

## Chapter Eleven

**Kevin** pushed both heavy walnut doors to the conference room open. Standing there in shorts, a LA Rams jersey and moccasins was way too casual for Robert Trask. The lawyers barely glanced up from piles of legal documents; a look of relief immediately came over Condi. Both, Hung Meng and Kang Chan looked as though they were looking at a ghost—the GPS/mobile phone in the SL600 Mercedes was still showing a waypoint in Portland, Oregon.

"I was planning on calling in on the conference line, but when I heard that this meeting is about outsourcing and selling, I wanted to sit in." Kevin walked to the far end of the long conference table and pulled out a chair; leaving about twenty empty chairs between himself and the eight others.

Condi stood and looked down the long dark wood table. "Mr. Kevin can I get you a cup of coffee?"

"Condi, I can get my own coffee, but thank you." Kevin stood and headed for a chrome serving cart. Everyone else sat astounded; a few were outraged by the intrusion. Kevin poured a cup of coffee from the silver decanter. "You all go right ahead. I'll just listen in."

"Well, I guess we can continue on," said one of Hung Meng's Lawyers.

Kevin leaned back and remotely listened to the legal jargon and observed all the initialing and signing of documents. He kept glancing out the window to watch all the container ships slowly maneuvering around the Port of Long Beach Harbor. A Blue fully loaded container ship caught Kevin's eye; all his years growing up at the Trask manufacturing plant he had never seen a container ship so large.

Mr. Meng knew that these megaships could easily conceal a small submarine underneath its girth. Any satellites spying from 175 miles above the earth would never detect a thing. Most importantly Mr. Meng knew that if the megaship was loaded with heavy metal shipping containers, any nuclear payload on the submarine underneath would also go undetected.

One Trask corporate attorney's spoke up. "I guess we can have Kevin Trask sign, since he is present. That way there is no need to take any proxy votes or use a power of attorney."

"I won't be signing anything until I have a chance to read everything over." Kevin said turning his attention from the view out the window to the far end of the conference table.

Mr. Hung Meng jumped up. "You must sign. You must sign, Deal already made with Mr. Robert Trask."

Kevin slowly stood up. "Mr. Meng, you and your attorney's must not have known that the day I graduated from college my vote became one third of everything going forward at Trask Enterprises."

Robert Trask jumped up. "That's only if you are on the corporate board"

"Well I guess I will be taking that VP position that you keep hounding me about." Kevin replied.

Hung Meng started talking in Chinese to his two lawyers while Kang Chan walked down the long conference table to Kevin and quietly said, "Nice play."

"I thought so," replied Kevin. "Kind of like our tennis match last weekend. When your boss cheated to get what he wanted. I don't care for Mr. Meng's attitude."

Kang Chan reflected back on the tennis match, just over a week ago. "You might not like Mr. Meng, but he has more power than most people understand. Be warned if you decide to challenge him to more than a tennis match." Kang Chan extended his hand to Kevin.

Kevin shook his hand and immediately noticed something. "Your hand is rough like a logger or plant worker."

"I'm not a worker back home. I'm a High-Songbun in North Korea. I'm what you would call an upper class person in the United States, like your family." Kang looked at his hand. "The old blisters are from playing ping pong, tennis and working out."

"I just came across a great Native American ointment that works on blisters and stuff." Kevin replied and then pointed at the pink healing skin on the heel of his foot.

Kang looked down and then asked, "What kind of shoes are those?"

"They are Moccasins; the person that gave me the salve for the blisters gave me the shoes." Oddly, Kevin thought about Office Bull's words when he looked at the hand print on the back of the fishing brochure, *Look here at the calluses, this individual uses a shovel, swings an ax or something.*

Kang Chan sensed that Kevin was on to something besides the outsourcing and land sale contract; he casually slid both his hands into his pockets. "Looks like you put an end to this meeting," Kang Chan said only loud enough for Kevin to hear.

Mr. Hung Meng ordered his attorneys to follow him. Kang Chan jumped in line with the other men as they left the conference room. Kang Chan kept his hands in his pockets visualizing the forced amputation he observed at a gulag in Pyongyang. One of the prisoner's handprint had been found on a dumpster outside a mess hall

searching for food. Cutting off the hand of a thief is practiced in North Korea, similar to some sects in the Middle East.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" screamed Robert Trask.

"I just want to look over the documents. I get it, if we need to outsource some of our manufacturing; so don't get in a big huff. I just don't trust Hung Meng, after that tennis fiasco at the club."

"Kevin, smarten up. That was only a game! This deal has huge consequences."

"Dad you need to wise up. If the guy cheats on the tennis court he will cheat you at business." Kevin replied in a solid firm voice.

"Kevin do not blow this deal! Hung Meng and Kang Chan are two individuals that can pull Trask Enterprises out of our sixty-six million dollars red financial position."

"What? I thought Trask Inc. was operating at a profit."

We were up until a few years ago, a couple of lawsuits and some bad press."

"Wow, I wonder what Grandpa would do?"

"Kevin, you think I want to shut down or sell this manufacturing plant. I built it from your Grandfather's small welding operation to an international trailer company. Everything is on the line. We need to close this deal." yelled Mr. Trask

"Kevin started gathering up the piles of legal documents." "Okay, I'll look this stuff over and then Condi can reschedule another signing meeting."

"Great, you can use Richard's office."

"What?" Kevin looked up with a knee-jerk reaction.

"I told you that we were going to have to let Richard go."

"And... I told you that if you let Richard Johnson go that I would not come to work here!"

"Kevin if you really feel that way then let me cast your one-third proxy vote. Our attorneys can draw up the documents and then you can run back up to Oregon to fish and climb mountains."

"What? How did you know I was up in Oregon?"

"Kang Chan filled me in on you being in Oregon. That was after Tim Baylor called and let me know about that boy that died sniffing glue. Tim also said something about you taking that twelve year old boy out in your car at night and that..." Robert Trask quit talking; he realized that Condi and the two Trask attorneys were hearing

every word.

Kevin was wordless, adding to the silence in the conference room. *It's like everyone is spying on me. Tim calls my dad and how did Kang Chan know that I drove up to Oregon?*

Robert Trask realized he had offered too much private family information; he did an about-face. "Sam, how long to draw up new paperwork, with Kevin as VP?"

"I'll have to meet with the attorney that drew up the original Trask trust. I never knew about Kevin becoming one-third owner after he graduated. But I think by the end of the week, we can have things in order."

Condi practically pushed Kevin from the conference room and then up one flight of stairs to her dad's old office. She shut the door. "Kevin, you need to grow up! This is not about your dad and not about mine. Quit thinking about yourself. You need to step up to the plate; maybe your Granddad is asking you from above to fix all of this. You have had nothing but a privileged life. Don't you think it's about time for you to payback something?"

"Payback! What right do you have telling me I need to fix anything? I don't owe anything to anybody? What about Richard? What kind of payback is he getting?"

"Don't be dragging my dad into this! And your father is not the villain here!" Condi replied with tears coming.

"Condi, I've never been close to my father and maybe you and Richard aren't close but your Dad gave a hundred plus percent to Trask Inc. I'm going to find out what happened."

"Kevin, please leave things be... All my life I was always second position to my brother. After Jabbar got shot, I thought Dad would treat me differently. Richard's Islamic faith teaches that a daughter is less important than a son." Condi paused. "Forget about my family, Kevin. Granted my father lost his son, but I lost my brother." Condi couldn't hold back any longer; she broke down and cried.

Kevin put both arms around Condi and hugged her. He could feel her natural nappy hair against his neck and damp wet tears on his shoulder. Condi held on for an extra extended period. Finally she pushed back and wiped at the tears. "Thanks Kevin. I haven't been held like that since I converted to a Christian. At least, by anyone in my family."

"Condi, I don't think I've ever been hugged by someone in my family for that long either." Kevin replied while thinking back. "Maybe you and I should have a special hugging time every day." Kevin said light heartedly.

"Yeah, that would be good, a hugging time every work day." Condi laughed

"Condi, I need to look over those papers." Kevin pointed at the pile of documents on his desk.

"Okay Sir, Do you want me to order lunch for you?" Condi put her hand on the door.

"No lunch and no calling me sir!" Kevin answered.

"Okay, Kevin. Push line #2 on the phone if you need anything." Condi left the office and Kevin walked over to the window directly behind the desk. From that vantage point he could overlook the entire lower level manufacturing area. The front window overlooked the employee parking lot and the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. On the walls were certificates of achievement and a twenty-year safety record earned by Richard Johnson. A picture of Jabbar Johnson was on the desk. Kevin sat down in the high backed leather executive chair and started looking over the first document. He tried to pull open the middle drawer of the desk for a yellow marker; it was locked. Kevin got up and walked over to a filing cabinet under the front window—it was locked.

Kevin picked up a set of binoculars on the front window ledge. He used them to scan the parking lot. A stretch black limo was at the security guard shack. *What is Gus up to with that broom stick and a mirror duct taped on the end?* Kevin watched Gus walk around the Limo; he was using the mirror to methodically check the underside of the Limo. The left rear door abruptly opened. Kang Chan jumped out grabbed the broom stick and broke it over his knee and tossed it at Gus. Kang Chan went into the security shack and pushed the gate button; the security gate immediately lifted. The stretch black limo sped off with Hung Meng on his satellite phone talking to North Korea.

Gus immediately looked at his watch and jotted the incident time down on his clipboard. Kang Chan stuck his hand out the window with his middle finger up. *Good for you Gus, piss those guys off, just like I just did...* Kevin liked his vantage point of the parking lot; he spent about five minutes spying around Long Beach harbor with Nikon binoculars'.

After thirty minutes of drudging through the first document, the desk phone rang.

"Kevin, there is a Bull Whitefoot on the phone; he told me that I was to have a hundred thousand dollar insurance bond ready for him." Condi sounded perplexed.

"Oh crap, put him through." Kevin's mind flashed to another promise he had made. There was a *click click* over the phone. "Officer Bull this is Kevin."

Bull was stunned. "Mr. Trask, how did you get down to California so fast?"

"Right after we had coffee yesterday. I got a call from Condi and had to fly down here last night."

"Oh... Mr. Trask I had a short powwow with some of the elders last evening and they

would like to start the firewood operation right away. But they don't like the name **White Crow Earth Friendly Logging**.

"Officer Bull, that sounds okay by me. What name do they want to use?"

"The Elder's would just like to call the operation **Bull Elk Logging**." Bull timidly spoke through the phone. "I don't want them to use my name but I'm still kind of a football hero on the Rez."

"No sweat, Officer Bull. I get the not liking the name thing. I'm often called 'Sir Trask' because of the Trask Trailer name." Kevin twisted ninety degrees in the leather executive. "I was just with our attorney's this morning and will get them working on an insurance bond and whatever else is needed within the week. Give me a number where our attorneys can contact you." Kevin pulled on the center drawer to find a pen; he had forgotten that it was locked. "Hold on Officer Bull, I need to find something to write with."

Kevin found a pen next to the fax machine and noticed a sealed manila envelope concealed behind the fax machine stand with the letters **KCHM** written across the front. "Okay, give me the number or numbers or an address or..."

"Mr. Trask you sound distracted."

"Call me Kevin. And I think I will be distracted for awhile." Kevin tossed the manila envelope about five feet and it landed smack in the middle of the desk.

"Okay Kevin. Then you should call me just Bull, not officer or Mr. Bull. "

"That sounds good Bull." Kevin replied. "I could call you Chief Bull?"

Bull laughed into the phone. "Kevin, you don't think I've never been called Chief bullshit before? Remember I'm a cop."

Kevin laughed. "Sorry Bull, I didn't mean it like that."

"This Indian understands Whiteman never means what he says, especially if it is a land deal." Bull spoke into the phone not really thinking about who he was talking with.

"Hey, I get it Bull. I'll try to get up to speed with Native American political correctness."

"I'm just goofing around with you," replied Bull. "You just sound so tense or distracted."

"It's just this land deal I've been looking over. It doesn't make sense why a foreign company would want to buy our building if they plan to shut down the plant here in Long Beach."

"I can look over the land contract for you. I do have a business degree and I majored in property acquisitions."

Kevin looked over at the Fax machine. "You know Bull that would be great! Who else to ask than a Native American about if they are getting screwed on a land deal?"

"Not a problem Kevin. Fax the contract to me." Bull took a long pause before he got back to his own agenda. "Kevin, it would be great if we could get that insurance bond ASAP. Fire season could shut down logging early this summer and it would not be good if our guests didn't have firewood to burn next winter in the resort rooms."

"Okay, Bull. I'll get someone working on the insurance bond right away."

"It would also be good to get Kenneth Saxton out into the woods ASAP. Hard work will keep his mind from dwelling on the past about his son and all..."

"Sounds like a good plan." Kevin replied in an agreeable tone. "How is the Saxton family? I noticed Mrs. Saxton uses a walker?"

"I think she has hip problems or something." Bull answered. "I'm planning to run some numbers by Kenneth Saxton after my shift tonight. The council is now willing to pay one-hundred dollars a cord for Juniper." Bull replied.

"Wish him good luck for me. I hope you two can get this on track."

"Kevin, don't forget that you're the silent owner of Bull Elk Logging. If Ken found out he would think he's getting a handout. Lilly wouldn't go for it either."

"Thanks for the reminder, Bull. I almost forgot how we talked about his pride issue with the Saxton family." Kevin looked across the office at the fax machine.

"Bull, I'm going to fax you the land contract I'm looking over right now. Would you just give me your thoughts before I sign it?"

"Sure no problem, Kevin." *Click*, the phone call ended.

Kevin started sorting the pages to load into the fax machine. On one of the pages there was a place where Hung Meng and Kang Chan had initialed. The two sets together made the four letters **KCHM**... *Those are the letters on this sealed manila envelope and I think they were the same letters Condi called me to say that Danny left a voice mail on the Trask private line.* Kevin rushed out of the office and down the one flight of stairs to the second floor.

Condi's reception desk was behind a four foot wall with a curved counter that half circled her in. The counter had an in and out basket for mail next to a vase of dried flowers; where the counter met the wall there was a coffee pot. Condi looked up from her desk. "Kevin, do you need something?"

"Yes, remember last week you called to let me know about a voice message left on the Trask private line?"

"Are you talking about that strange message in code or something from a young boy?"

"Yes that one. Did you keep it?" Kevin asked anxiously.

"No, I clear out all the voice mail on Fridays before I go home." Condi noticed disappointment on Kevin's face. "I do remember that you were driving and had to pull over to right the information down. There was the words 'zerk' or 'zert' and the call letters for a radio station or something."

Kevin's frown turned to approval. "That's right! I wrote the information on a fishing brochure that is still in my car."

"Kevin, that other call this morning about the insurance bond, should I take action or do something for Officer Lightfoot?"

"I'll let you know Condi. Is either of our attorney's still here?"

"Yes, Sam is in your Dad's office." Condi motioned with her head back over her shoulder at the two closed dark walnut doors.

"When they're done, would you send Sam up to your Dad's old office."

Condi paused, the words 'Dad's old office' caused her to pause. "I'll send up Sam when he comes out."

Kevin poured himself a cup of coffee then headed down to the ground floor for the vending machines in the lunch room. Whispers about the boss's son coming home from college to help with outsourcing the manufacturing plant had been the gossip for the last two months. The moccasins, cargo shorts and LA Rams shirt added to the conjecture; that the Trask family no longer cared about building their trailers in the USA.

No sooner had Kevin climbed the two flights of stairs with his coffee and vending machine snacks there was a knock on the door. "Kevin you wanted to see me?"

"Yeah Sam, come on it." Kevin pushed back in the leather chair and stood. "Sam, I need an insurance bond for a small firewood operation that I want to start up in Oregon. Is there someone in your office that can handle that for me?"

"Sure," replied Sam as he walked to the front side of the desk.

"You can use my new sports car as collateral if needed." Kevin motioned Sam to pull up a chair.

"There won't be any need for that. You did graduate from college and it looks like

you started work this morning; so according to your Grandfather's trust you now have one third stake of Trask enterprise."

"I don't know if that was in my plans, Kevin replied as he sat back down."This outsourcing and selling the property to China involves a lot of paper work. Grandpa Trask would never have thought about outsourcing." Kevin pointed at all the papers on the desk.

"You're right about that, Kevin. But outsourcing is the only way to stay competitive. I'm sure Donald Trask would want the company he founded to stay in business. I thought for sure the deal would have happened this morning."

"So, do you think it's a good move for the Trask family?" Kevin asked while sitting back down.

"Kevin, I'm not at liberty to say what I feel. My office only handles the property and labor contracts for Trask Enterprise's," Sam replied. "I do think Mr. Hung Meng is making your family a fair offer, considering the state of the US economy and all. Take a hard look at car manufacturing in the United States; they are all outsourcing."

"I know but it still doesn't feel right." Kevin shuffled thru the papers on the desk. "Here is the contact phone number for Mr. Bull Lightfoot. I need an insurance bond for a small start up firewood operation in Zigzag Oregon."

"No problem Kevin." Sam stood and took the paper. "I'll have one of my associates call you after they talk with..." Sam looked at the paper. "After they talk with Mr. Bull Lightfoot."

"That would be great Sam." Kevin reached across the desk and shook Sam's hand.

No sooner did Sam leave the desk phone rang. "Kevin, Tina is on the line three. Would you like me to put her thru or take a message?"

"A... Put her thru," answered Kevin, and then pushed the flashing line 3 button.

"Kevin, like where did you go after the cops took you into Redding? Like, you left me there on the lake all by myself."

"Tina, I just had to get out of there. After, Sherriff Wilson interrogated me as though I was a pedophile or something; I just didn't feel like more partying." Kevin leaned back in the office chair. "Maybe we could talk over dinner tonight?"

"Like, the partying sort of died down after that and nothing else big happened." Tina avoided Kevin's offer of going out to dinner.

"Frank and Laura gave you a ride home didn't they?" Kevin rocked forward in the executive chair, content to shift business conversation to Tina's ramblings'.

"Well they left early and I stayed. Tim guaranteed that he would make sure that he got me home safe and in one piece and all."

"Oh?" Kevin leaned all the way forward and rested his elbows on the desk. "So when did you get home?"

"Late Saturday." Tina paused. "Like, I'm still recovering, so maybe we should do dinner another night."

"No problem," Kevin replied, not actually feeling Tina's rejection and hesitation.

"Okay Kevin, maybe we should get together next week and talk and all."

Kevin could now feel Tina's push off and needed to know more. "How's Sue feeling?" Kevin asked so to keep the conversation going. "Are you still giving her moral support?"

"Well, I'm not really talking to Sue right now. She really said some bad things about Tim... Like, I just want to distance myself from her for awhile."

"Tina, you don't think Tim doesn't say bad things about other people." Kevin replied in a strong defensive tone. "I think Tim indicated to that Sheriff at the lake that I liked boys or something like that."

"Well, Kevin..." Tina paused. "Like, I was sort of wondering that myself? Since, we have never gone all the way and other stuff I learned about you up at the lake and all." Tina paused again. "Kevin, I really should go,"

"Wait, Tina! I do owe you the truth about what happened to me with my Grandfather and all. When I was fourteen he caught me skinny dipping in the pool."

"With another boy?" Tina immediately asked.

"What?" Now Kevin paused. "No Tina it wasn't with a boy." Kevin replied. "It was with Marie Gomez, our house keeper!" Kevin didn't mean to give up anybody's name but the female reference was important--now.

"Are you talking about that fat Mexican woman that cleans the Trask mansion?" Tina demanded an answer; she never did like Marie.

"Yes," Kevin replied, "Maria isn't fat; she's a full-figured Latino woman."

"So you went all the way with that full-figured, older Mexican woman?"

"No Tina we didn't do anything. But, after my grandfather caught us in the pool he made us do different stuff." Kevin hesitated and reflected back to the summer he was fourteen and Marie was eighteen.

"Oh, wow! Like, what did he make you do?" Tina was tuned in for the gossip.

"Well, I had to mow the lawn every Saturday all summer at a home for unwed mothers. I'm not exactly sure what Marie had to do, but I think she had to take citizen or history classes about the United States."

"That's it, Kevin. Like you had to mow a yard at a shelter for unwed-mothers for a summer and that made you like boys?" Tina was confused.

"Tina! I don't like boys!" Kevin yelled into the handset. "There were girls younger than me at that Grandma's Home, shelter... Some of the girls were rejected by their parents and other girls were hiding from their abusive sperm donor! Every one of those young women was afraid, dejected and all alone... That summer experience changed me for life!"

Kevin got distracted by a shadow that casted across all the documents spread out over the desk. Condi handed Kevin a blue post-it note: **Senator Byron Sherpard is on the phone for you.**

"Kevin, I'm listening, tell me how mowing a lawn changed you," rang out of the phone handset.

"Hold on Tina." Kevin moved the handset from his ear to his shoulder. "Condi can you tell Senator Bryon Sherpard that I will call him back."

"Kevin, I tried. The Senator insisted that he talk to you, now." Condi replied loud enough that Tina could hear through the phone.

Kevin moved the phone back up to his ear. "Tina, I'm going to have to call you back."

"Like, wow Kevin, you have to talk to a Senator? Like, I thought you were going to work on the assembly line or do welding at Trask Inc."

"Tina, there was a change of plans. I took the Vice President position," Kevin rushed his words. "Tina, we'll talk later." Kevin hung up the handset. Condi leaned over the desk and pushed the flashing **line 3** on the office phone.

"Hello Mr. Kevin Trask, this is Senator Byron Sherpard. I just wanted to checkup on you and make sure that Sherriff Wilson up there in Redding wasn't harassing you or anything."

"Not really?" Kevin rocked back in the office chair. "He did put out an APB on me, but that was just for me to call home."

"Well that is good. My son had a little run in with Sherriff Wilson up there in the Trinity National forest area and I just need to keep an ear open. The Sherriff is running for re-election; just like me."

"I remember you mentioned something about a logging protest or something and something about your son."

"Yeah he's a good kid. He just has his priorities mixed up about the environment. This logging old growth timber is becoming a political nightmare." Senator Sherpard stated.

"I just learned about the Spotted Owl and logging operations being shut down up in Oregon," Kevin replied.

"Yeah, this lame, tree hugging, wacko Vice President is going to put a lot of good people out of work," Senator Sherpard paused. "Anyway, Mr. Trask, I called for a favor."

Kevin leaned forward in the chair and rested his elbow on the desk. "And what kind of favor would that be Senator"

"I'm having a campaign fund raiser and I was hoping Trask Enterprise would like to purchase tickets for an entire table at the event."

"Let me get back to you on that," Kevin replied.

"That sounds good. So I can count on you!" Senator Sherpard didn't give Kevin a chance to back out. "It will be a Black-Tie event at the Sacramento Art Center. Each table seats eight; some of your young influential friends will make great guests. I'll have my staff contact yours." The call ended abruptly.

Kevin slammed down the phone, spun around and walked to the window directly behind the desk, he used his fingers to separate the blinds and get a better look down into the manufacturing plant. Sparks were flying from welders, sheet metal was being cut, loud air wrenches were bolting on wheel and forklifts were scooting around like rabbits. *This is exactly what I didn't want. I'm one month out of school and politics and deal making is already controlling my life. I don't want this...*

Kevin left the office and went down to the second floor. At the counter in front of Condi's desk, he noticed the open walnut office doors.

"Kevin, what is it now?" Condi asked looking up with a scowl.

"Where did my Dad go?"

"Robert and Mr. Meng went to have drinks at the country club." Condi got up from her desk and pulled both doors closed and then touched a keypad to set the lock.

"Condi, we will need to pay for a table at Senators Bryon Sherpard's fund raiser. His people will be contacting you. We must have an account or something for that kind of event?" Kevin rubbed at his forehead trying to recall the fund raising phone conversation. "We'll need to find eight influential people to attend the fund raiser."

Condi returned to her desk and made a note. "So that was the Senator that kept you out of jail up in Redding?"

"Yeah, and he expects payback now." Kevin answered.

"I also need you to make dinner reservations for Tina and myself at the Beverly Wilshire this next weekend. I'd like the Trask corporate pilot to fly down to San Diego to pick her up. It's going to be a special weekend so probably send flowers and..."

Condi looked up from the note pad. "Kevin it sounds like I need to call the temp agency and get you a secretary ASAP." I can't keep up with everything you have going on in your life."

"Didn't your Dad have a temp assistant? I'll just use her."

"Richard's assistant died in a car accident a week or so ago."

"Wow, I'm so sorry to hear that." Kevin responded with sincerity.

"No loss... She was a home-wrecker, she slept with my Dad," Condi replied looking off to the side.

"That's who Richard was having an affair with, his secretary?" Kevin whispered.

"She was more of an auditor than a secretary. Mr. Meng brought her on to look over the books," Condi couldn't look directly at Kevin; she started jotting down notes.

"That is why the small desk is up in the hallway outside his office?"

"Yes, if she would have been down here on the second floor where his old secretary was they might not have hooked up. But..."

"Are you sure they had an affair?" Kevin asked.

"Yes. I even saw the photos." Condi reached for a tissue and wiped at her eyes.

Kevin walked around the counter and over to Condi's desk "Hey, give me a hug."

Condi stood and hugged Kevin for the second time this day. Tears flowed; the comfort of a man's arm wrapped around her felt so good. She missed her brother, who always hugged her and listened to her emotional needs.

"Condi, I can see you don't have time to take care of all the stuff I've got going on. I have someone in mind that is looking for summer employment I'll give her a call."

Kevin took the stairs up to the observation floor two at a time and called Tina back. "Tina, do you have Patty's phone number?"

"What do you want that Skank's number for?" You would have been better off going to a whore than having sex with her your first time!" Tina yelled into the phone.

"I didn't have sex with Patty!" Kevin yelled back into the phone.

"Like, I know you slept with Patty the night before I got to Shasta Lake and all."

Kevin moved the headset to his other ear. "What are you talking about Tina?"

"Stan, the guy that brought her up to Shasta Lake filled me in on everything."

"Wait a second." Kevin started to rub his forehead. "Stan, Patty, Frank and Laura did come up to Shasta Lake before everyone else." Kevin paused, so much had happened over such a short period, his head was spinning. "Tina, I slept on the top deck of the Stargazer with Patty Sunday night, but we didn't have sex!"

"That's not what Stan told me!" Tina shot back.

"Stan passed out Sunday a few hours after they got to the lake. How could he remember anything?" Kevin challenged Tina with facts she was not aware of.

"A... Like, why do you need Patty's phone number?"

"Because she told me she was looking for summer work and I could use some immediate help. I know she lives somewhere around Los Angles."

"A sure, I got her number. Hold on..." Tina's brain was in reverse. All the things that Tim and Stan said about Kevin while trying to coax her to do a four some the last night at Shasta Lake could have been lies. Or Kevin was the one being deceitful. Whatever, she was now wishing that Patty did have sex with Kevin, so to level the playing field.

It took a while before Tina found Patty's phone number. Her life over the last few weeks had been almost as event filled as Kevin's. Sue, her best friend decided to keep the baby and was moving back to Michigan. Tina had sex with her best friend's boyfriend and just this morning Tim invited her to an overnight festival in Mexico for this next weekend. Since Sue was no longer in the picture, Tina accepted the invite down to Mexico.

The pause in their heated conversation helped to calm down Kevin; now he could bring up the main reason he called back. "Tina, I thought this next weekend we could have dinner at the Beverly Hillshire in downtown LA? I could rent the presidential suite and we could just relax for a couple of days."

A... Like, that sounds great Kevin..." Tina hesitated, "but like, I already promised my Mom and Stepdad that I would go to Tijuana with them to celebrate the feast of Peter and Paul. It's like a big party for the Mexicans."

"I don't know if it a party; I think it's a holy day for two saints." Kevin replied then noticed that both the **line 2** and **line 3** button started flashing on the desk phone. "Tina, I got to go I have two calls coming in."

The Trask attorney's office was on **line 2** and they needed to know if **Bull Elk**

**Logging** was going to be a subchapter S corporation or subchapter C. Kevin didn't have an answer and told them that he would get back with them. **Line 3** was Senator Byron Sherpard's office wanting to know if Kevin could forward them a guest list. Kevin told them that he would get back to them.

Putting his hands up to each side of his head Kevin yelled out, "I can't deal with all of this!" No one could hear him all alone on the third floor; also known as the crow's nest. Kevin knew the history of how the small 900 square foot top floor got the name. Per Grandpa Trask, Long Beach Naval Shipyard began in 1940 when, for \$1, the Navy acquired 104 acres of oceanfront on Terminal Island from the city of Long Beach. During World War II parts for Navy ships were refurbished or fabricated down below in the manufacturing area. The crow's nest was the room that any attack on Long Beach via the Pacific Ocean was watched for. Purportedly, directly below the crow's nest at ground level, secret training operations were carried out. Grandpa Trask didn't know anything about the Amphibious Scouts and Raiders training--but still to this day that room was still locked up.

Kevin pushed back from the desk and walked over to the one of the three windows with an outside view. The south facing window looked across Seaside Highway at the Port of Long Beach, Nimitz Road wrapped halfway around the protected port. The west window looked over the town of San Pedro and the north window faced Los Angeles. The east window was actually a one-way mirror and looked down and over the entire manufacturing area. Kevin recalled how Grandpa Trask would stand behind the one-way mirror and say how important a well paying job was to all the men down in the plant. Another thing that Grandpa Trask would say is that he put all these working men's lively hood into God's hands.

*Maybe, I need to put my lively hood in God's hands... For sure, I don't want this! It worked for my Grandfather and for my Dad but it's not for me.* Kevin plopped back down in the executive chair and dialed the phone number that Tina had given to him.

"Hello." A female voice came out of the handset.

"Patty, this is Kevin Trask."

'Kevin, its nice to hear from you. Is everything okay?

"Yeah, everything is okay." Kevin twisted around in the office chair. "Up at Shasta Lake you said that you were looking for a summer job; that is why I'm calling."

"Wow, Kevin. I have been out all week pounding the pavement and now I hear from you." Patty responded in an upbeat and excited tone. "What did you have in mind? I'm open for almost anything, cleaning offices, even landscaping, I just need to find something close to home."

"Patty, you told me that you were taking some business classes at community college, so I thought you could assist me with some stuff that I need to get wrapped

up this week for my Dad down here at our plant in Long Beach."

"Sure Kevin, whatever I can do for you and Trask Inc. Would I be your secretary or personal assistant or what?"

"Not sure, Patty." Kevin rubbed at his forehead. "I guess personal assistant?"

"Kevin, this sounds wonderful. When would you like me to come down for an interview?"

"Patty, I'm kind of up against a wall down here! Could we just skip the interview? Would it be possible for you start tomorrow? Kevin awkwardly asked.

Patty hesitated, she had been praying all week for any type of work close to home... Long Beach was at least twenty miles from Inglewood—too far to walk.

Kevin broke the long pause, "Patty if you need a few days to let me know I understand."

"No Kevin... I can be there first thing tomorrow." Patty knew that somehow she could find a ride down to Long Beach; even if she had to call Stan.

"Great Patty!" Kevin replied with relief. "Patty, you said you were working on a business degree. I was just wondering if you know the difference between a subchapter S corporation and subchapter C corporation?"

"Kevin, the difference between the two, beside the tax advantages is that a subchapter S is for companies with fewer than seventy-five employees. A subchapter C for larger employers; an established company as large as Trask Trailer I would think has been just a standard corporation for years..." Patty was rattling off the information like a college professor giving a lecture.

Kevin interrupted. "Patty, I'm not asking for the family business. I'm helping with a small startup firewood operation for a friend."

"Oh sorry Kevin," Patty replied and then started explaining to Kevin about 1099 contract employers. Twenty minutes later of phone conversation and Kevin had filled Patty in on the startup Bull Elk Logging for firewood operation he wanted to be a silent partner in. Patty knew the correct Federal forms to file for 1099 employees and had just taken a class on small start up businesses. After the extended phone call Kevin leaned back in the black leather chair and folded his hands behind his head, thankful that he had reached out to Patty.

At the other end of the phone line Patty laid back on her bed, folded her hands across her stomach and thanked God for answering her prayers. Now all she needed was a way to get down to Long Beach in the morning.

