

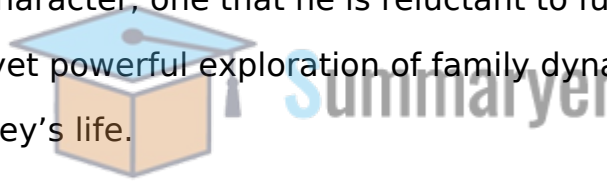
Chapter 96

Chapter 96 of *We Solve Murders* opens with a gripping and tense conversation between Steve and Mickey at a pub, setting the stage for a heated exchange that reveals deeper layers of intrigue. Steve directly confronts Mickey, accusing him of being François Loubet, a well-known money smuggler, questioning the absurdity of Mickey's claim that he is merely a scrap-metal dealer. Mickey laughs off the accusation, seemingly unfazed, and implies that he has been able to stay one step ahead of the law and avoid any incriminating evidence for years. The conversation takes on an air of mystery, hinting at a darker and more complicated past that Mickey is desperate to keep hidden, while Steve becomes increasingly determined to probe deeper. The suggestion that Mickey could be involved in the recent murder of Rob Kenna raises the stakes, adding an ominous tone to their discussion and fueling a sense of suspicion.

As they continue to talk, Mickey begins to reminisce about his childhood, recalling small, harmless thefts like stealing milk from a local shop. This brief nostalgic moment offers a glimpse into Mickey's early days and his long history of bending the rules. Despite his long list of minor crimes, Mickey insists that he has never been arrested for anything serious, except for one minor caution. This casual dismissal of his past transgressions contrasts with the more sinister implications in Steve's questions, suggesting that the lighter moments of their conversation mask a much darker undercurrent. The dialogue between them moves between humor and suspicion, with Steve clearly pushing Mickey to reveal more than he is willing to share. Their interaction becomes a complex game of cat and mouse, as Steve seeks to uncover the truth behind Mickey's actions.

The conversation shifts when Steve boldly claims that their families are interconnected, particularly pointing to the influential role of Mickey's grandmothers,

Lou and Bet. Mickey initially brushes off the comment, but as Steve presses on, the mood grows tense, and Mickey's irritation becomes evident. The discussion touches on family loyalty and the violent undertones that seem to surround Mickey's actions, particularly his business dealings. Mickey tries to downplay the seriousness of his actions, brushing them off as simply part of the "business," but there is a chilling implication that the line between legitimate business and criminal enterprise has long been blurred for him. His defensive stance and growing discomfort hint at a much darker side to his character, one that he is reluctant to fully reveal. The conversation serves as a subtle yet powerful exploration of family dynamics, trust, and the moral ambiguities of Mickey's life.



The intensity of their discussion escalates when Steve introduces the evidence he claims to have against Mickey. He reveals that he has video footage that supposedly ties Mickey directly to the murder of Rob Kenna, a serious accusation that Mickey denies vehemently. He challenges the authenticity of the footage, questioning how it could possibly have been obtained and casting doubt on its legitimacy. The increasing tension between the two suggests that their encounter is far from just a casual confrontation, as Steve's persistence and Mickey's denial create an atmosphere charged with mistrust and suspicion. Just when it seems like the situation may reach a breaking point, Steve drops a cryptic remark about Mickey's doorbell, leaving the conversation hanging in the air. This final question raises more questions than answers, adding another layer of intrigue and suggesting that there is a key piece of information that could link Mickey to the crime.

Throughout this chapter, the dynamic between Steve and Mickey is one of manipulation and counter-manipulation, with each trying to gain the upper hand over the other. Steve's probing questions serve to peel back the layers of Mickey's carefully constructed persona, revealing glimpses of the man beneath, while Mickey's defenses reveal a man who is not as in control of his past and present as he would like others to believe. The chapter deftly navigates the complexities of guilt, family loyalty, and moral conflict, creating a tense atmosphere that leaves readers questioning the true nature of Mickey's involvement in the murder. As the conversation ends on a

cliffhanger, with the mysterious doorbell question lingering, readers are left with a sense of uncertainty and suspense, eager to uncover the truth behind Mickey's facade. The chapter masterfully builds tension, layering intrigue and psychological drama as it delves deeper into the complexities of its characters and their entangled pasts.

