

"Found another one, eh Bruce?" Pete Holton said as he walked in, only pausing a few seconds to look at the body. He was followed the ME, Doc Petruzzi, King, and a couple others including a camera guy who got right to work. Bright flashes of light bounced off the pale yellow block walls.

Pete jerked his head toward the coach's office and said, "Let's talk." He went in and sat behind the desk, leaving me the only other chair, an old wooden straight-back matching the one Stinger was sitting and lying in. "How are you, DelReno?"

"C'mon, Pete, I'm not good. I'm very upset right now. Can we just do this?"

Pete Holton and I became friends about a year ago after the conclusion of that murder investigation. We have played golf together almost every Sunday for the last few months. He was about fifty-five years old, much younger than me, but my handicap was a little lower than his, so I was the boss on the golf course. He was the boss everywhere else. He was wearing his usual attire, suitable for both police work and golf, consisting of a blue polo shirt with a patch on the breast and "Willowtree Police" embroidered on the left sleeve. He wore tan chinos, same as mine but many sizes larger.

"Sorry, Bruce. Just start at the beginning. You know how this works." He switched on his mini recorder and placed it on the desk.

I recalled as best I could my experience so far that morning. I included what I saw in the locker room besides Stinger's presence.

"The chair he is taped to came from this office. It had apparently been placed in front of the curtain, which was a heavy fabric divider that divided the room in two. It was used when two classes or teams needed the locker room at the same time, and provided a degree of privacy. The golf equipment on Stinger's body and strewn around the room probably belongs to the school and came from the storage room next to this office. There is a bag on the floor that the putter and wedge Stinger is wearing came from. Maybe. You saw the balls. Maybe twenty, thirty balls all around on the floor." I paused, and then speculated, "This is what I think, Pete. You check it out. You don't want speculation, I know, but listen. Whoever it was used Maguire for target practice. See that five-iron in the middle of the room? The asshole hit balls at Maguire, defenseless, tied to that chair. He's got awful bruises all over. The curtain was a backdrop, like a net." I was trying to be strong, but I was really affected by the vision in my mind, and those last words came out more slowly and shaky.

"Okay. Okay. We'll see what Doc Petruzzi says about that. If he doesn't figure it out, I'll ask him about it. Were you alone when you discovered him, Bruce?"

"Yeah, just me."

"No one else in the building besides you until the authorities got here?"

"Just me." I didn't like this line of questioning, but I knew it was necessary, and routine. After a few more of these questions detective-chief Holton turned off the recorder and said I could leave if I wanted. He went out to have a better look around the crime scene. I followed him, and then stopped to watch a body bag containing Stinger Maguire being loaded onto a gurney.

At that same time John Gillihan, the high school principal, came through the door and went directly to Holton who was headed for Dan King.

Gillihan! Damn, I should have called him. He'll be pissed. He would say I should have called him first. He was the Queen of this institution, definitely ruled it like a monarch. The kids called him the "Queen," simply because he was gay. Gay or not, he was strict as they come, but fair, and I really thought a pretty good guy. I stood aside looking in his direction so he'd know I wasn't avoiding him. Gillihan was a tall, handsome man in his late thirties with an athletic build, dirty blonde hair receding a bit in front. A stranger wouldn't know his persuasion until he moved or spoke. Then, he moved toward me, and spoke.