

# Investigate the Investigator

## **Maggie's World**

**Maggie sat behind her desk at Carved Wood reading a novel. She'd done all the paperwork needed for the day and waited for closing time. The store was devoid of customers, as it had been for most of the day. Some days seemed to boom with activity, and others, like today, made her wonder whether there was any future in business for her at all.**

**The ringing of the bell above the front door pulled Maggie's attention from her fantasy world back to the real one. Disappointment quickly set in when she realized she didn't have a last minute customer, but rather it was her father coming into the office. If he came to the official seat of their business dealings, it was usually later in the evening and for no more than a couple of hours. He preferred to do business where he was most comfortable, and that was the manor that he'd tailored to his every need. Their downtown office was all Maggie.**

**"Hello, Father," she said, putting down her book and straightening in her chair.**

**Drake nodded. "Nice to see the great American work ethic in action." He moved smoothly across the showroom floor and stopped by the desk.**

**"You always seem to catch me at my best," she said, giving him a fake smile. "What brings you in?"**

**"The closing on our new river property is tomorrow. I wanted to go over the paperwork one last time," he answered. Drake walked through the door behind the counter into the small business office.**

**Sighing, Maggie knew she needed to tell him about the policeman that had questioned her. While she couldn't think of anything in the universe she wanted to do less, it would be nice to get it over with and off her mind. There was no fear that her father would blame or punish her. She simply hated to see him mad.**

**Maggie walked back into the office and sat in the non-descript chair on the far side of the desk. The workspace held another computer that was used by Drake almost exclusively, and little else. He usually kept it immaculate, in contrast to his home office, with no stacks of paper**

**or files sitting on it. At the moment, a tidy manila folder sat beside the keyboard.**

**“I’m glad you came in. There’s something I need to tell you about,” she said.**

**Drake tapped his fingers on the surface of the desk as he waited for the computer to boot up. “No need to make me wait. What’s up? Blackwolf in trouble again?”**

**“Not that I know of. I just had a visitor in the store today. A detective. He was asking a lot of questions,” she said.**

**Drake’s expression remained neutral. “About what?”**

**“Two dead bodies.” Maggie clasped her hands together and leaned forward, her elbows resting on her knees. “The police found Jo Jo at the warehouse.”**

**“Jo Jo?” Drake asked, then a grimace took over his face when he recognized the name. “You were in charge of that operation,” he said.**

**Maggie didn’t like where this conversation was headed. “You made me do it, and you made me take Marco. I made sure the deed was done. He was supposed to take care of the body. He might not have realized we owned the warehouse. I don’t know. That’s why the detective came to us,” she said.**

**He let out a few hostile breaths, but cast no more blame. “So some bum was killed in one of our warehouses. That’s not a big deal,” he said.**

**“That’s not all, though,” Maggie said, sinking back into her chair again. “The detective that came in thinks Jo Jo’s murder might be linked with Peter Kerigan.”**

**“Magnolia Drake! Can you do nothing right?!”**

**Maggie stood up, sending the chair behind her flying backwards. “Hey, maybe I’m not a killer. You need to send some of the people who actually enjoy this type of work to do your dirty deeds.”**

**Drake, his dark eyes boring into her, stood slowly. “I send you to do work because I know you can be trusted to do it right. I guess I was wrong.”**

**“Marco screwed up with Jo Jo and I didn’t make any mistakes with Kerigan. The detective must just think their linked from the similar wounds.” Maggie put her hands on her head and paced behind the desk. “Life shouldn’t have to be like this, Father. I was never meant for this.”**

**“You were meant to be a part of this family from the moment you were born. Don’t doubt that.” He walked around the desk and put a hand on her shoulder, stopping Maggie in her tracks. “And no matter how much you detest it, this work—being my daughter—is in your blood. The sooner you accept that, the easier your life will be,” he said.**

**Feeling tears welling, Maggie tensed every muscle around her eyes to stop them. “I can’t,” she whispered.**

**Her father sighed. “What do we need to do about this policeman?”**

**Maggie shrugged and was glad when her father removed his hand. “I don’t know. I think he’s just guessing about it all, but he’s definitely suspicious. He might not have any other leads, and that could make him dangerous.”**

**Drake returned to his side of the desk and sat down. Despite his outburst of anger, he had an outstanding ability to calm himself at the drop of a hat. To the contrary, Maggie knew she’d be upset about this conversation for hours, if not longer.**

**“I want you to watch him for a couple of days. Do you think you can do that without being seen?” Drake asked.**

**Spying was her specialty. “Yes, I can do that.”**

**“Try to see what he’s doing in this case if you can. If he contacts us again—or more importantly, if we become suspects—we’ll have to revisit whether or not he’ll have to be eliminated.”**



**Maggie Drake let the hot evening wind blow through her hair as she walked down Bourbon Street. Strangers passed by her without as much as a passing glance for the most part. Some tourists smiled, and the occasional street vendor tried to sell her a trinket or an ounce or two of pot. Otherwise, she interacted with those around her as little as possible. Unlike most of those around her who were out looking for a good time, Maggie had another purpose. She needed to find Stephan Blackwolf.**

**A rake, and a rambler, Stephan was also one of the most informed of the Drake Family. Without getting into trouble too often, he managed to travel in enough circles in New Orleans to know most of the goings on about town. He knew when there were raves and he knew when The Company was peddling one of their products on the cheap. He knew when one of their lieutenants got arrested and he knew when one of their clan overdosed. He also knew who was being investigated by the police and where the random bust was going to go down. Maggie didn't know exactly how he came about his information and she didn't want to know. She just wanted to tap in to his bank of knowledge for a bit.**

**Turning down St. Phillips Street, Maggie watched the couple walking in front of her. At ten O'clock on a Saturday night, she had no doubt what they were looking for. And in this Big Easy, they would have no trouble finding their desired party. Every bar in the French Quarter had one. The thirty-something man and woman no doubt had already had their fair share of alcohol during the day and would find some place to top it off. Like so many visitors, they'd drink until they could barely stand, until showing off the normally private parts of their bodies seemed okay, and until they could drink no more. Then they'd head back to their over priced hotel room and sleep it off until they had to go home, or until they could start drinking the next day. While there were plenty of family tourists in New Orleans as well, most of them didn't walk the streets at this hour.**

**Stephan would be out here among them somewhere. He loved taking advantage of those flaunting themselves and up to no good. His actions were rarely more honorable, but it provided him a thrill he couldn't seem to get out of living a more acceptable life.**

**Maggie ducked into a bar that Stephan liked to frequent called the Easy Does It. A blue neon sign from the front window announcing the name illuminated the dim interior. Additional florescent liquor signs on the inside provided supplementary lighting. This left the faces and identities of the patrons inside mostly hidden, as was likely the point.**

**The interior of the tavern was no bigger than a large living room. The bar itself stretched across the length of the room of about fifteen feet. The remainder of the space accommodated ten small tables and three booths along the far wall. Of the seats in the bar, only about half were taken.**

**Seeing the familiar shape for who she was looking, Maggie zigzagged through the tables to the far booth. Another tourist couple sat on one side, each with an umbrella drink in front of them. They looked**

**extremely similar to the people she'd noticed on the street, and she was sure they had no idea how dangerous a game they were playing with the good looking native sitting on the other bench.**

**Before he saw her, Stephan had his full attention on his prey. His dark eyes danced as he spoke to them, his lips a constant smile even while they moved. Maggie didn't know what Stephan's intentions were, but it was clear he had them. Whether it was stealing money from the couple, luring them into some strange sexual tryst, or something more sinister, Maggie didn't know. It was entirely possible that he simply wanted a bit of time and conversation from them. With Stephan, it was always hard to predict.**

**Maggie walked to the table and made her presence known. Stephan stopped in mid-sentence of some kind of lavish tale and shifted his roguish smile to her.**

**"And here's my girl," he said in his unaccented voice.**

**"I've been looking for you," Maggie replied, intending to sound cross.**

**Stephan sighed a little, as if hours of work had just gone down the drain, and turned back to his prey. "Looks like I'm going to have to call it a night, guys," he said.**

**After parting ways with the couple and leaving the smoky little bar, Stephan put his arm around Maggie's shoulder. "To what do I owe the honor of your presence?"**

**"Maybe I just missed you," she said. They were headed in the direction of Club 9. She didn't know if that was just a coincidence or if Stephan meant to lead them there. If he thought she was going to party with him all night, he was sadly mistaken.**

**"Possible, but not likely," he responded. Stephan stepped in front of her and began walking backwards so that they were facing each other.**

**Maggie pushed him in the chest, making him stumble. "I need your help on a new assignment from Father. Do you know a Detective Reed Hackman?"**

**Stephan stopped and began tapping his temple as if thinking. "That name sounds familiar. I have known a few of our boys in blue during my time."**

**"You've never forgotten a name or a face," Maggie said.**

**“Huh, you know I haven’t. I know Hackman. Why do you ask?”**

**“I’ve been asked to keep an eye on him for a day or two,” she said.**

**As people walked around them, Stephan and Maggie started moving again. Pockets of pedestrians pooled around the more popular clubs. Street performers and vendors helped attract them. They passed a shaggy looking man wearing raggedy shorts and a dirty white T-shirt playing When the Saints Go Marching In on a guitar. The street traffic was aided by the fact that New Orleans allowed drinking on the streets, and that a cool beer and fresh air would feel nice on a night like this.**

**“I’ve never been arrested by him, so I don’t know much about Hackman. I’ve heard he usually does murder cases. Likes the unsolved stuff.” Stephan shrugged. “If he ever gets a hold of you, he won’t let go.”**

**That wasn’t what Maggie wanted to hear. “Anything else?”**

**“He’s hot,” Stephan said.**

**A surprised laugh escaped Maggie’s throat. “According to who?”**

**“I’ve got eyes,” Stephan said. “Nothing wrong with recognizing another good looking man.”**

**“I guess not. He is pretty cute,” she agreed.**

**Stephan tried to put a serious look on his face. “Now don’t go breakin’ my heart over a law man. It would never work.”**

**Maggie paused in front of a booth selling hand carved trinkets. “Oh, I know,” she said, sighing. “Is he on the take?”**

**They started moving again. Stephan shrugged. “I don’t think so. I don’t know of anyone trying to pay him off and we’ve certainly never had reason to do so. Usually if they take one payoff, they take too many to keep secret. I’ve never heard that about him.”**

**Judging by the ten minutes she spent in his presence and her usually accurate gut feelings, Maggie didn’t think Reed Hackman was a compromised man. Cops that took money usually had an angry, guilty demeanor that put her on notice that they were probably crooked. Given that the Drake Family needed to utilize those of less scrupulous values on the police force, she usually considered it an asset.**

**Concluding that Hackman was not likely to be bought off made her glad for some reason, though.**

**With her thoughts drifting and her feet still moving, Maggie came to an abrupt halt when Stephan grabbed her arm. She looked around and realized they were in a much more dense group of people. Those around her were also younger by ten years than many of those they'd passed in their wanderings. She wasn't surprised to recognize they were at the front door of Club 9.**

**"I don't want to do this tonight," she said, turning to her friend.**

**His big brown eyes made him look like an expectant puppy dog. "Come on, Maggie. You need to have some fun."**

**"This won't be fun," she asserted.**

**"Yes it will. You need to lighten up a little," he pleaded.**

**Maggie shook her head. She knew herself enough to know that she was a pushover when it came to Stephan. He usually got what he wanted. And he might be able to get her to go into the club, but that was no guarantee that she would actually enjoy herself. Deep down, though, she hoped that she would.**

**"Come on," Maggie said, taking Stephan's hand and heading to the door.**