

Chapter Four

It was dusk when Kevin found Frank, Laura, Stan and Patty. He pulled up alongside the smaller houseboat and Frank threw a line across the bow. Things were a lot quieter now; Stan had passed out two hours ago. Laura and Patty were cleaning up in the galley. Frank helped Kevin tie the two houseboats together and then drop anchor.

Venus and Mars were just starting to come out when Frank and Kevin laid back in the lounge chairs on the top deck on the Stargazer. Soon after that Laura and Patty joined them. The four of them settled in to enjoy the solitude of the late night heat and the stillness on the lake. Patty had pulled her lounge chair close to Kevin; in hopes that Kevin might take her up on her earlier offer. The conversation went from the Duke, Blue Devils wining the basketball championship to the privileged all white Duke, Lacrosse team.

Sometime after midnight Frank double checked the anchors on both houseboats then came back and took Laura by the hand. They carefully climbed down two levels and jumped from deck to deck to the smaller boat.

Patty stayed onboard the Stargazer and kept inching herself closer to Kevin. But Kevin's mind was at different place. *I'm not a kid any longer. I'll stand my ground; if Dad fires Richard I'll not work at the family business. I'll have lunch with Condi when I get back; she knows everything that goes on at the corporate level. That Mr. Meng and Kang Chan just don't feel right. Grandpa Trask would never outsource any of our work...*

Patty put her hand on Kevin's thigh and asked. "How about a beer or a hard drink?"

"Not for me," answered Kevin.

"Well, I'm going to have another glass of wine." Patty got up and went over to the cooler and poured a glass of wine. Then she rested her firm, muscular butt on the deck railing, arched her back and looked up into the star filled night. "It sure is beautiful way up there," Patty said skyward.

"And so are you," Kevin replied.

Patty felt a warm rush; some from the wine but mostly from Kevin's compliment. "Thank you Kevin." She looked toward Kevin.

"Patty you are beautiful and you have a body like an athlete." Kevin said through the dimness.

"And what kind of athlete would that be?" Patty flirted back while sashaying off from

the deck railing back toward Kevin.

"Oh, I don't know maybe a runner or volleyball player." Kevin moved over when Patty squeezed on to his lounge chair.

"Like one of those sexy female beach volleyball players." Patty whispered into Kevin's ear.

"Yeah, I guess so," Kevin answered as he wiggled away from Patty and stood up.

"It cooled off, how about I go below and get us a couple of sleeping bags?"

"That sounds good, you only need to get one sleeping bag," Patty softly replied.

Kevin climbed down the two ladders. On the lower deck the sound of the water lapping against the aluminum pontoons was relaxing and blended in with deep snoring from across the way.

The moment the screen door slapped Kevin's brain was back on notice. *Crap, I don't want to wake Stan. He was so drunk and obnoxious when I got back from the marina. I'm glad that he finally passed out... We could have died this afternoon. Thank you God, for Danny knowing to pull the parking brake. Whatever is wrong with that young boy, please take him into your hands.* Kevin sat down at the galley table and reflected back on his own life and the blessing that had been bestowed on his family. Kevin gave thanks and prayed for some sort of comfort to come to Danny and Hank's family.

It took a few additional minutes for Kevin to find his travel kit, brush his teeth and splash on some cologne. With one sleeping bag in hand Kevin was careful not to let the galley screen door slap shut. He glanced over to the smaller houseboat; it looked like everyone had gone to sleep or was still passed out. When his head just came through the upper deck opening he saw Patty curled up on the lounge chair. Kevin tiptoed over to her—Patty's eyes were closed

Kevin unrolled the sleeping bag and gently placed it over her bare skin. He carefully pried the wine glass from her fingers. Patty pulled her now empty hand away and slid it between her head and the cushion. Patty mumbled, "I prayed for Danny too."

A gentle small wisp of cool air blew over and across the lake. Kevin noiselessly returned to the galley for another sleeping bag. Back on the lounge chair and next to Patty he slipped into the sleeping bag; folded his hands behind his head and gazed upward into the star filled dome. Kevin dozed off and the surreal image of Danny riding off on his mountain bike just a few hours earlier folded into a dream. One of those uncomfortable dreams not meant to have closure here on earth. For nonbelievers, a never ending nightmare to prevent any hopes of a restful night. Danny's last words 'Trust in Him' gave Kevin consent to a deep and peaceful sleep.

The Monday morning calm was broken with yelling and yelping from Stan as he dove into the lake. He surfaced, swam to the ladder and was on the deck standing in his boxer shorts. Dripping wet he went to the galley and got a cold beer from the refrigerator. Back outside from the lower deck, Stan proclaimed out across the stillness of the lake, "Let's party!"

Patty's head lifted from the lounge chair, it took a moment for her to get her bearings. She wrapped the sleeping bag around her bare shoulders and walked to the railing "Stan why don't we wait for the rest of the gang to show up before we start to party?"

"Lighten up Patty. Don't be such a bitch!" Stan snapped back, as he chugged half a beer.

"Stan, I'm just saying that you passed out before six o'clock last night, maybe it was because you started to party too early yesterday."

"I can handle my liquor!" Stan ran down the lower deck and dove over the railing for the second time.

Frank came out from the one bedroom on the smaller boat. "What's going on?"

Next Laura appeared in the doorway with just a blue tee shirt on; she slid her arms around Frank, the shirt hiked up and exposed her bare butt. "Kevin, do you want to join us for breakfast this morning," she loudly asked while pulling down on the bottom of the blue tee shirt.

"Yeah sure," Kevin replied now focusing his eyes on the sun raising over Shasta Lake.

Stan had a hell of a hangover and was making sure everyone shared his pain. As the five ate breakfast he was markedly rude; twice he inferred to Patty as a Skank. It was really eating at him that Patty had been on the upper deck of the Stargazer with Kevin. Deep down Stan hated their open relationship.

After breakfast, the tension eased when the houseboats were untied and started the long cruise down to the resort parking lot. Kevin piloted the Stargazer by himself and took notice that Patty was in the one bedroom on the other smaller houseboat with Stan—making up or something.

On the dock, there were at least three dozen people loading onto houseboats, ski boats and other watercraft. It was pandemonium watching everyone throwing on gear and ice coolers. A fight was brewing at the boat ramp over a jacked-knifed trailer and dented fender. The day of fun was just beginning...

When Kevin pulled into a berth and before he even tied off the Stargazer, a couple of the Duke Lacrosse players jumped on board. "Hey guys, I rented this boat just for

myself and my girlfriend!"

"Yeah right! Like you think that is going to happen," One of the Lacrosse players yelled as he threw a sleeping bag through the opening to the second deck and then started climbing the ladder with an ice cooler.

A girl approached Kevin. "Kevin, is it okay if I come aboard?"

Kevin looked up and finished tying off the rear mooring line" Yeah sure, Mary." Kevin ran up the dock for the bow line. "Have you seen Tina yet?" Kevin yelled back over his shoulder."

"No, not yet." replied Mary as she stepped on board.

Kevin finished tying off the houseboat. "I'll go wait for Tina and Sue up in the parking lot. You can take one of the bunks next to the Captain's room. But don't let anyone take the Captain's room or top deck."

"Thanks Kevin. Is it okay if Sally shares a bed or bunk with me?"

"Yeah, no problem. I'd stake your claim now. I got a feeling it's going to get crowded. Just don't let anybody take the top deck or the captain's room," shouted Kevin as he hurried down the dock toward the ramp.

From the top of the walkway Kevin didn't see any Blue Devil basketball players. Someone had just showed up on a motorcycle and circled around before parking next to the silver Mercedes.

Kevin jogged toward the far corner of the parking lot. Rick had just flipped out the kickstand with the heel of his boot when Kevin approached. "Hey what's happening man?" Rick asked Kevin as he unfastened his helmet strap.

"Not much. I don't see any players from the basketball team," Kevin replied looking over the parking lot.

"I don't know anything about that. All I heard was houseboats, booze and women." Rick shouted; his ears were still ringing from the loud exhaust on his Harley.

"Have you seen Tina and Sue yet?" Kevin asked Rick while holding his hand up to shield the sun that was reflecting off all the chrome on the custom motorcycle.

"Tina and Sue? Nope, haven't seen them" replied Rick as he started unfastening the leather bag off the handlebars. "But I did pass Tina and Tim on my way up here."

"Tina and Tim! Was Sue with them?"

"I don't think so. Unless she was in the back of the truck or in the boat."

"Back of the truck or in the boat? Rick, don't jerk me around!"

Rick stopped unlashng the bag from the motorcycle handlebars. He looked Kevin straight in the eyes. "Kevin you know me. I'm not jerking you around. Hey, if there's a problem between you and Tina, ask someone else to spy for you. But I know what I saw. Tina is with Tim...Sorry man."

"Yeah, okay Rick." Kevin said frustrated and dazed.

"What houseboat you got, Kevin? Is it okay if I crash on it?"

"It's the big three level one, it says 'Stargazer' on it. Sally and Mary are down there now. You're more than welcome. Just don't take the top deck or the captain's room."

"Hey, thanks man," said Rick as he grabbed the sleeping bag off the back of the tricked out Harley and headed toward the dock.

Kevin pushed the key fob and the car locks popped up; he opened up the passenger door and flopped into the passenger seat. With the key turned one notch the stereo system came on. Kevin pushed down and then up on a lever on the side of the passenger seat. The six-way lumbar seat moved back and then reclined far enough that he could just watch people over the top of the dash. *Boy, this is going be a zoo. I bet twenty-five people have already shown up. I wonder what happened with Sue. In the back of the truck or in the boat? Tim drives a red BMW, not a truck. Rick's mistaken... Sue would be lucky to be rid of the guy. I know he's doing other girls besides Sue. . .*

Kevin's train of thought was broken by a bright yellow pickup truck pulling the same yellow colored ski boat into the parking lot. The aluminum spoke wheels on the boat trailer matched the ones on the low-rider pickup. The truck headed toward the crowd and barely came to a stop before the passenger door flung open and Tina jumped out. Kevin reached for the lever on the seat and reclined it a little more—so not to be seen.

Where's Sue? Rick was right... Kevin watched Tina going up to different people in the crowd hugging and talking to them. One of the girls pointed toward the corner of the parking lot. Kevin dropped his head back onto the leather head rest, closed his eyes and turned the stereo off... *I'll act like I'm sleeping.*

Tina trotted toward the Mercedes, the skimpy bikini top barely held her firm breasts. She spotted Kevin reclined in the passenger seat and whipped opened the door. "Kevin, I missed you so much. Like, I wished I could have been up here last night, with you." Tina said while crawling on top of Kevin still reclined in the lumbar seat.

Kevin pushed her off and then got out of the car. "How was the drive up here?"

"It was okay... I had a chance to help patch things up between Tim and Sue. And like, I learned a lot. And like, I'm glad our relationship is what it is. And like..." Tina rambled out her awkward rehearsed answer.

Kevin started walking directly toward the yellow pickup and matching ski boat. "I don't see Sue? I thought you and her were coming up together?"

Tina pulled on Kevin's arm to slow him down and whispered, "That was the plan, but things didn't work out. I'll tell you about it later."

"Tell me what?" Kevin asked in a loud voice, causing some of the crowd to hush.

"I'll explain things later," Tina whispered for the second time.

"Explain what? And where's Sue? I thought you were riding up with her!"

"Kevin, not so loud. Like, people can hear." Tina's face was turning red.

Tim walked from around the back of the yellow ski boat with a beer in his hand.

"Kevin, Sue couldn't make it, she was feeling ill. So Tina volunteered to be my copilot. You know how I fall asleep when I drive."

"No, I don't know about you falling asleep when you drive!" Kevin stepped toward Tim. "Where's the rest of our team?"

Tim stepped toward Kevin; ready and willing for any type of challenge. "The Black players confronted me about the OJ trial. They wanted to know if I thought he was guilty."

"So what... Why aren't they here?" Kevin and Tim were toe to toe.

"Kevin your Dad is right. You are an immature, weak backboned idealist that doesn't know crap about dealing with stuff in the real world!"

"I know what is right and just in this world." Kevin argued.

"Sure, Kevin... And if the jury finds OJ guilty. All the riots and killing are going to be right and just!"

"That won't happen." Kevin replied, not prepared with a rebuttal.

"Tell that to the fifty three people that died after the Rodney King verdict. My uncle was one of those just driving through South Central LA that lost his life!"

Kevin stepped back and apologized, "Sorry Tim, I didn't know that about your uncle."

"No problem! How about a beer?" Tim held out the beer toward Kevin and then continued, "Kevin, you would not have wanted Tina to make that drive all by herself? It just worked out this way. The least I can do is buy you a beer," said Tim while putting a beer bottle into Kevin's hand.

"Please, help me get my stuff," Tina said while pulling on Kevin's empty hand.

Kevin handed back the beer and followed Tina to the back of the lowered, yellow pick-up truck. She pointed to two suitcases and an overnight bag. Kevin grabbed the suitcases; not saying a word. When they were some distance away from the crowd Tina leaned in toward Kevin. "Sue didn't come because she's pregnant."

"What?" Kevin stopped in his tracks

Tina put her index finger in front of her lips, "Shish... Not so loud."

"Does, Tim know?" Kevin asked.

"Yeah, he wants her to get an abortion or to put the baby up for adoption. That's what they are fighting about."

"Wonderful... So he leaves her home alone, to deal with that."

"Well, I can see Tim's point. He's going to be trying out for the NBA or applying to med school next year."

Kevin set one of the heavy, overstuffed suitcases on the asphalt and turned to look Tina square in the eyes. "Tina, I told you before, Tim is not that good of a basketball player to play in the NBA. The med school thing is all make believe. Tim lies all the time.

Tina turned her head to break eye contact with Kevin. She looked back toward Tim in the parking lot laughing and joking with some of the Lacrosse players. *I think that story about Tim's uncle being killed in LA riots might be a lie?* Tina forced that thought out and looked back at Kevin. "Like, can't this be just about us finally hooking up? Not about Tim and Sue.

Kevin picked up the suitcase and rapidly paced off toward the ramp down to the dock. *My grandfather was right. He might have screwed me up when I was fourteen? But he was right about the facts. Sex has some real life consequences...* Kevin stopped and looked back. *But then, Tim's uncle has his life ended for just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. How can that be right?*

Tina was still stopped; just spending a few hours in the car with Tim, listening to him present his side made her feel different about conception and pregnancy. Just the day before being on the phone listening to Sue cry and struggling with what to do. Tina's daze was broke by Kevin hand on her arm. "Come on let's get loaded up. I want to undock before any more people board the Stargazer.

"Kevin I take birth control," Tina blurted out.

"Yeah, you told me yesterday." Kevin started pulling Tina by the arm. "Let's get out of here!