110. The other window was smaller and on ground level and next to the door into Gus's apartment. Almost fifty feet south from Gus's apartment door was a very heavy steel roll up door that could have been used to park cars inside if it were not for the thirty foot round open pit that was full of saltwater. Over all the years Kevin had only been in that seventy five by fifty foot dark damp musty room once. It was his grandfather who had the wall and ceiling sealed off with heavy plastic tarp material. Grandpa Trask had the wall between Gus's apartment doubled sealed so to make sure that Gus's small apartment was moisture and mold free. There were old war stories about men being drowned in the thirty foot open pit of sea water but it was just one of those urban legends even a young inquisitive boy knew not to ask about.

Kevin walked over to the small window into Gus's apartment and peered through the glass. The room was about the same size as his office and the six navy bunk type hammocks Kevin remembered were still mounted on the back wall. A roll of equipment lockers were still in place shielding a small gym type tiled shower. There was a small counter with a microwave and hotplate next to a small refrigerator. In the center of the room were a folding table and two chairs; next to them was what looked like some sort of kneeler that you would expect to see in a funeral home or confessional booth. Kevin could only see about half of the room through the small window and it was plenty to put his mind on a different plan. *Maybe it is time that Gus move to one of them new condo's over in Torrance.*

Kevin backed away from the window and almost tripped over a bright red colored kid's motorized car. There was also a swing set and jungle gym under a temporary nylon shed that seemed out of place, especially since Gus was over six foot and over 200 pounds. Kevin headed toward the front of the building and made a beeline for the guard shack.

"Good afternoon Mr. Kevin Trask. I hope you got to the meeting on time. It was 9:02 am when I saw you turning in. That is why I raise the gate and let you go through without having a permanent parking pass. I hope that I didn't violate any security rules." Gus spoke rapidly and nervously.

"No Gus, I'm glad you let me through. I'm going to stick the permanent parking pass on my sports car when I get it back." Kevin replied. "You did everything by the book."

"Thank you Mr. Kevin Trask," Gus said with a more relaxed voice. "I was scared when I saw you walking across the parking lot. I always inspect every car and truck without a permanent stick-on pass." Gus started getting nervous again. "So... I did the right thing, Mr. Kevin Trask?"

"Yes Gus, you did the right thing." Kevin reassured Gus.

"Thank you, Mr. Kevin Trask. My stomach feels better now." Gus replied.

Kevin paused and knew that he needed to be careful with how he asked Gus the next question. "Gus what would you think about moving to one of those brand new Condominiums with a view of the port and all?"

"Do you mean move out from the Amphibious Scouts and Raiders training room? I couldn't do that Mr. Kevin Trask. A lot of Super Heroes are expecting me to keep guard on the tunnel that Iron Man made with Captain America. They used the Repulsar drill to cut the underground tunnel all the way out into the water." Gus pointed south down Navy Way Road.

"Gus, we could get you a condominium that overlooks the port and you would be a more important lookout. We could even set up a big telescope for you to look out into the bay with."

"No sir... Mr. Kevin Trask, they enter the tunnel from underwater. A telescope wouldn't work unless I had Superman's eyes." Gus replied and then started to sway back and forth. "No sir... Mr. Kevin Trask, it wouldn't be good for me to move..."

Kevin had planted the seed and knew to give Gus some time. "Gus I'm going to walk all the way down Navy Way Road and then come back and I want you to think about getting a new place where you can look out over the whole Long Beach Port with a Telescope."

"No sir... Mr. Kevin Trask, it wouldn't be good for me to move..." Gus replied again and now methodically rocking forward and then backward. "No sir... Mr. Kevin Trask, it wouldn't be good for me to move..." Gus had his eyes closed. "No sir... Mr. Kevin Trask, it wouldn't be good for me to move..."

Kevin started the straight as an arrow, two mile walk down Navy Way road, which was on top of a man-made jetty. He looked back a few times and Gus had not moved from his spot just outside the small security guard station. Gus was still rocking back and forth. Kevin made it almost a mile when he turned around for the second time and looked back—Gus was in the same spot swaying back and forth. "Crap," Kevin turned around and started jogging back.

The lunch whistle didn't even break Gus's fixated state. Sweaty and somewhat out of breath Kevin approached and yelled. "Gus, don't worry about moving we'll figure something out."

Gus immediately opened his eyes and quit rocking in place. "Thank you. Mr. Kevin Trask... Thank you... Mr. Kevin... Thank you... Mr. Kevin Trask..."

Kevin knew better than to say anything more to Gus; he just patted Gus on the shoulder as he walked by toward his car. This was the third time Kevin had parked the Range Rover under the basketball hoop. The first day he didn't actually park

there, Gus had pushed the Range Rover there because of the dead battery. The second time was when a semi delivering metal was blocking the entrance to the executives' parking area. This morning he was late and it was the closest place for him to get up to the conference room using the via the employee entrance.

Kevin took refuge in the car; the issue with Gus and his mild autism was going to be a problem. In his own fixated state Kevin watched men and a few women coming out of the plant and sitting on the edge of the dock with their lunch pails or brown paper sacks. Some sat and leaned back against the concrete wall; a few headed for their cars. One black worker came out bouncing a basketball, jumped down off the four foot high loading dock and motioned for Kevin to back out. Kevin looked in the rear view mirror and backed out: he dropped the SUV into drive and headed for the exit. In the rear view mirror he saw the black worker drop the basketball and then place his left hand under his right elbow then lift his right arm toward the sky. Kevin didn't need to hear what he yelled—the up-yours gesture was obvious.

After the signing meeting that went run-a-muck and not sure of what to do for Gus; Kevin wasn't going to put up with anymore crap. He stomped on the brake, slammed the Range Rover into reverse. He had hit the road rage limit. The worker bent over picked up the basketball and started bouncing it on the asphalt. Kevin jumped from the drivers' door and before he took two steps the basketball was flying at his face. Kevin caught the basketball and fired it back, but with more force. Everyone on the dock saw that a confrontation was coming—CP was no one to go up against.

"What's your problem?" Kevin yelled

"Hey white boy why don't you learn to park your SUV in a parking space like everyone else." CP yelled back. "This is the third time the boys' and I haven't been able to shoot hoops because you parked your Rat Rover under our hoop." CP two handed chest passed the basketball at Kevin's face again.

It felt good to feel the basketball in his hands for the first time since college playoffs. Kevin dribbled three times and took a jump shot. The ball swished through the net.

"Lucky shot white boy!" CP ran to the basketball dribbled back around Kevin and took a shot. The ball bounced off the rim and to the ground."

Kevin ran to the ball and dribbled it a few times and did a layup. "You want to play some one on one?"

"You can't play in those fancy leather shoes and dress slacks." CP was now trying to give Kevin the brush off so that he and fellow players could start playing their usual lunch time game.

"Don't worry about my shoes. Let's just play to seven." Kevin insisted.

"Ok... But don't be blaming the whooping that I give you on those shoes." CP

accepted the challenge and from the back of the court dribbled the ball to the top of the key, pulled up and shot. The ball swished through the net.

It was Kevin's turn; he dribbled past CP and went right to the basket for an easy lay-up! CP's next shot was short and bounced high off the rim. Kevin rebounded then spun around CP for another lay-up. "That's two to one!" Kevin tossed the ball to CP.

More workers gathered to watch. It was soon five to two, in Kevin's favor. "Two more point and I win." Kevin boasted.

"I thought you said play to eleven." CP replied, hoping he could make a comeback.

"No seven," Kevin snapped back. "The lunch whistle will blow before we can get to eleven and I don't need something else that ends in limbo."

"What do you mean ends in limbo?" CP used the distracting question to take a shot; the ball hit the backboard and went through the hoop. "That's three to five white boy."

Kevin hated it when players change the rules of the game. "You're just like playing Mr. Hung Meng in tennis! Changing the rules after you start is cheating." Kevin inbounded the ball, drove hard to the basket and slam dunked the ball. "One more point and I win." Kevin puffed up his chest. "The game is not to eleven!"

A large crowd had gathered. Even Gus had come out of the guard shack; he seemed to be the only person cheering for Kevin. CP was respected by his coworkers for his work ethic and for his recent service in the Gulf War. "So you must be the replacement auditor that is working with that communist Hung Meng to outsource good paying jobs in the United States."

"Whatever you think..." Kevin bounced the ball to CP. "Six to three. I'll finish you off the next time I get the ball, Kevin said with confidence."

CP dribbled to behind the key ball and was ready to inbound when he noticed one of the lunch time players to the side of the basketball hoop making the throat cutting gesture and then held up his hands for the ball.

Kevin's back was to the dock and crowd and didn't see the gesturing. CP tossed the ball high over Kevin's head to the black player who he expected to slam dunk the ball. But instead the player tossed the ball to someone else.

"The lunch whistle is going to blow. I'm done..." CP said to cover for the actions of his fellow players hiding the ball.

"No, let's finish the game!" Kevin insisted loudly as he turned to see where the basketball was. A group of workers were standing shoulder to shoulder and they all had their hands behind their backs—one of them was hiding the basketball.

The short pickup game had burned up Kevin's rush of road rage adrenaline. He didn't need to start another issue down in manufacturing to deal with. The morning meeting up in the conference room had been more than enough. Kevin was batting zero on getting anything accomplished—whether it was this game of pick-up basketball, the tennis match at the club, climbing a mountain or even having an intimate relationship... Kevin jogged to the Range Rover, jumped in and tore out of the parking lot.

One of the workers on the dock threw the basketball down to CP and then jumped down from off the concrete deck. CP passed the ball back and then walked over to Gus. "Why were you cheering for that guy? He's working with the Chinese to shut us down and put us all out of work."

"Mr. Kevin Trask would not shut down the place his grandpa built. Grandpa Trask and Mr. Kevin Trask put in this basketball hoop fifteen summers ago. I stayed up all night and guarded the concrete until it turned hard."

"Gus, are you telling me that was not Hung Meng's new auditor?" CP asked with a knot forming in his throat."

You played against Mr. Kevin Trask. He was number 14 at Gonzaga and left after his freshman year. He was a starter at Gonzaga but quit the team because the coach said to keep quiet about a bad priest. After Mr. Kevin Trask quit Gonzaga he then went to the Duke Blue Devils. Mr. Kevin Trask did not ever start for the Blue Devils but had a record for 234 assists and 78 steals. He also..."

CP was nonchalantly listening to Gus while watching the Range Rover through the cyclone fencing drive all the way to the end of Navy Way Road. *I just cut my own throat. All the white-boy talk probably did me in... Even working reduced hours for the Trask business is a good job. It's not that easy for veterans to find work... I should have kept my big mouth shut...*