

Sleep With The Fishes

Prologue

Peter Kerigan didn't know he was being watched. Two eyes as dark as coal tracked his every move, waiting until the time was perfect to do the job. The dimly lighted parking garage provided perfect cover.

Kerigan opened the trunk of his car, a year old Jaguar that had been given to him, involuntarily, by the mayor's brother. Having pictures of a high powered politician in a compromising position was never a bad thing. Being in a position to take advantage of indiscretions was a great perk of his job. Not unlike the penthouse apartment at the top of the building above him.

He moved his gym bag out of the way to make room for the suitcase he needed to deposit in the trunk. Kerigan might have been worried about carrying so much money around without a couple of wise guys to help protect him, but there was no one in the empty parking garage that he could see. He'd be delivering the payment to the boss at his house, behind the twelve foot high fences of his estate, so delivery would be a piece of cake.

Kerigan finished stuffing the bag of money inside of his jag and was about to close the trunk when something caught the corner of his eye. He stopped still as the night when a shadow passed through the sparsely moonlit garage. He squinted as he scanned the area surrounding him. He didn't see anything.

When he put his hand on the trunk to close it, Kerigan felt a presence at his back. He didn't understand how anyone could have snuck up on him without being heard, but he knew someone was at his back. He let go of the trunk, leaving it open, and reached for the Glock he kept in a side holster beneath his jacket.

Before he could pull out the gun, a piercing shot of pain struck him in the very back of his neck. Immediately, his body went limp and he fell to the ground. He was still conscious, but paralyzed. The only movements in his body were involuntary jerks that were slowly dying out as he felt an intense sensation of heat move down his spine and through the last reaches of his arms and legs. He tried to scream, but could not. He tried to move, but nothing happened when his mind sent the message. All the years he had spent in the gym building up his body by the use of weights and a little chemical enhancement, had gone by the way side and was rendered

useless in a mere split second by the figure that was still standing behind him.

As he lie there motionless and unable to do anything, a hand grasped his right ankle and he found himself being dragged away from his car and into the darkest reaches of the parking garage. He knew that he was helpless and tried again to yell for help, but was only able to get out a soft whimper. He knew that even if he had been able to yell, that he would still have been on his own. After all, he had chosen this particular location for its privacy factors. The thought raged inside his head that what had been the key to his safety was now going to be the key to his death.

After reaching a far corner of the parking garage, Kerigan's captor came to a stop, dropping him to the hard concrete. He still had not seen what or who had attacked him. He could see very little due to the darkness that surrounded him. If he looked to the left, he could almost make out an open section that was on the far side of the garage. That area was heavily gated, only allowing in the humid night air and the light from the moon, which cast a shadow of gate bars across the floor of the vast space of the empty garage.

Kerigan perceived footsteps again and for the first time was able to see the dark figure that had put him in his paralyzed state. He could not make out any details due to the darkness, only the silhouette of the person cast across the floor. The dark figure didn't say a word as it walked to the gate, where it stood motionless. The figure peered out into the night as if he or she needed to walk to an open window for fresh air.

Kerigan could not understand what was happening. Different thoughts ran through his head. The figure slowly turned its head around and looked at him. He could not see the eyes of the person, but could feel a look cold on his body. After a few moments of staring at him, the figure slowly finished turning and walked toward him once more.

Kerigan tried with every fiber of his body to move, but was unable to as the figure dressed in a long black draping coat closed in on him.

The figure's body slowly started to block out the moonlight, coming closer and closer until the silence of the night was finally pierced.

"You will never hurt anyone again."

At that moment, Kerigan knew it was the last thing he would ever hear as the remaining light turned to total darkness.



Reed's Realm

The moon finished its journey through the night sky as an oversized sun broke the dawn of another day in New Orleans. The first rays of sunlight cast a golden glitter along the gentle swells of the Mississippi River. The sky was a light blue with white clouds staggered across it like puffy train cars. It was a beautiful morning to take in for the early risers sitting outside a small shop off Jackson Square, kick starting their day with a latte and a beignet. Even the commuters fighting the early morning rush hour stops and goes on the 610 had to take a moment to observe the glorious dawn around them.

Not everyone was enjoying the morning, however, including Detective Reed Hackman. He had been on duty for most of the previous day and night, and only after an hour and a half of sleep he found himself awake and driving down St. Charles Street. He could not quite understand why he had been personally asked to handle this case, and he didn't have a clue what he was going to find when he arrived at his destination. One thing for sure was that he didn't like the feeling that he had in the pit of his stomach.

It was a feeling that he got from time to time, the one that most of his instructors told him back in his bureau days could be the difference between life and death; the feeling that should never be disregarded. Reed, however, was trying his best to ignore it this morning. He had high hopes that maybe it was the aftermath of the Cajun leftovers that had been in his fridge for a few days and late last night became his supper before he fell into his bed.

Reed took a quick glance down at the address that he had written on the yellow sticky note that once sat by his home phone. He thought that he should have already found the place. He was running out of the condos that lined the street. Just as he decided to turn around, the detective saw familiar red and blue lights flashing just ahead of him.

As he slowly approached the scene and parked his car, Reed was a bit puzzled to see so many police officers and crime units already there. He wondered again why he had been summoned out of bed to come to a crime scene that for all he could tell had more than enough law enforcement agencies there to handle anything that could have happened.

Reed got out of his car and walked over to the entrance of the luxury apartment building. There were two menacing officers guarding the entry way. Reed pulled out his badge.

“Hackman. Homicide”, he said as he flashed the badge to the two patrolmen.

“Oh, yeah. Hackman. They’ve been waiting for you. Down in the parking garage” the somewhat chunky officer on the left said.

“Just take the stairs down the hall and to your left and you can’t miss it.” He followed up, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder.

Reed made his way to the stairs and down to the parking garage below. When he reached the garage, he paused to take a quick look around. All he saw was one car; a black jaguar with its trunk open. There was a detective searching the contents of the trunk. Reed recognized him as Detective Martin Johnston. Reed knew Martin well. They had worked several cases together and Reed was glad to see him on the case. Reed admired Martin’s dedication to his work and his city. Martin was born and raised in New Orleans. He was walking proof that a young punk that grew up on the streets, in and out of trouble, could turn his life around and now serve his home town community by pouring his heart and soul into his work.

“What’s up, Martin?” Reed asked as he walked toward the car, his voice echoing in the empty parking garage.

“Reed. Good. You made it. I was beginning to worry about you.” Martin said, straightening up and walking over to Reed.

“What can I say, Martin? You know how I like to make an entrance.” Reed said smiling and reaching out to shake Martin’s hand.

“It’s good to see you, Reed. How you doin’?” Martin asked.

“Well, to be honest, I am a bit confused. I don’t understand why I’m here. It seems like you have this all under control,” Reed returned.

“Your call was not from me buddy. This call came from the top,” Martin shared.

“From the Chief?” Reed asked.

“You got it.”

Reed took another look around and shook his head. “Well, I’m sorry that I have been called to step on your toes. I’ll call downtown and let them know that you have this all under control.”

“That’s not necessary, Reed. This is one case that I’m more than happy to pass on to you,” Martin told him.

Reed slowly began to realize that the ominous feeling that he had in the pit of his stomach was not from the cajun food after all.

“Perfect!” Reed said to himself as he drew in a deep breath and looked around the parking garage once more.

“Well, I guess you’d better fill me in on what I have here then,” Reed said.

“Does the name Peter Kerigan ring any bells with ya?” Martin asked.

Of course, Peter Kerigan’s name rang many bells with Reed. Peter Kerigan was one of the most well known higher ranking members of “The Company”. The Company was the nickname of R J Imports based in New Orleans and owned and operated by Ronald Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was known for three things. One was that he was one of the wealthiest men in Louisiana. Second, he was more corrupt than all the political officials combined that he paid to look the other way. He had most of the police force and district attorney’s office in his pocket. That made even thinking about bringing him down an impossible task. While about eighty percent of his business was legitimate, it was the small twenty percent that was not that made The Company profitable.

Ronald Jeremiah was not the only corrupt crime boss that tried to keep a hold on the river. He did, however, have the biggest piece of control. The most deadly characteristic that Jeremiah was known for was that if anyone crossed him, their body would soon be found at the bottom of the ole Mississippi.

Jeremiah was also known for her extreme ruthlessness. Rumors about his acts ran wild everywhere. One of his oldest friends and business partners supposedly made advances on his wife and paid the price. When Jeremiah found out, he had his friend cut into six pieces and had his body parts exported to six different countries to prove that it did not matter who you were. Jeremiah proved that he was not a man to be messed with.

In order for Jeremiah to bring in and make profit off the pivotal twenty percent of his business—the best imported drugs money could buy—he had to have front men to get it out and do the street work. Jeremiah picked them by hand. They had to be trustworthy and loyal to him. He only had four such men. One of them was his wife’s nephew, Peter Kerigan.

“Kerigan.” Reed said without surprise. “I should have known this had to be some of his dirty work. Who did he off this time?”

“It’s a little bit more complicated than that,” Martin said.

“How so?” Reed asked.

“Well, Kerigan is the one that’s dead.”

“You have to be shitting me?” Reed said, surprised.

“I’m way serious man, go look for yourself. His body is over there around the corner.” Martin pointed out the far corner where the body of Peter Kerigan rested. “I didn’t have the crime lab come in yet. I thought you needed to see him for yourself first,” Martin added as he walked back to the trunk of the Jaguar. “I’m going to finish checking out the car. Let me know when you’re ready for the crime lab team and I’ll call ‘em in.”

Reed nodded and walked over to the area where Peter Kerigan’s body rested. He looked around and didn’t see any signs of a break in or fight. When he got closer to the body, he noticed that there were skid marks on the floor where dirt had been disturbed. It looked as if his body was dragged into this far corner from his car.

That’s very odd, Reed thought. If he killed him and then drug him over here, why isn’t there a blood trail? Unless he wasn’t dead yet. But if he wasn’t dead, then why didn’t he fight?

Reed took a closer look at Kerigan’s body. The cause of death was obvious. Kerigan’s throat had been almost cut or ripped off of his body. He thought the throat was ripped because there were no signs of a clean slice that a knife would leave. The wound looked more like a stress tear; like something or someone had ripped his neck apart.

Kerigan’s skin color was an odd shade of deep blue as well. He looked different than most dead bodies. The whites of his eyes were mostly a pale blue, giving way to small splotches that were an eerie blue blood shot. It was like he was under so much strain that his eyes were about to explode when he died.

Reed could see something sticking out from the inside of Kerigan’s coat. He reached in his own pocket to pull out a pen and used it to pull back one side of the coat to reveal Kerigan’s gun, still fastened tight in his chest holster.

“So, what do ya think?” Martin asked as he walked over to Reed.

“I think there is something very wrong with this whole picture,” Reed responded.

“You’re telling me that someone made it in here past the security system, grabbed him from behind, then drug his huge, muscle bound body over here, and killed him without him drawing his gun?”

“It just doesn’t make any sense, Martin.” Reed said, standing up.

“Well, if that doesn’t make sense, then you have to see what I found,” Martin added.

Reed followed Martin back to the late model black Jaguar.

“When we got here, Kerigan’s car was just like this, parked with the trunk open,” Martin said.

“Yeah and it looks as if his body was dragged from there to the corner,” Reed said, pointing.

“That’s what I thought too,” agreed Martin. “So I decided to see what was in the trunk.” Martin gestured down at two bags that were in the trunk.

“Now, the bag on the left is filled with a set of gym clothes. It has a complete change with shoes, weight lifting gloves, and a weight lifting belt,” Martin said pointing to the bag on the left.

“And the other bag?” Reed asked.

“Have a look,” Martin said taking a step back from the trunk so Reed could get closer.

Reed reached in and pulled one side of the bag open with his pen, revealing several stacks of bound money.

“Holy shit!” Reed said. “There has to be a quarter of a million dollars in this bag.”

“More or less, that is what it looks like, my friend,” Martin said.

“Who in the hell would come in here, kill Kerigan, and then leave all this money in the car?” Reed asked.

“I have no idea,” Martin admitted, “but like I said before, I sure am glad that it’s you and not me on this one. You want me to call in the crime lab?”

“Yeah, go ahead and call them,” Reed said. “I also want a full autopsy on Kerigan and I want him moved to the head of the list. I don’t care how many other bodies are ahead of him. I need it done yesterday.”

“I will take care of that,” Martin said.

“I also want the crime lab to comb over this car, his penthouse, and this whole building,” Reed ordered. “Whoever did this had to get in here somehow, and I want to know how. There has to be something left behind and I want it found.”

Reed placed his pen back into the inside pocket of his coat, and then walked back toward the stairs that led outside. “If anything is found, I want to be called immediately, okay Martin?” Reed asked as he reached the stairs and started up.

“You got it,” Martin said. “Hey, where are you going anyway. I thought that you might stick around.”

“You’ve got things covered here. I need to go,” Reed responded.

“Where ya goin’?” Martin asked.

Reed was at the top of the stairs about to walk out the door. Reaching inside his coat again, this time bringing out his pair of sunglasses, Reed turned around and looked at Martin.

“I’m going to go find out who wanted Peter Kerigan dead.”



Reed stood arms crossed at the window of his office on the fifth floor of Police Plaza, his tie pulled away from his collar and the first button undone revealing the very top of his white undershirt.

This particular window overlooked part of historic downtown New Orleans. Some of the buildings were new ones that stood on the soil of what used to be the home to an early 1900’s market or shop. The majority of the buildings, however, were the originals that had withstood the test of time, high humidity, and vicious hurricanes. Some of these were remodeled to look more modern and some were just empty, abandoned shells, holding the spirits and memories of all that once stood within their walls.

No matter what category the buildings fit into, they all spoke of the stories that etched the rich history through time of this one of a kind city. New Orleans was a cultural mecca that overflowed with tradition. There was also a mysterious side to The Big Easy, a side that wasn’t easy at all, that made the city hard to live in and harder to like. But it was all the quirky aspects intertwined together that made Reed love living in and serving this community.

One of the city's newest mysteries was the reason for the pondering taking place at the window inside the confines of Reed's twelve by twelve foot office. Reed's work area was typical of those of his counterparts, and not unlike any of the others inside Police Plaza. It was the smaller nuances that set each of these cookie cutter rooms apart from one another. One thing that made Reed's stand out was the cityscape visible out of his window.

Unlike other office dwellers that tried to shut the outside world out, Reed always had the window shades pulled all the way open. He enjoyed looking out at the community thriving below. It always gave him a visual reminder of the city and its people that he had dedicated himself to protect and serve. There were a lot of factors that contributed to the safety of the town, and he felt good knowing that he was a very small part.

Reed had an L shaped desk that dominated his space. The main section jettied out onto the middle of his office. There were stacks of case files and photos that poured out of his in and out box trays, making them look like over loaded hamburgers barely holding in all the ingredients. The main portion of his desk was the designated hands on case area.

On this day, that space was taken by the Kerigan case. Pictures of the crime scene, tagged evidence lists, and field reports filed by the Crime Lab Unit were scattered about in no particular order, making their home where they last landed after being read once and tossed back down.

The other section of his desk that almost touched the left wall held his computer, printer, and phone. To the far right end was an electric pencil sharpener, and desk organizers that housed paperclips, pens, and other needed supplies. There were a few coffee mugs along with a coaster in the forefront that held what was left of Reed's coffee from earlier that day. Reed hadn't been a coffee drinker until he joined the force. All the long hours of stressful work with little valued sleep finally broke him down, and kicked off what was a two to three cup morning addiction.

Hanging on the wall to the right of the computer was Reed's college degree from the University of Oklahoma accompanied by certifications from the FBI Quantico, and his certification from the NOPD. To the left of his qualifications were a series of street maps of New Orleans. Reed had used them to learn the city when he first moved in, but now he used them to plot crimes to try and see any patterns that could be found.

On the opposite side of his office sat a standard tan file cabinet that held all of Reed's recent cases. Next to that was a rather large and full book case that stretched almost to the entry way of his office. Reed constantly studied and researched as much as he could. After years of chasing law breakers, his theory was that the best ammunition that he had against criminals was his mind. Reed knew that he had more intelligence than most

of the officers on the force, but he didn't flaunt it. He looked at it as a gift and didn't go out of his way to show it off. It shined when it needed to.

There were rows and rows of books that took permanent keep on Reed's shelf. Everything from his old FBI Field Guide to books on state and local law lived there. However, by far, most of the space was taken up by books on behavior. Some cops didn't try to even understand why criminals acted the way they did. Many officers' philosophy was "break the law, and I am going make you pay with a steel fist or a lead bullet." Reed knew that there was a place for those kind of hard nosed cops. They were the front line troops out in the trenches everyday getting their hands dirty.

Reed had to be a different sort of cop. He was the one that had to come in and makes some kind of sense out of the senseless. He had to look at the puzzle pieces of evidence and try to put them all together. Reed always looked for signs that would help lead him to understand the behavior of the criminal. He then used that knowledge to extrapolate possible next moves. Using out of the box tactics is what made Reed a good detective and gave him the best success rate of any other man on the force.

Looking out on the city now, searching his mind for answers, Reed refused to think that he was being presented with his first unsolvable case. Although he knew that the case was still in its early stages, there was something different about it that still gave him an uneasy feeling. Normally, the puzzle pieces of the crime started to come together quickly and logically. But in this case, none of the pieces seemed to fit. Too many things just didn't make sense, much less come close to adding up to a clue about the killer.

"What am I missing?" Reed whispered as he lightly bit his lower lip.

His frustrations were building inside him when his self-induced trance was broken by the sound of his phone ringing. Reed moved slowly over to his desk chair and sat down, spinning the chair to the right a half turn to face the ringing phone.

"Hackman. Homicide", he said placing the receiver to his ear.

"Detective Hackman, this is Dr. Dana Fox at the medical examiners office. I was told that you were the man I needed to contact," she said in a professional tone.

"Yes doctor, how can I help you?" Reed asked.

"Are you the lead investigator on the Peter Kerigan case?" Dr. Fox asked.

“Yes, I am. What do you have for me, doctor?” Reed felt hopeful that she could at least give him some direction on the case. He hoped all along that the doctor could give him a hand in getting this case going with her findings. He felt like he had nothing.

“Actually, Mr. Hackman, I was hoping that you could come over to my office.”

“What’s going on?” Reed asked.

“I think you had better come and have a look for yourself detective,” Dr. Fox advised.

Reed turned his chair and once more gazed out the window. He could feel that uneasy feeling start to build again in the pit of his stomach.

“Detective are you still there?” Dr. Fox asked after a few moments.

Reed gathered his thoughts and once more concentrated on the doctor.

“Yes—I was just looking at my schedule. Are you free right now to see me?” Reed asked.

“Sure. I still have a few things to follow up on, but I am available,” the doctor responded.

“Great, I will be right over in a few minutes,” Reed said as he ended the conversation and hung up the phone.

Reed stood up and walked over to the window once more. He buttoned up the top button of his white Van Hussein dress shirt, then tightened and straightened up his maroon tie.

***This could be the break I have been waiting for,* Reed thought as he turned and deliberately walked out of his office, closing the door behind him.**