

## Chapter Thirty-one

**Tim** had just walked up and out of the San Diego airport jet-bridge when a small Middle Eastern man handed him an envelope. Tim rushed around and ahead of the long line of passengers to an isolated section in the gate terminal to read the instructions inside: **We can furnish the coast guard with the longitude and latitude coordinates of the life raft your brother is on. Only, if you follow orders! Use the enclosed ticket to go take care of business in Oregon.**

Being six four, Tim easily scanned over the crowd looking for the smaller dark haired man. He noticed a black haired Asian that looked familiar. The prevailing looking figure at the end of the gate nodded. *I think that is Mr. Hung Meng? I only met him once at the Senator's fund raiser...* Tim fell in line with the hundred plus passengers and worked himself through the cattle to the front—the dark figure had vanished.

The airline ticket listed the departure time to Portland Oregon at 7:38pm; included in the envelope was a motel reservation. It was past midnight by time the shuttle dropped Tim off at Holiday Inn in Portland. A red indicator was blinking on the nightstand phone. Exhausted, Tim sat on the edge of the bed and listened to the message. “The Coast Guard has been given the GPS coordinates of the life raft. A periscope visual of the life raft indicated five living and two possible casualties.” The phone message ended.

Hallway noise and motel room doors opening and closing woke Tim just before 6:00am. A new envelope had been slipped under his door with a car rental agreement for an SUV, a map that had several locations circled in red and a room reservation at the Indian Head Casino one hundred miles southeast of Portland. He scanned the morning news channels and finally found a clip about a captain and his crew being rescued at sea—only two of the ten tourists survived. The Baylor's always put themselves first. If needed, Tim could count on his brother to help deal with Hung Meng—a temporary, non white over reaching principle.

On the drive east over Mt. Hood Tim stopped in Zigzag, one of the places on the map that had a circle around it. The next stop was Timberline Lodge; he had lunch and asked around about Bull Elk. No one recognized the name. When he checked in at the Casino the desk clerk referred to Bull Elk as Officer Mike Jones and drew a map to the Warm Springs Tribal Police Department; across Hwy 26 and five blocks west. From his casino room Tim used the binocular; he spotted a Museum, a large lumber mill, a rundown Shell gas station and a market without any windows. Warm Springs was a small Indian town at the bottom of a deep valley that had been cut by the Deschutes river millions of years ago.

Tim cared less about the history of Warm Springs. After two days he had observed how physically limited Mike Jones, AKA Bull Elk was and how Bull often used a

walking stick to go from the police station to the motor pool lot. Hung Meng's specific instructions not to leave finger or hand prints went without saying and the deadline to finish the mission before Thanksgiving was getting close. The last red circle on the map was on the remote southeast slope of Mount Jefferson, the closest dot on the map was a place called Camp Sherman. The drive due west on a dusty gravel road turned from high desert to pine and fir trees after twenty miles of bumpy white knuckle driving. A lone logging truck forced Tim off into loose gravel; the SUV rental needed to be put in four wheel drive to get going again. This southwest corner of the Indian reservation would be a good place to kill someone—a remote area of a sovereign nation that the State Police or even the FBI had no jurisdiction.

Strangely, in the road ahead there was a flagger holding an orange warning sign. Tim slowed and then was stopped by a Native American woman, she had on a yellow hard hat; **Bull Elk Logging** was stenciled above the brim. The overly thin woman was more than glad to answer Tim's questions; he was only the third person she had stopped all morning. Tim gathered enough information to know that the one day that there would be no logging up on Biddle Pass Butte was on Sunday. He also found out that a road permit was required when driving forest roads that were on the reservation.

Aiana took up Tim's one hundred dollar offer to be a guide and show him the best place to hunt for antler sheds. They made plans to meet Sunday morning in the Casino parking lot. Tim knew not to leave a paper trail and asked if a road pass was required if she was riding in the car. He also suggested that she bring another female friend. *Two Squaws would be equal to one white woman*, a thought that kept popping into Tim's head ever since the first day of roaming around the gambling tables.

Madras was the closest town for supplies. The Ace Hardware store had a shovel, rope, gloves and a plastic tarp. Tim was careful to pay cash so not to leave a paper trail. Back in his room at the Indian Head Casino he checked his supply of Rohypnol. He had enough to drug two women, but Bull Elk was over two hundred pounds. Tim popped out the cylinder of the 38 Smith and Wesson—it was fully loaded.

Sunday morning Aiana had her own weapon. A boning knife with an antler handle was strapped to her leg. It would take less than two hours to take Tim up to Biddle Pass Butte to the logging site and then over to Camp Sherman. She hopped into the SUV. "Turn left out of Casino parking lot."

"You didn't bring a friend." Tim started the SUV.

"I don't have many friends left on the Rez." Aiana buckled her seatbelt.

"Oh why's that?" Tim backed out of the parking guest parking space.

“Drugs and alcohol,” Aiana quipped and then blurted out. “Basically we’ll head west directly toward Mt. Jefferson and stay on Tenino Road for twenty miles to the logging site. After we cross Milk Creek we’ll then head due south on Whitewater Access for another ten miles or so. The Cascade Mountains will always be on our right and the Metolius River on our left. There is no way to get lost, if you remember mountains west, river east.”

“Sounds simple. You people know directions and the outdoors.”

“Native Americans are hunters and gathers. We tread lightly on mother earth.”

“Yeah, I could see that at the casino. Your people gathered a lot of my money.” Tim said in a sarcastic tone.

“Why are you hunting sheds?” Aiana asked.

“I’ve heard that antlers are an aphrodisiac, almost as potent as Rhino horn.” Tim answered and then flashed a creepy sick smile.

Now, Aiana wished that she had brought a friend or at least told her mother where she was going... It hardly took an hour to get to Biddle Butte; a sparse clearing on top of a rock outcropping. There was a deck of downed fir trees fifteen feet high; a trailer with a blue outhouse on it, a second trailer with a large fuel tank and it smelled like Christmas from all the piles of cut white fir bows. Tim jumped out of the rental SUV and climbed up on the Skidder that had a small push blade on the front and a big cable spoon on the back. He started to look for a way to start the heavy piece of equipment.

Aiana jumped out the passenger door and ran to the Skidder, “You shouldn’t be playing on this. Kenneth Saxton would have a fit!”

“Well he left it out here. So it’s fair game.” Tim yelled down at Aiana.

Through a dense stand of trees Tim spotted the retro-fitted military CH-234 Chinook helicopter. The army camouflage paint did a good job but Tim had it in his sights. Aiana was on his heels but couldn’t keep up. Tim had already climbed up through the open belly of the huge twin bladed helicopter and tried to squeeze his six four frame into the pilot’s chair.

“You can’t be in here!” Aiana yelled from the back of the cockpit.

“A midget must fly this thing!” Tim said, as he looked for a way to adjust the seat.

“The pilot goes by Shrimp... He will be very upset if you touch or adjust anything. He calls this helicopter his baby...”

“Shrimp must be only five foot or so,” Tim replied and frustrated that he couldn’t get into the pilot seat.

“I think he’s taller than that,” Aiana replied. “Shrimp is a decorated Desert Storm Veteran. Please show some respect and leave his stuff alone!”

Nobody ever got away with telling Tim what to do. “I’ll tell you what Squaw. Have a beer with me and I’ll leave the midget’s stuff alone.”

Aiana agreed to have a beer. She was used to being called worse things than a Squaw—for over half of her life she had been called a drunken two-bit whore. Her current seven months of sobriety had her at a level of self respect that nothing or nobody could close down. Back at the SUV Aiana took the opened beer bottle, but when Tim attention was drawn to an eagle that had just landed in one of the dead snags she poured it out behind the log she was sitting on.

Tim watched the eagle for a long time and waited for the Rohypnol to kick in. There was a warm stillness in the air and dark gray thunderclouds were stacking up against the Cascade Mountains. “How was the beer?” Tim asked.

“Good,” Aiana replied and stood up from the log she was sitting on. “We should get going before this Thunderstorm opens up.”

Tim grabbed Aiana braided black ponytail and pulled her to her knees “Not before you perform your Squaw duties and blow me.” Tim started to undo his belt, expecting the date rape drug to have kicked in.

From her forced bent over position Aiana pulled the boning knife from the sheath tied to her leg and took a swipe at Tim. The steel blade grazed Tim’s forearm. He let loose of the black braided ponytail. “What the hell? You should be all doped up by now!”

“Let’s just end this peacefully. Just drive off and I won’t mention a thing.” Aiana said gripping the antler handle of the boning knife like an expert.

“Okay, don’t go all savage on me!” Tim backed up to the SUV and opened the door. “I need to see if there is a first aid kit. You cut me you stupid bitch!” Tim pulled the Smith and Wesson from the center console turned, pointed it and walked directly to Aiana. “I’ll claim it was self defense!”

The knife flew out of Aiana hand when she landed on her back. Tim put the 38 up between her legs and fired a second time. “That’s for being a drug user. You Doper’s are spreading AIDS these days almost as fast as the Fag’s. I just did the world a favor.”

An ear-piercing squawk rang out through the heavy still air and then a clap of thunder rumbled in the distant. Tim returned to the SUV for a first aid kit. The cut on his arm was superficial and really didn’t even need a bandage. There was flash of lightening followed by a louder clap of thunder and then another ear-piercing squawk. Tim took the binoculars off the dashboard and panned up the old dead snag. Suddenly, from out of nowhere a giant Bald Eagle swooped down and landed on the top of the deck of stacked logs. The Eagle canted its white head to stare back in through the windshield, its bright orange eye locked onto Tim. For the longest time the staring went on, neither would flinch. Tim had an audience; something he

planned so carefully to avoid. But this was a bird, not the police or a witness. Tim's hand reached for Smith and Wesson—there was only one way to end this stare down.

Tim fired the last four rounds; all four shots were low and went into the log deck. The Eagle turned its head, as to be spiteful... It was what Tim did not see, that got his attention. The eagle had no eye on this side of its head. There was just a dark hole where an orange eye should have been. The message of turning a blind eye to what had just happened pumped Tim's pride and ego. It started to rain and the blood evidence was being washed away. Killing an Indian wasn't a big deal. It made him feel powerful. Tim started making plans for Bull Elk, on or before Thanksgiving Day.

One thing that caught Tim by surprise was seeing Kevin Trask walk into the Warm Spring Police Station two days later. Kevin was in dirty work clothes and not driving his graduation gift; the limited edition Mercedes sports car that Tina always raved about. Tim knew that there was a connection between Mr. Hung Meng and Trask Trailers but didn't know of any connection with Bull Elk. It was hard to tell through the binoculars, but it looked like Kevin was caring a file holder when he left the police station.

Tim followed Kevin back to a motel in Zigzag, Oregon. It was already getting dark and all the tall Douglas fir trees shadowed the parking lot. It was clumsy using the Slim-Jim with gloves on to pop the passenger side door lock on the Land Rover. But, he did not want to succumb to the same fate that Kang Chan had by leaving finger prints behind. Tim grabbed the portable brown accordion file holder. Back in the rental SUV with the dome light on and with the din noise of traffic on highway 26 Tim went through the papers. There was a bunch of legal papers that dealt with logging on the reservation. There was a million dollar insurance bond to cover using a Chinook helicopter for lifting logs. There was a permit that gave Kevin Trask permission to climb Mt. Jefferson and there was an Interpol report on Mr. Hung Meng. It was pitch black when Tim returned the brown accordion folder—minus the Interpol report.

Kevin was out like a tired dog and hadn't heard the Land Rover door open or shut through motel room door. Laying on the night stand the new cell phone was almost dead; Kevin didn't even check it for messages before he crashed on the bed. Gus had called three times about a **Rescue at Sea** story in the LA Times. Condi called about the pending union decertification vote. Patty called to say the silk baptismal blanket was done. Linda Trask called to tell Kevin to be careful working around heavy logging equipment and extra careful around a helicopter. All the worries and concerned voice mails wouldn't matter by morning—Kevin had forgot the cell phone charger back in California.

Logging in the fall had it advantages; the sun didn't come up until almost 7:00am. Kevin had just stepped out of the shower when he heard banging on the motel room door. "Hey, Lilly," Kevin said with just a towel wrapped around his waist.

"I thought I'd stop by to see if you want to go Steelhead fishing this weekend?" Lilly took note of Kevin's lean, muscular bare torso.

"A... I can't this weekend," Kevin replied and took note of Lilly's new braces. "Is your mouth still sore?"

"What?" Lilly practically pushed herself into the motel room.

Kevin hurried into the bathroom and yelled. "Patty told me about how your mouth hurt from the braces and all."

"Oh yeah," Lilly yelled back and then mumbled, "Patty told me that you wanted to make my mouth hurt."

"What?" Kevin replied as he stepped out of the bathroom, tightening the belt on his work pants.

"Oh nothing," Lilly answered.

"I thought you said something about making your mouth hurt." Kevin walked over to Lilly who was now sitting on the corner of the bed.

"I was just being crude." Lilly's face was turning red.

Kevin lifted his sweatshirt and turned around. "Did I get a bruise from the hoist choker? I wasn't paying attention and it hit me in the back yesterday."

Lilly pushed Kevin's sweatshirt up to his shoulders and then moved her long slender fingers all the way from the middle of his back down toward his right buttocks. "You got a pretty good bruise going on. What happen?"

"A freak gust a wind spun Shrimp around yesterday and the end of the cable with the lift hook hit me in the back. It knocked me off the log deck and knocked the wind out of me."

"Wow, Lilly replied as she gently moved her finger and examined the rest of Kevin's back. "Logging is dangerous! Are you sure you should be out there."

"Hell yes, I should be out there! Falling trees, running heavy equipment and now hooking logs up to a CH-47 is awesome." Kevin relied in loud masculine voice while at the same time feeling aroused. Kevin turned back around and lifted Lilly off the bed. He kissed her hard and passionately. "I hope that didn't hurt your mouth."

Lilly was stunned. Kevin explained that he had to fly out to Lansing, Michigan this weekend and maybe they could go Steelhead fishing Thanksgiving weekend.

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Tim had his own plans for Lilly! His extended stay at the Indian Head Casino paid off; he now knew the connection with Bull Elk logging, the Saxton family and Kevin

Trask. What he couldn't figure out was how, what and why Mr. Hung Meng was involved. The Interpol printout didn't make sense either, Mr. Hung Meng wasn't even marked as a Chinese National—in fact none of the **RACE** boxes were checked. The one thing that stood out was his passport stamp indicated that he could travel to any country in the world. It was like Hung Meng didn't exist and that he had free reign over the world. Tim really didn't care, all he had to do was mail the Interpol report to Hung Meng and he would be free. Maybe he would check into the motel in Zigzag that Kevin was at. He needed to even the score with Lilly Saxton for that night in Sacramento when he got attacked from behind and then hauled off to jail.

Tim was checking out of the casino when one of the security guards approached him at the reservation desk. The guard showed a sequence of security camera photos of Aiana waiting in the parking lot and then getting into the rental SUV. Tim knew he should have played the self defense card, but after he fired the second shot up between her legs that plan was ruled out. Aiana was buried up past a gate on an overgrown forest road, the gun tossed into a slot canyon in the Mt. Jefferson wilderness. Tim had carefully inspected the back of the SUV for blood; the blue plastic tarp and rope had done the job. There was nothing the security guard could do. Tim didn't say much more than he had picked up a drunken hooker and let her out on a back road after paying twenty dollars for oral sex.

Tim headed south on Highway 26; it was only ten minute before he was off the Warm Spring Reservation. The Redmond International airport was less than an hour away. When he went to check the rental SUV back in the rental agent dialed a contact number that appeared on his monitor and then handed the phone over the counter to Tim.

"You should only be checking this car back in, only if, you have the completed your task and have taken care of all possible loose ends." A firm voice came through the phone.

"I obtained the Interpol printout. Give me an address and I'll mail it today," Tim replied quietly with his hand cupped around the mouthpiece of the phone.

"Has the informant been taken care of?"

"No, I got the printout. I thought that was the deal," Tim turned his back to the rental agent; stretching the phone cord taut.

"Quit thinking! Finish your mission and be back in your office the Monday after Thanksgiving. Your brother is home with his family. Every year a lot of homes burn down from people cooking turkeys." *Click*, the phone went dead...

Tim handed the phone back over the counter. "Go ahead and check this SUV back in. I need to rent something with a big trunk or maybe a van."

From a motel room in Madras, Oregon Tim stared at the map. Dumping another dead Indian in the wilderness wasn't a big deal. The big question was how to get

Bull Elk up into the dense forest. Tim drew a route on the map. He could get back on to the Northwest corner of the Warm Springs Reservation by circling back to Redmond then heading west through a small town called Sisters. There were a lot of campgrounds around an unincorporated community called Camp Sherman. The Metolius river that Aiana talked about looked like it started out no place — a good place to kill another Indian.

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Kevin's Mercedes was still in the Lansing International Airport; so was Tim's BMW. Kevin was dreading the long cross country drive back to California, even though Patty had worked out all the overnight logistics and evenly paced the four days on the road. Kevin opened the truck and put the garment bag in first and then placed the gift wrapped baptismal blanket on top.

As much as a fluke as Tim's and Kevin's cars being in the same parking lot was the Notre Dame Basketball player being at the baptismal ceremony. Being six foot three Ronda stood out every place she went. Kevin couldn't forget the bloody nose she gave him; how she called him a rat and mocked him for playing for the Duke Blue Devils.

After the baptism and at the celebration brunch Ronda sat next to Kevin. "You know that you're now responsible that your God Child be raised Catholic?"

"I understand." Kevin answered with a bewildered look. "If it ever came to that I would make sure little Benny Schultz is brought up in the Christian faith."

"He would have to be brought up Catholic. Only Catholics go to heaven!"

"I don't know if **only** Catholics go to Heaven. I'm leaving that call up to God." Kevin replied. "After what I saw happening at Gonzaga, I'm not sure if the Catholics are in God's favor right now."

"Those were maybe one or two incidences that the secular media blew all out of proportion and..."

"What about the Jews? They claim to be the chosen ones. If you're not Muslim, per Islam teaching than you a condemned Infidel. Then we have the Mormons, the JW's, the fundamental Christians and I can go on!" Kevin argued; Rhonda had hit a nerve. "I'm a spiritual person not a religious zealot."

"They're all wrong," Rhonda argued back. "Jesus gave the authority to St. Peter. The first pope and..."

Lawrence Shultz came to the rescue. "Mr. Trask, thank you for the hand sewn, silk baptismal blanket. We plan to start a college fund with the saving bond. Thank you so much for coming all the way out to Michigan." Lawrence handed Benny to Kevin.

Kevin had never held a baby this young. The tiny fingers, the blinking inquisitive eyes, the soft smooth skin and the magnificent baby smell all wrapped up in silk

melted Kevin's heart. The innocence touch of a child was something Kevin had never experienced. Kevin thought about a mother never holding the child that she gave birth to—about Gus and the bonding that never happened.

It took a long time before Rhonda got her chance to hold Benny. When Kevin passed the innocent child off she looked Kevin squarely in the eyes. "There is no person in the world that will be a better God Parent than you, Mr. Kevin Trask.

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After the celebration brunch Kevin was still discerning the second piece of his trip that Patty had worked out the logistics on to go see Tina. Patty firmly warned a side trip to and from Cleveland would add an additional eight hours of drive time. Plus, if Kevin spent an extra night he would be driving with all the other Thanksgiving Day travelers. However much Kevin hated driving, he felt obligated to lay it all out and let Tina know that it was time that they both move on. During the first four hours of the drive Kevin kept thinking about holding little Benny—maybe someday he would be a father... The closer he got to Cleveland the more he forgot about his prepared exit speech.

When he pulled up in front of the turn of the century two story home he didn't even have to call Tina on the mobile phone. Tina bolted out of the house and ran down the cobblestone walkway. "Kevin I have missed you so much. I know that you got super mad when I used the word retard and I'm so, so sorry for that."

Kevin shut off the SL600 and got out. "Tina there's a lot more to it than you just calling Gus a retard. I think we both need our space and..."

"Like, I totally get it Kevin. That is why I'm hoping to come back to California and go to work for the March of Dimes. We can still be friends. Kevin you opened my eyes to all the handicapped and all."

"Tina the word is disabled or someone has a disability. Gus isn't either! Gus is socially challenged and gifted at the same time. Gus is not a retard! He has a photographic memory and..."

"Like, I know that now Kevin! That is why I bought Gus some comic books for you to give to him. Patty told me how Gus likes to read them over and over again and can recite them by memory."

"Gus doesn't read comic books. He reads Super-Hero books!"

"Oh..." Tina's words didn't impress Kevin. Her hopes to patch thing up were dwindling; she started to cry.

Kevin put his arms around Tina's shoulder and could smell her perfume and scent. He rubbed her back and felt her tears on his chest. "Would you like to go get something to eat? I've been driving for four hours and need to get some coffee before I hit the road."

Of all the five star fine dining places Kevin had taken Tina over the past three years this Ma and Pa diner that served a pork chop breakfast special all day was the best dinner conversation they ever had. Tina didn't even make a comment about eating at a greasy spoon. After the daily special they drank coffee and ate apple pie until the restaurant closed. Kevin dropped Tina off and said, "I'll think about helping you pay back Tim, the twenty-two thousand dollars."

It was another four-hour drive due west to South Bend, Indiana where Kevin checked into his motel after two in the morning. The last piece of the plan was hand delivering a check for twenty-five thousand dollars to Coach Mike McCall for the Harper Cancer Research fundraiser. Even with limited capital on hand Robert Trask agreed that Trask Inc. should donate to cancer research. It was Kevin that was now having second thoughts. Tina needed help to pay back the money she had borrowed—stolen.

Early Tuesday morning Kevin parked in front of the Joyce basketball Arena, took the twenty-five thousand dollar check and ripped it in half. He dialed Coach Mike McCall and asked him to come outside to the parking lot. It wasn't even three minutes before Mike busted out through the gym doors and spotted Kevin standing next to the special edition silver SL600.

Coach Mike approached and extended a handshake to Kevin. "Are you back to play another pickup game with the girls? Ronda mentioned she ran into you at her nephew's baptism."

"No, I'm keeping my distance from her. She's way too intense. She'd probably break my nose this time around."

"She's just like you Kevin. You were way too intense at righting history at Gonzaga. If you would have taken that intensity onto the court you would have been the captain of the team."

"Maybe," Kevin replied. Too exhausted to get into any type of philosophical or religious discussion. Kevin held out the car keys. "Maybe you can auction off my car for the Harper Cancer fundraiser. You'll have to get the mobile phone removed but the car has less than five thousand miles on it."

Coach Mike's jaw dropped. "You're kidding! This Mercedes must be worth over a hundred thousand dollars."

"I think more." Kevin yawned. "All I need right now is a nap and then a ride to the airport."

Coach Mike led Kevin to the equipment room where Kevin conked out on one of the medical exam tables. Some two thousand miles west Hung Meng had just received a report that the SL600 had been moved from the Lansing International Airport, to Cleveland Ohio and was now parked at Notre Dame...