

## Chapter Two

Kevin left the Pasadena Country Club with a gash in his forehead, a split lip and no shower. *Crap, the traffic is really backed up. There must have been a serious accident. I hope there wasn't a fatality.* In the blistering noon sun with the convertible top being down, running the air-conditioning was ineffective. Add the exhaust fumes, the traffic noise and the problems at Trask corporate; Kevin was more than ready to get out of LA. He opened the car phone bag, put the handset to his ear and dialed.

The telephone rang three times. "Hello," came through the earpiece.

"Tina, this is Kevin. Let's do something different today."

"Okay, Kevin," replied Tina in an upbeat tone.

"Tina, I've been thinking about what you said about getting a private houseboat just for the two of us at Shasta Lake." Kevin paused, waiting for a response.

"Like, that would be so cool," Tina excitedly replied. "Just the two of us all alone?"

"Yeah, just us two... Let's do it today!"

"Today, but like. . . Like I'm getting my hair trimmed and nails done this afternoon. Can we leave tomorrow?"

"Tina, I need to get away now! I don't want to be home with my Dad. We just had a blow out at the club."

"A blow out? Like, that's not good. He's not going to take back the car, is he?"

"Tina, screw the car. We had a big disagreement. He even took a swing at me!"

"Really? Like, what happened? Like, do you want to meet to talk about it after my hair appointment?" Tina rattled on.

"No, I want to get away right after I pick up a few things from the guesthouse. Let's leave for the lake ASAP, so that we can get there before dark."

"A... I have a tanning session after my hair appointment. I can't go to the lake looking like a bleached out tourist. Plus, I'm not packed." Tina paused for a few more seconds. "Kevin, why don't you spend the night over here and we'll leave late tomorrow? That way you can avoid your Dad."

"Up yours!" yelled Kevin.

"What... Are you talking to me?" Tina questioned Kevin.

"Sorry Tina, some jerk just cut in front of me. Anyway..." Kevin's mind shifted to a more titillating event earlier that day. "Your tan looks fine. I noticed this morning. You don't even have a tan line."

"Really, Kevin? I didn't even think you noticed. Like, you rushed out of the guest

house so fast." Tina flirted back

"Believe me Tina, I noticed." An ear to ear grin overcame Kevin's road rage scowl. "So, let's head up to Shasta Lake; it'll be our first... You know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean Kevin. But, I can't go to the lake looking like a total loser. Like I said, my hair and nails need to be done. Plus, touching up my tan makes me look better naked. Just plan to come down to San Diego later." Tina paused. "I'm inviting you to spend the night."

Kevin paused. "What about your parents?"

"It'll be okay with them. They like your family."

"My family? They've only met my parents at a few games."

"Yeah, but it's the 'Trask' family," Tina replied.

Kevin took the phone away from his ear and stared out through the windshield. The guy that had just cut him off was edging out someone else two cars ahead. Brake lights flashed on, tires squealed and horns blared! The bumper to bumper traffic halted!

"Kevin, are you there? Can you hear me? Did that car phone go dead? Kevin!"

Kevin put the handset back up to his head. "Tina, I got to get out of here, now... I'll call you from my parent's home. I need a shower and to pack a few things."

"Kevin you can take a shower over here. Like, maybe I can join you... Like I was going to do this morning..."

"What about your parents?" Kevin asked again in a confused tone.

"Like, I said Kevin, they like you. It's no big deal to them."

"A, I'll call you later." Kevin switched off the phone and tossed the handset on to the passenger seat. He pushed his head back against the leather headrest and closed his eyes. *Damn it, most guys would be rushing over to be with Tina. She's so beautiful... But, Grandpa Trask messed me up, I will probably never be normal. If only he would not have made me...*

"Move it you rich asshole!" Came a deep heavy voice from behind; followed by a ten second blast of a horn.

Kevin snapped out of his daydream and looked in the rearview mirror. A big brawly biker-type was giving Kevin the finger from an old four-wheel drive pickup truck. Kevin quickly looked ahead; the traffic had moved about twenty feet. His knuckles turned white as he clenched the steering wheel and moved the short distance and stopped again. *I cannot deal with this, especially today...*

Twenty-five minutes of LA-traffic-hell and Kevin was finally there. He rang up the intercom to the main house and asked Maria to call Tina while he showered and packed. The shower stall was still wet and Kevin could still smell Tina's perfume from earlier that day. He picked up the towel that she had dried off with and buried his nose into it. Tina's scent was intoxicating...

As Kevin was hurrying up and down the outside stairs on the side of the six car garage Maria came out of the main manor with a brown paper sack in hand. She had been watching Kevin in the security monitor and knew that he was in a rush. Maria hurried across the cobblestones toward Kevin and yelled. "Mr. Trask, "I packed you a lunch!"

With his hand ready to shut the trunk lid Kevin turned. "Marie, I told you to call me Kevin."

Marie hurried the ten more feet; out of breath she held out the brown paper sack. "I'm sorry Kevin, but it's a habit."

Kevin slammed the trunk lid. "Did you get a hold of Tina?"

"No Mr. Tra\_\_." Maria paused to correct herself. "No, Kevin. I had to leave three messages on Ms. William's answering machine. I left messages for Ms. Tina that you were in a hurry. I told her to call the number for the new phone in your car.

"That's weird. I just talked to her thirty minutes ago," Kevin said as he walked around the silver SL600.

"I can keep trying to call her," replied Marie, now trying to conceal the brown sack lunch behind her.

Kevin opened the door and looked back at Maria. "Don't bother; I'll try getting a hold of her." Kevin let loose of the door handle and walked back toward the trunk. "I almost forgot my lunch."

Maria smiled and pulled the sack lunch from behind her back and handed it to Kevin. "I made you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with crunchy peanut butter. And put in two bananas that are not to ripe, just like you like them. I also hid some of those Twinkies in there. The kind that Mrs. Trask never let you have."

Kevin took the sack and smiled. "Did you put in one of those chocolate milks that I wasn't supposed to have also?"

"No, I forgot about the chocolate milk." Marie quietly replied while realizing how many years it had been since she had packed a lunch for Kevin.

Kevin gave Marie an awkward hug and put the lunch behind the passenger seat. He was still a child in many ways—especially with his sexuality. This was partially Marcia's fault from way back when she packed his lunches for middle school...

As Kevin approached the Interstate 5 on ramp the amber highway sign was blinking the words, **'I-5 south closed 4 miles ahead'**. "Crap!" Kevin screamed out and beat his fist on the steering wheel. *I'll have to take the I-405.*

For ten agonizing minutes Kevin tried to get a hold of Tina; dwelling on the drive south to San Diego. He hoped the 405 would not be packed. The thought of being with Tina while her parents were there was something he wasn't quite sure of. The words, *'They like your family,'* were still bouncing around his head.

As he approached the I-405 ramp headed south the traffic was stop and go. One quick glance in the rear view mirror and Kevin darted over three lanes and took the I-405 ramp headed north toward San Francisco. *There is no way in hell I want to spend four hours making my way down to San Diego. Tina had stuff to do anyhow... I'll fly her up to Shasta Lake. I think there is an airport in the town of Redding?*

Thirty miles north of Los Angeles the traffic was light and non-stop. Kevin took a deep relaxing breath and sucked in his liberation from the largest city on the west coast. The V12 engine purred under the hood, the six speaker sound system blasted Rock and Roll while the warm wind gently kneaded Kevin's auburn hair. Extending his arm toward the dash his tennis elbow ached. Kevin punched in **Shasta Lake** on a small keyboard. The prototype global positioning system flashed and then the blue display flashed **MPH**. When Kevin punched in **85** for mph, the front and rear radar detector automatically switched on. The blue display changed and read **ETA-8:22pm**. The cruise control took over, the car accelerated—LA was in the rear view mirror.

~~~~~

It was dark when Kevin pulled into the Shasta Lake resort; he parked, pushed the button for the automatic top, set the alarm, and started out across the parking lot. As Kevin approached the dock he noticed the sign hanging over the walkway: **BRIDGE BAY MARINA HOURS 9:00AM TO 9:00PM**. Below on one of the docks Kevin noticed someone with a flashlight by the gas pumps. The wooden planks bounced as Kevin hurried down the walkway toward the moving ray of light.

The silhouetted shadow turned and pointed the flashlight toward Kevin. "We're closing up!"

"I know. I saw the sign. I'll pay double, if I can rent a houseboat tonight."

The man shined the light directly into Kevin face. "That wouldn't do you any good. You can't operate a houseboat on the lake after dusk."

"Oh," replied Kevin while using his hand to block the beam from the flashlight.

"Plus, if you don't have a reservation all the boats are spoken for."

"We got reservations. I'm with the Duke Basketball team. The 'Blue Devils'. I think

we have two or three boats reserved."

"Yeah, but..." The silhouetted man scratched at his head. "I think you are a couple days early. Let's go check."

Kevin followed the man down the dock toward two buildings; one was a small office and the other a big white plywood sided slip with an aluminum roof where boats were repaired. The man opened the glass door and switched on a light. It took a moment for Kevin's eyes to adjust. The office was no bigger than a small bedroom; there was a tall counter and a big chalk board on the back wall. The man went behind the counter and retrieved a brown accordion style file holder from below and then plopped it up on the top. "You said Duke?" he asked as his finger found the **D** index tab.

"Yeah, I mean yes sir... There should be two or three houseboats reserved." Kevin said while moving closer so to be able to read **Hank** off of the tag on the coveralls. "Hank, I think you're right I might be a day or so early! But I'll pay double the rate if I can get a boat early."

Hank plopped down the **D** folder on the counter and found the reservation. "You are two days early. There's a note here that your group now wants two more boats. There's nothing about renting a boat two days early. It might be a little crowded for your group but that's all I could get your group is 4 boats maybe five."

"Oh, how crowded?" Kevin asked in a concerned tone.

"Three of the boats sleep eight and the other one sleeps six."

"Wow," Kevin paused. "Do you have anything I could rent just for myself?"

"Not a thing son," replied Hank putting the file back under the counter. "It's the beginning of our summer season."

"You sure? I'll pay double."

"Hank turned around and looked at a maintenance schedule that was on chalkboard behind him. I could maybe let you have the Stargazer; the refrigerator in the galley is not working but there is a small refrigerator in the Captains room."

"If it has two refrigerators and if one is working I'd take it. Like I said."

"Yeah, I know. You'll pay double," Hank replied and turned back around. "Do you know the Stargazer rents for nineteen hundred dollars a week or three hundred dollars a day?"

"That sounds reasonable. I'll take it. The privacy is a huge thing to me. Plus, I have some big plans for tomorrow night." Kevin thought about Tina and glowed. "Could you bill me?"

"Do you mean put it on a charge card?" asked Hank reaching for the accordion file holder again.

"Yes, please bill our company."

"Look son," Hank said with a stern look. "What's your name, anyway?"

"Kevin Trask."

"Look Kevin. I don't really like renting my boats to college kids. They all pool their money together and when there is damage I can never collect. I'm sorry but there is no way I will bill you or whoever is in your party. In fact I need to collect a deposit."

"Hank, I understand," Kevin replied in a reassuring tone. "I give you my word that if there is any damage. I will personally pay for it."

"Sorry, Kevin but I've just been burned by too many college kids."

"Okay Hank, that's not a problem." Kevin said. "I'll have my girlfriend bring cash tomorrow. I got some cash in the car for the deposit. I'll go get my wallet." Kevin turned to run and get his wallet. "

"Hold on," demanded Hank. "It's late! We'll settle up tomorrow."

"Sounds good Hank," replied Kevin then casually asked. "Where's the closest place to get a room for tonight?"

"You'll probably have to drive into Redding." Hank said, turning out the light and pushing Kevin out of the office. "You might have a hard time finding a room on a Saturday night."

"Well thanks for all your help. I'll be back tomorrow morning to rent the Stargazer." Kevin said as he headed off the dock.

As Hank was locking the door up he saw Kevin was already halfway up the wooden planked walkway. "Hold on!" Hank yelled.

Kevin stopped on the walkway and waited. The wooden planks bounced as Hank walked up toward Kevin. "You'll never get a room in Redding tonight. It's the height of the tourist season. You can sleep on the Stargazer."

"That'd be great. I'm beat from driving all afternoon."

"You can't take her out on the lake or anyplace tonight, it's against the law. I'll pull her out of the slip and put you at the end of the dock. It'll be nice and quite till morning."

"Hank, I would really appreciate that. I'll go get a few things and lock up my car." Kevin hurried up the walkway and hurried toward the SL600.

It took about ten minutes for Hank to pull the Stargazer from the slip and tie her up at the end of the dock. Kevin returned with an overnight bag in one hand and a sleeping bag in the other.

Hank tied the last rope off to the dock cleat and then stood up. "There you go; she's all yours."

Kevin dropped the sleeping bag and then pulled his wallet out. He pulled out six, crisp one-hundred dollar bills and handed them to Hank. "That's for tonight."

"Six hundred dollars." Hank counted the money again. "I'm not charging you to sleep tonight at the dock. I'll get the refrigerator fixed up in the morning. The rent starts after the repair and its \$300 a day." Hank yawned. "Well figure it out later. I just want to get home; it's been a long, hard day." Hank pushed the money into his pocket.

"Thanks Hank. I've had a hard day too," Kevin replied while bending down to pick up the sleeping bag.

"It looks that way from the cut above your eye and your split lip. I hope you got the best of the other guy." Hank turned and walked off into the night.

Kevin went aboard and did a quick walk around. He unrolled his sleeping bag on one of the cushioned benches on the top deck. The sound of the water lapping against the aluminum pontoons played a soothing melody. The night air was motionless and eighty plus degrees. With his hand folded behind his head Kevin looked toward the star filled sky. His early morning run, the tennis clash, and the long drive were all coming due. Kevin counted three shooting stars and contemplated about Tina and finally becoming a man in less than twenty-four hours.

The distant drone of an outboard motor woke Kevin. His squinted eyes were greeted by a deep blue, morning sky. When he rolled onto his side, his eyes focused down through the canyon walls and adjusted on a diehard water skier already on the glass like water. As the skier cut from side to side the spray of water glistened in the rays of the low rising sun. Just beyond the skier there was a lone fisherman casting from a rock outcropping. Sitting up Kevin felt stiffness in his shoulder and a sore tennis elbow. The bump on his forehead along with the swelling of the fat lip had retracted.

Standing at the railing Kevin was looking over the forty-foot houseboat when a teenage boy came out of the office and yelled down the dock, "Sir! Are you Mr. Kevin Trask?"

"Yeah, that's me," Kevin yelled back.

"Sir, you've already had three calls since I came to work. I think it's important or there's an emergency or something!" The teenage boy started to jog toward the Stargazer.

Kevin hurried down from the upper deck to the second level then to the main deck and leaped onto the dock and met the frail, hairless teenage boy.

"Emergency! Who, what? My parents?"

"I don't know sir, if it's an emergency, you can call from the marina office."

Kevin followed the young boy back to the office. The message on the chalkboard caught Kevin attention: **VERY IMPORTANT! HAVE KEVIN TRASK CALL 918-330-4221. DRIVING NEW SILVER MERCEDES CONVERTIBLE. HE IS A DUKE BASKETBALL TEAM PLAYER.**

Kevin punched in the numbers on the telephone hanging on the wall right next to the chalkboard. The phone rang one time. "Tina! This is Kevin... Is there an emergency?"

"Why didn't you call me back yesterday?" Tina asked in a pissed off tone.

"I tried! Marie also left three messages on your home answering machine. I-5 south was blocked. I even tried the 405. You weren't home!"

There was a long pause. "Oh... I went shopping after we talked." Another pause. "I thought you said you'd come spend the night at my house. I bought something really sexy to sleep in." Tina's pissed off tone turned to flirting.

"Tina, I'm not sure about doing an overnighter at your parents. I'd feel uncomfortable, or just funny, or something."

"Don't be such a prude, Kevin. I showed them what I bought to sleep in and my stepfather said it was super sexy. They even had me model it..."

"What?" Kevin asked in a perplexed tone.

"Yeah they both liked it, so will you," Tina replied. "Anyway, when are you going to come back and pick me up?" Tina asked in her best soft, seductive voice.

"Tina, that's a long drive. Can't you drive up here or catch a ride with someone?"

"No one is leaving till Monday. You need to come back and pick me up!" Tina demanded and then switched back to her seductive voice. "Then we can be all alone tonight... It'll be just the two of us."

"Tina, how about if I have Condi arrange a flight into Redding"

"Sir, this phone is for emergencies and business," interrupted the boy.

"Tina, I got to go. I'll try to call you back on the car phone, if I get signal." Kevin turned and hung up the phone.



"Sorry sir," the teenage boy said to Kevin. After Kevin hung the telephone up a different message on the chalkboard caught his eye. **MR. CHAN WANTS TO RENT ANYTHING. SKI BOAT, FISHING BOAT, YACHT. CALL BACK 514-213-5412**

"Thanks for the use of the phone," Kevin said, still examining the last message on the board. "This Mr. Chan, did he have a first name?" Kevin asked pointing at the chalk board.

"I can't say sir. Those are our valued customers. We don't give out their personal information." replied the young boy sounding like an official recording.

"Did you take the message? Can you tell me when it was taken?"

"Sorry Mr. Trask. I cannot give out that personal information. Those are our valued customers." The teenager echoed again.

"Okay," Kevin casually replied as he took a mental note of the message and phone number.

At the top of wooden walkway, Kevin looked to the far right corner of the parking where the SL600 Mercedes was parked; to his left was a small restaurant. "I'm getting a cup of coffee before I call Tina back," Kevin mumbled to himself.

The screen door slapped shut and Kevin headed for the counter. "Could I borrow a pen?" Kevin asked the waitress as she rushed behind the counter.

The waitress took a pencil from behind her ear and tossed it on the counter. "Will this work Sonny?" she asked now moving toward the swinging kitchen doors.

Kevin took a napkin from the chrome napkin holder and wrote down 514-213-54... *What were those last two numbers? Was it 1, 2 or was it 2, 2 or 4, 2?*

"Coffee this morning Sonny?" asked the waitress while flipping over the cup on the counter and pouring; not even waiting for a reply.

"Yes please." answered Kevin.

The waitress pushed a menu toward him. "The Denver Omelet is our special this morning," she said working her way down the counter refilling customer's coffee cups.

Kevin pushed the menu to the side. The smell of bacon floating in the air reminded his stomach that it had not had food since yesterday afternoon.

"What are you having?" asked the waitress taking her pencil from Kevin's fingers.

"I'd like two eggs over easy, some sourdough toast, light with the butter, some fruit and that bacon smells good. I'd like three pieces of bacon crisp, not greasy."

"I'll give you a couple of extra napkins and you can squeeze the grease out of the bacon if you need to," the waitress replied as she returned the pencil to her ear.

"And some fresh squeezed orange juice," Kevin added.

"It's fresh out of a can," the waitress replied with her pencil back on the pad.

"That'll be fine," said Kevin as looked down at the napkin that he had written the number on. "I'll be right back I'm going to go make a phone call from my car."

"That must be your fancy-pancy sports car out in the lot. Got a phone in it and all," the waitress quipped. "Ten minutes until your meal is ready."

The call from car phone was sporadic. Tina could understand enough of the message that Kevin would call her back when he found a better signal.

After breakfast Kevin hurried across the parking lot, there was a small chirp from the car alarm deactivating. When he turned the key, the blue digital display on the dash showed that it was already 74 degrees. *I should put the top down, but Redding is 45 minutes away. If I want to be with Tina tonight I need to get going. I've already wasted enough time...* On the drive to Redding; in an anxious and to some extent an aroused state, Kevin wanted to chat with Tina. The trees and mountains made finding a signal impossible.

In Redding the signal indicator on the car phone still showed a weak signal. *These portable car phones are crap... They're just going to be a fad.* Kevin looked up from the phone bag. *There's probably a pay phone in that grocery store parking lot over there.* It took three attempts at trying to place a credit card call. Kevin finally got connected.

"Hello." Tina's voice sounded hollow through the heavy dark gray handset.

"Tina, I drove into Redding and still couldn't get a signal. I had to find a payphone and then the credit card..."

"Oh, Kevin it's you. Hold on a minute I got someone on the other line." **Click.**

The pay phone disconnected when Tina put Kevin on call waiting. Kevin started to dial in the 25 numbers to make a credit card call for the fourth time... His car bag phone started to ring. He ran to the car leaned in through the window and hit the **CONNECT** button. Kevin could barely hear Tina over the static. "I'll call you back on the land line. Don't put me on hold," Kevin yelled into the handset before throwing it on the seat.

Back at the pay phone and 25 numbers later the phone only rang once. "Kevin?"

"Tina, don't put me on hold! I'm calling from a pay phone and it will disconnect."

"I won't." Tina replied. "Sue was on the other line. Tim just broke up with her."

"Lucky for Sue. She deserves better."

"What do you mean deserves better? Tim's going to be somebody, maybe a doctor or a politician. That is if the NBA doesn't draft him," Tina rambled.

"Slow down Tina. The NBA isn't going to draft Tim and he doesn't have the grades to be a doctor." Kevin paused, "He's good at acting; maybe he should be a politician."

"That's not nice Kevin!"

"Anyway, do you want me to see about getting you flown into Redding?"

"Sure Kevin. But, I have a hair appointment. The earliest I can leave will be about two this afternoon."

"I thought you got your hair done yesterday? Kevin asked, confused.

"Oh, a, they changed my appointment at the last minute." Tina lied.

"Tina, can't you forget about your hair?" I'll call Condi right now and have her have Dad's pilot fly you up here or have her check on a shuttle into Redding?"

"Get real Kevin. Like you know I'd never go out in public with my hair trashed out. I should go over and see Sue, she's really hurting."

"She's better off," Kevin paused for a loud Harley Davidson to roar by. "Is Sue planning on coming up to the lake? If the two of you drove up together you could talk." Kevin offered in a coaxing tone.

"Yeah, maybe I should drive up with her. She's really upset."

Kevin quietly breathed a sigh of relief, not wanting to drive back into the Redding airport during the heat of the day. "That would be good, I'm sure Sue could use your support."

"But, what about just the two of us? If Sue comes up with me we won't be alone?"

"Tina, that's okay. You know, we've waited this long to be together, one extra night won't matter." Kevin paused. "The houseboat I rented is over thirty feet, has three levels and has a master suite."

"Kevin, that sounds fancy. I'll just let Sue know that we will be hooking up and to give us some privacy."

"We'll talk about it when you get here." Kevin paused; he felt uncomfortable, same as if he'd gone to Tina's parent's home.

"Kevin the master suite sounds perfect. You'll be able to tear off the sexy lingerie that I bought at the mall..."

"We'll see, Tina... Anyway, when we do spend that first night together I want it to be perfect. I want it to be a commitment that I'll always keep," Kevin paused again.

"Tina I just want it to be right. You know; if you got pregnant, I would give you and the baby one hundred percent of myself."

"Kevin, it's not like we're getting engaged or going on a honeymoon. Or like..." Tina was now the one feeling uncomfortable and paused.

"Tina are you there?"

"Yes, Kevin I'm here." Tina paused again careful to choose her words. "Wow... Kevin, I don't know what to say. That's heavy stuff." Tina paused again. "You do know that I take birth control?"

"No, I didn't know that." Kevin replied quietly.

"Kevin, I've taken birth control since I was fourteen."

"Since you were fourteen, why?" Kevin awkwardly asked.

"Well, mainly to regulate my period." Tina was quick to answer.

"Oh." Kevin wished that he hadn't asked.

"Kevin, are you there?" Kevin did a one-eighty in the phone booth and pushed open the spring loaded glass doors.

"Sorry, Tina. I didn't mean to lay all this heavy stuff on you."

"No, that's okay Kevin. It's not that big of deal," Tina replied softly. "Anyway, you're probably right about Sue. The plan is for everyone to meet Monday at noon in the resort parking lot. I'll just see you then."

"That will work." Kevin replied in a relaxed voice. "I could use some down time to myself. I'm just not sure about going to work for my Father. Yesterday Robert mentioned something about firing Richard Johnson because he's having an affair."

"Who's Richard Johnson? Who is he cheating with? Is he cheating with your Mom?" Tina asked in a flurry.

"He's the shop foreman. I don't know who he is cheating with. It's not my Mom!" Kevin quickly snapped into the phone.

"Sorry Kevin," Tina replied and paused. "I didn't mean it like that. It's just my Mom had two affairs at her Real Estate company, to hurt my Stepdad."

"Your Mom cheated?" Kevin paused.

"Yeah, it was a get-even thing," replied Tina.

"Anyway, Richard has worked for Trask Enterprises since before I was born. He's Condi's father and his son Jabbar, got shot last year."

"Oh yeah, I remember you coming home for the funeral," Tina tenderly replied. "What's that have to do with you, Kevin?"

"Well, I told my Father if he let Richard go, I wouldn't come to work at the company."

"What would you do? Where would you work? Wouldn't your father take back the car? Don't you have some rule or commitment set up by your Grandfather?"

"Tina, I don't give a damn about the car! Yes, there is a trust agreement, now that I have graduated. But, I'm not about to screw over Richard Johnson!" Kevin looked out from the phone booth to make sure no one could hear his ranting. "Tina you don't get it. It's like my whole life is laid out for me. There's nothing for me to strive for. It's like being on top of a mountain and being told that it can be all yours, if..."

*Blip blip.* "Kevin I got another call coming in."

"Don't put me on hold," Kevin warned. "Unless you want us to get disconnected again."

There was a silence over the phone. "Sorry Kevin... Go on. What were you saying about giving up your sport car?"

Kevin paused. "Forget it Tina. Go ahead and take your call. I'll see you on Monday."

"Bye Kevin. I can't wait for us to hook-up on that fancy houseboat Monday night." Tina quickly clicked her phone twice to take the waiting call.

"Hello, Tina. This is Tim Baylor. I guess you heard about me and Sue. Sorry to call so early, but I just need to talk to someone that understands. I know that you would and... "

The spring loaded phone booth door sprung shut when Kevin exited. He focused on the sporting store across the street. *I'm going to go fishing, that should be relaxing.* Kevin retrieved his wallet from the center console and headed across the street. Three hundred dollars of fishing equipment, along with the salesman's fishing tips was a sure bet for catching fish. Kevin loaded the tackle box and fishing vest into the trunk but the two new fishing poles would not fit. He lowered the top and raised the automatic roll bar. The sporting store salesman was already headed across the street with a bungee cord; he helped Kevin secured the new fishing poles to the retractable roll bar.

Three teenage girls were pointing and telling each other Kevin must be a movie star or something. Kevin added to their excitement when he plopped behind the steering wheel, slipped on some designer sunglasses and turned up the 200 watt stereo system. One more detent of the ignition switch and the V-12 roared to life. A small wink to the girls, a wave to the store owner all while the two rear tires made a slight squeal as Kevin pulled out on to main street in Redding, California.

Backtracking to Shasta Lake with the top down Kevin noticed how the air was crisp and clear—different than the overhead, brownish haze he'd known most all his life. Pushing his head back into headrest he drew in the fresh mountain air, *now this is living and I have a whole day all to myself. I should have purchased a book about fly fishing. But the salesperson said there is nothing to it...*

Back at the Bridge Bay Resort parking lot the temperature had climbed ten more degrees. It took three trips back and forth to his car to unload the groceries, supplies and fishing gear. As he was untying the houseboat, Danny the frail boy from the marina came running down the dock. "Hold on. Wait a minute Mr. Kevin. You had another call."

Kevin stopped untying the rope; from his hunched over position turned and asked, "Do you know who it is?"

"Yes, she said Condi. She said Mr. Trask wants you to call."

Kevin started untying the houseboat again. "Do me a favor; if Condi calls back just tell her you didn't see me."

"I can't do that sir." Kevin stood up, towering over Danny by at least a foot and a half. Kevin reached into his pocket and pulled out a three crisp ten dollar bills. "Here take this."

Danny looked at the three bills. "I can't take money to lie. I'm not like Judas."

Kevin hesitated, and then said, "Oh, I'm not paying you to lie. This is a tip for getting both my messages to me."

"Oh, that's okay, it's my job. I can't take your money."

"I'll tell you what; you call Condi back and tell her that I got the message?" Kevin held out the three bills. "I can pay you to do that, can't I?"

"Yes sir, but thirty dollars is way too much."

Kevin put one of the bills back into his pocket. "I'm impressed with your historical knowledge of Judas."

"Thanks, and twenty bucks is too much."

"Danny you drive a hard bargain," Kevin said as he forced a ten dollar bill into Danny's hand.

Danny unwillingly took the bill and then asked. "Are you related to the Trask Trailer family?"

"Yes, I am!" Kevin replied with a noticeable scowl.

"That's what I thought. After I took the message, I looked on the houseboat rental agreement to see what boat you had and saw you were a Trask. Trask Trailers has been on the hospital TV news programs all about outpouring or outsourcing or something like that forever.

Kevin hated all the attention the Trask name brought to him. Not responding, he bent back down and started untying the rope.

Danny was in an investigative mood. "So that man on the news that wants to make everyone out of work is part of your family?"

"Yes, he's my Father." Kevin mumbled without looking up.

Danny sensed the strain in Kevin's reply. "So that must be your Mercedes SL600 with a V12 and retractable roll bar up in the parking lot? It has a 48 valve engine with almost 400 horse power." Danny took a breath. "Have you had it over a hundred miles an hour yet?"

"Maybe once or twice." Kevin mumbled.

"Cool! How fast over a hundred?"

"Ten or twenty miles over."

"Wow! One-hundred and twenty miles an hour..."

From his hunched over position Kevin turned and looked up at Danny. "I'll tell you what. If you call Condi and let her know that I'll call back this evening, I'll take you for a spin in the car."

"Sure, I'll do that. But she didn't leave a number. She said for you to call."

"Kevin stood up pulled out his wallet and took out a black business card. Embossed in gold was the name **ROBERT C TRASK**, below the name were two private phone numbers. Under that and also embossed in gold. **CEO Trask Enterprise**.

Danny looked at the card. "Which phone number do I call?"

"Call the office number. Condi will answer. Don't call the home number," Kevin instructed.

"I will do that," replied Danny as he stared at the business card.

"Danny," Kevin's voice turned serious, "I know that I can trust you not to give out either of those numbers. Please destroy the card after you talk to Condi."

"Okay!" Danny replied as he wrapped the crisp ten dollar bill around the business card and then slipped it into the back pocket of his blue jeans.

"Promise me that you don't ever give out those private numbers, to anybody."

"Promise," Danny replied; then confirmed the instructions. "You want me to tell the Condi woman that you will call her back tonight. And I should only call the private office number, not the home number."

"Yes, tell Condi I'll call this evening. She'll know what to say to Robert. She runs everything." Kevin unhooked the front mooring line from the dock cleat. "Maybe, when I come in later, I'll give you a ride in my car."

"Cool," replied Danny with a huge smile, covered with excitement.

Kevin jumped on board and hurried to the tall captain chair. The console and engine controls were almost identical to those on the Trask yacht. Kevin turned the key and looked down at the cluster of gauges as they came on.

Danny moved down the dock and then bent over to untie the rear mooring line. Kevin took note that Danny was practically hairless. Danny stood up and tossed the mooring line onto the rear deck. "You're good to go," he yelled over the sound of the houseboat engines.

Kevin steered the houseboat away from the dock. "Thanks, Danny!" The sun penetrated thru Kevin's polo shirt, he drove about fifty yards, pulled back on the throttle and then swiveled the captain chair to the side. Kevin stood and pulled his shirt up and over his head; his designer sunglasses got trapped in the collar and fell onto the green deck carpet.

When Kevin bent over to retrieve his sunglasses he had an overwhelming feeling to look up and back at the dock. The bright sun made Danny's pale skin appear pure white. The portrayal looked more spectral than real—Danny appeared ghostlike. The surreal image waved—a cold chill shot down Kevin's back. *I bet Danny is fighting cancer— I'll put him on my prayer list.*