

Cajun To Go

Reed's Realm

Reed returned to Police Plaza and made his way back to his office. It was nearly six in the evening and the clouds overhead hung over him like his own heavy thoughts. As Reed walked to his office, his mind was still trying to put some relative sense to what Dr. Fox had told him about Kerigan's autopsy findings.

Reed entered his office and moved behind his desk. He turned on the lamp that sat on the top right corner, the base obscured by the stacks of paper surrounding it. The light illuminated the room enough to work, but didn't cast the huge florescent brightness that the overhead lights would have.

This was the time of day when Reed could really think about the case that was still scattered in front of him on the desk. He didn't have all the regular day noise of people talking and walking around the precinct, along with the occasional pop-in by a friend or colleague. Reed always stopped what he was doing to talk and socialize with the other officers around the station. Truth be known however, he would usually rather not be disturbed when he was working on a case. He wanted all of his undivided attention on the evidence and task at hand.

Reed turned on his computer and pulled up an Excel document that was titled "Contacts". He ran through the document until he got to the page headed "FBI". He then found the information for Special Agent Joe Foster and wrote it down on a sticky note before closing the program, and shutting down his computer again.

Joe used to be roommates with Reed back at the FBI academy. Even though they came from very different backgrounds, it didn't take long before they became good friends. There was a whole list of reasons in Reed's mind that made him miss the FBI, and if he ever wrote that list out, number one on it would be his buddy Joe.

Reed remembered all the good and bad times that they shared at the academy. FBI training was tough. The instructors really put a cadet's mind and body to the test every day. As a result, not everyone who started training, finished. Graduating took physical strength, mental toughness, and above all, support and encouragement. Joe provided the latter for Reed. They picked each other up and had each other's back while they worked their way through the academy.

Reed also remembered one of the worst days of his life, when he told Joe that he was leaving the Bureau. It was the hardest thing he had to do after he made his decision to leave final. He actually told Joe last. Reed wasn't trying to keep it from him; he just never could seem to get the words out when Joe was around. When he finally did break the news to his friend, Joe was unsurprisingly upset with the decision. Joe told him as nice as anyone could that he thought Reed was throwing away his career.

Joe, always quiet about Reed's marriage, held back nothing then. "If Samantha truly loved you, she would not make you choose between her and the FBI. Look at everything that you have given up and sacrificed. She should be supporting you, not making you choose. That sounds like someone who only cares about themselves." Joe had paused, an almost imperceptible mist in his eyes. "Reed, remember that women come and go, but you have to always stay true to yourself," Joe had pleaded. Reed remembered the words, painfully true in hindsight, like he'd heard them moments ago.

Reed knew in his heart, even back then, that Joe was probably right, but there was only one thing in Reed's life that he wanted more than being called Special Agent Reed Hackman. That was to be called Dad. Working for the FBI meant being away from home, and the trouble that caused ate at Reed. It meant danger, long hours, and frequent trips away. The idea of coming home to a loving wife and a couple of beautiful children directly conflicted with his job as a special agent. Even more so during the hard times of their marriage, his dream of a family, kept him from not letting go of Samantha.

It was ironic for Reed to think about those particular words from Joe, because not only did Samantha pull him away from the one job he truly loved doing, but she also took all of his dreams of having a family out the front door when she left to go live with the man she had been sleeping with on and off for the last seven months of their marriage. Reed knew that he should have listened to Joe, but the past was the past. He paid the price then and in a lot of ways was still paying for it today. Reed still didn't have the family he wanted. He did, however, find time to marry again, this time to the NOPD. Now he was in a relationship that was devoted to him as much as he was to it. Somewhere along the lines, not really knowing when or how, Reed let his job take over his life.

Reed reached over and picked up the phone and dialed the numbers he had scribbled on the yellow sticky note under the heading "Joe". After a few rings he heard, "You have reached the desk of Special Agent Joe Foster. I am unavailable, please leave a message and your contact information, and I will get back to you at my earliest convenience."

“Hey Joe, it’s Reed Hackman. Sorry I haven’t been in touch in a while. I hope that you’re doing well. When you have a chance, I would like to talk to you about a case that I’m working. I was hoping to get your two cents on it. I look forward to hearing from you,” Reed said as he left his number and hung up the phone.

Reed was anxious to hear from Joe. It would be good to talk with him again, regardless of any help he might give on the Kerigan case. It had been more than a year since their last conversation, and that had only happened because of an unexpected meeting at an ATF sponsored conference. Because he knew how good of an agent Joe was, Reed was also very anxious to see if the man could actually help with his case.

Reed looked down at his desk, where Kerigan’s file was still open and papers were scattered about. Reed decided that after all the hours he had put into the file, there was only one thing left to do. It was time to go home and get some rest. Of course, he knew that he would still continuously be running the facts of the case through his head whether he wanted to or not, but at least he would be thinking about it at home in his recliner.

***Maybe I will luck out and actually get full night’s sleep,* Reed thought to himself.**

He straightened up the Kerigan file and closed it, leaving it still sitting in the center of his desk. He reached up and turned off the desk lamp, leaving only dim streams of light from the corridor outside to enlighten his office. Those slivers of light across his floor were dimmed to nothing as Reed closed his office door on his way out.



The gnawing hunger in his stomach forced Reed to stop and get something to eat before he went home. There was a really good café that he liked to go to in the French Quarter; a little Mom and Pop place called Dave’s Cajun House. It was a family restaurant, run by Dave and Kelly LaRue. Reed liked going there because not only did he think they had the best food in town, but it was a friendly, family type place, which was almost more important than the food.

Reed walked in and sat down at the bar at the front of the café. He loosened his tie and undid the top button on his shirt. The dining room had a throw back 50’s fountain shop feel with a deep south New Orleans twist. Fishnets and other authentic bayou memorabilia blanketed the walls throughout.

“Mr. Reed, Mr. Reed. How are you sir?” Dave asked as he greeted Reed.

“Hey, Dave. How’s business?” Reed returned.

“Ah, a bit slow, but I have high hopes now that you’re here!” Dave laughed. “So what can I get you tonight?”

“How is the shrimp gumbo today?” Reed asked.

Dave laughed and shook his head while tossing a white cloth over his shoulder and letting it rest there. “It’s just like every other night. You know, the best in town!” Dave snapped, putting a glass of water on the table.

Reed smiled and replied, “Well, then I will have the usual.”

“Alright then. One gumbo with a side of fried green tomatoes and spicy cornbread coming right up,” Dave said as he started to walk to the kitchen. Reed smiled and picked up the glass of water. He took one drink and realized that for the first time in three days he was not thinking about the Kerigan case. He looked down at his hand around the glass, noticing a line of condensed water running down the side. Reed decided that he was not going to let the Kerigan case rule his night. “Nope not tonight,” Reed said in a low voice that only he could hear as he raised his glass to his lips again to take another drink.

Reed sat the glass down and began looking forward to having a conversation with someone that didn’t want to talk about police work. Reed sat up a little straighter so that he could see Dave in the kitchen cooking.

“Hey, Dave—” was the only thing that Reed could get out before his cell phone started to vibrate inside its case clipped to his belt.

“What’s on ya mind, Mr. Reed?” Dave asked from the kitchen.

Reed held up one finger in total disgust as he stood up to get his phone.

Reed knew that the call couldn’t be anything good. He glanced down at the phone’s front display and saw that the caller ID said:

**Martin Johnston
N.O.P.D.**

Reed flipped open his phone. “Hackman,” he answered.

“Reed, this is Martin. I hope I didn’t catch you at a bad time,” Martin said.

“Well, it wasn’t the best timing, but you know how that goes as much as I do, Martin,” Reed returned.

“I’ll get right to it, then. We have another body, and I think you need to come and check it out,” Martin explained.

“Why is that?” Reed asked.

“This guy has injuries that are very similar to Peter Kerigan’s. Kind of, anyway. I thought that if there was a chance that they were related, you might want to take a look. If you want, I can bag and tag then send you the report,” Martin offered.

“No, you’re right. I’d like to see it. What’s your location?” Reed inquired.

“We are at an old empty warehouse down here at the Port of New Orleans, building number twenty-two,” Martin told him.

Reed sighed. “Number twenty-two. Alright, I’ll see you in a few minutes.

“Oh, by the way, Martin. No one goes into the crime scene until I get there, okay?”

“You got it. See you then,” Martin concluded as he ended the call.

Even though Reed was a little frustrated that he was not even going to be able to sit down and enjoy his meal, or have some much needed conversation with friends, he could not get too angry. He was curious to see if this new body did have a connection to the Kerigan case. Reed’s mind recounted and wondered why Martin thought that this body was “kind of” like the Kerigan case. Reed knew there was only one way to get those answers, so he stood up and looked back at Dave to finish the sentence that he started before he received Martin’s call.

“We better make this to go!” Reed told Dave, as he could not help but feel a sense of déjà vu as he re-buttoned his shirt and straightened his tie again.