

Dumpster Diving

Reed's Realm

Reed pulled over and parked his car at the curb just down from the yellow and black police barricading the alleyway just ahead of him. It didn't matter how many times he had arrived at crime scenes, it was something that never got passé. No matter how much Reed reminded himself that it was just a job, he could not help but think that these people were someone's son, daughter, brother, sister, or even a mom or dad. Reed knew that he had to distance himself from taking things personally. And although he worked hard at doing that, the thought that this person was once a child, so innocent playing on a playground without a care in the world, now through the events of their adult life they found themselves gone forever.

It made him wonder just what went wrong in their lives that led them to this unfortunate conclusion. Those ponderings were enough to wrench Reed's mind, but with everything that had happened lately, it seemed like he was getting nowhere fast and the body count was rising and rising on his watch.

Reed took another quick drink of his morning coffee before sitting it on the dash. He reached over and grabbed his coat that rested on the passenger seat.

"Just let this one be a normal one," Reed said, knowing that to most people there was nothing normal about finding and investigating dead people. With everything that Reed had seen over the past few weeks, he knew how twisted and bad things could really be.

Reed exited his car and closed the door behind him. He slipped on his coat as he made his way under the police tape, and down the alley. He took note of his surroundings. The alley was not very wide and was quite dirty, even for a New Orleans alley. It was the kind of place that put a visual to the saying being drug down the dark back alley.

Most of the places on Bourbon Street were either bars or places to sell cheaply made items to tourist. Being a place with so many tourist made the area flood with criminals that wanted to prey on the many that came to this street to get shit drunk and act like fools.

Reed was already pondering the possibilities in his mind, and of all those scenarios that were swirling around in his head, he already had a feeling it was a drug deal gone bad. Up ahead, a swarm of cops circulated with a crime scene team around a nondescript blue dumpster.

This isn't going to be pretty! Reed thought to himself.

Off to the left of the street was an older Asian woman talking to another officer. She flasher her hands from one point to another as she adamantly explained her story. She pointed down the alley with anguish on her face. She must have been the unfortunate one to have stumbled upon the body.

As Reed approached, Detective Crayton, who was fairly new to the force, looked over to see Reed, and met him halfway. He was a good kid, but Reed knew that he was as green as hell and needed a lot of work. If he had to warn the guy one more time not to touch evidence without gloves, Reed would have to pistol whip the guy.

“Detective Hackman, thanks for coming,” he said, shaking Reed’s hand. “I’m sorry for dragging you down here, sir. I really don’t think it’s necessary.”

Reed looked at him in question. “Well, someone thought it was,” Reed returned.

“You’re right,” a gravelly voice said.

Reed looked toward the voice to see Officer Smith, leader of the crime unit.

“Hey Smith,” Reed greeted. “I should have known that you had something to do with all this.”

“I tried to tell him that a supervisor wasn’t needed, but he refused to start investigating until you were here,” Crayton said in an almost grade school, tattle tail manner.

Reed stopped and looked over at Crayton standing beside him. Reed placed his left hand on Crayton’s shoulder. “I have been out on so many of these calls that I’ve lost count. As a matter of fact, at this point, they all have kind of blurred together into one big lump of unforgettable images that scare my brain. And after all the years and all the cases, I’ve come to realize one thing to be true. Do you know what that one thing is?” Reed asked the rookie.

“No, Sir,” Crayton quickly responded.

“Well listen close,” Reed said, leaning closer to the rookie. “If the crime unit, and especially this one, says that you need to do something, then you do it. It’s not a competition. We’re all on the same team. You hear me?”

“Yes, Sir,” the rookie said.

“Very good, now I would like for you to go over and prep the lady who found the body. Tell her who I am and that I will be over to speak with her in just a moment,” Reed ordered, glad to be sending the young detective away.

Reed looked back to Smith. “Hey, I’m sorry if he caused you any shit.”

“Me?” Smith said with a smile. “Nah, you know me better than that.”

“Yeah, I do know you and that’s why I am a little worried about you putting in the call for me,” Reed stated.

“Yeah, well, one look into this dumpster and you will know why I insisted you be here,” Smith explained.

Reed walked over to the scratched and dinged up dumpster that reeked like a piece of road kill that had been baking in the sun for a week and must have been filled with very nasty trash. Adding that to the smell of death provided a combination that would make a goat throw up.

Reed covered his mouth with his left hand and leaned carefully over to edge of the dumpster. Not only did he not want to disturb evidence, he also didn’t want to get anything on his clothes. He liked the blue cotton shirt that he was wearing and he knew he’d have to throw it away if he got any sludge from this crime scene on it. As Reed looked into the container and focused his eyes on the contents, his hand dropped from his mouth. The stench that filled his nasal cavity wasn’t as shocking as what he saw.

“Son of a bitch,” Reed said in a low voice before yelling out. “Crayton!” Reed eagerly pulled away from the dumpster and walked over to the other officer.

“Yes, Sir,” he responded.

Reed looked around at all the officers that were there walking around and shook his head before speaking. “Clear the alley,” he said as he walked toward the Asian woman.

“Sir?” Crayton questioned.

Reed turned around and looked at Crayton again with a serious and intense look in his eyes that was sure to be the first look of its kind that the rookie had ever seen.

No further words were needed to be spoken. Crayton yelled out, “Okay, people, let’s clear the alley. I want part of you on the north intersection and the rest at the south. Run crowd control until further notice.”

As the officers started moving out, Reed turned his attention back to the woman standing at the far side of the alley way. "Thank you very much for your cooperation and statement. If you don't need any more assistance from us, then you may feel free to go back into your shop," Reed stated.

The woman looked at him for a moment more, still perplexed, then nodded and walked back into her store. She closed the backdoor behind her, then locked a deadbolt.

Reed turned around, finding himself face to face with Crayton who had quietly walked up behind him. "You too, Crayton," Reed said as he motioned down the alley to the intersection.

Crayton stuttered. "But Sir, I—" was all he got out before Reed interrupted.

"If I'm going to have to repeat everything I say to you, it's not going to bode well for you around here," Reed stated.

Crayton held up both his hands and turned to move to the end of the alley with the other officers. Smith and his team stood by, waiting for directions. This was not the first time that Reed had cleared a crime scene, but the incidents in which he had were few and far between. He went back to the dumpster and looked at the scene within.

"What's the move boss?" Smith asked.

Reed stood motionless, not making a sound for a moment turning back to the crime scene supervisor. "Let's dust for any and all prints on the dumpster. I want to know every person who has put a finger on this dumpster. Cross check any finger prints with our system and also the FBI system as well. I want a lot of pictures of the body. After that you can bag and tag.

"Also have a few of your crew to black light the alley. This kid was not killed here. He was dumped in there. But this area is too public, so the killer wouldn't have taken the chance to take him far. I think he was killed somewhere in this alley," Reed said.

"We will get right on it," Smith responded, as he turned and motioned to his team.

"Oh, yeah, Smith," Reed called.

Smith stopped and turned back around to face Reed.

"You still remember who is supposed to get the body?" Reed asked.

“Yep, I sure do,” Smith replied before redirecting his attention to his crew.

Reed paced to the other side of the alley. He reached around inside his jacket to pull a cell phone out of its holder and dialed Dr. Fox’s office. He took in a deep breath, wondering how he was going to tell her that this was all not over and he had another body for her. Reed stood out of the way so that the crime unit tech could take all the appropriate pictures before they could move in and start gathering information. After hanging up the phone, Reed walked over to Smith.

“I think I’m going to give you guys a hand with this one,” Reed said.

Smith nodded, then proceeded to the dumpster.

Normally, Reed would not step on any toes, but he knew that with Smith he wasn’t at risk of offense. Reed was getting damned tired of all these bodies showing up, and kept asking himself what in the hell he had to show for all of his work so far. He didn’t know if he could take it if this murder met the same dead ends of the others. He knew that the number one rule was to not get personally invested in cases. That was detective basics 101, but Reed could not help it. The way things were going down, Reed was starting to take it personally, very personally.

“Can I get a print kit and some gloves?” Reed asked.

“Sure,” Smith answered, opening up a case that sat on the ground beside him. Reed knew that the photographer was almost done and he was ready to get started as was Smith and the rest of his team. Most stood waiting except for the one taking the pictures and one other tech person who was sweeping the alley, trying to pick up signs of blood using a special device that looked like a big flashlight. It cast a black light beam that would illuminate any trace of the substance.

“All done,” the photographer said when he came over to Officer Smith.

Reed didn’t wait for an invite. He moved over to the far back corner of the dumpster, where a square openings provided ground access to the inside. He carefully pulled out the trash bags that were in the corner until there was a free space to get into the interior.

“I want you to check all the contents of the dumpster. Who knows, we might get lucky and find something useful,” he said to the crime team.

Reed then pulled himself into the dumpster using the latch that the trash truck grabbed to pick up the container. Once inside, he stood in the corner and for a moment turned his head to try and get a fresher breath of air while

trying not to gag from the overwhelming smell of garbage and death. The smell was so horrid and thick he could taste it in the air.

“Here,” Smith said as he stretched a hand into the area and gave Reed a small mask to cover his nose and mouth.

“Thanks,” he returned, taking the mask and slipping it on.

Reed carefully picked up the bags of garbage nearest the body and pushed them out of the opening, doing his best not to disturb the scene too much. Reed took quick note that there were enough bags of trash to cover the body if who ever placed him inside wanted to conceal the body. It also caught his eye that both lids of the trash dumpster were flipped open, resting behind the dumpster which was pushed against the brick wall of the building. Taking into account all the windows that over looked the dumpster, and all the merchants nearby who used this dumpster for their trash, it was easy to ascertain that the person who killed this man not only wanted the body to be found, but they wanted the body to be found in a hurry.

Reed’s mind already knew that this was not an accident, or a crime committed by someone that didn’t know what they were doing. The feeling Reed got was the opposite. His intuition told him that everything was thought out in great detail and was left for a reason. He imagined that the victim was the biggest red flag of all, which is why Reed wanted to identify this person as soon as possible.

Reed knew without having to wait for Dr. Fox’s exam that this person had been handed the same fate as Peter Kerigan and Jo Jo. This kid seemed to be in his early twenties. His skin tone was a pale blue, once having been white. His fingertips and lips were almost a dark purple, like a nearly ripe eggplant. His neck, like both Jo Jo and Peter, had been ripped to shreds, the bloody field of tissue resembling ground beef. The skin of his neck was peeled back, exposing the inner workings of his neck and throat. Some parts looked as if they had been run through a meat grinder more than once. Even though he was on the third murder of this type, Reed could not understand what the hell could have caused these types of injuries.

The hardened detective could see that all the main arteries and veins had been severed, but as with Kerigan, there was a noticeable absence of blood around the body and inside of the dumpster from what Reed could see. He didn’t need to wait to see if any blood was pooled up under the body at the bottom of the dumpster below the remaining bags of trash. Been there and done that. Reed knew that the majority of blood was missing.

Reed flipped open the print kit and moved the body only enough to get a better position to take prints. As he did so, he noticed that there was a

bulge in the front pocket of the kid's baggie pants. Reed reached down and carefully felt the outside of the pocket.

"You have got to be kidding me," he said.

"What is it?" Smith, still standing near the entrance, asked as he looked on from outside of the dumpster.

"Here, I don't think I am going to need this after all," Reed said, handing Smith the print kit.

Reed leaned over and with his right hand lifted the outer lip of the pocket, slowly sliding his left hand into the pocket. He took hold of the object and pulled it out, revealing a plain black wallet.

"You can't be serious," Smith repeated Reed's sentiment.

Reed stood up and opened the tri folded wallet. Inside the first fold was a New Orleans driver's license. The detective looked at the picture and then back to the person lying in the dumpster with his motionless eyes still looking towards the heavens.

"Hello, Mr. Royce Adams," Reed said.

Opening up the other fold of the wallet, Reed was not surprised to see various club cards, but no credit or business cards. The middle compartment was filled with fives, tens, and twenties, probably three hundred dollars worth. He handed the wallet over to Smith.

"Bag it," Reed said.

"Who the hell robs a drug dealer and doesn't take his money?" Smith asked.

With plenty of haste, Reed jumped out of the dumpster and strode ten feet way to where Smith was securing the wallet in an evidence bag.

"Go ahead and run prints to make sure, but I think we have a positive ID on this guy," Reed said, reaching out and taking the bag that held the wallet from Smith.

Needing a moment away from the smells in the dumpster, Reed moved to the crime lab van, which had both hind doors open. He sat down in the back, turning away from the crime scene. He took off his rubber gloves with a snap and tossed them inside a hazardous contents bag that was sitting on the ground beside the van.

Allowing himself to take a little deeper breath, Reed reached around and flipped his phone open to call his assistant.

“New Orleans Police Department,” a voice on the line said.

“This is Reed. I need you to run a name for me,” he said. “I have a feeling I’m about to light up the computer screen with this one.” He proceeded to give all the vital information over the phone to his assistant. Not that anything justified his death, this kid probably had a rap sheet ten feet long.

“Okay, give me a second,” his assistant said.

Reed shifted and watched Smith work his way into the dumpster.

“Wow, you were right. Your man here has been keeping us employed for sure,” the woman on the phone said.

“What do we have?” he asked.

“Most of the arrests have been possession with the intent to distribute. There are a few disorderly conducts mixed in too. I’m surprised that this hood keeps finding himself out on the streets again with a rap sheet like this one,” she added. “We had him in custody two days ago when he was picked up by patrol.”

“You know how the system is if you have someone that knows how to work it,” Reed said. “Hey, can you pull up who posted his last bail for me?”

“Sure, one moment,” his assistant said.

“What the—,” she said, sounding a bit puzzled.

“What is it?” Reed asked.

“Sir, you are not going to believe this, but Royce Adams was bailed out by the same person every time he was arrested, and that person is none other than Ronald Jeremiah,” she stated.

“Jeremiah,” Reed said, shocked as well. His mind began racing, trying to focus on the possibilities, at the news.

“Is there anything else, Sir?” she asked.

“Ah no,” Reed said as he gathered his thoughts. “That’s perfect thanks.”

Reed closed his phone and sat for a moment, swinging his legs below the van. He then got up and went back over to the dumpster. He flipped his phone open and pointed the mini camera lens at Royce Adams, snapping a picture.

Smith looked up at Reed with a questioning glare. Reed saved the picture, then closed his phone and looked over to Smith. "Give me a call if you need me, okay," Reed said, slipping his phone back into the holder.

"Will do," Smith responded. "You heading out?"

Reed took out his sunglasses and put them on. "Yeah, I have someone that I have to go see," he responded before turning and heading down the alley towards his car, walking with full purpose in his steps.