

Chapter Twenty-six

Cutting-off the left hand of a thief works to discourage stealing in the Middle East. In communist China, sex-selective abortions avert women like Condi or Patty to ever get an opportunity to speak the truth--especial in a conference room dominated by men. North Korea promotes young prison guards that instilled fear and are good at crowd control. When Kang Chan strangled a political prisoner with a piece of barbed wire fence; one of the barbs ripped across his right palm. Kang's scar proved his loyalty to the Korean People's Army. Just flash his opened right hand and the most militant political prisoner would hold back the slightest rant.

That deep need to strangle again was fueled by the sick child pornography that Tim Baylor exposed Kang to on the internet. The mainstream media was also responsible, by posting thousand of prepubescent girls taking part in beauty pageants. Displaying a pure innocent child like a call girl boosted readership; more importantly increased advertising revenue. Child porn was one of Hung Meng's tools. Often addiction over powers a soul and even the strong in spirit will commit horrific acts and leave a trail of carelessness.

Triple XXX streaming videos were all over the World Wide Web—but there was no internet in North Korea. China and other communist countries filtered and blocked most WI-FI signal. Exposing over a billion people to freedom of thought would be like exposing the masses to the tree of knowledge—life would never be the same. Mr. Meng's main objective was to destroy the exponentially expanding WWW--the Y2K virus would insure that good information and truth could not be spread.

Tim Baylor's mini camcorder was a safe way to watch homemade X rated material without being caught. Showing off past college day Rally-Girl conquests was careless—pride made Tim do it. Kang Chan got to see the tape of Tina and Tim in Mexico; the trip when Tim was purchasing more Rohypnol. The newest tape of Lilly in the motel room was at the Sacramento police station inside a broken 8mm camcorder; there wasn't anything incriminating on it anyway. Unbeknownst to Tim; Hung Meng was making his own special tape of screaming and control with Kang being the main actor. This graphic tape included mutilation but not death. This video would make or break an alliance with the newt Baylor Anti-virus on-site maintenance upstart.

Trask Inc. wasn't an upstart and had been on Hung Meng's make or break list for over three years. After the Friday insurance meeting and Kevin's efforts to get the Union Contract settled the Trask land sell was back on. One drawback was the continual increase in production of trailers. Robert Trask had become receptive to selling but with the spike in production maybe stalling could net more of his return on investment. Hung Meng decided to up the earnest money--his new investors had lots of oil money.

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Monday morning Robert Trask had the new twenty million dollar non-refundable earnest money offer to ponder over. Kevin was up in Oregon all week and the Trask Condo was being used as a honeymoon suite. Robert Trask pushed the call button on his desk phone for Condi.

“Shut my door and take a chair,” Robert Trask ordered.

“Yes sir,” Condi replied and did as ordered.

“Condi, I do not like the fact that behind my back you gathered statistics and reliability data on brake light problems on some Trask trailer’s.”

“Sorry, about that.” Condi replied while taking a deep breath. “If you would have listened to some of the foremen down on the floor, maybe that family in Michigan would not have crashed into the back of one of your trailers.”

Robert Trask’s face started to turn red. “You’re right Condi... All weekend I’ve been running over what I need to do. Mr. Meng increased the offer. ”

“I know that you will do the right thing.” Condi replied in a sincere tone.

Robert picked up Condi’s personnel file from his desk. “Condi according to some recent inquires it looks like you have been sending out your resume to different places. Did that start when we had to terminate your Dad?

Now it was Condi’s face feeling hot. She got right to the point; she had nothing to lose. “No, my Dad slept with that whore auditor. He needed to be terminated.”

“That young woman lost her head in that horrific car accident,” Robert Trask replied.

“She was still a whore,” Condi quipped and then changed her tone. “I started looking for work elsewhere mainly because of the pending sale. If they outsource all the manufacturing to China, I need to cover my butt. I got a son to think about.”

“How is Ali?” Robert asked. “He’s getting big. I saw him trying to pedal Gus’s three wheeler around the parking lot late Friday afternoon.”

“Yeah, he is getting big. I’m planning on getting him a bike. But if we move up to Silicon Valley, I’m going to wait.”

“So, is that where you’re planning to go to work?” Robert asked.

“I have an offer at a new upstart virus protection company. Actually, Kang Chan told me about the position,” Condi replied with brute honesty.

“Would it help if I doubled your salary for you to stay on here?” Robert Trask asked as he let Condi’s personnel file drop onto the desk.

“A... I thought you called me in here so to terminate me after the meeting with the insurance people on Friday.”

“Terminate you?” Mr. Trask turned to look out the window at a super sized cargo

ship entering the Long Beach harbor. “I need you to get us through the pending sale? I’ll even give you a two year paid up severance package if you stay on and help wrap things up.”

“Sure, with an offer like that, I’d be a fool to leave.” Condi replied

“So your raise starts immediately.” Robert stood and extended a handshake to Condi. “Linda and I are flying down to our condo in Mexico for the rest of the week. If you can get the insurance claim with the Shultz’s family back on the bargaining table, that would be great.”

“No problem. I’ll see what I can do.” Condi let loose of the handshake and walked to the office door.

Robert Trask barked out one more order, “I’d better see Ali riding a brand new bike when we get back from Cabo San Lucas.”

Condi hardly ever cried but back at her desk she had to wipe away a few tears. Robert Trask always trusted her and respected her for getting things done. Something her own father couldn’t do—because she was a woman.

Up one floor almost the same scenario was taking place. Patty wasn’t getting her salary doubled, yet she couldn’t control her tears. The pending honeymoon gift to Hawaii already had her emotions running so high that she kept pinching herself to see if all the good in the last six months was really happening. Working for Kevin, meeting CP at work, getting married and in the morning going to Hawaii for eight days. Patty offered to put off the honeymoon trip till after the Shultz insurance claim was settled but Kevin insisted. The ten day plan was that Kevin would go up to Oregon to help fill in CP’s position until the following week. Lilly would load and haul logs to the mill; all Kevin had to do was to be a Nubber.

Robert and Kevin agreed that Condi could run everything with them both gone. Kevin had only been there for six months and Condi always ran things in Robert’s absence for the last ten years anyway. A couple of weeks for both sides to cool off and get things in order before the next land sale meeting would be a good thing. After Kevin spent a week or so up in Oregon he’d come back and work day and night get the union contract settled—he even had a plan to get Gus to move out of the corner apartment.

Patty had everything in neat piles or in folders on her desk and showed Condi where to find anything that she might need. Condi privately shared that she wasn’t taking the job up in Silicon Valley. Their joy filled and excited voices floated into Kevin’s office. He was also feeling good about doing something different for a week. Kevin was not exactly sure what being a Nubber was about... But he’s be working out in the woods-- so much better than being stuck behind a desk.

Kevin was following Patty’s lead and arranging documents and contracts into neat little piles on his desk, when he got distracted and looked up.

“Kevin, I can’t thank you enough for all the good that has come my way since that night we spent together on Shasta Lake.” Patty spoke from the doorway with her jacket and purse in hand.

Kevin stood up and then walked over to her. “Well then I guess I need to thank God for bringing us together. There is no way Trask Inc. would be where we are at if it were not for you.” Kevin put his hand on Patty’s shoulder turned her around and shoved her out the door. “Now get out of here and have a wonderful honeymoon!”

Patty practically floated down the stairs and across the parking lot. Gus gave her a big hug and wished her and CP Godspeed to Hawaii.

Kevin continued to arrange papers on his desk when something flashed inside his skull. It was almost as strong of a feeling as hearing the recording of Danny’s voice over the mobile phone. Kevin rushed down the stairs, ran across the parking lot to the guard shack. “Did you see Patty?”

Gus pointed toward Nimitz Road. “Yes. I did see Patty. She got on the bus about two minutes ago.”

Kevin turned and ran toward his car; hoping that he could catch up with the bus. The moment he put the key in the ignition the mobile phone rang. Kevin yanked the handset from the bag. “Hello.”

“Mr. Trask, the fishing brochure was delivered this morning.” Officer Bull’s deep raspy voice stated. “The hand print you lifted off of your windshield is the same print that was on the fiberglass can.”

For a second time the mobile phone delivered an unexplainable message that felt like God-speak. “Are you sure Bull? Are you sure that it is the same hand print?”

“I’m sure as if I was tracking a bear with a marking across its right front paw. The scar across the palm of the print you mailed is an accurate match to the one at the Redding Police Department.” Bull’s words had reassurance to them.

“You’re sure?” Kevin asked a second time.

“If you need, I can send both prints to a lab in Denver if you want a hundred percent confirmation,” Bull replied and then noticed a couple of *clicks*. Bull thought the clicks were from the new front desk girl at the Warm Springs Tribal Affairs building pushing the wrong buttons.

Kevin didn’t notice the clicks; he was brain numb. God-speak over the mobile phone again! “Bull, can you keep both those hand prints safe? I’m going to be working with Kenneth and Richard this week. I guess I’m going to be their Nubber.”

“Oh...” Bull replied through the phone. “I’ll put the handprints in our evidence file cabinet.” Let’s meet up this next week. I’ll bring you some more balm. You’ll need it.”

“Sound’s good.” Kevin put the handset back into the bag. Bull hung up the desk

phone at the tribal office. Mr. Meng pushed stopped on the cassette recorder. Any evidence that could lead back to the Y2K mission had to be removed and immediately dealt with. A filing cabinet could be opened with a crowbar.

Kevin's mind was at spiritual full speed for the second time. It was Tina's knee that had mysteriously dialed the marina phone number and now the two matching handprints information from Bull—two signs in less than a month over a mobile car phone.

Tuesday morning Kevin got a late start but made it to San Jose just after six. The GPS unit worked better than expected. Kevin found Tina's new apartment without any problem. The studio apartment was almost as small as a dorm room. She explained to Kevin that it was only temporary and that when her first commission check came in she planned to rent a house with a big backyard and a pool. Tina didn't tell Kevin that Tim was renting the apartment and only giving her barely enough money for food and gas—she was already tired of bartering for more.

"I can only stay an hour or so," Kevin said as he tried to find a comfortable spot on the fold up bed.

"Well maybe we could go get a bite to eat. I've been out selling Y2K virus protection all day," Tina said sitting at the tiny breakfast nook.

"Yeah let's do that," Kevin jumped at the chance to get out of the claustrophobic feeling place.

"Kevin, you can spend the night here and head up to Oregon in the morning."

"Thanks." Kevin was already at the door. "But, I start my training tomorrow."

"Training for what?" Tina asked as she locked the apartment door.

"Logger training!" Kevin answered in a deeper than normal voice.

Over fast-food Tina bragged about the eighteen thousand dollars of virus protection software she had sold. She was expecting her fifty percent commission check any day. Kevin only heard about every other word, he was fixated on meeting up with Officer Bull Elk. That handprint with a scar across the palm was surely a message from above. It was probably a sign; Kevin was thinking of different ways to double check his speculation when he got back. *Maybe a game of tennis? I'll extend a brand new tennis racket to Kang Chan and ask how he likes the grip. Then I'll ask for it back and bingo I'll have a good hand print.*

Kevin didn't even get an hour of sleep before he heard kicking on the bottom of door **5** at the Zigzag Inn. "You ready to start logging?" Lilly asked with a cup of coffee in each hand.

"Yeah, come on in while I get a shower." Kevin groggily said as he rubbed at his messed up hair.

“Skip the shower.” Lilly said and stepped into the motel room.

“Okay, should I put on the logging stuff Patty got for me?” Kevin pointed at a bag and box on the floor.

Lilly looked through the bag and tossed a heavy pair of overalls to Kevin and then a bright yellow sweat shirt. “Put this stuff on,” she said and then bent over and pulled the new cork boots out of the large shoebox.

The first thing Kevin noticed was that the boots had a bunch of steel spikes on the bottom. The second thing he noticed was that Lilly only had a white cotton tank top on under her overalls. Kevin’s man brain flashed back to the last time Lilly and he were in a motel room. “I’ll put this stuff on in the bathroom.” Kevin didn’t want Lilly to watch him get dressed and felt a little turned on being back in a motel room with her.

“Good, I see that Patty found you buckskin gloves like I told her to get!” Lilly yelled out and then looked at the hard hat with the Trask Trailer logo on it. She then went over to the bathroom door. “Are you going to wear protection?” she asked sensually through the bathroom door.

Kevin was stunned at Lilly’s question! Maybe she had noticed he was in a slightly aroused state. Kevin slightly opened the bathroom door and stuck his head out. “What?”

“You know ear protection...” Lilly smiled and held up the red ear muffs. “What did you think I meant?” Lilly laughed and then pulled the bathroom door shut.

The jokes, the sexual innuendos and light flirting might have been considered sexual harassment anyplace else—but this was normal logging jargon. Kevin didn’t mind Lilly’s ribbings; she was a great instructor and when it came to the safety stuff there was no joking around. By the end of the first day Kevin was running up and down the big fallen Douglas firs with his new corks like a tree squirrel. A chainsaw with a longer bar is better choice for limbing trees. Richard, Kenneth and Lilly didn’t plan to show Kevin the thirty inch bar; lightweight chainsaw until the following week

By Friday lunchtime, Kevin’s back ached so badly from bending over that he wanted to know where the closest spa or club with a hot tub was. Richard got up from his seat on the tailgate and dug into the truck tool box and pulled out the lightweight, extended bar chainsaw. “For a city-boy you leaned nubbing fast. You might try this one; it’s easier on the back.”

Richard, Kenneth and Lilly all laughed in unison.

“It’s not funny! Kevin grabbed the chainsaw from Richards grip and sat it down next to the lunch basket. Kevin was so tired and sore he didn’t really care nor understand that he needed at least forty hours experience with the smaller saw for his own safety.

“We got an old redwood soak tub out behind the cabin. Lilly can show you how to

fire it up if you want.”

“A redwood soak tub, what is that?” Kevin asked with an upbeat tone.

“It’s just an old redwood tub that is heated by firewood.” Lilly added to the conversation.

“Did you get the bees nest out of the cabin?” Richard added to the lunchtime conversation.

“Yeah, Lilly used a can of that bee killer that you can also use for mace on bears. She got the bees nest and the broken window all fixed up too.” Kenneth answered Richard while digging through the picnic basket. “Who wants a piece of Mary’s apple pie?” Four affirmatives rang out at the same time.

“You got bear up here?” Richard asked.

“Yeah, just them there brown bears. They don’t eat human.” Kenneth started to pass out the pieces of apple that were individually wrapped in aluminum foil “But you don’t want to get the Mama bear mad if she has her cubs around.”

“That’s good to know,” Richard replied and took a huge bite of pie. “Hey, maybe you want to go lake fishing with the three of us after church on Sunday?”

“Yeah, maybe,” Kevin replied. “Lilly still owes me a fishing lesson.”

“I don’t lake fish. It’s for old men.” Lilly injected.

“Fr. Jude isn’t an old man,” Kenneth stated, “He’s bout your age Lilly.”

“Yeah, I know but I don’t want to sit in a boat with a bunch of men talking religion.”

“Fr. Jude is working on a doctorate degree. He is one of the smartest men that I have met.” Richard said defending the old man and talking religion dig.

Kevin was on the same page as Lilly. “I’ll have to pass on the lake fishing. I’m meeting up with Bull Elk to see about doing some helicopter logging over on Mt. Jefferson.” Kevin winked at Lilly for giving him the heads up about the religion.

“That’d be good work on the Rez. We could work in the snow. We’d just haul our quipment in on sleds.” Kenneth pulled a can of chew from his button flannel shirt pocket. “CP and Bull have been talking about that a lot last week. Seems CP knows a pilot from Desert Storm that flies an old gutted out Chinook Helicopter.”

Those old twin bladed Chinooks were work horses during Vietnam. They could haul more than 50 men plus a whole lot of cargo.” Richard said with pride.

“You fought in Nam?” Kenneth asked.

“Yeah two tours, Army,” Richard quipped and then looked off into the distance.

“Thanks for your service for the good old USA.” Kenneth said.

“What about you?” Richard turned back and looked directly at Kenneth.

“They wouldn’t take me. They said I had an enlarged heart. But I think it was cause I couldn’t fill out the paperwork.” Kenneth put a wad of chew in his mouth.

“Probably best... Richard replied and paused for a long time. The Viet Cong guerillas were masters of improvised weaponry. Before attacking they sometimes would throw nests of hornets and wasps into our outposts. I got stung five times in one day before a fight.” Richard turned back to looking off; it was obvious that he didn’t want to talk anymore.

Finally, Richard spit out a spat of chew and stood up and said, “Let’s try to get all the trees fell from here to milepost thirty-nine before quitting time today.”

Lilly loaded and hauled two full loads of Douglas fir over the Mount Hood Summit in just less than three hours. With the bigger, longer chainsaw Kevin was nubbing limbs almost twice as fast. With the longer bar, Kevin also graduated to bucking the logs into twenty one foot sections. He was now an apprentice buckler and fully fledged nubber. Two days off to deal with all his aches, a sore back and to sleep in past 4:30 am was sounding good.

Richard jumped out in front of the third fully loaded log truck and gave the slashing hand signal in front of his neck. Lilly shut down the rumbling diesel motor opened the door and stood on the running board. “I can still make it to the mill before they close down for the weekend.”

“Not worth it. Too much Friday night traffic.” Kenneth pointed toward highway 26.

“Okay, I’ll chock the wheels and lock up the cab.” Lilly reached in the cab and grabbed the key out of the ignition.

“You ought to tell Paul Bunyan over there that we’re shutting it down.” Kenneth pointed at Kevin working himself up the trunk of a fallen tree. “Maybe logger boy wants to have a beer with me and Rich.”

Lilly skillfully walked up the large fallen tree and waited until Kevin cut through a limb. When he let up on the chainsaw trigger she tapped him on the shoulder.

Kevin immediately hit the kill switch, just like she had taught him. Kevin took tiny baby steps on the green tree; he had mastered the spiked boots.

Lilly lifted up one side of Kevin’s ear muffs. “We’re shutting down for the weekend.”

“Okay,” Kevin looked around. Kenneth and Richard were loading up one of the Saxton’s work trucks. “What a difference this saw makes.”

“Your back still sore,” Lilly asked.

“Not as bad, not being bent over sure helps.” Kevin replied. “I’d still like to use that soak tub if you can show me how to get it fired up.”

“Sure, but Dad wants to know...” Lilly stopped herself mid sentence jumped off the tree trunk and ran to one of the work trucks.

From out of hearing distance the three talked for about a minute; then both Richard and Kenneth waved up the hill at Kevin. Then they both got in the red truck and turned left onto Highway 26.

Kevin was loading up the old yellow truck when Lilly approached. “What was it that your Dad wanted to know?” Kevin asked while putting a gas can into the bed of the pickup.

“Oh... A...” Lilly paused so to make up her story, “Dad wanted to know if the corks fit okay. He said you have tender feet and mention the blister last time you wore new boots,” Lilly replied.

The long drawn out answer sounded kind of fishy but Kevin didn’t care. All he wanted was to soak in hot water and not have to get up before the sun came up. Kevin pulled himself up into the old pickup. “Next time I come up here I’ll drive the Range Rover so that you don’t have to drive me all over.”

“I don’t mind,” Lilly replied and started the truck.

“Lilly, could you stop at a wine shop. I’d like to get a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, some aged Cheddar and crackers.”

I don’t know anything about wine. Kevin’s going to think I’m a redneck heck if I stop at the grocery store. “There’s a wine and gift shop in Government Camp. Do you want me to stop there?”

“Sounds good.” Kevin took off his hard hat and ran his finger through his reddish blond hair. “That’s the hardest three days I’ve ever worked.” Kevin rested his head on the back of the seat and closed his eyes.

It wasn’t even fifteen minutes of silence before Lilly blurted out, “We’re here!”

Kevin opened his eyes and focused on the trendy wine and gift shop store front. “Are you coming in?”

“No, I’ll wait here,” Lilly answered, not wanting to embarrass herself with her lack of knowledge about fine wine.

It was Lilly that was awakened this time when Kevin opened the heavy worn out truck passenger door. He slid a big brown bag across the bench seat. In his other hand he lifted a big gift basket. “I got your Mom a wine basket for making my lunch for the last three days.” Kevin put the gift basket next to the brown bag and pulled himself in.

“That was nice, Mom appreciates fine wine.” Lilly, immediately smelled garlic rolling up and out from the brown bag next to her. “Something smells good.”

Kevin pulled a bagel from the brown bag; tore off a piece and put it up to Lilly’s mouth. “Try this fresh garlic bagel.”

Lilly took a big bite and got Kevin’s fingers at the same time. They both laughed and

finished the bagel on the road to the Saxton's family cabin.

Kevin vaguely remembered the bumpy ride into the remote cabin. The old dead snag out front of the A-frame looked familiar. Lilly jumped from the truck and yelled, "I'll get a fire going. It takes about forty five minutes for the water to get hot." She disappeared around the left side of the cabin.

The cabin front door didn't have a lock. Kevin went in and unpacked the wine, cheese, crackers, some fresh apples and three more bagels. He couldn't find any wine glasses so the blue enameled coffee cups became the vessels to hold the two hundred dollar a bottle wine. By the time Lilly came into the cabin Kevin had everything laid out on the small green table.

"Okay, I got a fire going in the heater box." Lilly noticed the items on the table.

"How about a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon and cheddar?" Kevin held up the blue enamel camping cup.

"Sure," Lilly replied and took the cup.

"And a toast," Kevin clicked his cup against Lilly's cup. "A toast that I finally got to use the man's chainsaw today."

Lilly laughed and then took a drink. "Wow this is really good wine..."

"It really takes the sharpness off the cheddar," Kevin replied and then put a small piece of cheese in Lilly's mouth."

The forty five minute wait for the soak tub to heat up was most likely not a good thing. Too much time to drink wine... The food somewhat helped to absorb the alcohol but another forty-five minutes in the heated water counteracted any sobering effect. Just as the sun set Lilly staggered back inside the cabin to get another bottle of wine. For no reason she broke out a glass piece of the French Pane window.

The sun yellow rays mixed with the dimming blue sky; the combining colors cast an orange cast on Mt. Hood. The soak tube was cooling off fast as the cool fall night air was settling in. "We'd better get out, dried off and get back before your parents start to worry." Kevin crawled out first and started to dry off. The cold chills hit him like a blast of Arctic air.

"Oh, they won't worry. But if I drive after drinking, they'll be mad." Lilly swung her long leg over the side of the redwood tub and grabbed the other towel. She pulled her wet panties and bra off; they hit the wood deck with a splat. "You better get those wet boxers off if you want to quit shaking."

Kevin reached under the towel and pulled off his boxer briefs. "I've got to get inside, I'm freezing."

Go ahead, I'll shut up stuff out here, Lilly replied as she fastened the large white towel just above her bare breasts.

Kevin scampered across the wood deck and into the cabin; it was as cool as the outside air. He started to shake more—his teeth started to chatter.

Lilly finally came through the door. “Why don’t you head upstairs and crawl under the blankets. I’ll build a fire.”

Unlike last time and back in the same bed, alcohol was the main reason for shivering—not exposure or hypothermia. Kevin would have uncontrollably shaken himself to death that night up on Mt. Hood if Kenneth Saxton hadn’t found him. This night there was no Tucker and yet Kevin felt warmth up against his bare back. Eight hours of rock hard sleep was what Kevin needed. The smell of brewing coffee and the dry heat from the fireplace slowly pulled Kevin from one of the best dreams that he ever had.

It was past nine before they made it back to the guide shop. Kevin grabbed onto the wine basket and hopped out of the truck. Now he hoped the gift basket could be sort of a peace offering, since Lilly didn’t make it home last night.

Kenneth Saxton came out of the door, spit some chew onto the gravel parking lot and then said. “You drink too much? Not to be able to drive home last night?”

Lilly ran up and gave Kenneth a hug. “Yeah we drink almost two bottles of wine.”

“You done good girl,” Kenneth spit out more chew. *I already lost one child in an accident*, Kenneth thought to himself.

Kevin was standing on the bottom stair and held up the basket. “I got something for Mary, for making all my lunches.”

“She’s inside making meatloaf,” Kenneth said as he lumbered down the stairs and went around to his shop at the back of the building.

The guide shop door hadn’t even closed and Tucker was jumping at the gift pack, he could smell the different cheese packs. Mary came down the hall and around the display case. “I hope you’ll come to dinner tonight?”

“Can I let you know after I talk with Officer Bull? He was looking into something for me. I don’t know how long our meeting will last.” Kevin walked over to Mary and held out the gift basket. “This is for you.”

“Thank you so much,” Mary said while looking at three different bottles of wine. “This Zinfandel or even the Pinot Noir will go good with my special meatloaf.”

Lilly often wished she was as sophisticated as her mother and often probed Mary for stories of when she was a worldly stewardess. “I’m going to go help Dad sharpen the chainsaws,” Lilly was gone just like that. It was her defense mechanism—she knew she would never be someone of Kevin’s class or stature.

“Well, dinner’s at six, I hope that you can make it.”

It was only about a half mile walk over to the Zigzag Motel. Before even going into

his room, Kevin opened the passenger door on the SL600 and checked the signal indicator on the mobile phone.

“Kevin, I’m glad you called,” Bull’s deep Indian voice came over the handset. “Can we meet up in the Timberline Lodge parking lot about three this afternoon? I need to do my last patrol drive through around about then.”

“Sure, I’ll get a shower and make a few calls and then meet you up there.”

“I hope we can get this helicopter logging project underway. It would really help the Rez to clean out and manage our forest.”

“Whatever I can do. It could be a win win for a bunch of people.” Kevin replied.

“I went ahead and sent those hand prints to an independent federal crime lab.” I know that they were a match but they said they would run the fingerprints to see if they matched anything in their database.”

“Wow,” Kevin’s mind jumped into a different gear. “Bull, if I sent you a tennis racket could you have that crime lab see it that handprint matches the other two.”

“Maybe?” Now, Officer Bull’s mind shifted into a different gear. “So, we think the handprint that was on your windshield probably matches the one on the fiberglass can that the young boy, Danny, supposedly was sniffing from?” Bull paused and then continued. “Kevin are you saying that you might know who these prints belong to?”

“I might...” Kevin replied as an uneasy feeling came over and through the phone. “Bull, when we meet up in the Timberline Lodge parking lot I’ll let you in on a hunch that I have.”

“See you at three,” Bull replied. There was a third *click* after they both hung up!

As Kevin showered he could smell the chlorine from the soak tub washing down the drain. Last night was another blurred out night up in the A-frame cabin with Lilly. Her disdain for families like the Trask’s was apparent, but there was just something about Lilly’s immodest, brashness that was compelling. Tina wasn’t modest either, but it was more like Tina was flaunting her flawless body wanting everyone to desire or envy her. Tina was a good fit for the upper and privileged crowd. *I need to call Tina when I get out of the shower,* Kevin said to himself.

Before Kevin called Tina he needed to try to set up a tennis match with Kang Chan. It was easier to call from the mobile car phone than place a long distance phone call from a motel room. The places that showed a strong signal on the bag phone really made long distance calling easier. No sixteen digit credit card number to enter or operator needed. *These mobile phones might become popular and the GPS feature works some of the time,* Kevin thought as he plopped down in the passenger seat.

“Don’t worry about calling on a Saturday. You know that I’m always here for Trask Inc.” Condi’s voice came over the handset.

“Well, Dad told me that you were sending out your resume. I bug you enough after hours and on the weekends. I hope that’s not why you’re looking for work elsewhere?”

“Since your Father doubled my salary I don’t think I will be going anyplace soon.”

“I’m glad that Robert convinced you to say on.” Kevin replied back over the mobile handset.

“So what do you need?” Condi asked.

“Could you somehow get in touch with Mr. Kang Chan and setup a tennis match between just him and me?”

“I can do that,” Condi replied. “I think they are playing a threesome this next week at Pebble Beach golf course. I’ll try to get a hold of Kang Chan out there. If not I have Mr. Hung Meng’s contact number on my rolodex at work.”

“Thanks Condi. I’m so glad that you are staying on” Kevin hung up, Condi hung up and there was the same third *click* afterwards...

Kevin found Tina’s new phone number to the studio apartment and dialed. Tim Baylor answered the phone! Kevin immediately shoved the handset back into the phone bag. *That’s weird Tina told me that her and Tim were over.*

About half mile west and down Highway 26 was a grocery store. The total length of the town of Zigzag was less than a mile. Walking to a grocery store was something Kevin never did. No way would the Pasadena Homeowners Association allow a commercial business in or near their private community. The brisk walk at the three thousand foot elevation felt good. Tim answering Tina’s phone was disconcerting but what Kevin was really focused on was; *what ‘if’ Kang’s handprint is a match?*

With coffee in one hand and a donut in the other hand, Kevin stopped at a roadside vendor selling fresh cut flowers. The town of Zigzag had the feel of a tiny Aspen; minus all the snobs and elitist. Kevin liked this small town feel opposed to their ski cabin in Colorado. The vine maples were popping with their red and yellow fall colors. The road up to Timberline Lodge had the same feel as Trinity Loop Road at the base of Mt. Shasta. In the back of Kevin’s mind he was tucking away a goal to climb some of the Cascade peaks—at least Mount Hood and Mount Shasta.

Bull had the police cruiser pulled in backwards in the usual place near the entrance to the massive lodge. No need to flash on the police lights, this had now become their meeting place. The west boundary of the Warm Springs Reservation paralleled a forty-five mile piece of the Pacific Crest Trail. In his younger days, Bull Elk would spend days on end camping and hiking along the trail. There were places that no man—Native American or pale-face had walked on. If Bull had his way he would keep this area a private sanctuary for the eagles to fly and Elk to roam.

The parking lot maybe had fifty spots filled; once the snow falls it would be

impossible to find a parking spot on a Saturday. Downhill skiing had been off of Kevin's list since his basketball scholarship. The crowds and lines was something Kevin didn't do well with. Mountain climbing with its do or die lure required solitude or at the most one other team member. *I wonder if Bull Elk has climbing experience?*

Kevin parked beside the police car. Bull approached the passenger side of the SL600 with a large manila envelope in his hand. "That was nice you bought me flowers."

Kevin laughed as he stood on the other side of the SL600 that he'd lowered the top on. "I got them for the dinner table tonight at the Saxton's"

"Mary is one great cook," Bull replied. "I always liked sleeping over at Billy's; she makes the best venison breakfast burritos."

Kevin's eyes immediately focused on Crater's Peak about halfway up the mountain; at about the eight thousand foot line. "I still feel guilty about losing Billy's crampon up there." Kevin squinted; *it looks like an eagle is way up there circling...*

"Here are all the permits and legal documents to log at the base of Mt. Jefferson," Bull handed the large envelope across the open car area.

"I'll give this stuff to Patty; she'll be back from Hawaii this Friday." Kevin leaned in and put the large document envelope behind the seat next to the flowers; he grabbed a small complementary motel guest pad and handed it to Bull.

Bull looked at the small motel note pad. "Are these are the names that you would like me to have checked out?"

"Yeah, I don't know if you will have any luck. Patty tried to run a background check on both of them but absolutely nothing came back. I know that Kang Chan is from North Korea but not sure about Hung Meng."

"Didn't you tell me that this car is registered to Mr. Hung Meng or to an import company or something? Officer Bull asked.

"Yeah, I think," Kevin replied and walked toward the trunk. "I'll read off the license plate to you."

Bull wrote down the information. "Give me about a week to run this information."

From behind, Kevin felt a strange pull; he turned and was now looking south at Mt. Jefferson. "Bull you told me once that I would need to get a permit to climb that mountain."

"If you climb from the east side you do. The private east access trailhead is on Reservation property."

"I might do that next summer," Kevin said. "Are you a climber?"

"I climbed a little with Billy before he died up here." Bull turned and motioned north

with his arm up toward the summit of Mt. Hood. "I can hardly even hike these days; ever since I got full-blown diabetes. You know Native Americans are twice as likely to get diabetes as you white folk."

"Sorry Bull," Kevin replied; feeling that he needed to apologize for being white. "I didn't know that fact about diabetes. I feel bad for you."

Bull sensed the apologizing tone. Most Native-Americans are used to it; whether it is sincere or not. "Hey it's not your fault. I blame myself, big gulps and fast food."

"Yeah, I hear you there." Kevin replied.

"I'm off tomorrow if you want to take a ride over to the Mount Jefferson trailhead. I could also show you the area that hopefully, they can get a helicopter in to remove some diseased trees."

Kevin's heart jumped like a Boy Scout preparing for a hike! They made plans to meet at the Warm Spring Police Station at seven Sunday morning. Kevin had lost track of the time but Lilly hadn't; she had looked out the front window of the guide shop at least five times. Like an arrow, Lilly shot from the storefront, down the hall into the kitchen and started moving plates around on the table.

"I told you'd he be here." Mary said as she put the meatloaf on a platter.

Ken had just come out of his shop and was wiping his hands off with a red shop rag. He met up with Kevin on the porch. "I hope you're hungry!" Ken locked the door behind them and then herded Kevin down the hall.

"I got these for the table." Kevin said and held out the fresh cut flowers.

Mary handed the flowers to Lilly, "Honey could you put these in a vase."

Lilly kind of liked being called honey; it made her sound younger, more like a little girl.

Ken pulled the small table away from the wall and sat down in the spare chair. He turned his palms up and said, "Let's pray. I'm hungry!"

"You can sit there." Lilly pointed at the spot directly across from her Dad. Kevin sat down and mimicked the palms up position. Lilly and Mary sat across from each other; they all joined hands.

"Thank You Lord for our food. Thank you for bringing work my way and bless all my new lumberjack friends. Please always look after Billy and look after Lilly on her flight this week to Washington DC. In your name we pray, Amen" In the same motion that they held hands Kenneth broke hands; he reached for the meatloaf. "I'll taste it first and let our dinner guest know if it is any good." Everyone laughed.