**Chapter One**

The pouring rain hammered the windshield as the wipers steadily swayed back and forth, resembling two frenzied arms at a rock concert. That and the drum solo of rain on the roof are the only sounds that can be heard inside of the car. Tony closed his eyes for a moment and ran through the dialogue that he’d been practicing for a couple of days now. This would be his second meeting with Shawn, although the first held much to desire. Shuddering with disgust, he remembered watching Shawn stare at him with hollow eyes as he defecated himself. Tony swallowed back saliva to deter him from throwing up at the thought. He shut the car off and shoved the keys into the pocket of his windbreaker. Grabbing for the manila folder on the seat beside him, he opened his jacket and held them inside as he got out of the car.

 The rain was blowing sideways with the wind and it made his longish black hair flap in thick chunky strands against his eyelashes. He shut the car door and hurried toward the entrance of the Mental Health Hospital. Quickly remembering that he’d left his car unlocked, he grabbed for the keys with his free hand and held them out toward the car. In his rushed attempt to lock the doors, he accidently set off the alarm and swore under his breath as he hurriedly turned it off. Finally getting the car locked, he shoved the keys back in his pocket and hurried inside the building.

 “Some weather.” A red-faced guard remarked as he flipped through a Cosmo Magazine with sticky fingers.

 Tony eyed the empty donut box beside the guard and tilted his head slightly. How stereotypical, he thought to himself.

 “Yeah, it’s pretty wet out there.” He replied.

 The guard set the magazine down on the counter and reached for the bottle of sanitizer beside him. Squirting a few drops into his hands, he rubbed them together and shrugged at Tony.

 “Beats having to walk all the way to the restroom to wash my hands.” He explained.

 “Yeah, that would be tragic.” Tony remarked, before he could catch himself.

 The guard narrowed his eyes at Tony for a moment before reaching for the clipboard.

 “Name?” he snarled.

 “Yes, sorry, it’s Tony Morselli.” He replied.

 “Morselli, you packing today?” the guard asked, his tone now professional and arrogant.

 I pissed him off, he thought to himself.

 “Just my service pistol.” Tony replied.

 “You need to turn it in for the duration of your visit. You will get it back on your way out.” The guard told him.

 Tony reached behind and pulled the pistol out from the holster that was neatly tucked under his windbreaker and handed it to the guard. He watched as the guard turned it over in his hands a few times before filling out the information on the clipboard. He shoved the clipboard at Tony and pointed to a line about midway down.

 “You need to sign here that we’ve taken temporary possession of your weapon and confirm that I’ve written down what it is, correctly.”

 Tony nodded and scanned the sloppy handwriting before scrawling out a quick signature. He set the pen down on the counter and started to move away, towards the metal detector.

 “Not so fast, hot shot. You need to watch me put it in the safety locker. It’s policy.” The guard told him.

 “Of course it is.” Muttered Tony.

 The guard didn’t appear to hear him and set about locking it up. Once it was tucked away safely, he moved toward the monitors of the metal detector. He nodded once at Tony and swung his eyes back to the screen.

 Tony shook his head and continued to walk through the metal detector, holding his breath. He hated these things. He could be wearing leaves and berries and it would go off on him. Surprisingly enough, it didn’t this time and the guard ignored him and went back to his seat at the counter.

 Tony made his way down the familiar hallway and started feeling around on the inside pocket of his jacket. He was checking to make sure his recorder was still there and when he felt the small squared device, he patted it once and continued walking. The buzzing fluorescent lights above were flickering and he wondered if they had always done that or if it was the storm going on outside. As he reached the elevators, he approached the door and pressed the button. Almost immediately, the stainless steel doors swung open, revealing an empty but run down elevator. Tony stepped forward and turned around, pressing the button for the fourth floor.

 As the rickety elevator made its way through the floors, he once again went through the script in his head and almost didn’t notice the audible “ding” sound. The doors swung open and he stepped out. He was on the hospitals monitored floor. There were law enforcement types crawling this wing and all of the patients were handcuffed in one way or another to something or someone. Some of the other shirts called this the criminal ward. It’s where the mental crime heads stayed while awaiting trials, court ordered evaluations and any other criminally deemed activity.

As he stepped up to another counter, he finally saw a familiar face and grinned at his old partner.

“Randy. You’re done training already, man?” he asked his buddy.

“Holy shit, Morselli. You’re dealing with the mental criminals now?” Randy asking him before slapping him on the back in greeting.

Tony laughed out loud and punched Randy in the arm, jokingly.

“Not habitually. Bryson couldn’t take this one, he’s on vacation with his old lady for a month and guess who got stuck with his assignments?” Tony answered.

“No idea, who?” Randy quipped.

Tony chuckled as he watched his old partner walk back around the counter and start typing on the computer. Randy had been his partner for almost two years before getting hurt in the line of duty. His wife had made him agree to either leave the force or take a desk job somewhere in the same field. Randy put in for a desk job at the station but nothing was available. About a week later, they called him to offer the position of the criminal unit at the mental hospital and here he was.

“Who we seeing today?” Randy asked him.

“Shawn Miller. Should be in high security, unless the doctors removed him.” He answered.

“Here he is. Nope, still high security. Give me a sec, Tone.” He answered.

Tony leaned on the counter as Randy stepped through the double paneled doorway, after punching in a series of numbers on a security tablet attached to the wall. His old partner disappeared to the other side and Tony looked around the room. The walls that were probably a crisp white at one time, were now stained in a light shade of yellow and beige in the corners and near the ceiling. No pictures or signs littered the walls and a cheap plastic clock ticked loudly from the wall adjacent to the counter. There were no chairs or tables, indicating that no one waited in this room very long. They liked to move people in and out quickly through the criminal ward.

Randy reappeared and had a small badge in his hand. He handed it to Tony who knew to pin it to his shirt as he had previously done on his last visit.

“You know the drill, I heard. Go on through. Good luck, man and good to see you.” Randy told him.

“Yeah, you too. Tell Grace I said hello.” He replied.

Randy nodded and buzzed the door open, stepping aside to let Tony pass through. He smiled to himself as he thought of the old stories with his old partner. They had a good run together and it was great to see him. As he made his way to the next steel security door, he waited for a moment before someone on the other side buzzed him through again.

“You’re here for Miller?” the guard asked.

“Correct. We have a thirty minute time slot for questioning. Are the reports available for investigators or law enforcement yet?” he asked the guard.

The man shook his head and shrugged.

“I’m just the guard, sir. The doctor will see you before you see the patient.” He told Tony.

Tony just nodded and continued to the holding area. He sat down in a small plastic chair, probably taken from some inner city school that just had a revamp of supplies. A couple minutes later, the doctor breezed in, wearing his long white lab coat and holding a thick folder of documents.

Tony stood and held out his hand.

“Sir, thank you for taking a moment to speak with me.” He told the doctor politely.

One of the tricks of the trade was to always treat the doctor as though he were a man of importance. They were trained to not see the people as criminals, but rather patients first. The doctors always spoke in a manner that indicated loyalty to their patient, not realizing that these were dangerous criminals. The way to get past this was to kiss their ass.

The doctor nodded without any reaction or emotion and immediately sat down at the table, across from Tony.

“You’re going to be questioning my patient today, Mr. Morselli and there are a few things I need you to know.” He began.

“Yes sir.” Tony replied.

“First, you can’t say the word murder. It seems to upset him and I can’t have you causing any setbacks to the progress we made.” He began.

Tony clenched his fists under the table. Can’t say the word murder? Why am I having to tiptoe around this maniac who sliced and diced his girlfriend and infant child?

“And?” he asked the doctor, taking great care to not let his anger show.

“And you are not to bring up the baby. I think that-“the doctor started.

“Okay, sir, with all due respect, this man is a criminal suspect in a double homicide case and I’ll be damned if I walk in, speaking baby talk to this asshole.” He interrupted the doctor.

“Then I’ll not be able to allow you in to see my patient.” The doctor started.

“He’s not your fucking patient, *Doctor* Phillips. You were contracted by the police department to evaluate this physcho for a court order.” He growled, unable to keep his cool.

The doctor stood abruptly and started scribbling on the outside of the folder.

“Now, you can let me see *my* suspect or I can let the department know that you’re not complying with a court order and they will see to it that you are taken off of the contract list in the future.” He finished, glaring at the doctor.

“You may see him today but I’ll be making a formal complaint that I cannot fully do my job and give a proper evaluation when you’re meddling in my recommendations.” The doctor spit back. He stood and began walking toward the heavy steel doorway. Tony followed him.

“Keep in mind that myself and two guards will be on the other side of the tempered glass, Morselli. The first time you go against my medical advice, you’re out and I will recommend no questioning during my evaluation.” He told Tony.

Tony sucked in his reply and nodded at the Doctor. It was crucial that investigation begin now, while the crime was fresh. These hours were the most important times to speak with their suspects and if the doctor actually went through with his threats, it could damage the entire investigation timeline.

He waited to be buzzed through and when the door clicked, he pulled it open and stepped into the small consultation room. A guard stood beside a square Formica table with two simple metal chairs, one on each side. The rest of the room was bare, but for a single light bulb above, directly centered over the table. There were two security cameras in each corner and another cheap plastic clock adorned the wall, ticking loudly.

“You can have a seat, sir. I’ll bring him in now.” The guard told him.

Tony nodded and sat down in the chair, pulling out the recorder and a small flip notebook and pen. As he was setting up the recorder, he watched the guard come back in the room, holding the chains that were attached to the handcuffs around the wrists and ankles of Shawn.

He looked better today, cleaner. He watched as Shawn shuffled in slowly behind the guard. He was wearing a pale gray pair of scrub pants and top in the same material. He wore white prison issued socks and a pair of plastic slide on shoes. His stringy hair was slicked back today, looking wet and gleaming under the glare of the single bulbs light. His eyes were listless and puffy, as though he were under the influence or sleep deprived. His eyes didn’t appear to be focused on anything around him and stayed unmoving as he made his way toward the chair.

“Is he medicated right now?” Tony mouthed to the guard angrily.

One of the most important things about a formal interrogation was to ensure that the suspect is not under the influence in any way. Later, during trial, it could hinder the validity of anything said during questioning. He made it clear before he came in today that Shawn was not to be medicated 24 hours prior to this appointment.

The guard shook his head and began cuffing Miller to the metal hooks on the floor.

“No, Officer Morselli. He always looks this way.” He said in a flat tone as he finished cuffing the wrist chains to the metal hooks on the table. Once Shawn was secured, the guard stepped toward the doorway.

“The panic button is located under your chair if you need immediate assistance. I’ll be right outside this door.” He told Tony.

With that, he exited the small room and left Tony and Shawn staring at one another. The only sound that could be heard was the slight raspy breathing coming from Shawn and the hum of the air handler.

“Shawn. Do you remember me? I’m Investigator Morselli. We met a few days ago.” He started.

Shawn continued to stare at him. Tony was aware that today was his birthday and he figured he would start with that. Something light and non-related to the case. The approach he’d first used earned him a shitty pants celebration.

“Happy Birthday, by the way. You’re twenty six today. Do you feel older?” Tony started.

Shawn stayed quiet still, not taking his eyes off of Tony. Just then, he heard a faint dripping noise and suddenly, the strong smell of urine wafted to his nose.

“You have to be shitting me.” Tony started. Right then, he realized his poor use of words and started to regret them when he noticed Shawn was finally beginning to respond.

Tony watched as Shawn shook his head back and forth extremely slowly. Tony quickly weighed his options. He needed to get a set of questioning in as soon as possible, while the crime was somewhat fresh and if he let the smell of urine stop yet another interview, he would lose precious time that he couldn’t get back.

“Yeah, I get it. Not shit this time. It’s piss.” Tony responded to the head shaking.

Shawn started to nod slowly now, still not showing any sign of emotion.

“Do you need a diaper, before we continue?” he asked.

Shawn started clenching his fists tightly, causing his knuckles to start turning white.

“Does that *piss* you off, Shawn?”

He watched as Shawn’s eyes started to twitch. This dull and unresponsive bullshit was an act, he was sure. There was nothing wrong with this monster, mentally.

“Because I can run and ask the guard to grab you a pampers, before we begin.” Tony continued.

Shawn closed his mouth shut and stopped puffing out his lower lip. It was now pressed tightly in a grim tight line. His eyes were now squinted narrowly and his breathing was quickening.

“Good. If you don’t need one, we will continue.” Tony said in a matter of fact way.

With that, Tony switched on the recorder and opened his small notebook. The manila folder sat unopened on the table and he considered it for a moment before deciding to leave it shut for now.

“Tracy was younger than you, wasn’t she? You two met at your job?” Tony started.

Shawn considered Tony now for a moment and then glanced around the room. His eyes swung upwards to the cameras for a moment and Tony thought he saw Shawn smile slightly before lowering his head back down.

“Who is Tracy?” Shawn finally asked in a low, almost inaudible tone.

“Your girlfriend, Tracy. Don’t play dumb with me, smartass.” Tony replied.

“I’m going to be late. I’m going to be late, again. Take the baby.” Shawn replied.

Tony sat back in his chair, tapping the pen onto the table as he watched this performance.

“Why do I cringe when you touch me? You have to ask why?” Shawn screeched, so loudly and abruptly that it startled Tony for a moment.

“Are you almost done?” Tony asked, yawning.

He could see that his indifference to this display was bothering Shawn. He might have fooled the doctors but he wasn’t fooling Tony.

“I wear makeup because it makes me feel better, Shawn! Stop that!” Shawn cried out before slumping his head forward and onto the desk hard.

Tony rolled his eyes and heard a rattle on the steel door. He glanced up at the mirrored two-way window and held up a hand, shaking his head. He had to let them know that this was a performance and to not come in. It could interrupt very crucial information.

“That’s adorable. The Oscars aren’t for another few weeks so why don’t you sit your pathetic ass up and start talking, you pissing, shitting piece of garbage.” Tony said.

Shawn sat straight up and glared at Tony. Tony smirked, glancing toward the glass and then looked back at Shawn.

“Fine. Pig. Fucking pig cop. Oink oink, pig.” Shawn snarled, spitting and rocking in the chair.

Tony wiped his forehead of the spittle that had landed like drops of a dew on a shaky leaf in the wind.

He smiled at Shawn and cross a leg over his knee. Shawn seemed agitated as he realized he wasn’t getting a reaction out of Tony this time.

“I did it in the garden, with the candlestick.” Shawn whispered, before throwing his head back and cackling loudly.

“Again, cute. But it looks more like you did it in the kitchen, with a butcher knife. You dumb hillbilly.” Tony finally said.

“What the fuck did you call me?” Shawn snarled under his breath.

Tony had taken the time to explain that his stepfather used to call him a dumb hillbilly. It was one of the things that screwed him up in his early adult years. His stepfather had even gone as far as to urge his girlfriend Tracy to abort the baby, so that it wouldn’t come out being a dumb hillbilly like its father. Shawn had spent a few nights in jail over this, making that the only criminal activity on his record thus far. After interviews with Shawn’s friends and coworkers, he left with a new abundance of information. That he grew up in a poor home with a single mother until she had met his stepfather. They were married when Shawn was just seventeen and although no physical abuse took place, a lot of verbal abuse happened daily.

Shawn had taken off the very day he turned 18 and met up with Tracy. They had apparently hit it off right away and he moved into Tracy’s RV in a mobile home park just a few miles from his mother’s home. He went to work as a mechanic and had knocked Tracy up when they were both 20. She aborted this one and Shawn beat the shit out of her for it. He’d wanted the baby. His friends said it was to prove to his mom that he could be a better parent and to prove to the stepdad that his kid would turn out smart and be great.

Tracy loved Shawn so she didn’t file charges and Shawn apparently lost a good handful of friends that day. A few still stuck around, however and those people were able to tell Tony that they acted similar to the way Shawn grew up. They didn’t have much, they still lived in the RV and he continued working as a mechanic while Tracy went to a community college for journalism. Fast forward a few years, Tracy got pregnant again but this time didn’t even hint at abortion. Nine months later, they had a baby boy and Shawn stopped drinking.

Tracy turned into a loose party animal and often left Shawn home with the baby after working long days at the garage. She would leave the moment he got home and wouldn’t be back until the next morning. Then, it progressively got worse and she began staying gone days at a time, causing Shawn to miss work and eventually get fired. The baby was now two months old.

According the Shawn’s old boss, he’d gone by the RV to offer Shawn his job back, with news that his wife, who worked in the office of the garage, would watch the baby in there during the work hours, free of charge. Shawn had been a good worker, he told investigators and they sympathized with his situation. When his old boss arrived, the door to the RV was locked and everything was quiet. Not wanting to pound on the door, in case the baby was sleeping, he left and decided to come back after lunch.

He did just that and this time, he noticed Shawn out back, burning something in a metal barrel they had used to burn house trash. His boss had noticed the piece of clothing with blood on it just before Shawn stuffed it down the barrel as he approached. He didn’t mention it as to not put himself in danger and instead told Shawn of the offer. Shawn was elated, shaking his bosses hand profusely and thanking him before suddenly looking troubled and hurrying toward the RV, saying he would call later.

His boss had gone straight back to the shop and called the police. When the responding officers arrived at the RV, Shawn was nowhere to be found and they broke open the door. When they went inside, they found a bloodied Tracy on the couch and the baby was on the floor next to the playpen, also bloodied.

“I called you a dumb hillbilly.” Tony replied, calmly. He began picking at one of his nails and buffing it on his jacket sleeve, as though bored.

“I’m not a dumb hillbilly, you son of a bitch.” Spat Shawn.

“You seem to have found your words.” Tony remarked, still messing with his fingernails.

“You got nothing on me, you dirtbag. You or your pig friends. You can’t prove shit.” He said.

“I don’t have to. Forensics are back. Your prints are on everything, you dumb redneck.” He said, leaning forward to meet Shawn’s eyes. This, of course, was a lie but lying was a tactic many interrogators used with suspects. Often, if they think they are caught anyways, they turn a new leaf, hoping that by finally spilling beans, they will get a lesser sentence.

Shawn was no different. He started to sing like a canary.

“Officer, you don’t get what it was like. I went insane for a minute, dude. You have to believe that.” Shawn started.

Tony wouldn’t let himself grin and cheer at this confession. While it was exactly what he needed, he couldn’t stop the outpour of information. He remained looking concerned and began jotting down notes.

“Temporary? So something made you snap?” he played along, asking Shawn.

“Yes, exactly! I snapped. It was out of my control.” He started.

“So you couldn’t help it?” Tony prodded.

Shawn shook his head excitedly.

“No! Not even if I tried.” He stammered. He was now bouncing his knee up and down which was another sign of nervousness, anxiety.

“Just like you couldn’t help it when you shit your pants? Or pissed your pants?” he lightly asked Shawn.

Shawn stopped bouncing his knees and his mouth hung open as he looked confused at Tony.

“You stupid son of a bitch. That’s all I have time for today. Thanks for the confession. I’ll see you at trail.” Tony smiled and switched off the recorder. There would be more questioning that needed to go on but he would wait for prosecutors to throw out offers and deals. He would use that as bargaining for more information. He had what he needed. A clear confession of guilt. Which he got.

Standing, he picked up the recorder and shoved it in his jacket pocket. Shawn glanced up at him with fright in his eyes before scanning the room, taking care not to stare at the mirrored window. His eyes fleetingly swung toward the camera before remembering to look back down. He immediately went back to his stupid dumb shit phase and shook his hair so that it now hung down in front of his eyes. He lost all expression and emotion and started to hum.

“Nice try. You already showed your non-mental side, *hillbilly.*” Tony told him.

Shawn immediately glared up at Tony and started to speak, just as the steel door swung open. Shawn nervously glanced at the guard before hurrying to lower his head back down and continue his act.

“You saw that, right?” Tony asked the guard.

The guard nodded and replied, “Yep, sure did.”

Tony could see Shawn twitch at that and he chuckled.

“See you in the court room, Hill-Shawn.” He said, winking at the guard and walking back out.

“Hot damn! That’s how you do it, son!” Randy called out.

Tony grinned and walked toward his old partner.

“You saw all that?” he asked, still smiling.

“Did I see all that? Hell yeah I saw all that, we all did. Nice work, Tony.” Randy grinned and replied.

The guards were slapping him on the back and giving congratulatory handshakes. This would turn out to be a cut and dry trial, due to his expert questioning. He shoved the folders inside his jacket and zipped it up.

Together, Randy and Tony walked back towards the elevators. Just then, the doctor stepped in front of them and blocked their path.

“Aw, shit. Here we go.” Muttered Tony.

The doctor spoke up.

“Officer, I apologize. Clearly that asshole doesn’t have a mental condition. I’ll redo my evaluation and provide it to the station on Monday morning. Good work.” He told Tony.

Tony raised an eyebrow and nodded at Randy, who shrugged and grinned. They continued on to the elevators and Tony stepped forward, pressing the button. Randy spoke first.

“Well, don’t be a stranger! Grace would love to see you, come on by the house this weekend. We can catch up.” He told Tony.

Tony nodded and embraced Randy in a manly hug.

“I’ll holler at you this weekend, buddy.” He said and entered the opened doors of the elevator.

He watched as Randy walked back to the counter, before the elevator doors closed and he grinned to himself at his successful interrogation. I need to take Bryson’s shit more often, he thought to himself, as he made his way to the front to retrieve his service pistol and hit the road.