

Chapter 1

The drive across the border from Tijuana always took Joe Martinez a good two hours, despite the fact that he left his casa by five AM every weekday morning. It wasn't that bad, however, since he had a steady janitorial job at the University of California at San Diego. Even at his lower echelon, there was some security in knowing he would have a steady income for as long as he was willing to work at his minimum wage job. If the commute took a long time, the work wasn't that bad, difficult, or heavy duty. In fact, it was easy to do. Today he would start by emptying trash cans in the Department of Biochemistry in the Martin Building. Since he got to work by seven every morning, the traffic along I-5 and into the campus itself was light and flowed smoothly. Finding a parking space close-in was always easy at that early hour as well, since classes really didn't begin in earnest until 9 AM anyway.

In short, it was a good job for Joe and he had no complaints. The pay was a lot better than he would ever get in Mexico and he didn't have to hang out with the gang of day laborers at the Shell station down the road--fighting for every scrap of work that may or may not come along during the long hours of waiting. It was easy for him, trundling his cart along the hallway, opening each office after a brief, polite knock, going into the office and emptying one or two trash cans, then carefully locking up again. It was mindless work, peaceful work where he didn't have to interact with many Anglos. Not that he minded being around them (although the hallways always became crowded later in the day). It was just that his English wasn't that good, and it was always an effort in finding out what professor so-and-so wanted when the teacher deigned to notice him and make a request. When this happened, it was always a complaint that the trash wasn't being picked up often enough and could he come around more often? It was

funny in a way, because they would always assume that Joe had the authority to decide when and how often he did his tasks. It made him realize just how different their universe was from his own.

Joe had worked his way half the distance down the right corridor and had come to Professor Nathaniel Shaw's office. He did his ritual knock, heard nothing, inserted his master key into the door and opened it. The room was in chaos! Books and papers were strewn all over the desk and floor, a lamp lay shattered in the corner, but somehow the bulb had not broken and it was still on. All the file cabinet doors were open, and one had fallen over because the weight of the open files had tilted it off balance--adding to the mess of papers on the floor. A computer monitor and keyboard was still on the desk and did not seem broken. Although the monitor showed a blackened screen, it had a steady green light that indicated that it was still on and working. What was clearly not working any longer was Professor Shaw, who was slumped in his desk chair, with his head on the desk. There was a large pool of blood on the desk that had congealed and started to turn reddish brown. A stream of his blood had run over to the corner of the desk and down its side, pooling on the carpet beneath it. The body was draped in absolute stillness, and a whitish, puffy pallor had begun to creep into his skin. The back of Professor Shaw's head was a pulpy mess, and seemed caved-in. Joe could see white bone protruding, and grayish matter in the wound.

"Por Dios". The shout was involuntary. He turned and ran out the door, bumping into his cart. He was sweating and felt faint, then he started to get sick--vomiting into his trash collection bin. He had never seen anything as grizzly as this in his entire life. Yes, he had seen plenty of road kill--but they were skunks or coyotes flattened and mashed beyond recognition. This was a human being, and not only that--Professor Shaw was someone he had known personally--at least enough to exchange a friendly "hola" when he was in his

office as Joe came by.

This was terrible! At first Joe was in shock, immobilized and not knowing what to do. His breathing was rapid and raspy, and his insides still hurt from the violence of his vomiting. He could feel and taste the bile that remained in his throat. But he felt color returning to his face, and his sweating was less heavy now. He went to the next office, opened it, and looked for a telephone. Thankfully there was a campus directory right under it, so he could look up campus security and call them directly. Despite his mediocre English, he was able to tell them who he was, where he was, and what he had found. “Muerte” sounded like “murder” in any man’s language. There was no doubt in Joe’s mind that Professor Shaw had been killed. No one could have mortally wounded himself like that in a university campus office. And whoever had taken the professor’s life was capable of incredible violence, especially when killing a living human being by bashing his head in. Joe shuddered at the thought of this ultimate personal violation--ending the life of someone else.

A team of two officers from campus security was first on the scene, after the discovery by Joe. They quickly ascertained that there did indeed appear to have been a murder committed, and that the victim was in all likelihood Nate Shaw, a faculty member in Biochemistry at UCSD. But they were acutely aware that this campus crime was way beyond their own capabilities. The campus police typically concerned themselves with theft (laptops and Ipods were favorite targets, given their portability and frequent presentation of opportunity). Some other campus crimes were more infrequently on a deeper level--such as date rape--but they simply did not have the expertise or equipment or experience to

deal with an actual murder.

Following procedure, The San Diego Police were going to have to be called in by the campus police to begin an investigation. Before their arrival, however, officer Frank Rankin knew some urgent housekeeping needed to be done right away. He picked up his walky-talky and patched in to the office.

“Lew, we’re going to need a few more people over here right away. It’s after 7:30 and people are going to be coming into the office very soon. We definitely are going to need crowd control.”

“I’ll send Carol and Steve over. Is there anything else that you need right now on your end?”

“You did call SDPD, right?”

“Yes, they should be there any minute. In the mean time, keep the entrance doors locked and keep anyone but SDPD from entering, got that?”

“No problem. Is there someone you can get over here to answer questions for our crowd that’s going to be forming outside. You know what happens when we get gawkers and standbys--lots of rumors and worries start flying around. Remember that last attempted sexual assault incident at Johnson Hall?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll send Jill over as soon as she gets in the door. I’m also going to call Chairman Bishop to let him know what’s happening down there. The whole Department will have to be closed down, at least for today. For the moment, when people ask, just tell them there has been a fatal accident but don’t give out a name. I’m sure the San Diego police will want to do their own disclosure and interviewing. The last thing we want is Professor Shaw’s wife

finding out he's dead from the 9 AM newscast!"

"No sweat. We're inside so it impossible for anyone, especially any TV crews, to get a glimpse of what we're doing. Lew, we better let Chairman Bishop or someone from the administration in here to handle the faculty. Students will do what they're told, especially if it means they can skip a class that won't be held. But you know how difficult faculty can be. They don't like being told what to do."

"Good idea! I'll tell Chairman Bishop to go down there immediately. In the mean time, no release of information other than a 'fatal accident'. Just say the cause of death is undetermined at this time, which it technically is."

"OK Lew, I have to go. It looks as if a couple of San Diego's finest are arriving."

The two SDPD cops strode in with an air of authority and command. They had crisp blue uniforms and a bulky presence that extruded with police paraphernalia over their bodies. The most obvious, blatantly demonstrating the ultimate power of their position, were the guns protruding from the holsters around their waists. Both officers had just arrived in one man car units, which they had randomly parked outside of Overby Hall. Although they would officially take over crowd control after taping off the scene, the police cars served to draw attention to something dramatic and strange going on inside the building. A small crowd of students and a few office workers had already started to gather outside the office complex in the outer lobby.

A forensics team arrived shortly afterward, and close on their heels came the two person homicide team from downtown. The homicide team portrayed the same aura of brisk efficiency and self confidence, although with piercing eyes

that seemed to take in everything--noting every detail of their surroundings. The team leader was a man of about fifty, a bit shorter than average and a little pudgy--but also somewhat muscular despite his outer layer of fat. He was obviously in command, and belied the stereotype of a Colombo-type detective. His immaculate grooming and gray Armani suit, with a stylishly muted tie and pale blue shirt, were set off by unmistakable soft leather shoes and belt care of Johnson & Johnson. In a word, the detective was impeccably dressed and poised to move in higher circles than the typical denizen of San Diego's underworld. Perhaps, Frank thought to himself, it may be an attempt to distance himself from the grim, dirty, slovenly atmosphere that a homicide investigator was forced to confront every working day. Frank was glad that his work with campus security put him in contact with an entirely different cadre of law-breakers. Ipod thieves were not likely to be dangerous or drug-addicted or violent. Although casually dressed, perhaps even slovenly garbed, students were typically clean and respected authority. In fact, thinking of the many attractive coeds Frank came into contact with in pursuit of his duties, the student body could look incredibly good at times!

And speaking of looking good, the female partner was a very attractive Latina woman of thirty-something. She effortlessly carried a mantle of poise and self-confidence as well. Her dark features complemented a more tanned appearance. As with many women who were naturally beautiful, she wore only a moderate amount of makeup--choosing not to mar her natural looks with a "caked-on" presentation. Her choice may also have been dictated by her profession. There would be precious little time to fool with a lot of makeup in a typical police woman's life on the job.

In contrast to her partner, she was thinner and showed obvious signs of working out. Although she was modestly dressed in navy slacks and a matching coat--serving to also hide her service revolver--the cut of her shoulders indicated

good muscle tone underneath. Frank was willing to bet this woman worked an exercise program that included some pretty good weights and resistance, along with the requisite cardio. He also had little doubt that somewhere in her mélange of physical fitness there was some kick-boxing or serious martial arts training of one kind or another.

Frank walked over and introduced himself.

“Hi, I’m Frank Stafford of campus security. Are you two from city homicide?”

“Yes, I’m Mack McPherson and this is my partner Linda Ortega. We’ve been sent from headquarters to assume control of this investigation. Thanks for all the help you’ve given us up to this point officer Stafford. We will also be taking over crowd control for this office complex and the hallway outside the offices. You should probably talk to your boss about whether the university would want to shut down the entire building. As of this moment, the Department of Biology will definitely be closed all of today.”

Frank shook hands with both of them, noting both had firm grips.

“I’m not surprised. We expected that your force would be here quite awhile gathering evidence. The last thing you guys need are a bunch of students and faculty getting under foot--maybe even accidentally ruining some piece of evidence. The Chairman of the Biology Department, Scott, is on his way over. He’ll be able to give your staff more help in answering any questions, locating things for you, and keeping everyone else out.”

“Thanks. We need as much cooperation as we can get. It’s always tough doing a murder investigation in a high traffic area. Fingerprints will be just about

useless, because there will be so many different sets. At any rate, that's our problem. If your campus police can keep control of the crowd outside the building, that would help us a great deal."

"There shouldn't be much difficulty in handling that. Let me know if there's anything else we can do to help you guys get going on this investigation. I'll probably be here much of the day to act as a liaison for the campus police department, so give me a holler if you need anything else done, OK?"

"Will do. Right now, we'll take a look at the immediate crime scene."

Frank wandered off to call Lew back. They would need to make whatever arrangements the powers that be deemed necessary. He correctly surmised that as many offices would remain open as possible in the building they were in, despite what the SDPD detectives wanted, which would hamper the comings and goings of the police and its staff. But it was a public facility, and it nearly took an Act of Congress (or, more specifically, an Act of the California state legislature) to change things. He had been around campus long enough to know how things worked, and unfortunately it was the slow machinery of bureaucracy that always dictated the pace of things. That, plus decision makers who were not willing to make decisions. At any rate, he personally would not be in any position to call the shots as the investigation unfolded. Aside from an occasional pang of regret that his job was not very challenging, offering only low-grade, routine police work--he knew he lacked the training to participate in a murder investigation. Better to relay messages and requests back and forth between the two forces and to just stay out of the way.

Mack and Linda, however, *were* such experts at picking apart a murder site. They were already looking over the crime scene, making cursory but careful

observations before the lab unit would begin taking pictures, dusting for prints on anything that looked as if it could be a murder weapon, and scooping up any forensic evidence that could even remotely be related to the murder.

And murder it was. Both investigators knew that for this kind of fatal wound to have happened, someone would have had to swing something very heavy to have hit the back of Professor Shaw's head with such a killing force. Mack thought of the board game he used to play as a kid with his siblings and cousins. Was it the proverbial fireplace poker so popular in the game?

No fireplace here, but the murder weapon had to have been something heavy. Whatever the object, it was not immediately apparent at the jumbled scene. It would have been somewhat blunt as well, because the wound had caved in his skull in a dented pattern, so that no sharp hole was readily apparent. The force had been substantial, suggesting that the killer may have been a man--or at least a very fit woman. Forensics may have been able to calculate the height of the killer if Shaw had been standing and if they had the murder weapon. But he had been slain while seated at his desk. The way he was faced, in his chair and turned toward the computer, suggested that he may have offered no resistance--despite the mess in the office.

Linda could see that Mack was irritated. After working with him during the past few years, she recognized the tell-tale signs. His breathing was quicker and had become more raspy, and the tips of his ears had started to redden. He grunted as he got up off of his knees near the side of the desk where Shaw's blood had pooled. His gaze wandered carefully and slowly over the room, looking for anything that stood out or was unusual, anything that perhaps was different or didn't belong in the office setting.

“What do you think, Mack? Did he fight off his attacker?”

The question from Linda was less rhetorical and more genuine, since she only had two years in on the homicide unit and was new to the game. Although she had learned to look at and handle dead bodies--some in even extreme deterioration--she knew she wasn't nearly as good as her lead partner in “reading” a homicide scene. Mack had been at this particular avenue of police work--homicide investigations--for nearly fifteen years. In some ways, that constituted a career in its own right, because many officers retired as soon as they got their minimum twenty years in. Not that anyone could blame early retirees. Police work was often inglorious and boring, punctuated by rare moments of genuine terror when lives hung precariously in the balance. It could be dangerous work, and the public at times showed no appreciation for police unless they were in the unfortunate position of being a victim.

Mack looked appreciably irritated, and replied caustically: “Yeah, that's gotta be it. He was seated in his chair and must have flung it backward to hit his attacker.”

“No, that's not what I meant,” replied Linda defensively. “There could have been a fight while he was standing up, and then he was arranged sitting in the chair after he was killed. I have no idea why the killer would have done that, but look at the mess this office is in. It looks like a tornado went through here!”

Mack, although quick-tempered, was also blessed with an ability to be easily mollified as well. Linda's reasoning wasn't bad for someone still learning the ropes on the homicide detail. At least she entertained all possibilities, and didn't jump to a single conclusion or the first explanation that suggested itself. Mack had worked with a few colleagues who were like that. They were either too dumb or unimaginative to see other possibilities. Sometimes it was sheer laziness.

Take the easiest explanation and go with that, the evidence be damned.

“Not a bad thought,” Mack replied--with a hint of charitableness in his voice.

“But here’s the way I think it went down. I’m thinking that Shaw was sitting just as he is when he was killed. He may have known his attacker and wasn’t expecting any violence, since he had his back to the room and was facing his computer. Or, the person who did this could have snuck up on him from behind. His office door could have been open, and both the corridor outside and this office is carpeted. A person trying to be quiet could probably have at least got to the open door without being heard. From there it’s only a couple of steps into the room, swinging the murder weapon as he went.”

“What makes you think the murderer was a ‘he’? And how can you be so sure Shaw was actually sitting like that when he was killed? What about all of this wreckage in the office?”

“You’re right on one thing, Linda. Without the murder weapon we really can’t be sure if the killer was a man or a woman. If we find it, and the weapon is especially massive and heavy--it would more likely be a man.”

“Hey, buddy, I know a lot of women who could pump iron rings around you. Don’t dismiss us by assuming we’re all a bunch of 120 pound weaklings!”

“Simmer down! All I’m doing is playing the averages. There are always exceptions, and a fit woman would be able to pull this off better than a puny guy. All I’m suggesting is the likely percentages.”

“Mack, your percentages need some adjusting. Don’t you think it’s about time you checked into this century?” Linda was smirking as she said this. She had

become used to his slight chauvinism, and they had a give-and-take style of communicating that rarely got belligerent. At bottom, she knew it was more likely to have been a man as well--strength notwithstanding. Women used poison or guns to kill. Although they might at times bludgeon their victim to death, it happened a lot more rarely in comparison to male killers according to crime stats.

“So, you still haven’t explained why you think Shaw was seated when he was killed. Look at this mess!”

“Actually, it’s elementary Watson.” Mack grinned. “If you look at the blood spatters on the rug, you will see that some of the files and papers are lying on top of them. If the blow had been made during a struggle, at least some of them would have blood drops or splatters on top of them. Also, there really aren’t any bloody smudges on the floor or walls. It was a clean, quick kill. The wreckage was made after he was dead. Whoever killed him ransacked the office, although we don’t know yet if anything is missing. We don’t even know if he was robbed, although the possibility suggests itself. I need to check his back pocket when we move his body, but I don’t see a wallet bulge right now. Also, forensics will tell us if he had a struggle with anyone when they look under his finger-nails. For now, I’m inclined to doubt it.”

Despite having worked with Mack for two years, Linda was impressed. “Bravo, Sherlock. Brilliant as usual. So now what? Where do we go from here?”

“The usual routine. Let’s start by talking to the Department Chairman, Scott Bishop. We should also have campus security start asking around if anyone saw anything strange or out of sorts around here last night. We need to get a list of people who had keys to this office complex, and we need to find out when they

lock the building up at night. It's possible that a complete stranger could have wandered in off the street with the intent of robbery. There are a lot of homeless guys around campus and living close to the beach."

Linda knew this to be true. You couldn't drive anywhere around San Diego without seeing one or two homeless men at every intersection with placards and signs--especially at the freeway exits and adjacent stop lights. The signs nearly always stated a variation of what had become a mantra: "hungry"; "out of work"; "God bless". It was sad to have watched what was now almost an epidemic of men emerge who had no place to live or to work. She had no idea if other big cities had the same degree of homelessness, but somehow she doubted it. San Diego had a benign climate, even in the chilly winter months, so it was possible to survive year round out of doors. This certainly couldn't be said of Chicago or New York, where an unfortunate number of the homeless actually froze to death every winter. So transients probably flocked here in greater numbers, and chose to remain here for longer spells as well.

Despite their visible presence, however, Linda had trouble seeing them as potential killers. They seemed genuinely respectful of people and were non-intimidating. There was a lack of aggressive, in-your-face panhandling of the kind that had reared its ugly head for a while in San Francisco. She also suspected that the panhandling success rate may have been higher here than elsewhere in the country, reducing the extremity of what really was a desperate situation for many of them. La Jolla, where the campus of the University was located, and Del Mar immediately to the north were both very wealthy beach towns. Californians could be more easy-going and generous. Even the university students would give money to some of the more pitiful solicitors, not having yet become as cynical and hard-hearted as their parents were. No, unless there was someone out there with a really bad drug habit that was totally whacked

out and broke, robbery by a homeless person was not highly likely. As long as they were getting by, why bring the full vengeance of the law down upon their shoulders? The equilibrium that had been reached between the police and the homeless was one of “live and let live”. They were largely ignored by the police as long as they behaved and didn’t hassle anyone.

Still, the possibility of robbery and murder by a person who may have simply walked off the street needed to be checked out carefully. California, and it seemed the entire nation, had quickly become addicted to crystal meth. Dopers had always killed each other, mostly over drug dealing profits but occasionally over someone’s drug stash. An addict going through withdrawal could be really dangerous if they absolutely had to get a fix but lacked the money for a buy. She recalled an early case at the start of her career in Sacramento. One of the middle level analysts working late in the Executive Office Building--right across the street from the State Capitol building--had been knifed to death in the men’s bathroom. The intent was robbery, and it was in all likelihood a junkie who had done it. The killer had never been caught! So she would have campus security officers talk to as many of the “local” homeless as they could find, just in case.

She got Frank started on getting their campus officers out to start talking to homeless men, and requested him to get information on who had keys to the office complex and to find out when the building was locked at night. When she returned from the front of the building where Frank had set up his station, Mack was talking to someone in the front of the complex, near the reception desk and secretarial area. He was an older man, approaching sixty, who was round-faced, rotund, balding, and bespectacled. He wore a tan suit with a carefully arranged, muted tie combination. Definitely out of place on a university campus, Linda thought, where the dress code for students and faculty was now almost nonexistent. Blue jeans on a hip professor could be almost *de rigueur* nowadays. As for corrective lenses, it seemed all of the teachers Linda had ever known wore glasses. Maybe it was from reading so many books that ruined their eyes at an

early age. Overall, Linda's general first impression of the man was that of someone who was overly fastidious, perhaps excessively concerned with appearances.

Mack turned to Linda as she came up to the two men. "Linda, this is Scott Bishop, Chairman of the Biology Department here. Professor Bishop, this is Linda Ortega, my partner. She will be assisting in the investigation to find out who killed Professor Shaw."

Scott looked at Linda, and with an ingratiating smile said "I'm very pleased to meet you Linda. Please call me Scott, and that goes for you too detective. Let's not get hung up on formalities."

They shook hands. Linda noticed his shake was not firm, but more hesitant and withdrawn--which contrasted with his heartiness. Mack didn't waste any time, and started peppering Scott with questions. He also pointedly ignored the invitation to be more informal with the Chairman.

"Professor Bishop, do you know of anyone who would want to harm Professor Shaw in this way? Did he get along well with his colleagues? How about his students?"

"Nate was an exemplary professor! He was very popular with his students. His classes were always filled to capacity, and he had outstanding teaching evaluations that students turn in every quarter. I can't think of anyone who would want to do anything like this to him. The whole thing was so incredibly brutal! Don't you think it had to have been someone who wandered in off the streets?"

"We'll be checking out that possibility. Right now, we need your expertise on the

workings of this Department. Are you sure there weren't any students that may have had a grudge or vendetta going against the professor? Students aren't necessarily as docile as we would like to believe. I remember reading about an incident that happened ten or fifteen years ago at the University of Iowa. Apparently a doctoral student got passed over for a prestigious fellowship. Before it was all over, he had gone on a rampage and shot to death several of the faculty members who were on the committee that gave the award to someone else. If it can happen in Iowa, it can sure as hell happen here!"

Scott looked visibly irritated, tersely saying "I can't be privy to every little tête-à-tête that occurs in this Department, especially between students and faculty. Let's just say we have a well run ship here, and our students aren't the type to run amok killing their professors."

"I'm not necessarily saying that. All I'm asking is for you to take the time to reflect about it. If you think about an incident, let us know. We're also going to talk to other faculty, graduate assistants, your office staff, and whoever else comes and goes around here to get their information. Now, how about Professor Shaw's colleagues? Did he get along with them or were there any serious animosities?"

It was almost as if Mack were baiting the Chair. Linda admired his style, having seen this gambit used a number of times before. He would deliberately irritate a witness to the point where something would jump out that never would in a "nice" conversation. It was working with Scott, whose complexion had now taken on a distinctly reddish hue.

"Well, it's certainly true we have a few tiffs between the faculty now and then. There aren't many academic departments that don't have arguments that surface occasionally. It's the nature of the beast lieutenant. Academicians are notorious

for being cantankerous.”

“Yes, I know what you mean. Probably from all that professing that goes on in their classrooms to students who are too intimidated to challenge them. They get to think they’re always right.”

Linda wanted to laugh, but managed to keep a straight face. Mack had scored another bulls-eye. By now Scott was bordering on being livid. In a strained voice, he replied “Whatever the reason for their tendency to split hairs, it does seem to go with the territory. A more charitable interpretation might be that professors-to-be are trained in their graduate programs to think critically, to challenge accepted thought, and to be free thinkers. That’s why they may go at each other once in a while.’

“Be that as it may, Dr. Bishop, do you know of any faculty member that may have had an axe to grind with Professor Shaw--something that may have escalated to the point of violence. I want to know about even the minor disagreements.”

“I’m afraid I can’t really help you there. Nate seemed to get along with all of his colleagues, about as well as with his students. We’re really a congenial bunch around here. Most of the faculty manage to have a golf game every couple of weeks, so the camaraderie level around here is quite high. But feel free to ask around. Maybe one of his colleagues may know something more than I do. Now, if there’s nothing else, I need to start dealing with this crisis. Can I get back to work?”

“Sure. Feel free. In the meantime, can you have your secretary get us a list of who has keys to this office complex? And by the way, do you know off hand what time they lock up around here at night?”

“You’ll have to ask campus security about that. Actually, the offices are open pretty late. I would say until around 10:30 or 11 PM at least. A lot of our night classes aren’t even over until around 9:30. Faculty come back here after class to finish up, and sometimes students come in with them for advising or to get questions answered. The list should be no problem. I’ll have Amy get right on it, but you’ll have to let her into the office complex so she can get at the records.”

“No problem. Just one more question. Do you know if Professor Shaw was getting along reasonably well with his wife?”

Steam seemed to be rolling off the top of Scott’s head! “I really can’t answer that detective. The marital or partnership health of our faculty is their business, and not mine. You will have to ask that question of his wife, Trudy.”

“Well done, Dr. Bishop! That’s about the most politically correct answer a person could hope for on a university campus. But let’s deal with reality, rather than idealized notions of communal bliss. Surely a man in your position must have heard some gossip, innuendo, or some stories about Professor Shaw that hinted there was something amiss. Was he unhappy at home? Was he sleeping with one of his pretty coeds, who also happened to be married? Could there be a jealous husband lurking in the bushes? Anything like that?”

Scott went ballistic, angrily retorting “Like I said, Lieutenant, it’s none of my business whatsoever. I can’t be seen nosing around in the private lives of my faculty. They would rightly resent it, and go to the administration with complaints about me. I’m offended by your suggestion that Nathaniel Shaw could have been having an affair with one of his students. You’re impugning his memory, and degrading a fine human being!”

“Chalk it up to frustration, Dr. Bishop. Ever since we began this conversation, all you’ve done is tried to put a positive facade on whatever happens in this Department. I really don’t give a damn what you tell your superiors about how great your Department is. People make enemies, they become involved others who end up not liking them, they break the rules and cross over lines now and then. They make some wrong or unwise choices. In short, they’re human! Professor Shaw was human, not a perfect automaton that you might wish he and the rest of your faculty would be. People make mistakes, and once in a great while those mistakes can come back to haunt them mercilessly. Sometimes it can even cause their own death.”

“Well, Lieutenant, I really don’t believe I have anything more to say to you that can be of any help. Like I said, I assiduously avoid prying into the faculty’s lives--and I try to turn a deaf ear to any gossip that comes my way. Perhaps others on the staff here might be able to help you. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I really need to take care of a lot of things. Professor Shaw’s death has left a big hole in this Department. His classes need to be taken over by someone else, we’ll need a faculty meeting to deal with this crisis, the dean, academic vice-president, and university president need to meet with me to determine how we will publicly deal with this death, and so on. There are a million and one things that need my immediate attention.”

“Fine. Go ahead and trot off to your meetings. That’s what administrators do--meet, and meet, and meet! Just remember that someone is responsible for Professor Shaw’s death. You have a killer loose on campus, and he or she may actually be part of your academic department. At this point, we don’t know why the murder was committed--but it is possible that whoever did this could kill again. This killer is a looming menace to you people, and some healthy fear is

warranted at this time. You should warn your faculty and students to be on guard and to report anything suspicious to us. And *nobody*, including yourself, should hold anything back from us, whether it's out of a false loyalty to Shaw's memory or a political maneuver to protect the reputation of your Department."

Mack had once again scored a direct hit. Scott licked his lips, and with a clenched jaw, tersely said "I will be in my office if you need any further information." With that he whirled around and rigidly walked down the hall. His anger was apparent. But so was Mack's. "God, I'm so tired of dealing with bureaucratic bosses who all seem to see the taking of a human life as part of a profit and loss column in some organization, whether it's a university or a corporation. 'Above all, we have to protect the reputation of the organization.' Never mind that someone is dead in his office, lying in a pool of his own blood!"

Linda was sympathetic. "Look, Mack. It is what it is. Any work place has to have a few bosses. As my daddy used to say, someone's got to be there to order the toilet paper. You need to cool down a bit before we start interviewing the staff. Let's grab a cup of coffee in the Grove Coffee Shop and let forensics do its job, OK?"

"Yeah, I want to get an idea of the layout of this building from the outside anyway. Let's go."