

City of the Damned

New Orleans



the World of Darkness

a sourcebook for:
Vampire
THE REQUiem

The background of the entire page is a grayscale photograph. It features a close-up of a Mardi Gras mask with intricate, swirling patterns. A string of white Mardi Gras beads is draped across the upper left portion of the image. The lighting creates strong highlights and shadows, emphasizing the textures of the mask and beads.

City of the Damned

New Orleans

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The Coming Storm

NOT TOO DISTANT IS YOUR MEMORY OF A SIMPLER, HAPPIER TIME. NOT TOO LONG AGO, YOU WERE ENJOYING NEW ORLEANS AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE ENJOYED: BY THE LIVING. THE DEAD, YOU'VE FOUND, KNOW LITTLE OF TRUE JOY. THEY KNOW DECADENCE, TO BE SURE, AND DEBAUCHERY IN SPADES. YES, THEY CERTAINLY KNOW EXCESS TO EXCESS... BUT NOT JOY.

NEVER JOY.

BUT AS HAPPY (AND AS PAINFUL, NOW) AS THAT TIME MAY HAVE BEEN, IT HAS PASSED. INTO THE REALM OF MEMORY IT FLED, AND EVEN MEMORY—AS THE DAMNED KNOW VERY WELL—IS NO SAFE HAVEN FOR JOYS PAST. FOR THE MIND OF ONE CAUGHT UP IN THE DANSE MACABRE IS AS POROUS AS A SKELETON'S SKULL, AS BEFUDDLING AS THE STEPS OF THE DANCE, ITSELF OF ALL THE THINGS YOU MISS THE MOST, THE ABILITY TO RETAIN THE SIMPLE JOY OF LIFE IS THE ONE MOST GRIEVED... AND THE ONE THE BEAST SEEMS TO DESPISE.

"IT'S FOR THE BEST," OTHERS HAVE CAUTIONED IN YOUR TIME AMONG THE DAMNED. THE CONSTANT, ENERVATING STRUGGLE AGAINST THAT WHICH MUST BE IS NO WAY TO SPEND ETERNITY, THEY SAY. BEST TO JUST LET THE BEAST WITHIN HAVE ITS PICK OF THE MOST SELECT, MOST CHOICE CUTS OF MEMORY, THEY SAY. IT'S MADNESS TO RESIST, THEY SAY.

IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN IT'S THE PATH OF MADNESS YOU HAVE CHOSEN (AT LEAST FOR NOW), AS ONE OF THE ONLY THINGS OF WHICH YOU ARE CERTAIN IN THIS EXISTENCE IS THAT YOUR MEMORIES, HOWEVER FLEETING OR PAINFUL THEY MAY BE, ARE ALL YOU HAVE LEFT OF YOU. AND NO STRUGGLE, NO MATTER HOW DRAINING OR UNENDING IT MAY BE, IS TOO MUCH STRUGGLE WHEN THE PRICE OF LOSS IS SO HIGH; WHEN THE PRICE OF LOSS IS YET MORE LOSS. LET THE BEAST COME FOR ITS MEAL, IF IT MUST. BUT LET IT ALSO FIGHT FOR ITS REWARD.

STILL, AS MUCH AS YOU DEFEND YOUR ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR RETENTION, YOU CAN'T DENY THAT MEMORY IS THE ROOT CAUSE FOR THE SITUATION IN WHICH YOU CURRENTLY FIND YOURSELF. YES, "PRECIOUS" MEMORY IS UNDOUBTEDLY TO BLAME; THE ONLY QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER TIME WILL REVEAL ITS EMERGENCE AS BLESSING OR CURSE.

WHEN YOU SAW HIM, HE WAS STANDING JUST INSIDE THE DOORWAY OF THE SASPARILLA CLUB, IN ALMOST EXACTLY THE SAME POSITION AS WHEN YOU LAST SAW HIM, SO MANY YEARS AGO. BACK HUNCHED FORWARD SLIGHTLY, SNEAKERED FEET PRESSED TOGETHER, SHAKY HANDS TUCKED INTO THE POCKETS OF THE JACKET HE NEVER SEEMED TO REMOVE. THAT JACKET... IT WAS THE SINGLE DISPARATE DETAIL OF THE IMAGE. WERE IT NOT FOR THE FACT THAT THIS MAN WORE A BLACK AND GOLD SWEATSHIRT (WHERE HENRY'S JACKET HAD BEEN AN OLD-FASHIONED WIND-BREAKER), THE CASUAL VIEWER MIGHT WELL BELIEVE THE TWO MEN TO BE ONE AND THE SAME.

THE SIGHT OF HIM SNAPPED YOU FROM YOUR JAZZ-INDUCED REVERIE. THE SOUNDS OF THE CLUB AROUND YOU FADED AS THOUGH DIALED DOWN ON A STEREO, AND MEMORY RUSHED UNBIDDEN ONTO THE SCREENS BEHIND YOUR EYES. THE IMAGE BEFORE YOU WAVED AS YOUR

INCONSTANT MIND, NOW AGOG WITH PURPOSE, SUPERIMPOSED HENRY'S DISTINCTIVE FACE OVER THE FEATURES OF THE ANXIOUS BLACK KID SHUFFLING NERVOUSLY BY THE DOOR.

YOU KNEW HENRY WAS GONE, OF COURSE, AND HAD BEEN FOR YEARS. BUT YOU'D BEEN THINKING ABOUT HIM AN AWFUL LOT, LATELY, AND THAT BRIEFEST OF FLASHES—WHERE LIVING MEMORY ONCE AGAIN INTRUDED ON YOUR FOGGY REQUIEM—WAS ENOUGH TO SET SOME RUSTY, DEEP-SEATED COG IN MOTION.

AND SO YOU ROSE.

‡ ‡ ‡

HE SAID HIS NAME WAS MASON, AND HE CLAIMED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DIRTY THROWS KREWE. YOU WERE CONFIDENT YOU'D HEARD BOTH NAMES SOMEWHERE BEFORE, BUT YOU'D BEEN HARD-PRESSED TO DREDGE UP ANYTHING MORE ABOUT HIS COTERIE THAN THE FACT THAT THE DIRTY THROWS, LIKE EVERY OTHER LEGITIMATE KINDRED KREWE IN THE BIG EASY, WAS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF NEONATES—MOST OF WHOM TRIED VERY, VERY HARD TO STAY BELOW PRINCE VIDAL'S INCREASINGLY UNFORGIVING RADAR.

THE KID'S STORY, AND A REMARKABLE ONE IT WAS, WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

EVERYONE IN TOWN KNEW ABOUT THE RECENT RASH OF POACHINGS. (THAT'S A TERM ELDERS AROUND HERE USE TO AMUSE THEMSELVES; IT MEANS SOMEBODY'S BEEN FEEDING IN ANOTHER VAMPIRE'S TERRITORY.) WELL, MASON CLAIMED THAT HE KNEW WHO WAS GUILTY OF THESE INDISCRETIONS, OR AT LEAST THE MOST RECENT SPATE OF THEM. AND THE REASON HE KNEW WAS BECAUSE THE CULPRITS HAD BEEN HIS OWN COTERIE, THE DIRTY THROWS.

DUE TO VARIOUS PERSONAL PROBLEMS MASON HAD WITH HIS PACKMATES, HOWEVER, THE REST OF THE KREWE DECIDED THEIR ONLY WAY OUT WAS TO MAKE A SCAPEGOAT OF MASON. THEY INTENDED TO "TURN HIM IN" TO PRINCE VIDAL, IN THE HOPES THAT THEIR EFFORTS WOULD REWARD THEM TWO-FOLD: FIRST, IN THE FORM OF CHOICE FEEDING GROUNDS (A GIFT OF THANKS FROM A GRATEFUL AUTHORITY FIGURE),

AND SECOND, THEY'D GET THE PRINCE TO DISPOSE OF MASON FOR THEM. ALL IN ALL, IT WASN'T A BAD PLAN.

TOO BAD MASON WAS ONTO THEM.

SCARED AS HE WAS, NOT TO MENTION ENTIRELY ALONE, MASON FIGURED HIS ONLY MOVE LEFT WAS TO BEAT HIS TREACHEROUS PACKMATES TO THE PUNCH. SO HE SET UP A MEETING BETWEEN HIMSELF AND DONOVAN, THE LOCAL SHERIFF AND, IN RECENT NIGHTS, THE LONG IRON ARM OF VIDAL. HIMSELF MASON WAS GIVEN A PLACE AND TIME WHERE HE WOULD MEET WITH ONE OF THE SHERIFF'S AGENTS, WHO WOULD THEN BRING MASON SAFELY TO DONOVAN HIMSELF AT A SECOND, AS YET UNDISCLOSED LOCATION. ONCE WITH THE SHERIFF MASON WOULD TURN HIS ERSTWHILE ALLIES IN AND THROW HIMSELF UPON VIDAL'S MERCY. ANOTHER SOLID PLAN.

TOO BAD THE REST OF THE DIRTY THROWS WERE ONTO HIM.

WHEN YOU FIRST SAW HIM, MASON WAS TRYING DESPERATELY TO FIGURE OUT HOW HE WAS GOING TO GET TO THE MEETING PLACE IN ONE PIECE TONIGHT. IF THE DIRTY THROWS CAUGHT UP TO HIM BEFORE HE COULD TURN HIMSELF IN, THEY WOULD NEVER LET HIM SURVIVE. TO MASON'S WAY OF THINKING, IT WAS EITHER THEM OR HIM. AND THAT WAS NO CHOICE AT ALL. THE PROBLEM WAS, THERE WAS ONLY ONE OF HIM... AND THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE.

AND THAT'S WHERE YOU CAME IN.

‡ ‡ ‡

ONCE MASON REALIZED HE WASN'T ALONE AT THE SASPARILLA—WELL, NOT THE ONLY UNDEAD ONE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT, AT ANY RATE—HE NEARLY BROKE DOWN UNDER THE POTENT COMBINATION OF HYSTERIA AND RELIEF YOU SIMPLY HAD TO HELP HIM. SURELY, YOU SAW THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY. COULDN'T YOU SEE THAT HE WAS DESPERATE HERE?

SOMETHING IN THE WAY THE FRANTIC NEONATE SPOKE DISPOSED YOU TO HELPING HIM OUT, AND IT WASN'T JUST THE KID'S UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO HENRY. SURE, THAT MAY HAVE BEEN PART OF IT. HELL, YOU'LL EVEN ADMIT

THAT CONSCIOUSLY. WHY WOULDN'T YOU? BUT JUST AS MUCH, PART OF IT UNDOUBTEDLY HAD TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT YOU WERE BUT A NEONATE, YOURSELF AND BEING A PART OF ANYTHING THAT WOULD SHINE FAVOR DOWN UPON MASON WOULD INVARIABLY SHINE SIMILAR FAVOR DOWN UPON THOSE WHO HELPED HIM OUT. WHO KNOWS, MAYBE YOU'D EVEN END UP WITH SOME CHOICE FEEDING GROUNDS OF YOUR OWN OUT OF THE BARGAIN. BOTTOM LINE WAS, THE KID NEEDED AN ESCORT. YOU AGREED.

THAT WAS JUST UNDER AN HOUR AGO.

NOW, YOU WERE MAKING YOUR WAY DOWN ST. PHILIP STREET, HEADING TO THE PLACE WHERE MASON WAS TO MEET WITH DONOVAN'S MAN: IN THIS CASE, LOUIS ARMSTRONG PARK. ATTENDED THOUGH HE WAS, MASON'S PARANOIA (AN INNATE CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL THE DAMNED, NEVER MIND THOSE WITH GOOD CAUSE) REQUIRED THAT YOU AVOID THE TWO MAJOR ROADS THAT HEADED DOWNTOWN—ORLEANS AVENUE AND ESPLANADE AVENUE.

EVEN THE ROUTE TO ST. PHILIP WAS AN EXTENDED CHORE, AS MASON INSISTED ON OVERSHOOTING CROSS STREETS AND THEN DOUBLING BACK TO PICK THEM UP TWO, SOMETIMES THREE OR EVEN FOUR BLOCKS FURTHER DOWN. IT WAS HIS ATTEMPT AT BEING CIRCUITOUS, IN THE EVENT THAT YOU WERE BEING FOLLOWED, BUT YOU'RE UNCONVINCED IT ACCOMPLISHED A WHOLE HELL OF A LOT MORE THAN WASTING A FAIR PIECE OF TIME. ALL THE SAME, IT GOT YOU TO OVER TO ST. PHILIP AND THAT'S WHERE YOU WANTED TO BE.

THE WEATHER WAS PURE NEW ORLEANS. BALMY, WITH AN OVERCAST HAZE THAT THREATENED RAIN, AND THAT DISTINCTIVE LOW FOG THAT ROLLS IN OFF THE MISSISSIPPI AND SETTLES INTO THE LESSER TRAFFICKED AREAS THIS TIME OF YEAR. IT SEEMED TO CURL AROUND THE EDGES OF NEARBY BUILDINGS AS YOU WALKED, ALWAYS STAYING JUST OUT OF REACH, AS THOUGH SENTIENT AND ACUTELY AWARE THAT COMING TOO CLOSE WOULD BE... UNWISE.

DESPITE HIS PARANOIA, MASON LED WITH SURPRISING ALACRITY, HIS LOOSE-LACED NIKES SCUFFING FIRST THE SIDEWALK AND THEN THE FOGGY GRASS AS YOU BOTH CLIMBED INTO LOUIS ARMSTRONG PARK AT ITS NORTHERN TIP. AT THIS HOUR, ONE NORMALLY EXPECTS THE PARK TO BE DEAD QUIET, WITH LITTLE ACTIVITY TO SPEAK OF AND FOR A MOMENT, YOU BOTH STOOD SILENT, STRAINING TO SEE OR HEAR ANYTHING THAT WOULD BELIE THAT NORM TONIGHT, BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY FEELING A GIDDY WISP OF DREAD SWIRL ITSELF INSIDE YOU.

JUST THEN, A MUFFLED SOUND FROM ACROSS THE PARK PIERCED THE TENUOUS MOMENT LIKE A BUBBLE, GIVING YOU A START THE LIKES OF WHICH YOU HADN'T FELT IN... WELL, SINCE YOU WERE STILL ALIVE. THAT WAS, TO SAY THE LEAST, UNUSUAL FOR YOU. MASON EXHALED THE BREATH HE'D BEEN HOLDING (HAD HE BEEN ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING?), AND MOTIONED FOR YOU TO FOLLOW HIM. AS BEFORE, HE DARTED OFF AHEAD, SCUFFING HIS WAY TO WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A COMFORTABLE LEAD IN MORE COMFORTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE SOUND, BARELY AUDIBLE THOUGH IT WAS, HAD AT LEAST THE GOOD GRACE TO BE CONSTANT, AND YOU FOLLOWED BOTH IT AND MASON WITH EASE. BASED ON HOW WELL YOU KNEW YOUR OWN SENSES, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, THIS PARK, YOU WERE CONFIDENT THAT THE SOURCE OF THE SOUND WAS COMING FROM JUST BEHIND THE MAHALIA JACKSON THEATER, AND THAT YOU'D BOTH BE UPON IT IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS. IT WAS ALL GOOD.

OR WAS IT? COME THAT MOMENT, SOMETHING ABOUT THE ENTIRE SITUATION WAS STARTING TO FEEL DISTINCTLY... NOT RIGHT. SOMETHING MADE YOU DECIDE TO KICK UP YOUR HEELS AND, AS QUIETLY AS YOU COULD MANAGE, MOVE TO CATCH UP TO THE IMPATIENT NEONATE WHOSE SILHOUETTE WAS EVEN NOW STARTING TO ROUND THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING AHEAD.

YOU CAUGHT UP TO MASON JUST IN TIME TO WATCH HIM STEP OUT INTO THE LIGHT—AND FREEZE. BOTH HANDS JERKED FROM WHERE THEY LAY AT HIS SIDES A MOMENT BEFORE, DRAWING SWIFTLY UP TO HIS FACE AS THOUGH TO COVER OPEN MOUTH OR PANICKED EYES.

A SINGLE STEP OF YOUR OWN TO THE SIDE ALLOWED YOUR GAZE TO PASS OVER THE MOTIONLESS NEONATE BEFORE YOU, COMING TO REST ON A PAIR OF FIGURES HUDDLED IN THE DARKNESS BEYOND. IN THE MOMENT IT TOOK FOR YOUR EYES TO ADJUST, A VOICE EMERGED FROM THE SMALLER OF THE TWO FIGURES. THE VOICE WAS CLEARLY FEMININE, BUT POSSESSED OF AN ANIMAL QUALITY THAT GAVE THE SYLLABLES IT UTTERED AN UNEARTHLY, INHUMAN TONE. AND RATHER THAN ISSUING FORTH ANY ACTUAL SPEECH, THE VOICE BEGAN A LOW, THROATY GROWL... ONE WHICH ROSE TO FULL SNARL IN BUT A SPLIT SECOND.

YOUR EYES FINALLY ADJUSTED, YOU HAD A CLEAR, UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW OF THE TWO FIGURES. THE ONE WHO "SPOKE" WAS A WHITE WOMAN WEARING A BLACK SHIRT AND PANTS. HER GLEAMING EYES WERE WILD, FURIOUS. THE OTHER FIGURE, A BLACK MAN WEARING A GREEN JACKET AND A BERET COVERING A MOP OF TANGLED DREADLOCKS, WAS STEPPING BACK, HIS OWN EYES CLEARLY BETRAYING HIS UTTER CONFUSION AT THE PRESENT SITUATION.

AND THAT MOMENTARY IMAGE WAS ALL YOUR EYES HAD TIME TO CAPTURE BEFORE THE SCENE IN FRONT OF THEM EXPLODED INTO VIOLENCE. THE WOMAN UTTERED A SECOND SNARL, LOUDER THIS TIME, AND REACHING HER ARMS BACK SLIGHTLY, PLUNGED BOTH HANDS INTO THE TORSO OF THE MAN STANDING NEXT TO HER. THE MAN GAVE A CRISP WHEEZE AND LURCHED FORWARD ONTO THE WOMAN'S FOREARMS, A HEAVY BEAD OF FLUID ESCAPING HIS LIPS AS HE DID.

BEFORE YOUR MIND COULD EVEN REGISTER THE SCENE BEFORE IT, THE WOMAN WAS STEPPING BACK, WRENCHING HER HANDS FREE OF THEIR GRUESOME RESTING PLACE. THE TIPS

OF HER GORE-SOAKED FINGERS WERE LONG AND JAGGED, UTTERLY INHUMAN. THE DEAD MAN GAVE ANOTHER WHEEZE, THIS ONE MORE DRAWN OUT THAN THE FIRST, AND HIS BERET SLIPPED FROM THE SIDE OF HIS HEAD, FALLING LIMP TO THE BLOOD-SPATTERED GROUND BELOW.

AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, SHE WAS GONE—LEAVING YOU AND MASON IN THE PREDAWN PARK, WITH A CORPSE.

AFTER A MOMENT THAT SEEMED TO HANG FOREVER, MASON TURNED, HIS FACE BONE WHITE. "SHIT," HE FINALLY CROAKED. "HOLY SHIT. HOLY FUCKING SHIT, MAN. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO THAT WAS?" YOU SHOOK YOUR HEAD. AND IT WAS TRUE. YOU HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT THE FUCK WAS GOING ON. MASON SEEMED TO IGNORE YOUR REPLY.

"DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THE MOUNTAIN OF SHIT WE BOTH JUST FELL RIGHT THE FUCK INTO?" HE CRIED, HIS VOICE RISING. "THIS TYPE OF SHIT... MAN, THEY DON'T JUST FORGET THIS TYPE OF SHIT!" THE TERRIFIED BLACK KID'S EYES, WHICH HAD BEEN GROWING WILDER AS HE SPOKE, SUDDENLY NARROWED. HE TOOK A SINGLE STEP BACK, OUT FROM UNDER THE LIGHT—REGARDED YOU ALMOST PITIFULLY FOR THE BRIEFEST OF INSTANTS—AND THEN, JUST LIKE THE WOMAN MOMENTS BEFORE, HE TOO WAS GONE.

THEN QUIET.

AS YOU STAND THERE, WATCHING THE BLOOD POOL ON THE GROUND BENEATH THE DEAD MAN IN FRONT OF YOU, A LOW, FAMILIAR RUMBLE BEGINS SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE. THIS PEAL WILL SOON BE FOLLOWED BY A SHARP CRACK, AND THEN BY HARD, DRIVING RAIN. YOU KNOW THIS BECAUSE YOU KNOW THE CITY'S VOICE. THIS IS ONE OF HER FAVORITE SONGS, AND YOU'VE HEARD IT MANY TIMES BEFORE. WHEN YOU'VE BEEN IN NEW ORLEANS AS LONG AS YOU HAVE, YOU COME TO KNOW HOW THE CITY LIVES, BREATHES, COMMUNICATES. AND WHAT SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU NOW WAS SIMPLICITY ITSELF...

"THERE'S A STORM COMING."



Come for the party, stay for the Feast

All the conveniences of modern industry, yet neighboring architecture gothic and old-fashioned enough to make even the eldest Kindred comfortable. Famous hauntings and numerous vodouisants—perfect cover for accidental violations of the First Tradition. A wild-party atmosphere that cloaks the city's own moribund core, an unbelievably high murder rate and a tourist population nearly double that of the city's actual census—enough to make even the undead feel alive, if ever so briefly. Indeed, the whole city is utterly vampiric.

New Orleans is a twisted reflection of the Requiem itself, and a perfect home for the Kindred. The city is an endless blend of debauchery and faith, of joy and terror. Massive cathedrals loom over the streets, their doors offering comfort, but their silhouettes become fearful in the glow of flickering streetlights. Rosaries compete with dice and cards, and the wine that flows is only occasionally for communion. It is a dichotomy seemingly built into the city itself;—inescapable, a product of the fear that grows nightly in these desperate, modern times. Year after year, New Orleans sinks ever deeper into the Louisiana swamps. The very soul of the city itself knows that its time is limited, and that desperation manifests in its populace as both wild abandon and religious fervor. Where go the mortals, so follow the Kindred, and New Orleans' undead factions whirl ever more swiftly about one another in a war of faith versus faith, old versus new and hope versus fear. New Orleans has a grim past and an uncertain future—a twisted reflection, indeed, for the Kindred nightly face both a grim future and an uncertain past.

Remember that this is not entirely the New Orleans you know, or think you know. This is the World of Darkness, and few cities earn that appellation as well as the Big Easy. The swamp, its hunger undeniable, reaches up to reclaim New Orleans at a much faster rate. The New Orleans of this world is even more crowded, particularly in the neighborhoods of the poor and disenfranchised. It boasts even more sinners, native and tourist alike, who indulge in even greater binges of every vice imaginable. Crime is a simple fact of life, violence a nightly—and in some neighborhoods, hourly—occurrence. The rich dwell in palatial estates in the Garden District, mirroring the soul, if not the façade, of the old plantations. The poor know all too well that, decades of effort and

Abraham Lincoln aside, they might as well still be slaves. And in both populations, the Kindred fatten on not merely the blood but also the despair—parasites on a dying body, too wrapped up in their own affairs to see how utterly meaningless it all is.

Welcome to New Orleans, a city of the damned—even without the presence of the Kindred.

Theme and Mood

If we were to set about creating a brand-new fictional city to personify the aesthetic of **Vampire: The Requiem**, we could not do better than New Orleans. This is a Modern Gothic Storytelling game, and few cities embody that aesthetic as well as the Big Easy. It is the old intertwined with the new, the fearsome with the holy. Hoary cathedrals boast fearsome gargoyles and stained glass windows in intricate and often disturbing patterns. Ornate aboveground tombs fill the city's cemeteries, large and complex enough to be their own cities and have their own street signs. The droning of prayer lies beneath the sounds of traffic, a solemn undertone that promises no relief in this life—and almost certain damnation in the next. In New Orleans, faith stands front and center, prevalent in almost every aspect of everyday life, yet it offers little hope. And hope itself, so fleeting and fragile a promise in even the best of times, is itself something to be feared.

Like the Kindred, New Orleans is a creature of dichotomy and paradox. Founded on faith, it is home to two separate thriving religions, boasting a Catholic majority and a significant vodoun minority. Yet, it is known far and wide as a city of vice, drawing millions of tourists who come to shed their inhibitions and partake in activities the likes of which they might never consider back home among their families, friends and employers. Many of them return injured in spirit, if not in flesh, and some do not return at all. New Orleans is a city that perverts what is good and exalts what is perverted.

New Orleans is, in a very real sense, a vampire itself.

This sense of wild abandon, of old values corrupted of sheer desperation, permeates the Kindred community as well, and should run thick through any New Orleans chronicle. Everything here is factionalized and rotting from the inside out in spite of a façade of beauty, grace

or order. Prince Vidal rules the city with an increasingly iron fist, enforcing the Traditions and his own edicts with equal fervor, furiously attempting to shape the Kindred into what he believes they should be. He is steered by faith, a fierce devotion to the Holy Trinity, and yet it seems unlikely that God or Christ would approve of what Vidal does in His name. Religion for Prince Vidal—and, thus, for most of the Kindred suffering under his rule—is not something beautiful but a whip used to scourge the backs of those who do not obey. The cost of Vidal's rule has been high for both Kindred and kine, and even as he tightens his grip, an ever-growing number of Kindred slip from it, gravitating toward the Prince's rivals. Yet, these rivals are no less dichotomous, two-faced or corrupt. Antoine Savoy is a politician and a con-man, a power-hungry fiend who wears the face of a faith he does not truly believe. Baron Cimitiere, while no less devout in his own faith than Vidal in his, cares little for the well-being of New Orleans' Kindred. He seeks power only to protect and nurture his own select group of followers—let the rest of this debauched city burn.

Chronicles set in New Orleans should follow this pattern. Everything is a double-edged sword, nearly every *up* trailed by a *down*. Every cause proves ultimately futile, every faction internally corrupt (or ineffective, which, to the Kindred, is even worse.) The characters should have little enough trouble feeding here, for New Orleans is practically a buffet of kine, but what will they have to do to earn their hunting grounds? Whom must they serve, and can they stomach doing so—or do they have the ability to rise above their peers and make a place for themselves? New Orleans' Kindred have no good options, merely those that are less distasteful. Only by truly changing the power structure of New Orleans, tipping the balance between the city's triumvirate of elders, can the Kindred truly hope to thrive. Yet, who among them has the will, let alone the power, to do it?

How to Use This Book

City of the Damned: New Orleans is intended, in conjunction with Appendix Two: New Orleans of **Vampire: The Requiem**, to provide everything you need to run a chronicle, or even multiple chronicles, in the Big Easy. It provides information on the city itself, the history of its Kindred inhabitants, and the schemes, goals and machinations of those selfsame Kindred. It includes advice on how to use those stories, how to involve players, and everything you need to take the major players of New Orleans and use them in your own stories. Many plot seeds and story hooks are called out in sidebars, making them easier to find. Of course, not all plot hooks are sidebars and not all sidebars are plot hooks, but you should still find them useful tools.

It should be noted that, in a few instances, the information about certain characters or events as described in this book does not entirely match that given in Appendix Two

of **Vampire: The Requiem**. In all such cases, the information in Appendix Two represents what is commonly known or believed about the subject, while that presented in **City of the Damned: New Orleans** represents the hidden truth.

Dance of the Dead

As mentioned previously, *City of the Damned: New Orleans* is meant to be used in conjunction with Appendix Two of **Vampire: The Requiem**. As such, some Storytellers and players may not be coming entirely fresh to the Modern Gothic version of New Orleans by the time they purchase this book. While some may have used only the material presented as fodder for their own introductory chronicles, others may have used it to run *Danse de la Mort*, an introductory demo story offered as a free download on www.white-wolf.com.

If you have run the demo story, a word of reminder is in order: *Danse de la Mort* was designed and presented primarily as an opportunity for fans to preview the mood and feel of the new game and its signature city New Orleans before the new game was released. The content of the demo story was not beholden to the specific details presented in *City of the Damned: New Orleans*, and, thus, the reverse is also true. Where setting details, statistics or character behaviors and motivations differ with those presented in the download, the material in this book, of course, takes precedence. You don't need to pretend the download didn't exist, but simply keep in mind its overall purpose.

For those who did not download and run *Danse de la Mort* for their troupes, this is all more or less academic. Now that *City of the Damned: New Orleans* is in your hands, you have everything you need to run numerous fulfilling stories in the Big Easy. And for those who find the idea of a pre-made introductory story appealing, you need look no further than the Appendix of *this* book, where precisely such a sample story—titled *The Dead Travel Fast*—awaits.

Chapter One: A Look Back at the Big Easy expands upon the history of the city as presented in Appendix Two of **Vampire: The Requiem**. Focusing primarily on the past century-and-a-half, it delves into the specifics of Kindred activities, and how they affected, and were affected by, the activities of the mortals around them. This chapter lays the groundwork for all that is to come and reveals how things came to be as they are in the modern nights.

In Chapter Two: Points of Entry, we examine New Orleans itself, with an eye toward introducing newcomers to the city. The chapter includes a discussion of various regions and points of interest and how they relate to Kindred activities in particular. It also offers a discussion of the laws and customs of the city in general, and of Vidal's, Savoy's and Cimitiere's territories specifically.

Chapter Three: Games of the Elders takes a look at the ongoing schemes and goals of the power players of

New Orleans. The chapter discusses a specific handful of the city's elders and then the clans and covenants of the city's elder population in general.

We take a similar approach in Chapter Four: *Wheels Within Wheels*, which studies the activities of the city's ancillae. Again, we present a number of individual ancillae and their schemes, and then a broad overview by faction.

Chapter Five: *Working the Street* is the last of our plots-and-schemes chapters; it focuses on the neonates. These are the plots your players' characters are more likely to encounter (or at least recognize) during the early stages of a chronicle.

In Chapter Six: *Storytelling*, we offer advice for taking the information presented so far and turning it into an actual game. Building on the storytelling framework presented in the corebook, this chapter includes techniques for involving characters in the story and making full use of the schemes already ongoing in the *Big Easy*.

Finally, Appendix: *The Dead Travel Fast* presents a complete sample story, a scenario that you can either run "as is" or mine for ideas for your own chronicles. It showcases the sort of plot that might thrust the troupe into Kindred city politics, showing how player characters can thus help shape the static world around them.

Glossary

Due to its multi-lingual history (and the presence of a faith with which many people are unfamiliar), New Orleans has its own lingo. In order to make full use of this book (and to add verisimilitude to your games), what follows is a list of some of the more important terms.

bokor: A vodoun priest or magician who practices black magic. Houngans *can* be bokors, but such is not common.

Cajun: A Louisianan descended from French-speaking Acadia (a corruption of the word "Acadian"); also describes other rural settlers, as well as food or music.

Code Noir: The "Black Code" adopted by the French in 1724 governing the conduct of free people-of-color and under which conditions slaves were freed.

Creole: A free person of Spanish, French or African descent born in Spanish America; originally used in reference to whites alone, but grew to encompass others after the Civil War; also used to refer to food or music.

Grand Dérangement: Literally "forced migration;"; the massive dispersal of over 10,000 Acadians following the 18th-century wars between England and France.

gris-gris: A term for all sorts of charms, talismans, and other mystical items of vodoun.

hounfour: Inner sanctuary or altar room for the practice of vodoun, sometimes dedicated to a specific loa. Alternately, a more general term for any vodoun temple.

houngan: A priest of vodoun, fully initiated in all the rites and mysteries of the religion.

krewe: A club that sponsors festivals and events (ersatz Old English "crew"); among the Damned, also a type of coterie composed entirely of local neonates.

lagniappe: Literally, "a little something extra"; any small gift from a local.

loa: Spirits of divine origin that serve Bondye (God). They expect to be worshiped and respected, but can be imposed upon to grant favors in return.

mambo: Initiated vodoun priestess; female equivalent of houngan.

mulatto: The child of a black parent and a white parent.

peristyle: The building or outdoor area where vodoun ceremonies are held; often, but not always, bordering or very near the **hounfour**.

quadroon: A term referring to a person who is one-quarter black.

veve: A symbolic design representing one of the loa. These are used as both the focus of rituals and as a temporary altar. They can be found written or inscribed on various surfaces but are usually constructed with flour that is poured on the ground during rituals.

vodouisant: A believer in vodoun; a worshipper of the loa.

Resources

Literature

An enormous amount has been written on New Orleans, and on the religion of vodoun. For those interested in either, consider the following sources.

Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*—Rarely will you find a book on Haitian vodoun (the parent faith of American vodoun) that does not reference this book or Maya Deren herself. This book was written in the early years of the 20th century, so

some of our understanding of Haitian culture and faith has changed substantially, but most of it is still applicable, and all is worth reading.

Tom Downs & John T. Edge, *New Orleans*—Another in the incredibly practical and well-written series of Lonely Planet guides, this small tome proved invaluable during the design of the setting, and should be of equal help to visitors to the city.

Jim Haskins, *Voodoo and Hoodoo*—A book that focuses on the magic and ritual aspects of (mostly American) voodoo. Although the history section is quite brief, this is the book for those who wish more detailed information on the specifics of rituals, *gris-gris*, and the like.

Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*—This book's description of the development of the various religions among American slaves includes no small amount of detail pertinent to the history and development of the region, as well as a fascinating look into the lives and beliefs of the slave population.

Film

Hollywood, too, visits the Big Easy on occasion, either in truth, as in a shoot location, or merely in spirit, in order to capture the city's evocative mood. The following films show aspects of the city at different times and in different areas:

Angel Heart (1986)—What starts with a two-bit private eye hired by a mysterious stranger to track down a missing New Orleans man, soon descends into a serpentine tale of madness and damnation. Gothic and affecting, based upon the novel *Falling Angel*, by William Hjortsberg.

The Big Easy (1987)—A modern classic, a blend of equal parts crime drama, romance and atmosphere piece. For Storytellers, the Cajun musical score is especially effective. (Later spawned a mostly forgettable cable television series.)

Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh (1995)—Not the greatest film, as sequels go, but the local color is more than convincing, and Tony Todd is, well—Tony Todd.

Double Jeopardy (1999)—Otherwise formulaic "wrongfully convicted" thriller does a nice job of pacing and of showing off some of the Big Easy's locales.

Interview With the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (1994)—Anne Rice is, of course, a seminal source for the feel and mood of the modern vampire myth, and nowhere is this truer than for games set in the city of New Orleans.

Live and Let Die (1973)—Ahh, Bond. Watch for the classic scene in which our hero blows up the New Orleans bad guy—literally.

The Serpent and the Rainbow (1988)—Although it doesn't feature New Orleans per se, this surprisingly effective chiller is immersed in vodoun. One of Wes Craven's best, based upon the book by Wade Davis, with a soundtrack that ranks among the creepiest ever recorded for a motion picture.

Storyville (1992)—Excellent cast, led by James Spader as a New Orleans politician uncovering skeletons in the family closet, is marred by an obtuse script.

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)—One of the most memorable films of all time, based upon the play by Tennessee Williams. Oscars went to just about everyone involved, but it's Brando who steals the show. Influential jazz score sets the tone. "Stella!"

BAYOU MUSIC

The city of New Orleans is, of course, so intrinsically associated with music, and with jazz in particular, that it even spawned its own sub-genre. What follows is but a mere sampling of the artists whose music can add both color and depth to any game run in conjunction with this book:

- Louis Armstrong
- Sidney Bechet
- Harry Connick, Jr.
- Dirty Dozen Brass Band
- Los Hombres Calientes
- Dr. John
- Professor Longhair
- Wynton Marsalis
- The Meters
- Jelly Roll Morton
- Nicholas Payton
- Wild Tchoupitoulas
- Irma Thomas

Web Sites

Of course, neither New Orleans nor vodoun is so mundane as to restrict itself to books and film. The following sites proved useful to the writers.:

A Dictionary of Voodoo Terms (www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/125.html)—maintained by Bob Corbett. A simple but useful list of terms and definitions.

The Vodou Page (<http://members.aol.com/Racine125/>)—maintained by Mama Racine Sans Bout. This may be one of the greatest web pages available for anyone looking into these beliefs. Mama Racine is an initiated *mambo* and is more than happy to share her knowledge.



A Look Back at The Big Easy

*You're new to the parish,
I see.*

*Well, let me give you a
crash course
in how we do things
around here.*

*- Donovan,
Sheriff of New Orleans*

— Samuel Butler

God cannot alter the past, but historians can.

Entire books are filled with discussions of New Orleans' history, which don't take into account the undead moving around behind the scenes. It would be impossible to offer here a comprehensive view of city history in a work of this size. What follows, then, is an overview in broad strokes, focusing primarily on the Kindred themselves.

This history builds on the timeline presented in Appendix Two of **Vampire: The Requiem**. Some events presented there do not appear here, as they did not require any additional details.

Ancient Nights Through the 1850s

During the nights before colonization, an elder Kindred roams the territory, stalking the Choctaw like a vengeful deity. Known now only in legends that few Kindred believe, he was said to be practically inhuman (so feral had he become over the centuries), yet still capable of scheming and reason. He interacts little with mortals, even once the European settlers appeared.

The first definite trace of a Kindred presence appears during the expansion of the city around 1720. Few of the vampires active tonight are among this initial wave of arrivals. Antoine Savoy claims to have come over during this time, but few other than his most ardent supporters believe him. Pearl Chastain is known to have come to New Orleans at about this time, however.

Many of the French immigrants at this time are "undesirables," misfits and criminals of whom the French government is only too happy to be rid. A majority of the Kindred who come with them are a similar breed. Lawless and wild, they feed indiscriminately (increasing the spread of yellow fever), and make few concerted efforts to form any real Kindred government. The Masquerade survives only because the Kindred aren't yet numerous enough for their depredations to be noticed among the many other causes of sickness and violent death. Those few Kindred who do attempt to attain some stability, such as Chastain, meet with little success. Many of the

immigrants bring with them slaves from Africa and French Caribbean settlements such as Haiti, granting the Kindred more of a helpless, "unseen" population on which to feed. Some of these vampires use the Indian massacre of 1729 as cover to strike at the native elder, who allows his attackers to believe him slain while he enters a long period of torpor. (See p. 61 for more on this mysterious elder.)

True Kindred government does not appear until Augusto Vidal, a Cordoban Ventrue, arrives in the city with Alexander O'Reilly's forces in 1769. Even as the Irishman moved to pacify the locals for Spain's takeover of power, Vidal used his influence with several of O'Reilly's sub-commanders—all of whom were easily persuaded to move against "insurgents and agitators"—to sweep in and intimidate or destroy the most troublesome of the local Kindred. With the aid of several other local Kindred who wished an end to the chaos of the region, the Princedom of Augusto Vidal was born. The few Kindred holdouts, while troublesome, were unable to gather enough force to come near to ousting the new Prince.

It is during the 1770s that the influx of slaves from the Caribbean first exposes Vidal to the worship of vodoun. He develops an immediate loathing for the faith, because it is both pagan (in his eyes) and a corruption of Catholicism (due to the common practice of adopting saints and even Christ Himself into the pantheon of loa). For many years, Vidal supports and encourages the government's and slave-owners' efforts to keep the slaves down and to wipe out their religion.

Vidal, Chastain, the Spanish Daeva Maria Pascual and other powerful Kindred involve themselves in the growing sugarcane industry. These ties to sugarcane further reinforce Kindred support for the institution of slavery. No longer are the displaced Africans merely an underclass from which the Kindred can easily feed; now the slaves are also valuable workers for the Damned, just as they are for their mortal masters.

The fires that sweep New Orleans in 1788 and 1794 result in a massive rebuilding in the Spanish style. Vidal takes a direct (albeit minor) hand in that planning, selecting the engineer Emmanuel Costa as his

ghoul in 1788. His satisfaction with Costa's work, and persona, grows sufficiently that he Embraces the gifted engineer in 1795.

Those same fires also destroy the havens of many of Vidal's remaining adversaries, who assume—falsely—that the fires were a deliberate attack. Led by the Mekhet Francois Nicholas du Valle, the surviving “rebels” step up their efforts to overthrow the prince. Vidal uses Governor Carondelet's efforts to prevent upheaval in the city to strike back at the rebellious Kindred.

It is also during this time that Baron Cimitiere first appears in the city, arriving among the refugees fleeing the rebellion in Haiti. He becomes actively involved in several vodoun circles.

Little changes in Kindred circles until the war of 1812, which gives Vidal even greater weapons in his war against du Valle's rebels. Du Valle himself attempts to assassinate Vidal, a plot foiled by the efforts of Philip Maldonato and Maria Pascual. Further investigation reveals that Vidal's childe, Costa, is a co-conspirator in the attempt. A mortally embarrassed Vidal personally beheads Costa in an open court to which every important Kindred in the city is invited. To this night, most of New Orleans' Kindred believe that Vidal's anger and shame over Costa's actions are the reason he never again Embraced.

The City Prospers

From around 1815 through 1860, New Orleans prospers as never before. Thousands of immigrants, primarily German and Irish, establish roots in the region, bringing with them new Kindred, who expand Vidal's own domain. The city grows dramatically as entire new neighborhoods fill up as swiftly as they are built. Sugarcane and cotton crops thrive, resulting in the formation of numerous wealthy plantations and the various other farms, shops and services required to maintain them. The slave population increases as well, and the local authorities grow even more concerned with the slaves' “heathen religion,” at various times utterly forbidding its practice.

The majority of Kindred immigrants are of the Mekhet, Daeva and Ventrue clans, who now drastically outnumber the Gangrel and Nosferatu who had, in the earliest years, been at least as numerous. Vidal and the other powerful Kindred begin to associate these “lower clans” with the slaves and poorer classes, treating them accordingly. This is partly out of a desire to reduce the competition for power and resources, but also out of the human need, still present in the Kindred, to classify and qualify those who are different. In effect, though not slaves, the Nosferatu and Gangrel fill the same general position among

New Orleans' Kindred that blacks (and to a lesser extent, Asians and Indians) fill in mortal society at the time.

The attempt to quash the practice of vodoun instead sends it underground. Baron Cimitiere, who has attracted only a few Kindred allies, develops a sizable mortal following. A powerful *houngan*, Cimitiere uses his abilities to protect his fellow vodouisant. His following—if one counts both those with whom he practices directly and those who practice with *houngans* and *mambos* loyal to him—numbers in the thousands. Cimitiere considers involving himself more substantially in the region's politics, in particular to counter Vidal's efforts to oppress or destroy the faith. His initial queries and envoys to the Prince, seeking a meeting, are rebuffed.

As the city grows, Vidal divides his territory into smaller domains based on official parishes. He bestows many of them upon his allies or servants, granting them feeding rights and dominion so long as they obey his dictates. In addition, Vidal decrees that such domains can be inherited. If the childe of a former landowner makes a claim, she has precedence over all other claimants—assuming the Kindred involved don't give Vidal a reason to rule otherwise.

One of Vidal's first major such grants occurs when Pascual steps down from the city's Primogen, no longer interested in keeping up with the night-to-night affairs. As a reward for her service (particularly in saving his unlife during du Valle's assassination attempt), Vidal awards her the “old city,” that portion of New Orleans dating back to the original colonization that will eventually become known as the French Quarter. This grants her substantial power, especially as she is able to barter permission to feed here during Mardi Gras (a custom that began in 1838) in exchange for favors.

The Civil War

Louisiana secedes from the Union in 1861, becoming a staunch member of the burgeoning Confederacy. While the majority of its mortal citizens approve of this decision, the secession causes a split among the Kindred. Prince Vidal and most of his court support the Confederacy fervently, and a few even advocate sending messengers to other nearby domains in hopes of arranging wide-reaching cooperation among Southern Kindred Princes, though this never comes to fruition. Their support of the Confederacy is partially due to their support of the institution of slavery, but Vidal's primary motivation for supporting the South is far more personal. He knows full well that, as Union troops move South, Northern Kindred will almost certainly come with them, ready to take advantage of

any power vacuums created when local vampires are destroyed or have mortal pawns pulled out from under them.

OUTSIDE CONNECTIONS

Although it ultimately did them little good when it came to charting the course of the civil war, Vidal and the other local Princes never entirely allowed their newly constructed web of contacts to waver. From Texas to Mississippi, a scattered selection of Princes—most of whom are the successors to those who reigned during the civil war, but a few of whom still linger from those nights—maintain a sporadic but non-hostile correspondence. They write only once every few years, perhaps speak by phone every decade or so. They can hardly be called friends, or even allies, but, given the standard level of communication between most Kindred domains, this particular chain is remarkably strong.

Vidal would almost rather chew off his own arm than do so, but if he truly begins to lose ground to Savoy and Cimitiere, he just might be able to convince these other Princes to help him out—for a *substantial* political price. This would grant outsiders unheard-of influence in a domain not their own, but Vidal is sufficiently determined to keep his rivals out of power than he might just be willing to do it, though the end result might be new rivals of equal might. And should he call for aid, or should these other Princes grow truly curious as to the situation in New Orleans, they are most likely going to begin by sending a few expendable neonates to make the dangerous inter-city journey to a domain they do not know—neonates like the players' characters...

On the other side are those Kindred who support the Union. Being Kindred, most have ulterior motives for their decision. Cimitiere, one of the staunchest Union supporters in New Orleans, wants freedom for the slaves because this will benefit the vast majority of his followers, allowing them to increase their positions and status, and encourage additional converts. Many of the city's Gangrel and Nosferatu support the Union as well in hopes that a Northern victory will either remove Vidal from power or force him to change his political views.

Vidal, furious that some within his domain would work against him on such a major issue, is nevertheless unable to move directly against them. Although he instructs Pascual and his other allies to work against the "agitators" as best they can (denying them feeding rights, attacking their contacts and the like), he himself is too busy using all his political acumen to support the Confederacy on a wider scale to focus his attention on the local issue.

In 1862, Captain David Farragut sails the Mississippi and bombards several Confederate forts defending New Orleans. Faced with a naval force against which they have no workable defense, the city surrenders on the first of May—much to the chagrin of Vidal and his court and many citizens. General Benjamin F. Butler becomes the Union overseer of the city, and even makes it the Union capital of the state.

Any plans Vidal might have had for dealing with Butler never come to fruition. Cimitiere and his followers, the local Nosferatu and Gangrel, and several Northern Kindred all rally around Butler's banner, working to counter any moves Vidal might make to replace or suborn the general. These factions might not normally have the ability to stand against the Prince, but with a new government in place and outside forces policing the city, much of Vidal's own power has been stripped away, his several pawns in City Hall removed.

Furthermore, just as he'd anticipated, Vidal faces a challenge for power from a Northern Kindred, a Gangrel by the name of Roger Halliburton. Unusually social for one of his clan, Halliburton makes up for in charm and ambition what he lacks in actual political acumen. Though many of the Kindred he approaches—such as Cimitiere and the Nosferatu Miss Opal—are wise enough to remain neutral, some local Kindred rally to his side, hoping to force a change in praxis over New Orleans. Halliburton never gains enough support to unseat Vidal, but he is a sufficient threat that the Prince is forced to make compromises elsewhere he might otherwise have resisted.

Reconstruction

Union soldiers occupy New Orleans throughout the Reconstruction. They institute a new government, which consists largely of Northerners, Union supporters and a select few freed blacks. Vidal, weakened on the one hand by the loss of many of his mortal contacts in the government and on the other by the efforts of his rival factions, realizes that he must soften some of his stances in order to make new allies. He ceases fighting the integration of the freed slaves into society long before many mortal officials do. At the behest of several Kindred including Miss Opal, the new Priscus of the Nosferatu clan, he alters and expands his Primogen Council so that it no longer deliberately excludes specific clans. Vidal even (grudgingly) offers Miss Opal a seat, but she turns it down in order to devote her attention to her self-imposed duties as Priscus. Vidal still refuses, however, to make any concessions to Baron Cimitiere. As fervently opposed to vodoun as ever, he seethes when the newly freed slaves continue to practice and even expand the religion, and he sees Cimitiere's growing flock as a true political threat. Some theorize that it is only



the greater threat posed by Halliburton and the arguments of Miss Opal and others on the Primogen Council who have connections among the poor blacks that prevent Vidal from turning his full attention on Cimitiere. The Nosferatu *houngan*, for his own part, refuses to ally himself with Halliburton, precisely because Cimitiere does not wish to draw any more of Vidal's attention.

Racial Tensions

Conflict between the newly freed blacks and the white citizens who are still unwilling to acknowledge them as equals grows steadily in the years following the end of the war. This leads to all manner of violent incidents, including a riot over voting rights in 1866 that leaves over 50 dead. Vidal takes the opportunities provided by these events to attack Cimitiere's supporters in small numbers. The departure of the Union troops in 1877 allows Vidal to make headway in his struggle to regain his full authority, as many of Halliburton's own agents vanish with them.

Immediately, Vidal cracks down on any Kindred who support the growing power of the freed slaves, determined

that nobody will use this new and growing power base as a platform from which to challenge his authority. He combines this with yet another crackdown on vodoun, supporting all those among the mortal citizenry and in the government who still seek to stamp out that "heathen" religion. This last act cements Cimitiere's animosity toward the Prince, and he finally opens up negotiations with Halliburton.

They do not progress very far.

The Changing of the Guard

The last years of the 19th century see a rather dramatic change in the politics of New Orleans, as two of its major players are removed from the field. Roger Halliburton, who had an unpleasant predilection for feeding on (and doing even worse things to) young children, finally chooses the wrong victim and is hunted down and slain by an angry crowd of vodouisants. (His childe Lidia, who has her own personal reasons for hating her sire, will go on to become one of Cimitiere's most trusted followers.) Within a year, Maria Pascual is destroyed as well, by assailants unknown. Vidal, while certainly not displeased at the

loss of Halliburton, is less enthusiastic about the Final Death of one of his oldest allies. He begins careful deliberations to determine who should take over Pascual's dominion of the French Quarter. Now not the prime territory it once had been, it is still valuable for its easy hunting and as the site of the yearly Mardi Gras celebration.

THE WOMAN WHO SLEW HALLIBURTON

The Gangrel pedophile Roger Halliburton was slain by an enraged mob of vodouisants, but it could almost be said that it was one specific woman who killed him. Catalina Bena, the daughter of a former slave and a Mexican immigrant, was herself the mother of twin girls, Rosa and Isabel. Isabel was one of the children victimized by Halliburton, and it was Catalina who sparked the outrage that led to the Gangrel's death.

None of this would matter in the modern nights, were it not for the fact that this was apparently not the end of the family's involvement with the Kindred. Tonight, a vampire by the name of Rosa Bale is the most powerful Kindred *mambo* of New Orleans not associated with Baron Cimitiere. (In fact, she violently opposes him.) Rosa Bale has never overtly admitted to being Rosa Bena, nor has she ever told the tale of her Embrace. She does, however, spend a great deal of her time speaking to empty air, often addressing her absent companion as "Isabel"—but sometimes by other names as well. Strange things happen around Rosa Bale, things inexplicable even by the many Disciplines of the Kindred. Those who know Rosa well can only theorize that Isabel remains with her sister, one of the many ghosts who haunt the Big Easy. Furthermore, Rosa appears to have parlayed one phantasmal ally into many—at least half a dozen, if every name she has been heard to utter to empty air is truly a separate spirit. In a city as laden with the restless dead as New Orleans, a pack of ghostly allies is a potent weapon indeed, and Rosa may well prove to be one of the city's rising powers. After all, even the most powerful of the local Kindred can do little against foes who are beyond the ken of most Kindred.

Vidal never has the chance to make his decision. Within a few months, the French Quarter is claimed by a relatively unknown Daeva named Antoine Savoy.

Savoy claims that he has dwelt in New Orleans, keeping a low profile, since the coming of the Spanish. He claims, as well, that he was a close compatriot of Pascual's. Neither claim has ever been substantiated, but Savoy clearly has powerful contacts and influence

somewhere. When he first appears on the scene, he shows a complete working knowledge of New Orleans politics. He calls in favors and boons owed to Pascual and Halliburton both, and, while many of Pascual's debtors ignore him, others choose to honor their commitments in case Savoy proves to be an ally worth cultivating. He talks a good game as well, espousing freedom and equality for those who find themselves among persecuted minority classes, both Kindred and mundane. He is eminently charming, seemingly closer to the "common man." He even practices vodoun, which ingratiates him with many who still oppose Vidal, even if they themselves are not vodouisants. Savoy also attracts the attention of Cimitiere, who initially sees Savoy as a potential ally against Vidal. The two Kindred begin serious discussions.

Vidal finds himself unable to do anything about this arrogant upstart who has simply waltzed in and taken over a valuable territory. Savoy has just enough backing and support in the beginning to maintain his grip, and, by the time he becomes a strong enough factor for Vidal to focus on him, that grip has tightened. To this date, Vidal has never acknowledged Savoy's claim to the French Quarter, but neither has he ever been able to oust the Daeva.

The 20th Century

The turn of the century sees an expansion of industry in New Orleans and a corresponding expansion in the areas of influence of the Kindred. Vidal, who already claims substantial influence in city government and local churches, expands his areas of influence to include the growing corporate arena. Savoy branches out in the areas opened up by organized crime and, eventually, Prohibition. Based in the French Quarter and other poor areas, he also manages to insert himself into the New Orleans socialite scene by working through charities. More than once, he and Vidal find themselves attending the same function; the French Quarter lord takes a perverse delight in striking up friendly conversations with Vidal. Cimitiere's influence increases as a growing population of poor blacks go to work in the factories and similar blue-collar jobs. Both Vidal and Savoy initially underestimate the power a rival might wield if he gains influence over the products their own pawns sell and trade. Furthermore, vodoun continues to grow at a substantial rate—especially during the Great Depression, when mortals of all stripes seek hope and faith in new places—and while Savoy holds some influence in the religion, Cimitiere is still the primary Kindred power in that arena. It is these years, then, that set up the triad of Kindred power in New Orleans, one that remains largely unchanged to this night.

Other than the boost given to production, the First World War has little direct impact on New Orleans or the Kindred who dwell here. Of far more immediate concern to the Kindred is the falling-out that occurs at this time between the potential allies Savoy and Cimitiere. Initially heartened by Savoy's purported attitude toward the poor and his veneration of vodoun, Cimitiere comes to believe that the Daeva's faith is a charade. Savoy, or so Cimitiere maintains, does nothing without political motivation. His support of vodoun, of the poor, and of mortal and Kindred minorities is all a front to buy him the loyalty of the lower classes, the strata of society where Vidal has the least power. For his own part, Savoy finds Cimitiere to be a zealot and an unreasonable idealist who refuses to make "proper use" of any power that comes his way. From being potential allies who together might even have toppled the great Vidal, the pair swiftly become staunch adversaries. While they have cooperated to thwart some of the Prince's schemes, such alliances are always short-term and filled with mutual distrust.

The Storyville Murders

In 1915, a rash of murders strike the area of the city known as Storyville, located in one of New Orleans' poorest districts. Oddly enough, while the killings are quite brutal, involving substantial amounts of blood, the victims all seem to die swiftly from the first wound. The police investigation lasts months: Whether their failure to locate the culprit is due to the killer's cleverness or the simple fact that the police can't be bothered to give their all to crimes that take place among the poor black community is open to interpretation. The crimes eventually cease, with as little rhyme or reason as they began.

Nobody has ever found evidence to prove Kindred involvement in the murders, but both Cimitiere and Savoy are known to have investigated the matter. Neither one has come forward with any results.

What few Kindred other than Cimitiere's closest confidants know is that the Baron himself grew sullen and withdrawn during the months of the Storyville murders and, in fact, failed to appear at several ceremonies he was expected to lead. Several of his followers, including Lidia Kendall, have raised the issue; Cimitiere has constantly maintained that he was merely distraught at the violence taking place in what was essentially one of "his" communities. If any of his followers have doubts that this is the whole truth, they have pushed them aside.

A Deal With the Devil

For a brief period of time—less than a year—the hostilities between Prince Vidal and Baron Cimitiere

cease utterly. On several occasions, Vidal actually meets with Cimitiere, their meetings remaining cordial if not particularly friendly. Savoy, terrified at the prospect of an alliance between the pair, takes to a comparatively reckless expansion of his own territories, determined to be prepared to ward off a potential combined assault.

It all proves unnecessary. Whatever plot or alliance the pair are cooking up apparently amounts to naught. Within months, they both return to their old ways, their enmity as strong as ever. Furthermore, Vidal is able to regain his lost territories with little trouble, as Savoy had moved too swiftly to cement his gains. In fact, Cimitiere is able to take a few poor neighborhoods from Savoy as well while the French Quarter lord is defending himself from the Prince.

HAUNTING THE DAMNED

At roughly the same time as this interaction between Vidal and Cimitiere, the laws that govern the inhuman beings of the World of Darkness briefly collapse in the vicinity of the old Storyville neighborhoods and, to a lesser extent, throughout much of New Orleans. In the great portions of the city, an abnormally high number of mortal deaths has resulted in the rising of ghosts and an increase in reported hauntings that even mortals can detect. The powers of the Kindred grow slightly more difficult to use, often requiring extra concentration or even extra expenditure of Vitae. In Storyville itself, the ghosts go berserk, and only the desperate efforts of Vidal and Cimitiere to manipulate the municipal government, media and urban rumor prevent a massive investigation of the "strange phenomenon." Moreover, in that particular neighborhood, Disciplines often fail to function entirely or function in ways other than they are intended. These effects fade after a few weeks, but they still flare up at random intervals—usually for only a few moments or hours at a time, but occasionally for entire nights—in the vicinity of what used to be Storyville.

Cimitiere has admitted this to nobody, but he believes these effects to be the result of the botched ritual that he and Vidal attempted to perform. (See sidebar on p. 22.) And Cimitiere worries about what might happen to the neighborhood or even the city, should any powerful *houngan* or *mambo* attempt any rituals in Storyville. After all, if the laws of the occult and the walls between life and death are already weakened in that area, could further magics not serve to shatter them entirely? He has forbidden any of his own followers from conducting ceremonies within a mile of the former site of Storyville, but, powerful as he is, he certainly does not have a voice in every vodoun congregation—to say nothing of non-vodouisant sorcerers—in New Orleans.

The Great Depression

The Depression is a better time for the Kindred than it is for mortals. While even the greatest Kindred take a hit in the wallet, Vidal and most of the other powerful vampires of New Orleans are sufficiently diversified that they suffer less than mortals of comparable wealth and influence. Additionally, more poverty leads to more homelessness and more crime, all of which are boons to Kindred feeding. Few Kindred would call the Depression a “good time,” but most of them weather it with relatively minor inconvenience.

In fact, at least one of New Orleans’ Kindred is able to thrive in this environment. With the rise of jazz in the 1920s comes the appearance of nightclubs, and the Nosferatu known as Sundown takes advantage of the opportunity. He begins with a single establishment, a jazz club that happens to be Kindred-friendly, with private rooms (even made available as emergency havens, for the right fee) and a rather unusual selection of beverages in the “members only” section. Sundown’s focus on Kindred customers allows him not only to thrive during the Depression, suffering no noticeable loss of income or prestige, but even to open several additional establishments. Both Vidal and Savoy become regular patrons of his establishment, and the apolitical Sundown finds himself wielding more potential influence than he ever wanted. To date, he has rarely taken advantage of that position, but should he ever side

specifically with one of New Orleans’ three factions, his support might well tip the balance of power.

AFTER SUNDOWN

Antoine Savoy, always eager for an edge against Vidal and Cimitiere, is seriously considering a scheme intended to push Sundown firmly into his own camp. Given Vidal’s recent activities, and his crackdown on all Kindred who even potentially threaten his rule, Savoy has begun planning ways he might launch an assault on Sundown’s assets—from tying up his establishments in legal issues to overt arson—while making it appear that Vidal, not Savoy himself, is responsible. If done subtly enough, he believes this might inspire Sundown to come to Savoy as an ally or, at the very least, ensure that Sundown will never go over to Vidal.

Savoy is not stupid; he knows that such an operation must be orchestrated perfectly. Should any hint of the truth reach Sundown, he might well turn to Vidal instead. Thus, the French Quarter lord holds off on actually beginning such a project until he’s certain he has the proper timing, method—and, perhaps most importantly, expendable operatives. A group of neonates recently Embraced or arrived in the city, neonates easily misled or manipulated, might form just the opening Savoy seeks.



As with World War I, the Second World War affects New Orleans primarily on an industrial and economic level, a boon for which many of the city's Kindred are grateful. Vidal's and Cimitiere's influence in production temporarily wanes, as the mortals with whom they were accustomed to dealing with ship off to war and are replaced by elderly or female workers, but this constitutes only a minor setback in most respects.

The Civil Rights Era

Each of New Orleans' three most prominent Kindred make use of the racial violence that marks the beginnings of the civil rights movement to strike at one another. Cimitiere and Savoy hide their assaults on Vidal and on one another under the guise of random violence and street crime, while Vidal is able to mask his own activities behind mortal police actions. It should be noted that Vidal has no personal motivation for keeping the black populace poor and unrepresented—he successfully abandoned that particular prejudice when he acknowledged the need for change after the civil war. Still, he tends to support the white power structure because this is where the majority of his own influence lies, and because he knows that both Savoy and Cimitiere hold substantial influence among the city's minorities.

Vidal begins to focus ever more intently on Savoy, who has become the greatest political rival Vidal has ever faced. The French Quarter, which had reached its nadir of disreputability in the 1920s, sees an upsurge of attention in the 1930s when, despite the Depression, preservationists and locals work together to clean it up and rebuild it. The next few decades see its evolution into the tourist Mecca it is tonight, and, suddenly, Savoy holds dominion over not merely a historical neighborhood but one of the most financially valuable and easily hunted territories in the entire city. Powerful Kindred are now willing to offer substantial favors in exchange for feeding rights in the French Quarter, which Savoy uses to cement his power in other neighborhoods as well. Savoy is no longer an irritant; he has positioned himself as a potential challenger for the Princedom of New Orleans itself.

Vidal responds by cracking down severely on domain and feeding rights. While he cannot directly harm Savoy, Vidal strips away some of the territories Savoy had granted to others outside his immediate sphere of influence. Vidal adopts a stricter custom of introduction, insisting that all Kindred newcomers to the city announce themselves within several nights of arrival. He can do little to shake Savoy's grip, but his activities prevent the French Quarter lord from expanding any further.

The Prince further expands his own influence into the growing space-age industry and tourist industries not directly related to the French Quarter, such as the new Louisiana Superdome sports stadium and the hotels and restaurants that spring up to service the fans. Due to his contacts in city government, he is able to move on such projects—investing money and suborning important personnel—well before Cimitiere or Savoy. By the mid-1970s, despite Savoy's dominion over the French Quarter and other neighborhoods and Cimitiere's almost total influence over the vodoun community, Vidal is as secure in his power as he's ever been.

It is also at this time that Miss Opal, who had vanished some three decades earlier, emerges from her torpor and sets about regaining her position as unofficial spokesman for the Nosferatu. When Miss Opal first reappears, she begins tentative discussions with Cimitiere, but the pair never become overt allies. Perhaps because Vidal seeks to expand his base of allies, or possibly because he fears what might happen should Cimitiere gain widespread Nosferatu support, the Prince once again offers Miss Opal a seat among the Primogen. This time she agrees, neglecting the commonly accepted duties of Priscus with the belief that she can do more to change the system from within. Due to Miss Opal's vocal support of the Carthian cause, Vidal has more than once regretted his offer in the years since.

The Iron Fist

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Vidal's crack-down grows even more oppressive. Young or visiting Kindred suspected of sympathy with Savoy or Cimitiere often find their privileges in New Orleans revoked or scrutinized by the overzealous Prince. Although no longer able to turn city officials against the vodoun community, Vidal encourages the Kindred to victimize that population wherever possible, granting numerous feeding rights in vodouisant neighborhoods. Mortal allies and pawns of Savoy find themselves snubbed by politicians and businessmen who had welcomed them (and their contributions) mere days before. And Kindred criminals citywide find themselves subjected to far more severe punishments than had once been the norm, up to and including an increase in blood hunts and executions.

From that night to this, rumors run rampant as the Kindred try to understand the change in their Prince's behavior. Did the rapid changes of the late 20th century simply prove too much for the elder to adapt to? Or is something else, something more personal or more sinister, behind his hardening attitude? Only the Prince himself and perhaps his advisor

Maldonato—who, it should be noted, has been rather more dour and preoccupied in recent years—can say for certain. Whatever the reason, as resentment and

fear mount throughout the Kindred community, Vidal's most recent grab for power may ironically result in the end of his own long reign.

THE PRINCE AND THE PRIEST

Desperation makes strange bedfellows, and even the greatest religious convictions may crumble before the demands of necessity.

Prince Vidal and Baron Cimitiere did indeed cooperate with one another once, almost 90 years ago. Their alliance, however, was not political, but mystical. It was around the turn of the last century when it truly began to sink in for Vidal that he was going to lose his domain eventually. He had, by Kindred terms, relatively little time left before torpor claimed him, and it was clear, given the growing power of Antoine Savoy, that Vidal could not count on any of his own court to hold his domain until his return. Nor was he eager to Embrace a new childe, after his betrayal at the hands of the traitor Costa. Pressed by Maldonato to take full advantage of one enemy in his efforts to thwart the other, Vidal finally decides to use Cimitiere—and vodoun itself—to his benefit.

Working alongside Cimitiere, the Prince concocts an ambitious plan. During many vodoun ceremonies, some of the participants occasionally become "mounts" for the loa, granting these spirits temporary use of their physical forms. Cimitiere and Vidal attempt to develop a rite that will cause one of the loa—Baron Samedi, guardian of the dead and Cimitiere's own patron—to become permanently fixed in Vidal's undying form. This will grant Vidal an understanding of the faith and magic that has beleaguered him for so long and allow him to rule without the burden of thirst or the need to fall into torpor. To entice Cimitiere's cooperation, Vidal offers the *houngan* a permanent guarantee of autonomy. So long as Cimitiere and his followers do not interfere with Vidal's rule, he will cease any and all campaigns against them and even alter his policies to benefit the vodouisant community.

Of course, neither participant was entirely honest with the other. Vidal believed that, having subsumed the power of Cimitiere's patron, he could easily control his Nosferatu rival. For his own part, Cimitiere thoroughly believed that no mere Kindred could simply make use of Vidal's body for as long as he wished—perhaps making changes in the city to aid his disciples—and then depart.

The rite to bring about this melding of loa and Kindred proved quite complex, and it required—among other things—a number of sacrificial gestures. True vodoun involves animal sacrifice at its bloodiest, but this proved to be a far cry from anything resembling normal religious practice. It was Baron Cimitiere himself who committed the Storyville murders, each death a blow to his heart and soul as he slew those who could so easily have been his own followers.

The ritual also required a vessel, a vampire into whose body Baron Samedi could be drawn. Vidal would then absorb the loa permanently into his essence by violating the Third Tradition and consuming the soul of the vessel. Perhaps as a subtle hint to Cimitiere, Vidal chose another Nosferatu for his vessel, an unimportant neonate by name of Leon.

As the night of the ritual fell, Cimitiere and several of his mortal followers, who were to act as participants in the rite, met with Vidal, Maldonato and Leon in a hidden location not far from Storyville. There they performed the rite, which went as planned—up until the end.

Cimitiere did indeed succeed in summoning *something*, though even he is not sure to this night if it was truly Baron Samedi. Whatever it was, all involved felt the presence of this great power in the chamber.

What happened next, not even those who were there can truly say. The spirit seemed to fade briefly from the air, as though it were indeed possessing someone—and then the air itself seemed to come alive as the being lashed out in rage at its would-be violation. Every mortal present died almost instantly, their echoing screams deafening in the chamber. Unaware that the ritual had gone awry, for he had little idea of what to expect, Vidal did not realize that the spirit was not, in fact, contained within the vessel. At Cimitiere's cry of "Take him now!" the Prince leapt upon Leon and drained the Nosferatu to a husk. Although possessed of no spirit but his own, Leon's Final Death and the culmination of the ritual were accompanied by a surge of mystical energies that left everyone present briefly dazed.

In the weeks after the rite, Vidal grew horrified to learn that not only did he not have the power of a loa inside him, he had become spiritually sterile. Every attempt to sire a childe, or even to make a mortal servitor into a ghoul, failed utterly. The Prince's hatred of vodoun escalated to the fever pitch it holds to this night. He orchestrated the burning of the original Storyville neighborhood, ostensibly "cleansing" the area after the murders, and began his current practice of politically retaliating against those who even speak kindly about voodoo in his presence. Any promises he made to Cimitiere were nullified, and the two Kindred swiftly returned to their mutual animosity.

Cimitiere was far more pleased with the results, though the rite didn't happen quite as he intended, either. Since that night he has felt even closer to Baron Samedi; the proximity to such potent mystical power makes Cimitiere feel like he is on the verge of developing sorcerous techniques unlike those known to either the Nosferatu or the Circle of the Crone. He intends, after the proper preparations have been made, to pass these abilities on to future childer and disciples. If he has any reservations about what he instigated those many decades back, it is simply this: Cimitiere heard himself speak the words "Take him now," but he has no recollection of speaking them. He wonders if he himself might not have been the mount for the spirit that night. And he wonders, too, to whom the spirit may have been speaking when he uttered those words. For of one thing, the Kindred *houngan* is certain, to the core of his being:

The message was *not* intended for Vidal.







Chapter

Points of Entry

*Well I'll be damned.
Never heard of anyone
trying to sneak into
New Orleans before.
Plenty of young Kindred
try to get the hell out,
though. Something about
the spiritual climate,
they tell me.*

*- Father John Marrow,
Sanctified Priest*

*After all, animality’s an instinct and its luxurious slave.
To taste the truth is a seizure of the senses, and it’s a foot in the grave.*

Crescent City... the Big Easy... the City that Care Forgot... N’awlins.

Whatever one calls her, New Orleans is, and has always been, one of the most colorful urban centers in America. Few cities in the union can boast such a deeply rich and multi-cultural heritage. The first neo-Americans in the region begat the Tchefuncte, who constructed scattered settlements of mud-caked thatch in the area that was to become New Orleans. From them arose the city’s Native American roots, with the Choctaw, the Houma, the Chickasaw and the Muskogean all struggling to eke out lives on the shores of Lake Ponchartrain.

All this would change when a Spanish explorer by name of Alonso Alvarez de Pineda sent word of the discovery of an entryway to the heart of North America in 1519. He had found the Mississippi, and now all of Europe was eager to explore. Although Hernando De Soto made it as far as the river in his grueling, three-year trek overland from Florida in 1542, it would be a Frenchman named La Salle who would finally settle and lay claim to the region for his king, Louis XIV (for whom the state of Louisiana was named), some 14 decades later. Afterward, once Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur of Bienville, located the river’s muddy outflow in 1699, the area became a viable colony as well as a symbol of European ambition.

Come tonight, however, the city that Bienville dubbed *Nouvelle Orléans* in 1718 (in honor of the Duc d’Orléans) is much more a symbol of America than of France. The city’s melting pot is full to overflowing with the cultural broth of its own people. The Native American, Spanish, French, Acadian and Creole ingredients of yore, stirred together with the later Haitian, Latin American, Vietnamese and Middle Eastern elements, have resulted in a unique blend that cannot easily be defined or categorized. And while it is a melting pot that has often served as an example of the American ideal, it is also one that has proven easily brought to boil.

These nights, the population of New Orleans is mostly African American, who constitute just over 60 percent of the total. The remainder is divided roughly among Caucasians, who total around 35 percent, with the last five percent or so being a mix of peoples in which Hispanics are the dominant demographic. Perhaps equally important to the city, however, is its bustling tourist trade, which swells the ranks of its residents to nearly three times its normal size over the course of the year. Given this, it is

not unreasonable to expect that not every character (even a starting character) in a New Orleans chronicle will be a Crescent City native. Indeed, some of the most interesting stories the city has to tell will be told to newcomers.

Walkin’ to New Orleans

While it may have been Fats Domino’s preferred way of entering the city, traveling to Crescent City on foot is the least viable option for one of the Damned, save the occasional nomad familiar with the hazards of travel. Most Kindred prefer to travel to New Orleans by one of the more commonly accepted (not to mention efficient) means of travel.

Coming to the city over land is a bit of an eye-opener even by car, as all freeway approaches to New Orleans travel over either lakes or bayous and are designated as hurricane evacuation routes out of the city. The country’s major east-west corridor along the southern boundary, I-10, is the primary road of entry for most ground traffic going in or out of the Big Easy. For traffic that merely seeks to cross from one side of the city to the other, a local connector (I-610) provides a shortcut that escapes most of the downtown congestion. The other major east-west highway serving Crescent City is I-12, with I-55 (to Chicago) and I-59 (to Chattanooga) running north-south to and from the city.

The greater New Orleans area is served by one major airport, New Orleans International Airport (MSY). In truth, about 98 percent of the flights that pass through are domestic, and most of the international flights only go back and forth between other North and Central American destinations. As an air travel hub, New Orleans is largely overshadowed by the larger, nearby hubs at Dallas-Fort Worth to the west and Atlanta to the east. New Orleans International is technically in the Kenner suburb, about 15 minutes by car to the downtown core. Smaller plane traffic is typically served by New Orleans Lakefront Airfield, so named because it sits on the edge of Lake Ponchartrain to the northeast of the city proper.

For those who cannot afford or tolerate air travel, New Orleans is home to Union Passenger Terminal, located on Loyola Avenue in the Central Business District. Three different trains operate out of the sizeable downtown facility: The City of New Orleans train, which runs to Memphis, Jackson and Chicago; the Crescent Route, serving Atlanta, Birmingham, New York and Washington, DC; and the Sunset Limited Route, for which New Orleans is but a stop-off

on its way from Los Angeles to Miami. Union Passenger Terminal is also home to the city's Greyhound terminal.

Last but not least is the Mississippi River, the source of much of the city's economy and culture since the city's foundation. Once the most common method of travel, the riverboat continues to bring both goods and people into and out of New Orleans. Costs are relatively high, however, and the era of steerage passage is well and truly over. River travel for individuals is now largely confined to the tourist trade, which offers riverboat excursions of every kind.

Getting Around

Arrivals by air (rare among the undead, but not unheard of) have the option of taking a shuttle from New Orleans International Airport to any location downtown. The cost is reasonable enough, especially as compared with similar shuttles from other American airports, that any vampire who can afford to travel from city to city by airplane should likely be able to afford it with ease.

Once in the city proper, the standard host of options found in most major urban centers is available here as well. In addition to the usual banquet of taxi companies, Crescent City is city is host to three bus services: The Regional Transit Authority, which handles most of the traffic to and from the airport to the French Quarter; Jefferson Transit, whose buses serve the airport and Metairie; and Westside Transit, which handles traffic across and on either side of the Greater New Orleans Bridge.

Thanks in small part to the efforts of some of the city's older Kindred (including Pearl Chastain, if the rumor mill is running grit-free these nights), the streetcar is making a vibrant comeback in New Orleans. The city's two older lines—the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line and the Riverfront streetcar line—were recently joined by a third, the Canal Street line. The St. Charles was the nation's second horse-drawn streetcar line, having seen its opening in 1835 under the name "The New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad" and was one of the first to adopt electric traction (in 1893). No streetcar line in New Orleans runs after midnight.

Unlike many other urban centers, the Big Easy also offers more traditional means of getting around. As New Orleans is both a river and lake town, one always has the option of taking any one of the city's three different daily ferry services. One makes a circuit from Canal Street to the west bank of the community of Algiers; another between Jackson Avenue and Gretna (another city suburb); and a third between Chalmette and lower Algiers. Only the Canal Street ferry runs until midnight; the others make their final stops before 9:30 p.m. Another even more charming method of transport in New Orleans (or at least in and around the Quarter) is the old-fashioned carriage ride. Most carriages are attached to a particular tour route, but one can always get on and off at any point along the way (at usually the same rate).

The Reins of Power

Comparatively speaking, New Orleans is a bastion of stability in the tempest that is the American Kindred political structure. Indeed, the reputation of New Orleans as a city of sharp and often paradoxical contrasts is nowhere stronger than it is among the Damned. Here, in a city long associated with murder and the chaos that often accompanies loose moral fiber, the Sanctified have thrived. Their local paragon, Augusto Vidal, is in the 24th decade of his praxis over the domain, and has survived all that such a remarkable era entails. His rule has become the very model for ambitious Sanctified over the years.

Now that era comes to an end.



ANY EXCUSE TO CELEBRATE

These are the words many mortal residents of New Orleans live by, and wheresoever go the kine, the Kindred are sure to follow—especially in the Big Easy. The city certainly does love a festival, and even the period known as "the holidays" in other parts of the country seems like just a warm-up in New Orleans, where the period after the New Year is the time of greatest celebration. A selection of the more important annual holidays and events are as follows:

- Twelfth Night (January 6th)
- Battle of New Orleans celebration (January 8th)
- Martin Luther King Jr Day parade (third Monday in January)
- Mardi Gras parades (the month or so leading up to Mardi Gras Day)
- Mardi Gras Day (in late February or early March)
- Black Heritage Festival (second weekend in March)
- Spring Fiesta (five days, beginning the first Friday after Easter)
- French Quarter Festival (second weekend of April)
- Jazz Fest (last weekend of April and first weekend of May)
- Greek Festival (Memorial Day weekend)
- Carnival Latino (last weekend in June)
- Swamp Festival (four days in early October)
- Halloween (October 31st, this holiday is not taken lightly in New Orleans)



It is no secret that Vidal's administration of his domain has grown more bitter of late, and that his patience for even the smallest of infractions has worn thin. Many believe that Vidal is feeling the stifling pressure of his own years, and that he struggles against the sleep he knows must overtake him soon. Ever since executing his only childe for complicity in an act of treason, Vidal has never again brought a mortal into the Requiem, and many wonder who will be named as his "successor" when he finally succumbs to torpor. The rumor mill



picks his Sheriff, a Sanctified named Donovan, as the most likely candidate but nothing official has ever confirmed or even hinted at this, and Donovan's status as the progeny of Vidal's biggest rival, Antoine Savoy (whether truly estranged or not), complicates the prospect of his being Vidal's successor, at least in many eyes.

For now, however, Vidal is still Prince and his domain is as strong as ever—perhaps even stronger. His reign is assisted, as it ever is, by his Seneschal, the Mekhet Philip Maldonato. In addition, Vidal keeps a Sheriff (Donovan), a Master of Elysium (the Sanctified Nosferatu Gus Elgin) and a Primogen Council that includes Pearl Chastain (Invictus Daeva), Coco Duquette (Carthian Mekhet), Gabriel Hurst (Sanctified Ventrue), and Miss Opal (Carthian Nosferatu). Informally, Vidal has employed the talents of a Hound, as well (a Gangrel woman named Caitlin Meadows), especially in recent years, but many believe she has gone rogue or otherwise vacated Vidal's service of late.

Custom, Tradition and Law

What separates the Big Easy from other cities is often not *what* goes on within the city limits, but *how* it goes on. Many cities have parades and celebrations, but no place else has anything quite like New Orleans' Mardi Gras. Many communities have an older or historic district, but there's only one French Quarter.

As with the city, so too with the Kindred. Prince Vidal—and, in their own domains, Lord Savoy and Baron Cimitiere—certainly have their own laws and dictates. What makes the unliving community of New Orleans stand out, however, is not its *unique* laws, but the ways in which the leaders enforce, and the other Kindred obey, the common ones.

Unless stated otherwise, everything discussed below applies to all portions of the city evenly, as even Savoy and Cimitiere are still formally subjects in Vidal's domain. They cannot entirely ignore his mandates, though they may tweak them to their own purposes.

The First Tradition: Masquerade

It is, paradoxically, both easier and harder to abide by the First Tradition in New Orleans than it is elsewhere. This is a city accustomed to the bizarre. It is a contender for the highest murder rate in the world, making it all too easy to hide the results of a frenzy or excessive feeding amidst the many others who are little more than violent crime statistics. During select portions of the year, an enormous portion of the population is dressed in outlandish or even monstrous garb, allowing the Kindred to unleash more of their bestial natures without standing out. It is also considered, by those who believe in such things, a widely haunted city, and one inhabited by a large population of people whose religion involves the ritual use of magic. And perhaps most importantly, alcohol and drugs

are among the most prevalent of the city's many vices; all manner of abnormal events can be—and often have been—passed off as the result of too much fun.

Given Vidal's recent growing obsession with defeating Savoy and Cimitiere once and for all, even those Kindred who violate the Masquerade may find the Prince too involved in other activities to deal with them. This applies, however, only to very minor violations. Vidal is most certainly not an idiot, and foolish Kindred who assume his preoccupation grants them open license to do anything usually find themselves very warm for a very brief length of time.

Still, between the costumes, the vodouisant and the chemically induced hallucinations, one might expect the Masquerade to be more secure here than it is anywhere else. And that might be true—were it not for those selfsame vodouisants and a select few of their Catholic counterparts.

For these people, the supernatural is real. They do not buy into the disbelief and selective blindness of modern culture. The vodouisant believe in evil spirits; some of the Catholics believe in demons. Both believe that powers of evil stalk the world, that magic and witchcraft work. Vampires do not directly play into these belief systems, but neither are they a particularly far stretch. Many of New Orleans' inhabitants frequently watch for elements of the supernatural in the world around them, and they have the faith and the will to confront them. Thus, while the very nature of New Orleans bolsters the Masquerade, a select but dangerous portion of the population is far more sensitive to such things, and likely to cause substantial trouble for careless Kindred.

Domain

Maintaining the Masquerade means keeping the peace—at least relatively—among the Kindred, and that means a solid process for determining who is permitted to hunt and gather influence in a given area. In New Orleans, that procedure is simple and ironclad. Prince Vidal grants territory. Period.

Certainly, the process *appears* more complex than that. Many of the city's Regents have themselves parceled out their territories to even more Kindred. The simple truth, though, is that with a few exceptions, nobody holds rights of domain in New Orleans without being a loyal ally, or at least useful tool, of Vidal's. Vidal can easily rescind any of these layers of fealty should he choose to do so, which makes him the ultimate arbiter of domain in New Orleans.

This, of course, might seem to fly in the face of the current political situation in the Big Easy. After all, both Savoy and Cimitiere claim their own domains, and they have divided those territories among their followers as well. How, then, can it be said that Vidal is the last word in the city's Regency?

Simply, both the Baron and the French Quarter lord attained power at times when Vidal was unable to prevent them from doing so. They have such a firm claim on their territories now that even the Prince cannot

shake them. And, of course, they can divide their own domains as they choose. In the modern nights, however, Vidal makes absolutely certain that those territories do not expand. On several occasions, Savoy has "offered" one of his followers a territory in Vidal's domain in an attempt to expand his own influence. The Prince has not been shy about calling anyone who partakes of such an offer a criminal, and dealing with him accordingly.

Many of New Orleans' domains match the borders of the local parishes, and Vidal tends to think of all of them as religious entities as much as political ones. Regents are expected to watch out for the spiritual welfare of any Kindred active in their domains, either tending to such matters themselves if they are of the Lancea Sanctum, or calling for a Priest to deal with issues of faith if they are not. Although Vidal does not make any great effort to enforce the requirement, he mandates that all Kindred requesting feeding rights in a domain, and the Regent who is either granting or refusing them, do so through a brief but elaborate religious ceremony. In it, the petitioning Kindred swears loyalty to the Regent, to God and to Vidal himself. If the Regent is of the Lancea Sanctum, he grants permission by offering a blessing to the petitioner. If he is not, he must have a Priest present who can do so. Refusal of permission, however, requires nothing but a statement to that effect. Vidal requires that all Regents inform him if they have granted permission for another Kindred to dwell or feed in their territory for longer than a few nights so he may keep track of community ties.

The Second Tradition: Progeny, and the Custom of Tutelage

Vidal takes the Second Tradition very seriously, and very literally. He does not enforce a blanket ban on the creation of progeny, though all who seek to sire a childe must first gain his permission to do so. He does, however, strictly enforce the notion that the sire is responsible for the actions of the childe. Until the childe is released to be her own Kindred, the sire suffers equal consequences for anything she may do—up to, and including, Final Death for sufficiently severe violations. To make matters even more hazardous, the sire cannot decide on his own when to release the childe from his tutelage. Just as he must petition Vidal for permission to create, so too must he petition for permission to release. (Vidal often delegates this decision, which he considers to be of lesser import than permission to sire in the first place, to others of his court.) This involves a combination Lancea Sanctum/Catholic prayer ceremony, which includes the symbolic christening of the newly released childe with a bit of Kindred Vitae. Only after this has occurred is the sire freed of responsibility for the childe's actions.

Unlike most other Princes, however, Vidal interprets the sire/childe relationship in the other direction as well. The sins of the father are, in truth, visited upon the childe in New Orleans. Until the childe is released, she suffers the same punishment as her sire does for violating the laws of

the domain, just as he suffers should she transgress. This seems an unfair process to many outsiders, but Vidal follows it religiously, as it ensures that, should he need to destroy or banish a lawbreaker, the criminal leaves no untrained and uneducated—and perhaps vengeful—childe behind.

TATTLETALE

Vidal does allow the young, unreleased childer of criminals a means of escaping their sires' fate. If the childer come to the Prince (or any authority figure loyal to Vidal) with news of their sire's planned activities, if they can prove that they made what efforts they could to stop the crimes, or if they are willing to aid the Prince in arranging the capture of their sires, Vidal may declare them released and preside over the ritual described above. Vidal does not particularly expect the childer to be all that effective in their efforts; they are, after all, barely neonates. Rather, it is a test of resolve and loyalty, as well as a determination of whether the young Kindred may prove useful if allowed to survive.

This offers Storytellers a wonderful means of beginning a chronicle. An entire coterie of neonates, ignorant of the city and still not even officially released from their sires' tutelage, must decide if they should support the conspiracy in which the elder vampires are engaged, or attempt to stop or expose it. And if they choose the latter, how can they go about doing so without being discovered by their sires, or making enemies of the many Kindred they are likely to interact with in the process?

The Third Tradition: Amaranth

Officially, Vidal's word on the matter of diablerie—or on slaying another Kindred in any fashion—is firm and inviolate. Kin-slaying is punishable by Final Death, pure and simple.

As is always the case with the Kindred, the truth is a bit more complex than that. Vidal has made it very clear to certain circles of his followers that any attacks on vodouisant Kindred or followers of Antoine Savoy will not be investigated too closely, so long as they are subtle and non-disruptive to Vidal's own rule. This doesn't mean the Prince will turn a total blind eye, as he cannot allow himself to be seen as either inconstant or weak. Should the perpetrators prove careless, allowing themselves to be identified or caught, their punishment will be no less than anyone else's. Still, the notion that Vidal will not make too concerted an effort to root them out has encouraged Kindred with a predatory mindset to attack followers of Savoy and Cimitiere—precisely as Vidal intended.

The above applies only to the killing of certain Kindred, however. Vidal steadfastly refuses to permit diablerie in any form, and anyone found guilty of that crime will suffer Final

Death, no matter who she may have destroyed in the process. This is partly due to Vidal's religious beliefs regarding the soul but also to cover up his own act of diablerie during the ritual he performed with Cimitiere.

On the rare occasions that Vidal calls a citywide blood hunt, he does so by summoning all available Kindred to court and then performing Last Rites *in absentia* over the subject of the hunt. The message is, to put it bluntly, unmistakable.

Deference and Presentation

Unsurprisingly, Vidal and his policies are strict indeed on these particular customs. Vidal expects lesser Kindred to acknowledge his station, and the station of other high-ranking inhabitants of the city. This is both a religious and feudal divide so far as Vidal is concerned, and failure to follow it can lead to both a breakdown of government and an eruption of violence as the Beasts of New Orleans war for dominance. Failure to show proper deference isn't a crime per se, but it is grounds for substantial social snubbing and even political reprisal. At gatherings with both Vidal and Savoy present, the Prince has even been known to berate younger Kindred for not showing proper respect to the French Quarter lord. The dictates of etiquette are too important—especially given the instinctive Kindred reaction to other Kindred—to be ignored under any circumstances.

Vidal also demands strict adherence to the custom of presentation. Officially, any newcomer even passing through New Orleans is required to appear before the Prince and request permission to stay or to feed. On a practical level, however, Kindred staying less than a few nights are somewhat exempt from this rule, if only because not even Vidal and his people can possibly discover and keep track of them all. Anyone who remains long enough to be discovered by the Kindred community at large, however, had better present herself at the earliest available opportunity—and ignorance of the custom or of how to locate the court is not an excuse. (And God help the newcomer who, through accident or ignorance, presents himself first to Antoine Savoy or Baron Cimitiere. Given Vidal's recent crackdown on anyone allying with either of those factions, seeing them before seeing the Prince is, in and of itself, usually grounds for significant penance.)

Unlike many of his other rituals, Vidal does not have an elaborate religious ceremony for welcoming someone to his domain. He simply demands that the newcomer take a brief oath of obedience to Vidal and his laws in the name of God, Christ and Longinus—and no, religious objections are not sufficient to avoid taking the oath. Once that's done, one of the lesser court functionaries offers the new arrival a brief overview of said laws and sends the new arrival on her way.

Other Local Customs

While the preceding description represents the primary Kindred Traditions and customs, Vidal and New

Orleans have their own customs as well, laws that do not stem directly from the Traditions but are nonetheless an integral part of the city's identity.

Church and State

As a devout Catholic and a devoted member of the Lancea Sanctum, Vidal rules his domain very much like a Catholic diocese. True, he refuses to take the title of Bishop, but he—and many of his fellows among the Sanctified—still consider themselves religious leaders. This is particularly clear in his expectation that Regents will not merely keep the peace in their territories but also see to the spiritual needs of the Kindred who dwell there.

As implied above, nearly all court functions in New Orleans have at least a small element of religion to them. At their simplest, they involve oaths of loyalty sworn before God. Many others borrow entire aspects of Catholic practice, from the christening of new childer to the Communion—which involves drinking the blood of a mortal priest—at important court functions. Opening and closing prayers are common, and Vidal and his fellow Sanctified actually hold Mass for certain religious holidays throughout the year. All Kindred involved in these affairs are expected to participate, regardless of whether or not they believe in the same doctrines as Vidal himself.

The court's religious leanings enter all aspects of the Requiem for Kindred dwelling in New Orleans. Newcomers who are members of the Lancea Sanctum or appear to be devout Catholics are much more likely to receive permission to remain in the city than those who follow other faiths. Similarly, such Catholic Kindred receive domain rights and permission to sire a childe with substantially more frequency. By the same token, those who show a particular leaning toward vodoun or the various pagan faiths find themselves subtly (or, in some cases, not so subtly) persecuted. Many are forbidden entry into New Orleans outright, and in the past several decades, no Kindred of a non-Abrahamic faith has been granted Regency or permission to sire. (Some have done it anyway, with varying—but usually unfortunate—results.) Vidal maintains that this practice is in keeping with religious doctrine, but few Kindred are blind to the fact that this allows him to build up his own following while preventing Savoy and Cimitiere from doing the same.

Confession

Note: *The local setting trappings of confession in New Orleans differ from those presented in the Lancea Sanctum sourcebook. Storytellers who wish to use them as presented in that book are encouraged to do so freely. The details presented here exist both to show the localized differences between chapters of the Sanctified and to allow use of this setting by troupes without access to the Lancea Sanctum book.*

Perhaps one of the strangest carryovers of Vidal's mortal faith, and one of the most useful yet potentially dangerous

to his Kindred followers, is the practice of confession. Vidal makes himself, and others of the Lancea Sanctum in New Orleans, available to take the confessions of other Kindred, just as mortal priests hear the confessions of their own congregation.

Obviously, in most circumstances, the notion of a vampire voluntarily confessing his transgressions to another—particularly one in a position of authority—is ludicrous. Vidal, however, has dangled a fairly enticing carrot before them. Kindred who make regular confessions, so long as they are honest and detailed, often receive forgiveness for their crimes, rather than punishment.

The risk they take, of course, is that the Kindred have no way of knowing which crimes can be forgiven, and which are serious enough that an admission, even within the bounds of the confessional, will lead to punishment. The line of demarcation varies, depending on whether Vidal or one of his followers is hearing the confession, on what sort of mood the Kindred is in, on whether the crime has had any repercussions for Vidal's rule, and so forth. For the most part, Kindred who take advantage of confession will admit to minor transgressions—feeding in someone else's territory, participating in a “non-approved” religious ritual, conspiring to take another Kindred's influence, that sort of thing—and will leave out more serious crimes such as diablerie or cooperation with Savoy or Cimitiere. Siring a childe without permission, meeting with one of Vidal's rivals but not allying with him, and slaying but not diablerizing a vampire who is not one of the Prince's followers, all these acts constitute a gray area that may or may not result in forgiveness.

Adding to the worry is the fact that Vidal expects those who confess to do so consistently. If a Kindred offers confession for one transgression and then fails to confess another that Vidal later finds out about, the Prince is likely to punish the criminal all the harder. So the Kindred of New Orleans must weigh the risks and benefits of admitting their sins to their “priests,” fully aware that either course might lead to a worsening of their situation.



CITY OF VIRTUE, CITY OF VICE

The strange dual nature of the Big Easy, deep spirituality clashing with widespread debauchery, certainly manifests itself in the actions of its Kindred leaders and the laws of their domain. This is not, however, the only way in which New Orleans' dichotomy affects the Kindred; in some regions, the city itself seems to lean more in one direction or the other.

In places of worship scattered throughout New Orleans, from corner churches to private *hounfours*, years of heartfelt religious practice have permeated the very stones. Just as the Kindred sometimes flinch away from true believers armed with religious symbols, so do they find it difficult, if not impossible, to enter these places



of faith. Any vampire who wishes to do so must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll. If he fails, he cannot enter the location at all. Success allows entry, but the Kindred cannot utterly ignore the effects of the faith within. Depending on the strength of the ambient faith, as determined by the Storyteller, the Kindred may suffer a dice-pool penalty of anywhere from 1 to 5 on *any and all rolls* he makes while present. Furthermore, he is constantly distracted and uncomfortable, weighed down by a sense that he truly does not belong.

Similarly, some locations in New Orleans have gone the other way, succumbing to a spiritual rot that makes mortals vaguely uncomfortable and actually attracts the Kindred. These places are most frequently places of faith that have since been corrupted to more sinful purposes and might include an apartment that once housed a *houngfours* but is now the home of a drug dealer, a church-turned-casino or a once-sanctified cemetery now used as a gang hideout or the site of Satanic rites. In these instances, the Kindred feel quite comfortable here. They gain a +1 dice-pool bonus to all rolls *except* those to resist frenzy or degeneration; these rolls are instead penalized by 1 dice, as the Kindred feel closer to their bestial natures.

In both instances, faith and corruption, no pattern exists for determining why some areas develop these auras and some don't. Most religious sites in New Orleans do not have this trait. Such locations are rare enough that even Kindred who dwell in the city for decades rarely run into more than a handful of them. Furthermore, the effects fade or even move, so a Cathedral that wards off the Kindred tonight may be perfectly approachable tomorrow. Whether this is entirely random or perhaps has some bearing on the ever-shifting faith of the nearby mortal community, is unclear.



Pariah's

Clearly, Prince Vidal prefers to allow only those who share his beliefs to thrive within his city. Although his persecution of those who follow different faiths than his own is subtle and indirect, his policies are substantially more hostile to members of specific Kindred families and factions. Specifically, Vidal takes issue—sometimes to a lesser extent, sometimes greater—with three specific demographics.

Nosferatu

Vidal's dislike for this most inhuman of clans is not nearly as strong as it once was. At one time, the Prince refused to allow the Nosferatu even to participate in his court. Obviously, this is no longer the case. Miss Opal, a Nosferatu, sits on the Primogen, and the Haunt called Sundown interacts with every one of the city's major players. Vidal has clearly come to accept the clan as a part of New Orleans.

However, Vidal has not completely lost his antipathy for the clan, nor are they treated as equals in his city. This is most likely due to Baron Cimitiere. The fact that one of Vidal's two most-hated rivals is a Nosferatu plays upon the Prince's old



hatreds. Further, Vidal worries that the charismatic *houngan* could unite the Nosferatu under him, as he has so many of the disenfranchised among the mortal communities. And on top of *that*, he finds Miss Opal one of the most aggravating of his advisors, due to her support of the Carthian cause; he doesn't wish her to expand her power base either.

Thus, while Vidal does not overtly act against the Nosferatu and does not automatically refuse them the right to dwell and feed in New Orleans, he is *very* selective about how much freedom he allows them. A Nosferatu newcomer to the city is more likely to find his request to stay refused, based on all manner of possible excuses, than would a Ventrue or Daeva under similar circumstances. Similarly, much like the racism that pervades much of mortal society, a Nosferatu accused of violating the Traditions is far more likely to be found guilty, and his punishment may be more severe. The Nosferatu are aware of this pervasive discrimination, but find they can do precious little about it. Indeed, among many Nosferatu it has become an ironic mark of honor, a sign that Vidal fears them more than he's capable of dealing with objectively.

Many of the other Kindred of New Orleans have picked up on this. Of all the newcomers and young neonates of the Big Easy, Nosferatu without powerful patrons find themselves ostracized by other Kindred with greater frequency than most other clans. Of course, this situation practically begs for a particularly motivated coterie of Nosferatu to exploit it.

The Circle of the Crone

Whereas Vidal's bias against the Nosferatu and the Ordo Dracul is somewhat discreet, there's nothing even remotely subtle about his dislike of the Circle of the Crone. Vidal is a devout Catholic, he's a devoted member of the Lancea Sanctum, and one of his two worst enemies practices a vodoun-oriented form of Crúac sorcery. Any one of these facts would be sufficient reason for him to despise the Acolytes; considering all three, it's a wonder his actions against them are as restrained as they are.

The laws of the court forbid the practice of Acolyte religious rituals and assembly by Circle members for political purposes. Many see it as splitting hairs, but Vidal does not forbid Acolytes to assemble for religious rites that do not tie directly into traditional Circle beliefs; it is this loophole that allows Cimitiere and other Acolytes to gather for vodoun ceremonies. Vidal knows that to take that last step and attempt to forbid the local Kindred from participating in vodoun would both drive the few vodouisant Kindred not already loyal to Cimitiere over to the Baron's camp and would force a confrontation between Prince and Priest that neither is yet ready for.

These nights, Vidal refuses to grant permission for any Acolyte not already dwelling in New Orleans to remain in the city for any length of time, and he demands knowledge of all new arrivals' covenant affiliation as part of their presentation. Similarly, those who already dwell

here can forget about siring childer or becoming Regents. Vidal would sooner grant an official court position to a Nosferatu member of the Ordo Dracul than he would grant territory to an Acolyte. The Prince has even been known to have his Lancea Sanctum Priests spiritually cleanse any location or territory used by the Circle of the Crone before granting it to another vampire.

The Ordo Dracul

The Ordo Dracul certainly doesn't have it nearly as bad in New Orleans as the Circle of the Crone does. This is, undoubtedly, due to three distinct facts. The Ordo Dracul isn't innately tied into religions that most Catholics—such as Vidal—view as pagan. The Ordo Dracul does not claim among their numbers one of Vidal's greatest rivals. And the Ordo Dracul presence in New Orleans is so small that most local Kindred don't even know they're here.

All that being said, the Dragons do not stand particularly high in Vidal's estimation. They practice a form of sorcery substantially different from Theban Sorcery, and this marks them as witches in the eyes of the Lancea Sanctum. Vidal dislikes the Dragons' focus on overcoming the Kindred condition, something that he believes was mandated by God. Finally, he is certainly aware that Lidia Kendall, Cimitiere's right hand, is a Dragon. Vidal does not make any particular point of persecuting the Ordo Dracul, but neither does he make a habit of granting them permission to enter his city or offering them domains or titles if already present.



THE SHATTERED MIRROR

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a small group of Kindred—hardly larger than an extended coterie—appeared on the New Orleans political scene. Made up of ancillae who had some degree of influence but nothing in the way of true power in the city, they went by the rather overly dramatic name of the Magic Mirror. Their stated goal, quite simply, was to ensure the equality of all clans and all covenants under Vidal's reign or else to see that reign ended.

One can imagine how well that turned out. Prince Vidal didn't even have to move against them; the other Kindred on whose influence and territories the Magic Mirror infringed did the job for him. In 1968, the group claimed over half a dozen members. In 1973, it had two. The Mirror had, indeed, been shattered.

It should be noted that the coterie's stated purpose was not entirely altruistic. A great many of the Mirror's members were either Nosferatu or Acolytes (or both). Those who were not members of the Circle were Carthians, and they were egged on by several of the local Nosferatu who had become prominent in the clan during the years of Miss Opal's torpor.

This would be utterly irrelevant to the Kindred of tonight, were it not for a few events that have

taken place within the past few years. On three separate occasions, when Vidal moved against a Nosferatu or Acolyte lawbreaker, acts of terror have followed the punishment of the criminal in question. In two instances, mortal pawns of important Kindred—one belonging to “Gutterball” Elgin (Master of Elysium), the other to Gabriel Hurst (one of the Primogen)—were slain. In a third, the haven of a young ancillae whose information had led Vidal to the lawbreaker burned to the ground. In all three instances, a shard of a broken mirror, with the phrase “Freedom for all, or safety for none” scrawled across the backing, was left at the scene. All of the city’s Kindred so far questioned on the matter have denied any knowledge. Vidal is all but convinced that the perpetrators are either zealous Carthians or agents of Savoy attempting to agitate without taking the blame. To date, however, he and the Sheriff have had insufficient time to track them down.



The Night of Unfettered Dreams

Vidal may be strict, religiously fanatic and iron-fisted when it comes to his dictates, but he’s not stupid. He knows that he reigns over a population of ever-hungry, instinct-driven predators, and that no vampire can keep the Beast fully leashed all the time. Furthermore, they dwell in a city that plays host to all manner of debaucheries, from the gambling and drinking and gang violence that occurs on a nightly basis to the yearly Carnival, where all manner of inhibitions are left at the city limits. The Kindred, who always seem to echo the mortals around them, could hardly be expected to experience all this without some of it rubbing off on them.

Vidal, therefore, allows an outlet, in the belief that letting off steam now and again will allow the Kindred of New Orleans to better maintain control on other nights. On two nights a year, once toward the end of Mardi Gras and once on New Year’s Eve, Vidal relaxes the restrictions that rein in his undead subjects. The three Traditions still hold, and violators of those traditions can still expect to be punished severely and finally. But all other laws of the domain are relaxed, if not ignored outright. For one night, the Kindred can feed where and when they will, associate with anyone they like, practice whatever pagan rites they feel the need to indulge in. Vidal himself tends to go into seclusion on these two nights, unwilling to observe the effects of lawlessness even as he recognizes the psychological need for it. The violent-crime rate in New Orleans spikes on these two nights, for fairly obvious reasons.

The night following a Night of Unfettered Dreams sees a swift return to the status quo, and Kindred who allow their desires to get the better of them and try to continue the party for a second night swiftly find that, while it may be a new year for the mortals or Mardi Gras may still be going on around them, Prince Vidal offers

no more leeway than he does on any other night. In fact, the Sheriff and Vidal’s other enforcers have orders to be particularly strict immediately following the Night of Unfettered Dreams, to be certain that the Kindred understand that it was a one-night-only deal.

Crime and Punishment

The Kindred citizens of New Orleans, like all Kindred, scheme to advance their own agendas, and many consider the laws of the domain nothing more than inconveniences, speed bumps to be ignored.

Those who dwell under Vidal’s rule swiftly learn better. The Prince has a truly draconian sense of justice, a mix of the Old Testament and Machiavelli. Vidal not only believes strongly in an eye for an eye, but he dislikes having to repeat a lesson.

Although the distinction is informal rather than rigid, Vidal and his court generally divide Kindred offenses in the domain into three separate categories.

Minor Infractions

Crimes such as poaching another’s territory, dealing with Vidal’s rivals, refusing to participate in mandatory court functions or religious ceremonies, failing to present one’s self to the Prince after several nights in the city, or moving against the interests and pawns of important Kindred (and similar violations) are considered minor infractions of the city’s laws. Penalties are commensurate with the crime and may involve simple reparations, loss of domain or title, public chastisement, physical mutilation severe enough to take nights or weeks to heal, and, on occasion, even partial Vinculums. Repeated offenses draw more severe penalties and may eventually result in banishment from New Orleans. More and more often of late, Vidal frequently has been allowing his Sheriff Donovan to bestow these lesser sentences, rather than involving himself in “minor” issues.

Civil Infractions

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Vidal draws a distinction when it comes to major criminal acts in his domain—civil and religious. Civil infractions include conspiring (rather than just dealing) with Savoy or Cimitiere, deliberately avoiding presentation or otherwise attempting to hide from Vidal’s notice for great periods of time, violating the laws of Elysium, inflicting the Vinculum on an unwilling Kindred without legal cause, destruction of a vampire’s haven or killing another vampire’s ghoul.

Vidal takes these matters extremely seriously. On very rare occasions, a perpetrator might get off easy, with nothing more than a complete Vinculum and loss of substantial influence, but Vidal is this merciful only when the lawbreaker is someone extremely useful to have

around, or when he would make powerful political enemies by handing down more severe penalties.

Under most circumstances, the perpetrator is either banished from New Orleans or, if the crime was particularly heinous or the result of repeat offenses, executed. Vidal hails from a time when hanging was considered the most dishonorable of deaths, reserved for lowly criminals, and he maintains that practice tonight. Obviously, hanging does not destroy the Kindred in and of itself, but Vidal has the condemned hanged either outside or in a chamber with eastern exposure, and he does so mere seconds before the rising dawn. This combines the dishonor of the gallows with the Final Death of sunlight, a combination Vidal finds eminently acceptable and everyone else finds rather disturbing.

Religious Infractions

Vidal considers these far more serious even than civil crimes. Because he believes the Traditions were handed down by Longinus—and thus, indirectly, from God—he considers breaking those Traditions tantamount to sinning against God himself. Open violations of the Masquerade, siring a childe without Vidal's express permission, abandoning a childe who has not been formally released, killing another vampire in any circumstances other than a legally declared blood hunt or last-ditch self-defense, or committing diablerie under any circumstances are all religious infractions. Vidal also considers defacing a church or practicing witchcraft to be religious violations, but he has not, to date, been able to enforce this interpretation with any regularity.

The Prince of New Orleans reserves only one punishment for those who flout the laws of the divine, and it's the same traditional penalty that has existed for centuries: Burning at the stake. True, in the modern era it may not involve a wooden post and a pile of kindling, but all Kindred who dwell in New Orleans soon learn that to earn Vidal's true displeasure means consignment to the fire in one form or another.

THE BLOOD HUNT

As do some other Princes, Vidal considers participation in a blood hunt to be absolutely mandatory. He does not call hunts lightly, but when he does so, it is because the target (at least in his view) is a dangerous criminal. Vidal sees no difference between refusing to participate in a hunt and actively aiding the lawbreaker in escaping its tightening grasp.

This doesn't mean, of course, that every Kindred in the city must be on the street with fangs bared and weapons drawn. In fact, Vidal demands that his hunters be as subtle as possible; engaging in a blood hunt is not considered justification for violating the Masquerade. He prefers that most of the Kindred simply seek out the troublemaker, perhaps attempting to anticipate his moves if they

know him personally, and report his location once discovered. They are to make use of any mortal contacts they have—particularly, but not exclusively, those in law enforcement, travel and transportation, and the criminal underground—to aid in the search, so long as they can do so without revealing the true nature of the prey. The blood hunt allows other Kindred the right to slay the transgressor, but Vidal would rather they leave that to his own people where possible.

If Vidal knows in advance that he will soon be calling a hunt, he has been known to use his influence to arrange a parade or some other sort of widespread demonstration for the night of the hunt. (He is particularly fond of calling blood hunts during Mardi Gras, though obviously the opportunity to do so arises only occasionally.) This allows the hunters a bit more freedom of activity, as strange events and street violence are far from uncommon during such affairs in the Big Easy.

The Crescent City

The domain of Augusto Vidal is not restricted to the city of New Orleans proper. Indeed, Vidal claims praxis over almost 200 square miles of land, spread across two different parishes (traditional districts of Louisiana): Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish, with the majority of his domain resting inside in the former. The line between the two districts is the suburb of Metairie to the west, and the midway point between the communities of Gretna and Algiers to the south, with the intervening Mississippi River being evenly divided between the two parishes.

Each vampire who intends to reside in Vidal's domain for any length of time must acquire feeding rights. Once assigned, any Kindred caught feeding in another vampire's domain (a crime known as "poaching") is subject to the Prince's censure. The issue of feeding rights is in itself a complicated political dance, as some areas are considered "choice" among the Damned, especially by way of comparison. What follows is a look at the major sub-districts under Vidal's sway.

Central Business District

The Central Business District (the CBD) is the hub of the American commercial sector, established after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Once the Americans had taken over officially, a flood of northern immigrants arrived to turn New Orleans into a bustling port. Over time, the American sector (originally called Faubourg St. Mary) attracted all the important banks, offices, and government buildings, becoming the nexus of commerce in the city.

Officially, the CBD is the territory east of Claiborne Avenue to the river, bordered by Canal Street to the north, and the Ponchartrain Expressway to the south. Toward the lake is a host of modern buildings, built on an old African American neighborhood called "Back o' Town." (This was the location of Black Storyville, an extension of the seamiest red-

light district of the day.) Tonight, it is the location of such important sites as City Hall and the Louisiana Superdome.

As important as it is, the entire CBD couldn't possibly be the personal domain of a single vampire, but Vidal's grip on the district certainly comes close. He allows all Kindred to move through it freely, and even grants them feeding rights here, but is otherwise stingy with how and when other vampires interact with the area. Contrary to popular belief, Vidal has a haven here—inside an office building on Lafayette known as Perdido House (see sidebar). Both he and his Seneschal are known to have free rein in the area when it comes to feeding, but prefer to make their more permanent havens in more hospitable environs elsewhere.

PERDIDO HOUSE

Any Kindred who has been a resident of New Orleans for any length of time has probably heard of Perdido House. The name is actually a minor misnomer, for the building is truly no house, but a 20-story office building on Lafayette Street in the middle of the downtown core. Those who know of Perdido House at all know that it (and everyone within it) is the sole purview of Prince Augusto Vidal. Most know that Vidal uses it to maintain a web of offices that house the affairs of his domain and, that on the rare occasions when one is summoned to meet with the Prince, one is typically summoned to Perdido House.

What nobody outside Vidal's innermost circle knows, however, is that his web of offices is mobile, and only Vidal himself knows from where he and his entourage will operate on any given night. Vidal actually owns the building and has set up a system whereby his mobile court can shift its operation from one floor to another in a matter of minutes. Security in the building is top-flight, with provisions allowing Vidal to secure a given floor (even from sunlight and fire), regardless of what might be transpiring only a floor away on either side. And should those measures fail, a firehouse—the only building on the block that Vidal does not own, directly or otherwise—is right next door. Vidal's Seneschal keeps careful records of who is admitted where and when and has committed to memory the floors on which the offices were present when a given Kindred was admitted. Vidal prefers that each vampire in his domain see only one floor of his sanctum; thus, if Vidal's offices are on the 12th floor the first time one meets him, then one will probably never encounter him on any other floor.

Over time, and especially of late, Perdido House has come to be the very symbol of both Vidal's power and his ire. It is the only place Vidal feels comfortable doing just about anything, so he often uses the building when he wishes to host important Kindred functions or Sanctified rites. These occasions invariably include the rare public execution of a Kindred criminal, and many have come to associate Perdido House (perhaps rightly so) with fear and foreboding.

The Warehouse District

This vital little area began as a pocket of the greater Central Business District, but gradually took on a life of its own. Before the 1970s, the zone was accurately named, having consisted primarily of warehouses (many of which were abandoned). The completion of the Contemporary Arts Center, however, inaugurated a renaissance which resulted in Julia Street—from Canal Street to Convention Center Boulevard—becoming the “Gallery Row” of the Big Easy. The improvement of the area began in earnest after the 1984 World's Fair, when developers began transforming the empty warehouses into condominiums.

Vidal keeps the district under a fairly strict watch for a number of different reasons, not the least of which is his own personal interest in the area. While Vidal is willing to grudgingly accept sharing influence over the rest of the CBD (he knows that feeding rights do not immediately equate to “influence”), he monitors very carefully those who seek to muscle in on the Warehouse District, regardless of their intention. Therefore, he is a great deal more circumspect in assigning feeding rights to the area; so much so that anyone who receives such an honor from him (especially lately) has clearly and truly earned the Prince's favor.

Faubourg Marigny

Just across Esplanade Avenue from the French Quarter sits the city's most unusually titled district. Faubourg Marigny gets its name from Bernard Xavier Philippe de Marigny de Mandeville, a Creole plantation owner whose personality was so colorful that it left an indelible impression on the residents of the city he loved with such passion. De Marigny's primary claim to fame was having brought a dice game called “Hazard” to New Orleans. In the course of teaching it to the local Creoles, the game gradually became known in local parlance as “Craps.”

Unfortunately, de Marigny wasn't quite as good at his own game as he would have liked, and financial troubles eventually forced him to subdivide his vast estate, thereby creating a public development known as Faubourg Marigny. In keeping with his colorful personality, he gave the district such street names as “Poets,” “Music,” “Love” and, of course, “Craps Street” (which was changed to “Burgundy” after the third church in a row was constructed on it; rumor has it that Vidal and company were unwilling to let such a pious road remain named “Rue de Craps”).

After its colorful Creole origins, the district grew into a vibrant Bohemian scene. Tonight, it is known as the local entertainment (as well as gay and lesbian) hub, and some of the hottest music and dancing clubs line Frenchmen Street. One of the reasons for the area's development is the Nosferatu entrepreneur known as Sundown, who has been pouring resources into the district for decades. As a result, nobody is allowed to feed on Frenchmen Street (or the surrounding blocks) without his say-so, and currying his favor has become a local pastime.

Bywater

The district of Bywater, so named because it's "by the water," sits nestled against the Mississippi on the eastern edge of the downtown core. Bywater is bordered by Faubourg Marigny to the west and the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal to the east (which becomes the Intracoastal Waterway a couple miles further north). As rents on and around Frenchmen Street rise, poorer folks have been moving down to Faubourg Marigny's up-and-coming neighbor. There isn't much of interest in Bywater, but it's an increasingly safe place to dwell, and some prime feeding rights can still be had in a few of the areas further out.

Perhaps the area's greatest claim to fame, at least among the Damned, is its most well-known resident. For many years, Bywater has been home to Vidal's Master of Elysium, Gus "Gutterball" Elgin. The quiet Nosferatu has dwelt here, somewhere along the river, for as long as many can remember. Perhaps ironically, he originally came to the area because he valued both privacy and peace of mind, and Bywater was only sparsely populated back then. With its recent growth, Elgin has had to make a number of commensurate sacrifices for the city, but if he has any axe to grind about them, he's kept it entirely to himself.

The French Quarter

The Vieux Carré ("Old Quarter") is much more than just the country's most extensive district of historic

architecture—and Antoine Savoy knows it. The French Quarter is widely regarded as the city's cultural and geographic nexus. While it is small—only six blocks by 13 blocks in a grid pattern—the Quarter is densely packed with shops, bars, restaurants, hotels and other sites of interest. Still, the majority of those who work in the Quarter don't live there, and the actual population of the district numbers only 10,000 people or so. However, vampiric domains are usually granted based on physical territory, and the lord of any domain is not restricted to feeding on *residents* of that domain. Thus, Savoy (and those whom he gives leave to feed) has his pick of thousands more every single night.

In the late 1920s, Savoy began pushing hard for the area to gain some measure of autonomy, and by 1937 the district had acquired "historic district" status. The primary effect of this distinction was the architectural restrictions it imposed upon would-be land developers (or their Kindred patrons). The only stain on Savoy's otherwise perfect record for keeping Vidal and others out of the Quarter is a strip of area in what is known as the "upper Quarter." Orleans Avenue divides the district into two roughly even sub-quarters, and over time, one or more parties managed to lessen the restrictions on the upper, more touristy half of the Quarter. The entire district is still Savoy's purview, but the increasing number of high-rise hotels and chain shops appearing in the upper Quarter is slowly reducing the area's inherent charm (and thus its appeal).



FIELDS OF LIFE AND DEATH

While every piece of dry ground within Vidal's domain is subject to his laws, two specific types of locale—parks and cemeteries—stand apart from other areas of the Big Easy in several important ways. First, in keeping with tradition, Vidal has decreed that burial sites may never be the personal domain of any vampire. The Damned may frequent the city's necropoli to their dead hearts' content, but no Kindred has ever held "feeding rights" to any graveyard. Furthermore, any vampire caught defacing or otherwise blaspheming the final resting place of a Christian will be dealt with as though he had committed a religious infraction. (Vidal is often quoted with the mantra, "God has ordained the Damned to prey upon the living, not the dead.")

Vidal has also applied a similar type of discretionary exclusion to city parks: No vampire has "rights" to any public patch of greenery in his domain. Vampires are welcome to feed there, but the responsibility of maintaining the Masquerade (and of resolving any disputes that arise from two Kindred dealing with the Predator's Taint in a park) rest solely on the shoulders of the Kindred in question. In the city's early years, before the parks were officially set apart and granted special status by the mortal government, such areas were the unofficial (and in some cases, official) tenurial domains of the local Gangrel. As such, members of that clan still hold a "claim" of sorts—though a largely unofficial one now, borne mostly of respect—to park areas.

The park areas officially "protected" by Vidal's decree include the following:

- Audobon Park (located by the river on the western edge of Uptown)
- Behrman Memorial Park (across the river near the suburb of Algiers)
- City Park (the fifth-largest urban park in the country)
- Coliseum Square (in the Lower Garden District)
- Crestmont Park (in the suburb of Metairie)
- Fair Grounds Race Track (in Esplanade Ridge)
- Jackson Square (in the French Quarter)
- Lafayette Square (in the Central Business District)
- Louis Armstrong Park (just outside the Quarter)
- Pontchartrain Park (just south of the lake that bears its name)
- Privateer Park (a smaller park nestled in the north of Gentilly)
- Washington Square Park (inside Faubourg Marigny)
- Woldenberg Park (in the French Quarter, on the riverside)

What the city is truly known for is its splendid boneyards. New Orleans is home to over 40 cemeteries, each with a slightly different look and feel than the next. The primary cause of this reputation is the fact that the vast majority of graves in Crescent City are aboveground, due to the region's high water table. (Early residents had to first scuttle their coffins to ensure that they would sink, and even then, heavy rains would draw the coffins back up to the surface, often washing their resident cadavers down flooded city streets.)

The final resting places of loved ones are as varied as the interred themselves, but a handful of tomb styles prevail. Family tombs, the cemetery version of two-story single family homes, are the most common. They are privately-owned and usually house the remains of more than one generation of their owners. The wall vaults that surround many cemeteries are often called "ovens," due to the fact that they are known to get hot enough to slowly incinerate the bodies held within during summer months. (After a year and a day, these vaults are often opened so that newly deceased can be placed within.) The last and grandest common style of burial chamber is the "society" tomb. These were begun by benevolent associations who wanted to ensure proper burial for members of a particular community; many were dedicated to 19th-century religious groups who had to pool funds to see to their dead. The larger society tombs have upwards of 20 or more vaults, which are reused over time (thus leading to some large populations).

Among the larger or more impressive of the city's many cemeteries are St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 (just outside the Quarter), Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 (in the Garden District), Metairie and Greenwood Cemeteries (just west of City Park), St. Roch Cemetery (a few blocks lakeward from Faubourg Marigny) and St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery (located two blocks north of Bywater).

Technically, the only Kindred supposed to be an actual resident of the French Quarter is Savoy himself. While Savoy certainly does keep a haven (or three) in the district, he has also created something of a "communal" haven in the Quarter. This building, a two-story Toulouse Street townhouse festooned with cast-iron filigrees, serves as both meeting place and emergency haven for Savoy's inner circle, including Natasha Preston and Reynaldo Gui, whenever they are around, which is most nights. Savoy has also extended feeding rights to his Seneschal.

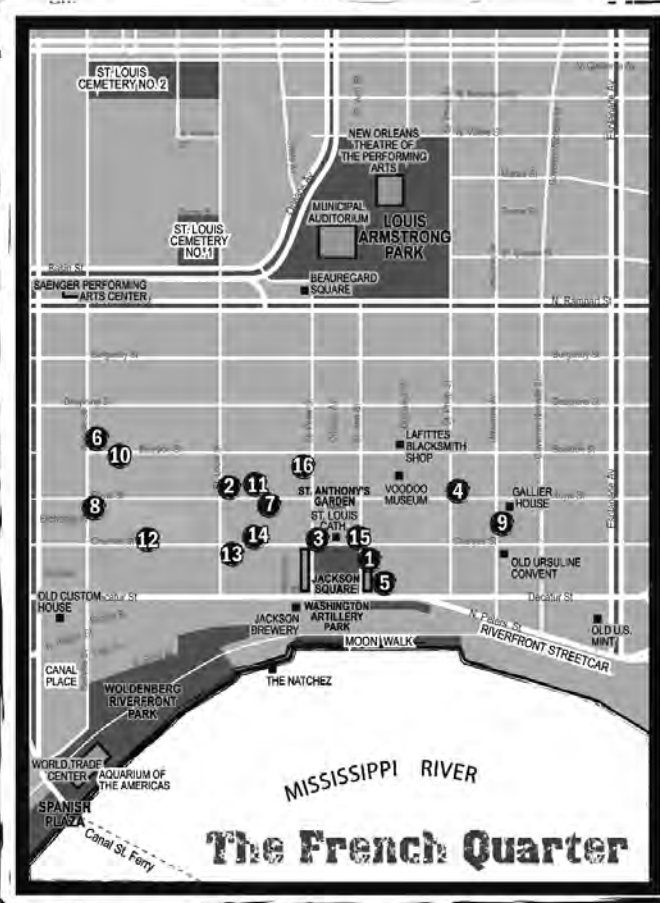
Jackson Square

At the heart of the French Quarter sits one of the most colorful and enduring public spaces in the country. Jackson Square sits at the center of a green park, flanked by the two Pontalba buildings and the beautiful Cabildo and Presbytère structures on either side of St. Louis Cathedral, the square's centerpiece. All around the square, one sees a display of life's rich pageant: Musicians, painters, mimes and tarot/palm-readers vie for the attentions (and donations) of local and tourists alike about the banquette.



Places of Interest

1. 1850 House
2. Antoine's
3. Cabildo
4. Cornstalk Hotel
5. French Market
6. Galatoire's
7. Historic New Orleans Collection
8. Hotel Monteleone
9. Hotel Villa Convento
10. Jean Lafitte's Old Absinthe House
11. LeMennier Mansion
12. Maspero's Exchange
13. Napoleon House
14. Omni Royal Orleans
15. Presbytere
16. Preservation Hall



The square was part of the original plan laid out in 1722 by Adrian de Pauger, but it began its storied existence as a military parade ground called le Place d'Armes. Madame Pontalba (a wealthy early patron of the city) transformed the muddy grounds of the square into beautiful gardens and renamed the square in honor of Andrew Jackson, who had led the American forces in the Battle of New Orleans. In the middle of the park stands his equestrian statue, unveiled in 1856. Its inscription—"The Union Must and Shall be Preserved"—was an added (and locally unwelcome) sentiment by General Butler, the Yankee commander of the occupying force in 1862. According to rumor, Butler's afterthought was spurred on by one of Vidal's agents, whose master wanted to remind the lady Pascual that, elder Primogen or no, she was not the Prince of New Orleans. The story could be apocryphal, of course, given the relations between Vidal and Pascual's heir, but it's always good for a recounting at Elysium.

Lower Garden District

At one time, the Lower Garden District of New Orleans was one of the most elegant suburbs in the nation. Its many tree-lined thoroughfares were home to a cohesive, classically-styled faubourg designed as a Greek-style revival. Where the streets in Faubourg Marigny reflect their district's patron's quirkiness, so too do the streets in the Lower Garden District reflect the personality of their designer. In keeping with the Greek motif, the streets in this area honor Greek gods, nymphs and muses. The early cast-iron craze struck the residents of this district perhaps the hardest, and just about every attractive home in the area was adorned and/or fenced with ornate metallic designs, lending the district an overall aura of grace.

The Lower Garden District, together with its slightly more modernized sibling to the south, is often referred to by neonates as "Elderville." This is due in part to the fact that multiple elders maintain both havens and feeding grounds here and partly to the fact the area's most high-profile resident, Pearl Chastain, is infamous for her protectiveness of the district. She has been a resident of New Orleans for longer than just about anyone else, and has clearly spent much of that time making sure that if she is to have neighbors, she decides who they'll be. The one neighbor she seems to appreciate most is her fellow elder, Philip Maldonato, who has not only maintained a haven here for well over a century, but has also gotten personally involved in the welfare and preservation of the district. Ever the gentleman, Maldonato has always bowed to Chastain's love of the area, and rarely makes a substantive move regarding the district without first consulting her.

St. Charles' Guest House

One of the most curious sites in the Lower Garden District is a large, antiquated-looking manse located near the riverward end of Terpsichore Street. The building is now known as St. Charles' Guest House, but the original sign that hung from its cast-iron gallery read: "St. Charles' Infant

Asylum." The three-story structure was built with the assistance of soldiers after the city fell to the Union during the civil war, in the hopes that it would relieve some of the strain put on orphanages that were full-to-teeming with youngsters who had lost their parents to either war or pestilence. And, for a while, it even made good on its promise.

A series of increasingly bizarre events led to a swirl of terrible rumors about the place, and, after a particularly vicious fire gutted its upstairs interior, the manor's charter was abandoned as soon as it be could done responsibly. Come the modern nights, the manor is a tourist attraction cum low-end place of lodging, visited primarily by those with an interest in either history or the occult (or both). The place is run by a tall, severe woman named Fernanda, who has a tendency to treat guests as though they were wayward children. Many believe her demeanor is just an example of a typical New Orleans proprietess making the most of her product and giving customers the most bang for their buck.

In truth, Fernanda is an exceptionally old ghoul and her mannerisms come not from any devotion to salesmanship, but from the fact that she was actually there before the Infant Asylum was devoured by flame. Few Kindred are aware that she is anything other than a simple (if colorful) innkeeper, and those who suspect her of having a Kindred domitor would likely be shocked to learn that she is, in fact, the ghoul of none other than the Seneschal of the city, Philip Maldonato.



SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN

The building now known as St. Charles' Guest House has been a source of concern for the city's guardian angel, Philip Maldonato, for going on a century now. He is perhaps the only vampire in New Orleans who knows the true history of the unassuming manse on Terpsichore Street. It was by his will that St. Charles' Infant Asylum was shut down and, not long after, replaced by the guesthouse that bears its name.

At the time of the fire, the asylum was located in the heart of Maldonato's domain. Indeed, leading up to the fire, he had been watching the mission's progress with some interest. Like many others in his district, he was greatly disturbed by the rumors he'd heard going around. But, like many of the undead, he processed his feelings on the matter slowly, and before he could take any action one way or another, St. Charles' Infant Asylum erupted in flame.

The stories about the manor's haunting surfaced not long after it reopened as a guesthouse. Visitors reported hearing strange things—the rapid-fire patter of bare footfalls in the hall outside the door as they slept, the muffled giggling of high voices coming from inside the closet by the window. Guests even started seeing things, too, after a time. Numerous visitors reported seeing the silhouette of what appeared to be young children, dancing and cavorting in the flickering shadows cast by the upstairs-hall and bedroom candles.

In a very brief time, it got so bad at St. Charles' Guest House that its proprietor was considering



closing down for good and just taking the rather substantial loss. Philip Maldonato, intrigued by the battle of wits the situation presented, finally took the only action left for him to take. Knowing a thing or two about the occult, he surmised that if he put the former headmistress back into the house, her presence might stem the tide of visitations upon guests.

And he was right.

Maldonato then made Fernanda his ghoul and bound her to looking after St. Charles' Guest House for so long as he deemed it necessary. Once the original proprietor died, Maldonato worked it so that the title to the establishment would trickle down through Fernanda's "family," in essence securing it for himself and for her.

The arrangement seemed to worked well enough for decades, but the once-rare public haunting has slowly increased in frequency, and Maldonato has received a number of dread-laden reports from Fernanda of late, in which she pleads with him for guidance in dealing with a house that is growing "awfully restless."



Mid-City

Just northwest of the downtown core is the large, urban sprawl known as Mid-City. A fair percentage of the city's total population is concentrated here, and wheresoever go the kine, so must the Kindred follow. As a result, Mid-City has the dubious distinction of having birthed the relatively recent phenomenon known as the Kindred "krewe." Vidal had grown so efficient about sequestering new arrivals to his domain in Mid-City that they eventually decided to band together of their own accord. These Kindred "gangs" of neonates call themselves "krewes," and have become an important part of the Kindred street scene tonight. At least five such krewes are known to exist, and while a handful of members among them don't actually have feeding rights in Mid-City, that is their base of operations nonetheless. Indeed, getting one's krewemates to let one feed in their territory is one of the only ways a neonate can thumb his nose at the Prince.

This is not to say that only neonates dwell in Mid-City. In fact, it is a matter of some pride for local residents that two of Vidal's Primogen councilors—Coco Duquette and Miss Opal—maintain havens and feeding rights in their district. And not only do they choose to dwell here, but they're proud of it, as well, and do more to help the neonates of their district than many would ever have thought they would care to do. As such, Coco Duquette and Miss Opal are often viewed as the Mid-City Krewes' "big sister" and "big mama" (respectively).

Esplanade Ridge

Like St. Charles Avenue in Uptown, Esplanade Ridge is a long, prettified residential concourse with a "neutral ground" (a New Orleans colloquialism indicating a broad median strip) running down the middle and an oaken

canopy to shade its lovely houses. The ridge itself is a strip of slightly higher ground running from Bayou St. John down to the French Quarter, and early settlers recognized the wisdom of erecting homes on the higher ground it offered as a means of protection against seasonal floods. The small district is home to the Fair Grounds Race Track, which hosts not only the city's horse-racing season, but its annual Jazz & Heritage Festival as well. At festival time, the small district's only vampiric resident, the Gangel elder Nathaniel Blanch, does his best to accommodate the needs of not only the mortal influx but also the Kindred.

Bayou St. John

The very oldest part of the city of New Orleans is a tiny circle of blocks around the curve at the end of the bayou proper. French Canadian settlers lived here even before the city of New Orleans was founded, and well before that, Native Americans used the waterway to reach what is now known as Esplanade Ridge. Iberville and Bienville decided to settle here themselves after learning of the path, and Governor Carondelet would later build a canal that would extend the bayou to the edge of the French Quarter (nearly connecting the Mississippi River and Lake Ponchartrain in the process).

It is common knowledge among those who've been in town for any length of time that no vampire claims Bayou St. John as his tenurial domain. What isn't as widely known is why Prince Vidal refuses to grant such rights to any vampire within his domain. The few who have specifically asked for the domain have been simply denied, with no explanation offered. In truth, Vidal himself isn't even entirely sure why he feels as he does about the area. Upon first arriving in New Orleans, Vidal had occasion to take his rest at the edge of what would become Bayou St. John, and he was plagued with a spate of such horrible nightmares that he was obliged to move out of the area entirely. Ever since then, he has forbidden other Kindred from claiming domain in the area, or even tarrying too long within its borders. Any Kindred caught feeding in Bayou St. John are either ostracized from the city or simply put to death. Vidal's not fooling around here.

Treme District

One of the smallest and oldest districts in the city is also one of the most run-down and nearly derelict come the modern nights. The area is populated almost exclusively by poor African Americans, and many of the "shotgun" houses (so named because one could theoretically fire a bullet from the front through the back) resemble their French Quarter cousins in style, but not quality. Recent efforts to clean up many of the older buildings point to a potential trend toward gentrification, but little headway has been made on that front to date. Technically speaking, only three Kindred dwell in this district in any official capacity—Baron Cimitiere, his childe Josue, and Father John Marrow, Antoine Savoy's unofficial spymaster. However, both of the older vampires have entourages of their own, and they both play host to them here more often than not.



In the 1840s, the area was located outside the city's walls—as its name suggests, Rampart Street was the town limit at the time—and both slaves and free persons of color met in a market here called Congo Square. While the rest of America was forcing people of African descent to repress their own traditional culture, Congo Square was a place where cultural events of every kind were not only permitted but encouraged. (“Better outside the city than in,” was the motto.) Even after the wall came down and the district became an integral part of the city, something in that early tradition spoke to the African American Kindred of New Orleans. While Baron Cimitiere plays “host” at the various gatherings that take place here from time to time, many such parties are open to all Kindred of African descent, regardless of whether or not they are in the Circle of the Crone.

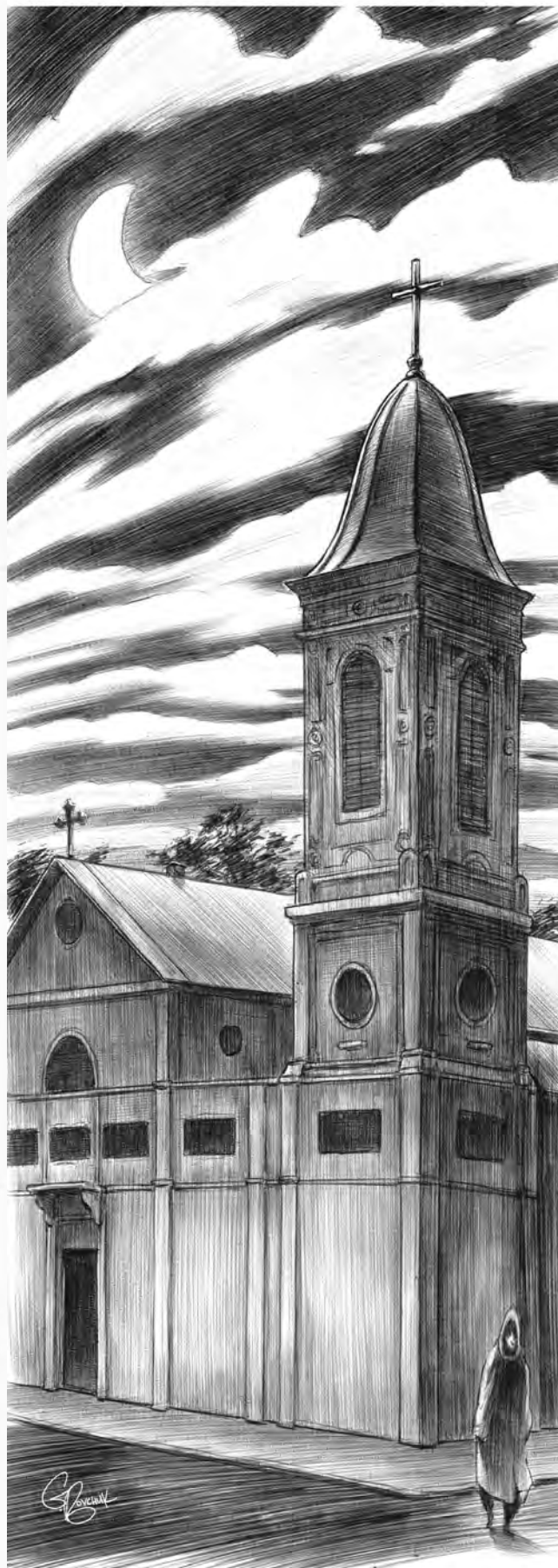
St. Augustine's Church

Designed by celebrated architect JNB DePouilly (who virtually rebuilt the St. Louis Cathedral in 1849), St. Augustine's Church opened its doors for the first time in 1842. It is the second-oldest African American church in the nation, and its small congregation toils hard to provide food for the needy and to maintain the Tomb of the Unknown Slave. Over time, the church has also become known for its colorful jazz funerals, which depart from St. Augustine's before parading down the streets of the district.

The Kindred of New Orleans have a curious relationship with St. Augustine's. While it is technically in the Tremé District, it is a Catholic church and, thus, most of the district's Kindred (who are sympathetic to Cimitiere's cause, if not outright supporters) have little reason to go anywhere near it. Recently, however, Father John Marrow, who keeps his eye on such things, espied one of the Baron's Acolytes ducking out the back of the church. Marrow, who had been operating under the assumption that the faith of the place would be intolerable to Kindred (and especially to those of the Baron's covenant), was stunned beyond belief. The subsequent “tests” he's run have all led him to one, baffling conclusion: The faith of St. Augustine's Church is indeed toxic—but only to those Kindred baptized into the Lancea Sanctum! Marrow has yet to uncover the cause of this startling revelation and is hesitant to share his findings with Savoy until he does.

Uptown

At one point, Canal Street was the dividing line between the American and French parts of town (and still represents the boundary between Downtown and Uptown tonight). With the Garden District as its centerpiece, modern Uptown New Orleans is a living architectural entity that stands in sharp contrast to the more crowded, old-world French Quarter. Numerous blocks of glorious homes stand as symbols of the industriousness that made New Orleans one of the wealthiest cities in the nation during the mid-19th century.



What is perhaps an even greater contrast, however, is how the stately homes give way to poorer neighborhoods once one crosses South Claiborne Avenue, heading toward the lake. By the time one reaches the community of Broadmoor, only a dozen or so blocks from Uptown proper, the scenery has done a complete 180-degree turn. It is just this sort of contrast that gives not only the city's mortal populace its tension, but its Kindred as well. Kindred like Cleavon Jennings and Desirae Wells dwell in and around Broadmoor, while they can almost literally look "across the tracks," as it were, and watch privileged parasites like Pierpont McGinn put the finishing touches on yet another expensive haven.

Garden District

Speaking of expensive havens, one can hardly do better (or worse, depending on who you ask) than the Garden District. Like the French Quarter to its east, the Garden District is both small and nationally historic, and is governed by restrictive architectural laws that attempt to maintain the area's overall persona. The upriver towns that eventually converged to form the Garden District (and the rest of Uptown proper to the west) were populated almost exclusively by Americans, and the area reflects their particular wealth and taste. Perhaps its greatest claim to fame, however (at least among the undead) is the fact that Garden District is home to Prince Augusto Vidal, who maintains no fewer than two havens of his own here, in addition to "bestowing" a third upon his fellow Ventrue (and would-be protégé) Gabriel Hurst upon his admittance to Vidal's Primogen council.

Riverbend

On the far, west end of Uptown sits a district known broadly as Riverbend, due to the fact that it encompasses the territory that lies on the edge of where the river bends around the city in its journey northward. Riverbend is largely residential, with two prominent sub-districts of its own. The first of these is the part of Riverbend beyond the St. Charles Streetcar toward the river, and it includes the area in and around Audobon Park (named for the famed naturalist John James Audobon) and the Audobon Zoo. The second is the area above the streetcar, which includes the neighboring campuses of Tulane and Loyola Universities. This area is often known as "University District," for obvious reasons. The Riverbend Shopping Center is a sizeable riverside attraction, and one of the last along the river before one enters the suburb of Carrollton. Vidal's Sheriff, Donovan, is rumored to keep a haven in Riverbend, but most believe he spends the majority of his time downtown, attending to his duties.

Beyond the City

Although a larger domain puts a greater strain on the ability of one Kindred to administrate efficiently, Augusto Vidal has never been one to shy away from a challenge, especially when the payoff is increased power or authority. The entirety of the Greater New Orleans area is nominally under his sway, and he aggressively pursues any substantive threats

to his hegemony in the outlying areas. Given the population and influence concentrations in the area, such threats have been few and far between in the past, but wherever they've reared their ugly heads, he and his agents have been there to handle the matter swiftly and usually without mercy.

As a rule, Prince Vidal's domain is generally accepted to include all the territory east to Lake Borgne, west to the suburb of Kenner (where the airport is), and south nearly as far as Lafitte. For all practical purposes, however, Vidal concentrates his efforts on the immediate surrounds, including the important suburbs of Algiers, Metairie, Gentilly, Westwego, Gretna, Harvey and Marrero. This is not to say that he doesn't claim praxis over the rest, merely that he can and does assign feeding and domain rights to all these places on a fairly regular basis, and thus watches them closely. Indeed, one of his biggest concerns about the future is just how secure these outlying areas will be once someone else is responsible for keeping them in line. The truth of the matter is that it would take a miracle for another Kindred—any Kindred—to fill such prestigious shoes. In his two centuries as Prince, Vidal has accomplished an amazing feat, as Princes go: The simple fact that one has to go a pretty fair piece in Louisiana (nearly as far Donaldsonville to the west, for example, or Houma to the south) to find a population of Kindred who don't at least claim to recognize the power and authority of Prince Augusto Vidal. Indeed, some even send emissaries to Vidal's court, asking that he grant them his influence and support in exchange for fealty.

NEW ORLEANS ELYSIUM

A complete list of the French Quarter locations Augusto Vidal has declared Elysium can be found in **Vampire: The Requiem** (p. 284). While the ratio of such sites is certainly concentrated in the Vieux Carré, due to the political noose Vidal has been tightening on Antoine Savoy over time, other Elysiums exist in other districts of the city, as well. What follows is a list of the remainder of these sites.

- City Hall
- Civil War Museum
- Contemporary Arts Center
- Gallier Hall
- Hotel Storyville
- Louisiana Superdome and New Orleans Center
- Medical Center of Louisiana
- New Orleans General Hospital
- New Orleans Museum of Art
- New Orleans Public Library
- Ogden Museum of Southern Art
- Old Spanish Custom House
- Orpheum Theater
- Pitot House
- Tulane University Hospital
- World Trade Center
- All Catholic/Christian sites of worship in the Greater New Orleans area





Chapter Games of the Elders

*Only young Kindred
believe we subsist on Vitae.
Any tempered Kindred
knows full well
that the Damned
need lies more than blood
to thrive.*

*- Pearl Chastain,
Daeva Primogen*

The reputation of power is power.

Augusto Vidal

Without doubt, one of the most serious issues facing Augusto Vidal tonight is the question of who will act as Prince in his stead after he has sunk into torpor. Many feel that this perceived “indecision” is simply another of Vidal’s inscrutable political games, played to the hilt until the last possible moment, so that he may witness the fullness of the in-fighting among potential candidates until that time. Others feel that Vidal, ever the consummate schemer, would have sired his own successor by now, if that was his intent. And still others fear that Vidal has no plans to enter torpor at all, and that all this furor is yet another political salvo.

The truth is that the matter weighs far more heavily on Vidal’s mind than he lets on, even among those closest to him. He does, indeed, plan to enter torpor (and very soon now), but the simple fact is that he really is undecided about what to do with his domain while he rests, and that indecision—a rare thing for Vidal in the best of times—is one of several problems that are slowly driving him mad.

In point of fact, Augusto Vidal would have little problem following the convention established by antiquity and embraced, by and large, by the Lancea Sanctum: The neo-feudal practice of leaving one’s domain in the hands of his own progeny. Unfortunately, that option has long since passed him by, thanks to a horrific ritual performed so many decades ago. As a result, Vidal must nightly struggle with the fact that he himself put to death the one and only child he would ever have. (For more on the ritual, see the end of **Chapter One: A Look Back at the Big Easy.**)

While the general impression among the Kindred of New Orleans is that Vidal is grooming his Sheriff, Donovan, to take control of the city once torpor comes, that is merely one of a number of possible scenarios Vidal envisions playing out. Some years back, when Vidal first became convinced that he must sleep soon, the first person he turned to was his longtime friend and advisor, Philip Maldonato. Vidal was shocked, however, to learn that his Seneschal had absolutely no intention or desire to rule as Prince in his absence, and the realization set Vidal’s already weary mind spinning. Deep down, Vidal knows that the only reason he invited Donovan so fully into his court was to spite his rival, Savoy. And while he finds the preening Daeva a capable Sheriff, the prospect of handing his entire domain over to such a man is one that Vidal still finds daunting as yet.

In the darkness of his own private chambers, Vidal has considered the possibility of another, more dire alternative. In truth, the Prince’s greatest secret is also the primary reason why he feels the need to rest in the first place: Augusto Vidal can no longer gain sustenance from the blood of the living. Recently, Vidal has considered the notion of not entering torpor *at all*. If he could somehow find a way to temper his own hunger—without compromising his beliefs or his blood—he feels that he could likely go on as Prince for decades or even centuries. Sadly, he cannot turn to his old friend for help on this one matter, for he keeps the truth of his hunger a secret from *everyone*, even his most trusted advisor.

The Storyville Coterie

Just about every Kindred in the Big Easy is aware that all but one of the local Kindred krewes (coterie composed of New Orleans neonates) consider themselves at least passingly loyal to Prince Vidal, in name, if not in truth. After all, flouting the rule of the local ruler—especially when that ruler has the iron-fisted reputation Vidal has—is an unwise thing for a neonate to do, unless that neonate has already ingrained himself into the good graces of a rival powerful enough to give him some sense of security. But even then, most neonates realize that, should the support of their adopted liege run dry, they will be left all alone in a city run by an unforgiving elder whose displeasure they have roused.

Most Kindred are equally aware that one krewe in particular, a tight-knit group known as the Storyville Coterie, is especially and *actively* loyal to Vidal, and that its members consider themselves firmly entrenched in Vidal’s camp. It is common knowledge among those in the know that every vampire in the coterie is a devout member of Vidal’s covenant, the Lancea Sanctum, and that this is what explains the group’s loyalty—or so they believe. While it is true that the Storyville Coterie is composed entirely of Sanctified neonates, its members are a great deal more than they seem.

In Kindred terms, the transition from requiring mortal blood to vampiric Vitae is terrifyingly sudden; so much so, in fact, that Vidal even wonders if it was not God himself who leveled the curse of cannibalism upon his faithful servants. Whatever the cause, Vidal quickly realized that he would have to enter torpor *immediately*, or else starve himself into it (or, worse yet, into a frenzy) in

a matter of weeks. To his credit, Vidal did indeed consider “obeying God’s will” and taking his rest then. But with no heir apparent, and with so much still at stake in his domain, Vidal could not in good conscience allow the city to be bereft of its leader so suddenly.

And so he vowed to delay his torpor, but that left him the question of sustenance. Surely, he could not become the monster so many of his kind had become in the past upon reaching this age. No, if that was his only recourse—to butcher his own kind in droves—he would sooner die than fall victim to such hunger. And that’s when a vision came to him; and in that instant, he knew he’d been saved.

Once or twice a week, Vidal now summons the loyal members of the Storyville Coterie to a secluded location he owns near the outskirts of the city. During hours, he leads them through a long and involved Sanctified rite, during which he feeds them mortal blood and asks of them a paltry sacrifice of their own in return. In order to maintain the secrecy of both this ritual and his relationship with the coterie, Vidal makes liberal use of his considerable powers, sending waves of Dominate and Majesty at regular intervals over the course of the rite. When the coterie members at last depart, they leave feeling purified and proud, as though having taken part in something truly special. And for Vidal’s part, they have.

The end result is that the Storyville neonates, while not specifically “controlled,” have been heavily conditioned by their weekly experiences with Vidal. Combined with their entirely natural reverence for the Prince, they now see him as something *actually* divine—a dark messiah for the Damned in these dark times. They feel that every other Lancea Sanctum member in the city, even Vidal’s prodigal Sheriff, are but neophytes on the path of wisdom and salvation, and that neither the covenant nor the city as a whole could afford to lose their vaunted leader. Individual members have no idea they’ve been manipulated mystically, and Vidal has been so careful in his application of his powers that it would be supremely difficult (if not impossible) for anyone of lesser skill to detect that anything untoward had ever taken place.

The one stain on Vidal’s otherwise spotless interchange with the Storyville Coterie is a Daeva named Evan Bourelle, who was at one time one of the most impassioned of the Storyville neonates. After the first few private encounters with Prince Vidal, Evan began to notice that his paramour in undeath—a fellow coterie member named Roxanne—was forming a disturbing attachment to their Prince. Evan, too, found the elder Sanctified both powerful and inspiring, but he questioned the hold Vidal was beginning to have on the other coterie members.

In truth, this alienation of affection was the spark that led to Evan Bourelle finally somehow resisting the full force of Vidal’s ministrations. In so doing, however, he would seal his own death warrant. Vidal, sad though he was to have to do so, silenced Evan Bourelle before the



hapless neonate could go public with the truth—but not before he could send word to the one person he felt he could trust: His clan elder, the Primogen councilor Pearl Chastain. Luckily for her, Vidal has no idea that Evan managed to contact anyone before his death, but if Vidal found out (or even suspected), he would certainly have no qualms about killing yet again.

With Evan Bourelle gone, the Storyville Coterie is composed of Roxanne Gerlette (who, despite her nearly unswerving loyalty to Vidal, still searches for her missing lover), Wyatt Jenkins, Jocelyn Baker and Gwendolyn Wade.

WOLVES AT THE DOOR

While Prince Vidal certainly has more than his share of threats from within, other, more external parties are presently watching the situation in his domain with great interest as well. An uninterrupted, two-century reign is an impressive run for one of the Kindred (especially in an American domain), and there are those who would see the influence of both Prince Augusto Vidal and his covenant come to a much more permanent end when he finally enters torpor.

Perhaps the most significant such interested party is the Prince of nearby Baton Rouge. While most Kindred confine themselves to affairs of a more immediate nature, and rarely seek to garner any substantive influence over the night-to-night affairs of other cities, Baton Rouge is an exception to these rules.

And a serious one, it is.

For Baton Rouge's Prince is, and has always been, a paragon of the Invictus. And for some 50-odd years, he has had to watch the domain of New Orleans (which is less than an hour's drive away) grow into one of the more profitable cities in the region with regard to certain, specific lines of business, while falling into economic ruin with regards to other (read: Invictus-friendly) lines of business. And while Baton Rouge may be the state capital, and while it certainly has proved profitable for the politically savvy Prince over time, can there be any doubt as to which city both fortune and the multitudes of kine favor?

The Prince has watched this truth play out for decades and, in his greed, has finally set his sights upon all that is Vidal's—and will one night be his own. He watches as his rival prepares for sleep, even as his domain is on the brink of chaos, and is pleased. Baton Rouge's Prince has come to an arrangement with his long-time Seneschal, a fellow Invictus, whereby the two schemers would run the affairs of both cities on behalf of the First Estate.

In this endeavor, the two already have themselves a spy in the house of Vidal. Regular communication with the ambitious Inner Circle member Pierpont McGinn is keeping them abreast of the escalating situation in New Orleans, putting them, if all goes well, in just the position they'll need to take over after the dust settles.

Pearl Chastain

Despite widely-held impressions to the contrary, the Daeva elder and Primogen known as Pearl Chastain is not finished in New Orleans. Far from it. Rather, she is currently embroiled in a private scheme that revolves around nothing short of becoming her beloved city's next Prince. Such a gambit would take many by surprise, of course, for everybody knows that Chastain willingly stepped aside over 200 years ago, specifically to allow Vidal to claim the title, when she had an even greater claim on the domain than he (or anyone else).

In truth, Chastain aspires to the Princedom not out of any hatred for Vidal, but because, to oversimplify the issue, it is the one thing left for her to do. What instigated the initial desire, however, was the rumor (begun some years back, now) that Vidal would soon take his rest, and that he still had no childe to name as successor. What cemented the notion in her mind, however, was sheer *spite*. Under no circumstances would she allow either Antoine Savoy or his bastard childe Donovan to claim the city—*her* city—for himself. She loathes both of her clanmates with a deep passion, for they stand against everything she believes is integral to the blood that runs within all three. They are, in her mind, unworthy.

Chastain is, and has always been, a creature of propriety, first and foremost. She remembers the nights when simply being one of the Kindred implied a certain sophistication, a certain sense of rightness—especially for her clan. If politics is indeed but a game, then it is one which must be played a certain way, by certain rules. Pearl Chastain has always been unforgiving of those who thoughtlessly cast aside those rules (such as Savoy and Pierpont McGinn; see below), but more importantly, been equally admiring of those who follow and respect them.

Despite her differences with Augusto Vidal, she has always credited him with being one of the latter—like his Seneschal, a “class act” among the Damned. She knows full well that her support may have been the only thing that got Vidal the Princedom in the first place, and was undeniably the only thing that got him through a number of rough spots early on in his reign, and he has always treated her with the minimum dignity that such support merits. What this means is that Pearl Chastain would prefer if Augusto Vidal chose to declare her his successor. She wants him to acknowledge that he still knows how proper Kindred behave, and that he realizes, of his own accord, that he could do worse than to name her.

Failing this, of course, Chastain is prepared to take more drastic measures. The only thing she draws the line at is open conflict with either Vidal or Maldonato (but not just because she finds violence distasteful nor because she is afraid she might lose). Rather, she believes that if she is going to have her way in this, it will be through the rightness with which she has played the game. Noble Kindred like Vidal and his Seneschal deserve nothing less.

A Dish Best Served Cold

Almost by their very nature, the Kindred make precious few, if any, true friends during the Requiem itself. To most vampires, other creatures—and especially other vampires—are only idle companions in misery, at the best of times. When an exception to this rule does occur, however, it tends to stand in sharp contrast to the way most other Kindred relations play out. Indeed, on some rare occasions, it seems as though the Beast itself stands behind the connection forged with another, fostering that relationship with all the intensity it can muster.

Such was the case with Pearl Chastain and her true friend, Maria Pascual.

Indeed, it was Pascual's betrayal by forces unknown that played a vital role in shaping Chastain's current attitude toward her own clan (and, to a lesser extent, tonight's Kindred at large). She still has no concrete proof, of course, but there is no doubt in her mind that the one responsible for Pascual's death was Antoine Savoy, Pascual's so-called "heir" to the French Quarter. At a bare minimum, she knows that Savoy has lied about his age, or at least the length of time he's been a resident of the city. She was *there* at the time he claims to have been first coming up, and she recalls no mention of him anywhere, at any time.

Although the case of Maria Pascual's destruction is over a century old, the subject of it still holds the power to sting the dead heart of one of the city elders. And for this, Chastain is actually grateful—not to the soulless betrayer who took Pascual from her, but to Pascual herself for providing her with something even more lasting than power or prestige. The only remaining satisfaction Chastain can receive from the matter (aside from the return of Pascual herself) is to finally uncover the one responsible for her death—and make him pay dearly for it.

In point of fact, this ongoing desire, one of the only ones left in Chastain's dead heart, is part of why she so fervently wishes to claim the Princedom. When she is at last in charge, she will have the authority and the resources to put her dead friend's memory to rest at last. And that alone is worth the price of her ambition.

Sacrificial Lambs

In addition to her exquisite Southern social graces, Pearl Chastain is also gifted with an extraordinary facility for dissembling. The consummate politico, Pearl Chastain has, meticulously and over an extended period of time, managed to convince her fellow Inner Circle member Pierpont McGinn that she finds him a worthy ally and respectable representative of the First Estate in New Orleans.

In reality, Chastain sees the bigoted Ventrue as little better than her miserable clanmates, Donovan and Savoy, and fully plans to sacrifice him upon the altar of her own ascendancy. McGinn's outmoded political style is both boorish and clumsy, in Chastain's eyes, and she views

him as one might view an intoxicated vulture, squawking and stumbling wildly as it searches for enough purchase to feast on the body of a superior animal. To her mind, he is just another garish parasite, unworthy of representing even the Kindred race, never mind the proud Invictus.

THE KEY TO REDEMPTION

Not too long ago, something transpired that has the potential to finally and drastically shift Pearl Chastain's fortunes in New Orleans—one way or another. She received word from one of her clanmates, a starry-eyed Vidal-worshipper named Evan Bourelle. She'd never much cared for the boy (seeing him as she did as yet another example of potential greatness led astray), but he didn't as yet bear the stink of corruption she loathed in the other, more seasoned Daeva of the city. And as such, she was always willing to play the nurturing, maternal role in the neonate's unlife; anything to even partially offset the Lancea Sanctum's influence.

Bourelle's last correspondence, however, was tinged with uncharacteristic anxiety—and fear. In it, the neonate nervously confessed that he had happened upon some information he claimed would be damning to some powerful party, and that he desperately needed to discuss it with someone he felt he could trust. Before she could find him and offer him sanctuary however, he disappeared.

Given the tenor of her last exchange with him, Chastain is under no illusions as to the whereabouts of Evan Bourelle: She knows he is but shadows and dust. Also, she is no fool, and has surmised that whatever Evan Bourelle knew or saw, it probably pertained to someone close to Vidal, if not Vidal himself. (If it pertained to Cimitiere or Savoy, why wouldn't Bourelle have simply taken the information to his own beloved Prince and "messiah?" And if it pertained to any of the Invictus, Chastain surmises that Bourelle would not have come to her at all.)

The question now for Pearl Chastain is, what can she do with what she knows? If Bourelle's murder can be traced back to someone in Vidal's camp, she just may have the leverage she needs to return herself to political glory. For if it was done by Vidal's hand to keep some dark secret from emerging, then both the discovery of his involvement and the secret in question could spell ruin for him. And if it was done by someone in Vidal's camp without his specific knowledge but was still done to protect his secrets, then the same would ultimately hold true.

Of course, if Chastain is not careful, she may well suffer the same fate as her younger clanmate. But she has two distinct advantages on her side: First, nobody knows that Bourelle contacted her before his death. Second, the Kindred of New Orleans have gotten used to the idea that Pearl Chastain is ineffectual. She eagerly awaits the time when she'll see that assumption prove their downfall.

She permits him to continue on much as he likes, however, because his ongoing efforts accomplish two things that aid her own agenda: First, all his blustering prattling and power-scrabbling serves to draw attention away from anything Chastain herself pursues, thus allowing her to plan and prepare without excessive scrutiny. Second, she knows that he is in close contact with Invictus members outside the city and is funneling resources into New Orleans (and thus into the local Invictus) in the process. As she is the eldest member of the Inner Circle in town, and a Primogen to boot, she can keep at least rough tabs on his activities without exerting too much effort, all the while maintaining the front of unity that she believes is vital to her long-term goals.

Although she does not know that McGinn is working with the Prince of Baton Rouge specifically, she has seen through to the arrogant Ventrue's heart, and she knows precisely what sort of man he is. And she would sooner see a foolish but well-meaning toady like Hurst in Vidal's chair, when all is said and done (though she fully intends for the seat to be her own). For all his foibles, Augusto Vidal has done a reasonable job of maintaining her beautiful city's character over the last 200 years, and she'll be twice damned if she'll see it fall into the hands of a snake like McGinn—or the interloping sharks who back him.

Philip Maldonato

Few Kindred in New Orleans are under as much constant strain as the city's beleaguered Seneschal, an elder Mekhet by name of Philip Maldonato. One could easily say, with little measure of overstatement, that the main reason the city's bureaucratic machine has not yet collapsed (or, worse yet, eaten itself) is because the Prince's Seneschal—who might as well call himself the very city's Seneschal—has refused to allow it. While everyone is familiar with the elder Mekhet's combat prowess and fearsome reputation, few realize just how important he truly is to the administration of Vidal's domain—especially now.

As Vidal withdraws ever more inward in preparation for his long (and well-deserved, in Maldonato's opinion) rest, more and more of the city's night-to-night functioning falls upon his Seneschal's broad and capable shoulders. Maldonato shouldered his newfound burdens with ease, at least at first. But over the last couple of years in particular, as both Vidal's temper and his patience for nightly affairs have grown shorter, Maldonato has had to compensate more and more for the gaps left by his longtime friend. In truth, Vidal is little more than an absentee leader at this point, and when Maldonato is being honest with himself, he realizes that he has neither the desire nor the temperament to be an actual Prince. He wants merely to continue in the capacity in which he believes God meant him to serve.

All this puts an inordinate amount of pressure on Philip Maldonato. He is loyal to his friend Augusto (perhaps to a fault), and constantly seeks ways of either excusing his

friend's behavior or mitigating the deleterious effects of it. Like many Kindred in the city, Maldonato knows that the Prince cannot sire progeny, but unlike the others, Maldonato actually knows how deeply the loss has affected his friend. Maldonato believes he knows all his old friend's secrets (he knows nothing of the Storyville Coterie), and has pledged himself not only to keeping them but to forgiving them as well. In truth, Philip Maldonato is simply a better man than Vidal is now, but that fact never weighs so much as an ounce on Maldonato's mind. All he cares about is keeping the Prince and his power base as secure as they can be until such time as an heir to the title and domain can be declared.

On this matter, the relationship between the two elders is on somewhat rocky ground. Several years back—before Vidal's recent acceleration into his own descent—Maldonato confessed to his friend that he had no desire to rule as Prince, not even in Vidal's place until such time as Vidal could reawaken. Since then, all the talk at court on the matter has revolved around the rumor that Vidal intends to name Donovan, his Sheriff, as his successor when he enters torpor. Maldonato has never fully trusted the preening Daeva (who himself betrayed his own sire, Antoine Savoy, to attend the Prince's side), but knowing that Vidal cannot sire a proper childe (and knowing that he removed himself from consideration), is left supporting the Prince's decision as best he can, all the while hoping that something will happen to make him feel more confident about the state of the domain upon Vidal's withdrawal. If something happens to prove to Maldonato that Donovan cannot be trusted as Prince, the apprehensive Mekhet has considered ruling the domain in Vidal's stead, but only as Seneschal (essentially leaving the domain without a true Prince until Vidal's return). But to do this, Maldonato knows he would have to gain considerable support from city elders and, more likely than not, he would also have to destroy at least one or two Kindred in the process.

A Serpent in the Fold

In his ongoing effort to secure his friend's sanity, Philip Maldonato recently did something he had not done for many, many years: He actively sought the aid of another Kindred outside the domain of New Orleans. In this case, he turned to his old clan contacts in Cordoba, in the hopes they might send him aid. One of the wisest things a pre-torpid vampire can do is to summon the services of a member of the Mekhet bloodline known as the Agonistes. Of all the world's Kindred, the Agonistes seem the most learned in the ways of vampire physiology and, perhaps more importantly, psychology. The bloodline has studied the vampire mind extensively, with special attention to the effects of torpor in particular upon it, and has developed a number of techniques both mystical and mundane for not only averting the worst of the Great Sleep's torments but also for helping the torpid vampire retain his precious memories and thoughts upon awakening. And it is to one of these

able Kindred that their brother-in-blood, Maldonato, has turned. Would that such a Kindred was sent.

Unknown to Maldonato—and perhaps unfortunate for Vidal—it's not a member of the Agonistes bloodline who has traveled to New Orleans from the Old World, but rather, one of an even-rarer bloodline of the Mekhet known as the Sons of Khalil. This assembly of respected Kindred is a combination gentlemen's club/tribal council has existed in more or less the same form for many centuries. Those who know the Sons of Khalil (commonly referred to as "Judges") consider the bloodline something of an elite body of politically neutral mediators, advisors and, on rare occasions, punishers for the greater body of vampirekind. They are most typically called in by Princes or other Kindred of power, who seek either some wise counsel on a matter of great import or a respected adjudicator who can mediate a dispute between two or more Kindred residents of the city.

Once in a great while, however, a Judge arrives for a third, more dire reason: To sit in judgment of another Kindred. As he is one of the most high-profile Princes in the New World, word of Augusto Vidal's growing extremism has spread far and wide over the last few years. Many in his own clan, particularly those back in Andalusia (and especially those outside his own covenant), have been growing increasingly concerned at what the increasingly frequent reports may truly mean. Some even suggest that Vidal has finally lost his mind, and must be—quieted.

This is where the Sons of Khalil come in. Once Vidal's own Seneschal sent word requesting aid—even from one of the Agonistes, as he did—the time was right for Sons of Khalil to step in. Thus, instead of one of the Agonistes bloodline, it was a Judge of Jordanian extraction named Bassem who arrived in the Big Easy. And rather than coming to assist the local Seneschal in preparing for the Prince's withdrawal from his duties, Bassem's come to determine just how unstable Vidal truly is, and just what should or should not be done, for the good of all Kindred. Philip Maldonato has no idea that the vampire he recently welcomed to the domain is not, in fact, the Agoniste his contacts promised (and lied about), but rather, the very investigator who could bring everything for which he has worked to ruin.

Depending on how he assesses the situation, though, Bassem could well see nothing particularly perfidious in Vidal or his regime, and could leave on the next ship bound for the Middle East with little fanfare or consequence. Should Bassem determine, however, that Prince Vidal has become a danger to both his subjects and to the Kindred as a whole, he may well decree that the rest to which Vidal must soon commit himself may well be one from which he will never re-awaken. How the Judge's visit actually pans out is ultimately up to the Storyteller.

Miss Opal

Miss Opal is a rarity in Kindred circles—someone who believes more or less what she claims to believe, and acts

accordingly. Her professed beliefs in the Carthian cause, and in advancing the position of the Nosferatu in New Orleans society, are genuine. This doesn't make her any less underhanded in her schemes; it just means that her goals are usually predictable, even if her methods are not.

In all respects, Miss Opal feels as though she's clinging to the edge of a crumbling precipice. She still maintains her loyalty to Prince Vidal, serving him as one of the most active members of the Primogen, but she is feeling increasing pressure from both above and below to take some sort of action in light of Vidal's recent behavior. He considers the Carthian Movement among his enemies—albeit far less so than Antoine Savoy or Baron Cimitiere—and a substantial number of the city's Nosferatu are members of the Carthian Movement and/or Cimitiere's faction. Combine that with Vidal's historical dislike of the clan, and it's no wonder the Haunts are suffering terribly under the Prince's new draconian policies. Miss Opal still desperately wants to change the system and the Prince's actions from within the government, as doing otherwise would mean becoming an open enemy of Vidal's; and that's safe for neither her clanmates nor her. On the other hand, her power is waning as Vidal takes more and more of the duties of his reign into his own hands, and many Nosferatu believe that Miss Opal will be forced to operate outside the confines of the court—and even of Vidal's entire faction—if she is to do her cause or her clan any good.

How To Make Friends Influence People

Miss Opal knows full well that, at least so far as her covenant allegiance and ultimate goals are concerned, she can count most of Vidal's court as enemies. Few have any respect for the Carthian objectives, let alone share them. Therefore, Miss Opal doesn't just need leverage over factional enemies like Savoy; she needs to wield some sort of influence over her fellow Primogen as well.

To that end, ever since her return to active power, she has been gathering all the information she can acquire on those with whom she deals on a regular basis. Under most circumstances, this might not be much. Almost every Kindred in the city knows that Miss Opal has her own objectives, and most are careful about what they let slip around the Nosferatu Primogen or her proxies. Fortunately for Miss Opal, she has an ally in this matter that nobody else suspects.

Miss Opal, with the aid of Coco Duquette, has spent years "borrowing" Pearl Chastain's eyes and ears. The ancient Daeva has grown so uninterested in all that happens around her (or at least *appears* so) that she exchanges information with Miss Opal and even allows the Nosferatu access to her own contacts, simply as a diversion. While Miss Opal has no doubt that Chastain is keeping some secrets—the elder Kindred is bored, not stupid—she has still managed to glean all manner of information from Chastain that nobody else in the court believes she has



access to. She knows specifics of actions taken by Kindred older than she, as Chastain was present when they took place. She knows much of what Vidal has planned for the future, for he is less concerned with keeping his schemes from Chastain (whom he considers a staunch supporter) than he is from Miss Opal herself. And she has a solid idea of what the Invictus as a whole, and its individual members such as Pierpont McGinn, are engaged in at any given time. With a combination of her own resources and those lent by Pearl Chastain, it's possible that Miss Opal may be the single most well-informed member of the New Orleans' Primogen.

Blood is Thicker Than Water

To most of the Kindred, clan represents little more than where one comes from, akin (at most) to a mortal's sense of nationality. To Miss Opal, clan identity stands at the forefront of everything she does. She thinks of the Nosferatu as an entity, even when they are not, and she believes that others would think as she does if only they would open their eyes.

As such, even though they have little in common in the modern nights, Miss Opal has attempted on several occasions to reopen contact with Baron Cimitiere. As the Baron is inarguably the most powerful Nosferatu in New Orleans, Miss Opal believes they should be allies, supporting one another to achieve their mutual objectives and for the good of the clan as a whole. It is a fine line to walk; she must convince Cimitiere that her efforts to deal with him are not some trick of Prince Vidal's while keeping sufficient distance that Vidal himself does not discover her efforts and declare her a traitor. For the nonce, she has had to content herself with cryptic messages delivered through three or four layers of intermediaries. This has, unsurprisingly, brought about few results. Even assuming the Baron has received and understood her missives, he cares little for the notion of "clan unity," unless supporting it will also advance his own causes. She may have to undertake more direct methods to prove her usefulness to Cimitiere—but that would entail acting directly against Vidal. The fact that many of her fellow Nosferatu are also supporters of Cimitiere and are clamoring constantly for just such an alliance, regardless of consequences, only makes matters for Miss Opal ever more frustrating and dangerous.

Seven Years' Bad Luck

Miss Opal strongly believes that the Shattered Mirror (see the sidebar on p. 33 of **Chapter Two: Points of Entry**) is made up of either members of her clan, her covenant or both. The actions simply point far too strongly to young Kindred who believe in something resembling the Carthian cause but are much too inexperienced and foolish to understand the damage they do with their violent tactics. Miss Opal has volunteered to investigate the matter on behalf of Prince Vidal and his Sheriff, both of

whom have more important matters to attend to. Although Vidal is somewhat suspicious of Miss Opal's motives, he has agreed, for the nonce, to let her handle it.

In truth, Miss Opal has no intention of turning the perpetrators over to Vidal if they are indeed Nosferatu or Carthians. She hopes to convince them of the error of their ways and turn their energies to more productive pursuits before Vidal *does* discover them and exact his own brand of justice.

Unfortunately for Miss Opal, the Shattered Mirror is remarkably popular with many young Carthians. The fact that she is involved in investigations ostensibly intended to bring the organization down and expose them to the Prince has damaged her popularity with many of her covenant. For the first time in decades, Miss Opal finds her support dwindling, just as she feels she needs it most. To date, she has managed to keep this loss of faith secret from Vidal and the other Primogen, for fear that they will use her growing weakness against her, but it's only a matter of time before she must either abandon her investigation or else reveal that it is unpopular with her own covenant.



BAIT

Miss Opal—or perhaps one of the other Kindred with a vested interest in finding the Shattered Mirror, such as the Sheriff—might eventually decide that it's easier to bring the Mirror to them than to go out hunting for it. A coterie of relatively young and powerless Kindred, such as, say, the typical group of starting players' characters, would make the perfect cat's-paws for just such an endeavor.

Consider: One of the elder Kindred accuses the coterie of being the Shattered Mirror, or at least a major portion thereof, in a public forum. She turns the full force of Vidal's law against them. The real Shattered Mirror now has little choice. If they are to be taken seriously as a force for justice and change in the Kindred world, they cannot simply sit back and allow innocents to take the fall for them (even if that's exactly what most vampires would do). Although it's unlikely they will simply come forth and turn themselves in, they will almost certainly aid the accused in escaping from their unjust fate, perhaps sheltering the characters or causing other problems to divert attention from them. This, of course, is exactly what the elders anticipated, and they have operatives, spies and pawns already in place to observe what happens and identify those involved.

Which side will the characters end up supporting? The wanted terrorists whose violence has disrupted the city numerous times? The law that seeks a return to the status quo but was willing to endanger the characters in the process? Or do they simply wish to find a way out of the mess so they can be left alone?



Antoine Savoy

The Lord of the French Quarter has realized in recent years that he is fast running out of the one resource most Kindred assume they have in spades—Time. Vidal's recent crackdown across the city, particularly on Savoy's and Cimitiere's territories, leads the Daeva to conclude that a final reckoning between them cannot be too far off.

And Savoy is worried, though you'd never know it to hear him talk his political game. He knows that in a no-holds-barred struggle for supremacy he may be powerful enough to make Vidal suffer—to turn any victory the Prince might earn into a Pyrrhic one—but he fears that he cannot possibly win. Savoy holds a grudge as well as the next Kindred, but spite alone is not sufficient cause to die or to give up his dreams of being the next Prince.

Savoy has determined, therefore, that in however long he has before Vidal begins his endgame gambit, he *must* increase his base of support by any and all means possible. The laid-back image he projects, the implication that he's willing to wait centuries to build his power, if need be, is all façade. Savoy is moving, and he's moving—by Kindred terms, anyway—extremely swiftly.

His primary political pitch, of course, involves Vidal's recent descent into true tyranny. This does not mean, however, that Savoy is screaming about the injustice of it all, regaling Elysium with the Kindred version of street-corner preaching. No, Savoy leaves that to the neonates. Rather, Savoy prefers to allow the subject to come up naturally in conversation, as it almost always does. Expressions of sympathy and understanding often do far more to convince the listener that Savoy is a viable alternative than would a screaming rant. "Yes, I was terribly sorry to hear about your childe's ghoul. That's, what, the third time since the new year you or your family has lost someone, isn't it? Difficult times for all of us, these. Something simply *must* change before much longer." In this fashion, Savoy fans the flames of discontent, while simultaneously reinforcing the notion that he would be a much more sympathetic alternative to Vidal.

Not that Savoy's efforts are focused entirely on Vidal; he's equally determined to chip away at Cimitiere's power base as well. His pitch to the Baron's followers is far more direct. He simply points out that, while he may not be a *houngan*, he has shown that he is sympathetic to the vodouisant viewpoint, and that he is far more likely to attain real power in the city than Cimitiere. Thus, he's more likely to be able to make things better for them. Only a few of Cimitiere's followers have yet succumbed to this pitch, however, and most are young neonates frustrated by the slow pace of Kindred social change.

In fact, most of the converts Savoy's obtained in the past decade and more have been neonates only, regardless of which faction they come from, and he's come to



the conclusion that New Orleans' three primary factions are very nearly fixed. Still, he's acquired a few useful allies in this fashion, and he's determined to make full use of all of them.

Eyes at Court

Perhaps the most useful convert Savoy has made in recent years is Roderick Durant, assistant to (and purported childe of) Coco Duquette, and thus a member of Prince Vidal's own court, at least by extension. While Durant holds no official position therein, he frequently attends alongside his mistress, and his presence—like that of so many servants—is often overlooked. This relationship is still relatively new, and the parties are still, to an extent, feeling one another out. Durant has expressed deep distrust of Vidal's motivations for his recent actions as well as anger that Duquette has compromised so much in recent years, and claims to support Savoy as a better alternative for the Kindred of New Orleans.

The French Quarter lord walks a fine line with his new ally. Durant is a resource Savoy cannot afford to throw away, but neither can he afford to reveal to Vidal that he has a leak in his government. Thus, Savoy cannot afford to make *overt* use of the information Durant supplies. Should Savoy do anything blatant, such as use any of this material for extortion, he reveals that he has access to information he should not have. Instead, he subtly moves against the various interests of Vidal's

people, such as approaching mortal contacts who are, according to Durant, unhappy with their current Kindred allies; or shoring up his own influence with contacts who have appeared in the Primogen's "crosshairs."

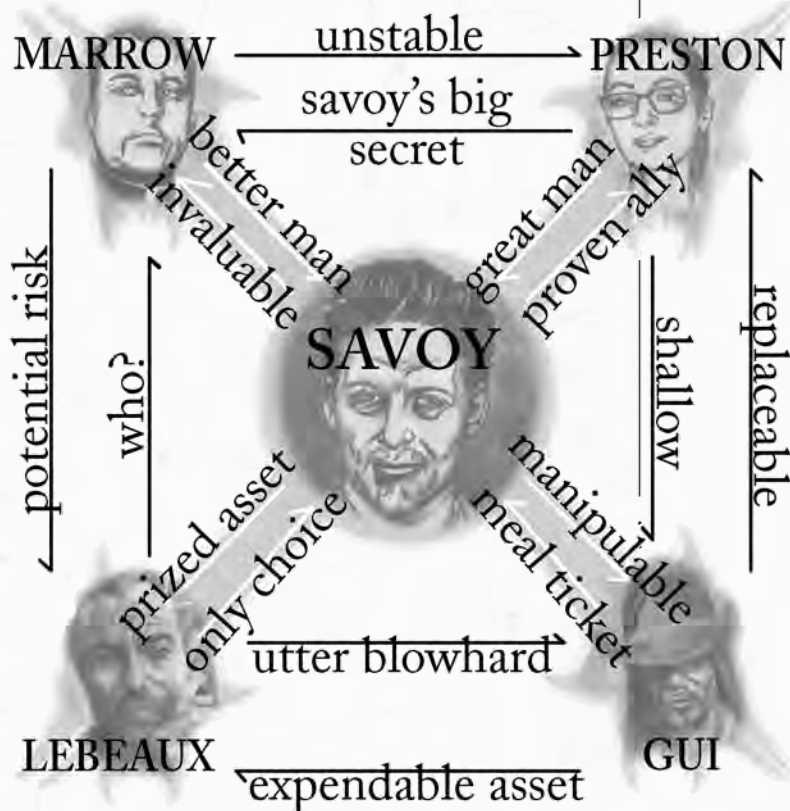
Savoy has also determined to test Durant's loyalty before trusting him any further. The French Quarter lord intends to drop information to Durant suggesting that Savoy is prepared to make a major move against Duquette's interests, to take advantage of the Mekhet's lack of political progress in recent years. Savoy figures that Durant will either go along with it, in hopes of proving himself to Savoy, or he will warn Duquette, so as not to risk damaging what Durant hopes will one day be his own base of power.

The Baron Besieged

Savoy has turned another of his recent allies, the *mambo* Rosa Bale, into his single greatest weapon against Baron Cimitiere. Bale appears to harbor an intense hatred for Cimitiere, a true rarity among the New Orleans' vodouisant population. Savoy had made use of that, allying himself with her to set his two greatest foes against one another by orchestrating opportunities for Bale to frame Cimitiere's followers for crimes against the Prince.

Savoy himself is not intimately familiar with the details of Bale's actions, preferring to remain somewhat distant from them in case Vidal discovers the true perpetrator. He provides her with information on both Cimitiere and Vidal (some of which he has gained through the efforts of Roderick Durant), so that she might best conduct her endeavors, but he does not ask her exactly which laws she plans to violate or how she plans to point fingers at the Baron, lest he be considered an accomplice.

Oddly enough, Savoy is not as suspicious of Rosa Bale as he is of Durant or Pierpont McGinn. It's not that he trusts Bale, as a Kindred in his position cannot afford to trust anyone, especially relatively recent allies, but he seems to take her motivation at face value. He believes her stated reasons for hating Cimitiere—namely, that his use of Baron Samedi's title and general appearance and his claim that he has dealt with the Baron directly in the afterlife are marks of arrogance and an unfitness to lead—and believes, as well, that she truly supports Savoy's own efforts at becoming Prince. Savoy's other followers worry that the French Quarter lord may be under some form of influence when it comes to Bale, and even Savoy himself has considered the possibility, but he has so far not been able to bring himself to care enough to act on



it. Therefore, his efforts at keeping track of Bale's actions when she is not serving him directly are half-hearted at best, and he remains ignorant of any ulterior motives she might have.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Savoy keeps at least as sharp an eye out for the occasional newcomer to the city and for illegally sired childer as Prince Vidal does. In fact, Savoy has an advantage in this regard, because so many newcomers to New Orleans, no matter what else they may do, make a point of visiting the French Quarter.

If he discovers Kindred new to the Big Easy before the Prince does, Savoy attempts to make contact—but slowly, subtly, and not all at once. If he believes he has the time before the Prince's own eyes spot the newcomer, Savoy has various members of his faction make casual contact, each of whom has his own horror story regarding the Prince's rule. Only after the newcomer has heard of Vidal's tyranny from "independent" sources (or if he believes he hasn't sufficient time before Vidal himself contacts her) does Savoy summon her personally. Drawing her into his court, he makes as strong a first impression as he can, driving home how open and accepting (at least in Kindred terms) his own rule is. He only alludes to the Prince's own horrific rule, offering warnings without hammering the point home, for he believes that understatement will actually make a stronger impression than obvious exaggeration. Inevitably, when the neonate or newcomer then goes out into the rest of the city and discovers that Vidal's rule is indeed a harsh one—especially since she's likely to be punished severely for seeing Savoy first, if the Prince learns of it—she inevitably becomes convinced that Savoy's faction is the one to support. Of course, a great many of these Kindred don't *survive* this discovery, given the severity of Vidal's punishments. Those that die don't cost Savoy anything, though, and those who remain add to his growing pool of allies.



Mortal Affairs

Two of Savoy's greatest weapons against Vidal are, in fact, not Kindred at all. Rather, they are two of the primary cogs in Savoy's mortal interests and represent his most powerful areas of influence.

Julia Lansdale

Julia Lansdale is a major figure in several of New Orleans' most popular, and most politically active, charitable foundations. From the Association for a United New Orleans (a Catholic faith-based initiative that seeks an end to racism and religious persecution) to Save Our City (which boasts the slogan "Our buildings may be our past, but our children are our future"), Lansdale is a major mover

and shaker in the field. She is also a ghoul, and so zealously devoted to Savoy that it makes even him nervous at times.

Lansdale, along with Savoy's other contacts in the field, has proved to be a surprisingly painful thorn in Vidal's side. Her organizations are supported by New Orleans' rich and poor alike, but more importantly, they draw funds from major businesses and the city's own government in the form of grants—essentially using Vidal's own pawns' money against them. Her charities have formed numerous grassroots political campaigns, all of which enjoy massive popular support, and all of which are aimed at booting Vidal's municipal allies out of office. In fact, the Prince lost three highly placed pawns in the city's last elections and stands to lose more in the next if Lansdale's movements keep growing.

Savoy believes it's only a matter of time before Vidal moves directly against Lansdale's interests—and indeed, she only barely survived a scandal manufactured by Vidal's own interests in the media a few years back—so he's making as much use of her now as he can. He knows that should she fall he has other contacts in the field. He has considered Embracing her, if and when he no longer requires her to operate by daylight.

Jermaine Washington

Washington is a major figure in New Orleans' organized crime and drug circles. A former street kid and gangbanger, Washington succeeded in obtaining a college education through a combination of financial aid and drug profits. Graduating with degrees in both business and pre-law, Washington returned to the underworld, this time with the intent of becoming far more than the muscle. Today he is equally at home in Armani or gang colors, and can shift flawlessly from perfect English to street slang. He remains unaware of Antoine Savoy's inhuman nature, knowing only that the Daeva is a powerful underworld figure and is willing to serve as patron and financier for Washington's own efforts in exchange for regular favors.

Through Washington and other contacts in organized crime, Savoy is slowly but surely attacking Vidal's mortal power base. Gang violence has increased dramatically in recent years, elevating what was already one of the world's highest crime rates, and while most of that is due to the traditional societal issues of poverty and drugs, a substantial portion of it represents Savoy's own efforts. It is, he and Washington both know, far easier to replace gang members than police officers, and the rate of cop-killing in the Big Easy has risen even compared to the increase in violent crime. Furthermore, the gangs are spreading out into higher-class neighborhoods in which they have traditionally held little interest. Property values are falling, the police are spread thin, and—due to Savoy's efforts—the traditionally high crime regions such as the French Quarter are actually seeing a *decrease* in crime. At this rate, Vidal may find himself with a woefully undermanned and ineffective police force and with



allies and pawns holding onto properties not nearly as valuable as once they were.

Washington has recently informed Savoy of outsiders attempting to muscle in on his territories and those of other New Orleans gang leaders. Savoy has not, as of yet, been able to devote any time to learning who this new player in the New Orleans underworld might be.

Baron Cimitiere

Cimitiere is, in many respects, fighting a defensive action in New Orleans. He does not seek to wipe his enemies out, as does Prince Vidal, nor does he seek the position of Kindred liege over the city, as does Antoine Savoy. Rather, Cimitiere wishes primarily for his followers and himself to be left alone to practice as they will. However, because part of his definition of being “left alone” includes being granted complete autonomy, freedom from outside authority, and the ability to expand whenever and wherever he feels the need, it is unlikely that even a Prince less tyrannical than Vidal would grant his wish.

In light of this, Cimitiere’s own schemes are less intended to weaken his rivals across the board, but rather to weaken their ability to harm him directly, and to strengthen his own position so that he can hold out against their efforts. He is less concerned with bringing

them down himself than with ensuring they cannot do the same to him; the best defense is a good offense, and if he can best ensure his own position by aiding those who would throw down Vidal or Savoy, so be it.

Like his rivals, Baron Cimitiere recognizes that the situation between the three factions in New Orleans must eventually come to a head, and probably sooner rather than later. However, unlike Savoy, Cimitiere has not yet realized just *how* soon a reckoning is likely to come upon them. After all, Vidal has always despised vodoun and persecuted its Kindred and mortal practitioners. The Prince’s recent crackdown has affected Cimitiere and his followers less than others because Vidal already worked against them at every opportunity, and therefore, they have not realized the extent of his new tyranny as it has fallen on the city’s other Kindred. Thus, while Cimitiere is constantly preparing for a final showdown with either Vidal or Savoy, he has not increased preparations in recent years as Savoy has.

Cimitiere’s focus also differs from that of his rivals due to his treatment and use of his mortal followers. Whereas both the Prince and the French Quarter lord tend to view the kine as nothing more than useful tools when they aren’t serving as meals, Cimitiere’s own faction consists almost entirely of mortals. They are more than sustenance to him (though they are certainly that before they are anything else). They are fellow believers,



brother and sister vodouisants. Cimitiere makes more efficient use of his mortal followers than Vidal or Savoy when building his schemes, but they are also his weakest point, as an attack against them damages his capabilities—and indeed, injures him—in a way it would not either of his rivals.

While Cimitiere despises Savoy and is concerned with attacks from that quarter, his primary concern, and his greatest enemy, is Prince Vidal.

Mob Rule

Perhaps the simplest of Cimitiere's tactics, one that he has made use of for decades and increased in the past few years, involves the placement of his mortal followers. The Baron has literally hundreds of kine on whom he can call, either directly or through his network of *houngans* and *mambos*. Because his followers come from the lower echelons of society, they tend to work at fairly menial jobs, such as those in maintenance and janitorial services. By encouraging his followers to apply for certain jobs, and by pulling strings with the few vodouisants who hold powerful positions or public office, Cimitiere has positioned a substantial portion of his following in specific businesses and specific industries. Tourist attractions, sports arenas, major charities, city offices, construction crews and the like all employ a great many blue-collar workers who hold some loyalty, directly or indirectly, to the Baron. Similarly, a substantial overlap exists between Cimitiere's followers and the local gangbangers. Thus, Cimitiere has his fist clenched tight around the support structure of many of Vidal's and Savoy's own areas of influence. A word from Cimitiere, an exhortation to strike from the many religious leaders of the vodoun community, and entire industries in New Orleans grind to a halt. Because some of these industries (such as tourist spots) power the city's economy, this in turn cripples other unrelated businesses.

Cimitiere does not wield this power lightly, as his own people, and all the city's kine, would suffer as a result. Still, because his rivals' interests would suffer more immediately and more severely, Cimitiere holds his options open. If nothing else, it would prevent them from launching an attack on his own interests, as they scrambled to regain their crumbling influence.

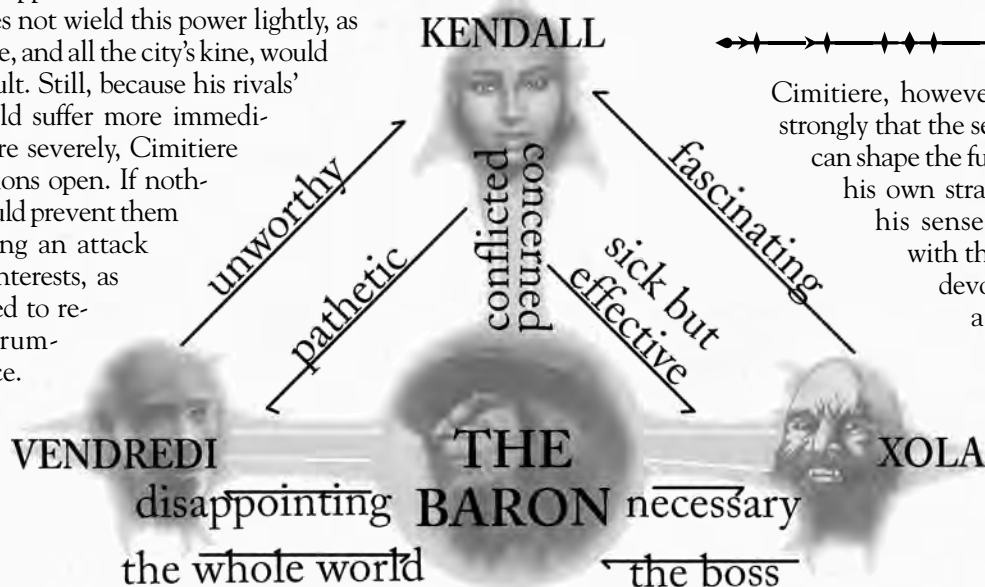
Looking Back

Surprisingly enough for creatures that are essentially endless, few of New Orleans' Kindred devote much attention to years gone by. This is partly due to the same hurdles that all Kindred would-be historians face; namely, the Fog of Ages prevents clear recollection of events long gone. In New Orleans specifically, however, those in power tend to frown on digging up the past. Vidal dislikes others looking into the details of his reign, and all the city's elders have something to hide.

DIGGING UP BONES

Due to his fascination with the past, Baron Cimitiere is always willing to exchange cash or favors with anyone who can deliver up a new piece of historical or mystical information. Furthermore, because his own Kindred followers are relatively few, the Baron has been known to hire outside vampires and coterie to search for specific knowledge in and around New Orleans. He prefers dealing with Kindred who are sympathetic to his cause, or at least neutral, but he will deal even with those ostensibly loyal to Vidal or Savoy—so long as they are not direct servants or operatives of those two—if they can deliver what he seeks.

A young and relatively unattached coterie, such as a traditional group of newly created players' characters, would serve Cimitiere's needs perfectly. They do not yet have the ingrained paranoia of the past, as they have few secrets of their own to be exposed, and much of their questioning can be dismissed as youthful curiosity. This is a perfect way for Storytellers to introduce their players to the third side of the primary conflict in the Big Easy, since Cimitiere's faction is often less visible than either Vidal's or Savoy's. Furthermore, in so doing, the Storyteller can introduce elements of New Orleans' long history that might not otherwise be available to the characters.



Cimitiere, however, believes very strongly that the secrets of the past can shape the future. Inspired by his own strange history and his sense of connection with the loa, the Baron devotes a substantial amount of his own time, and those of his

followers, into uncovering the true history of New Orleans. Lidia Kendall, in particular, is essential to this task and has often made use of her Ordo Dracul contacts for these purposes. (See p. 81 in **Chapter Four: Wheels Within Wheels.**) Cimitiere is searching for knowledge of his rivals, of course, but, more than that, he is delving into New Orleans' mystic past. He seeks to understand the spiritual nature of the region, why it is such a haven for restless spirits, why the loa drew their worshippers to this place, why areas of the city seem anathema (or particularly enticing) to vampires, and so forth. Cimitiere has even made use of New Orleans' ghosts in learning of the past, though many of the spirits have been reluctant to aid him since the *mambo* Rosa Bale came to prominence.

Cimitiere is, due to these studies, easily the most well-informed Kindred in the city when it comes to history, with the possible exceptions of Vidal and Chastain (who saw most of it personally). He knows everything but the deepest secrets of the elders, including many of the mystic convergences that the Ordo Dracul are only now attempting to map. Additionally, he is all but convinced that the "mythical" Choctaw elder did indeed exist, and the Baron's current fixation is on learning everything he can about this powerful ancient. If he can understand how the elder operated and how the newcomers to the region destroyed him, he can perhaps use that knowledge to his own advantage. (The notion that the elder may have, in fact, survived his apparent death has not, as of yet, occurred to Cimitiere as a real possibility.)

Once Cimitiere has a solid understanding of the paths and convergences of mystical energy in New Orleans—what the Ordo Dracul would call "ley lines"—he intends to create a ritual like none he has ever attempted. By modeling it after the failed rite in which he and Vidal participated in the 1920s, he hopes to duplicate that first ritual's effects without the sacrifice of one of the participants and without the targets necessarily standing in proximity. It would have to be a truly powerful incantation, one that may be beyond even Cimitiere's knowledge of Crúac sorcery. If it works, however, he can render Savoy, and all Vidal's and Savoy's followers, as impotent as Vidal himself is. While this will not weaken Cimitiere's foes immediately, it will prevent them from ever again siring, and thus increasing the size of their respective factions.

Mending Bridges

Cimitiere has recently sent numerous emissaries to Rosa Bale in hopes of ending hostilities for which he, at least, can see no reason. In the Baron's mind, they should be allies, united by faith. He knows that she despises him and speaks out against him in public, and he suspects—though he has not yet proven it sufficiently that he can justify attacking her directly—that she is responsible for the recent crimes that his own people have been blamed for. To date, all his efforts at conciliation have been rebuffed. Cimitiere has reluctantly decided that he

must be prepared to destroy her, and has set his operatives to learning more about her. He knows that Bale is in frequent communion with various spirits but is not yet aware of just how deep their connection runs. He still holds out hope that he can turn Bale, or at least steal away some of the ghosts who serve her, and thus gain a spy within Savoy's court.

Completing the Circle

Baron Cimitiere is technically a member of the Circle of the Crone, but it is a relationship more of convenience than conviction. His faith in vodoun aligns more closely with the tenets of the Acolytes than it does with any of the other covenants, but the Baron makes no secret of the fact that his loyalty is to his followers and fellow believers first, and the needs of the Circle a distant second.

That said, in recent years, Cimitiere has made overtures to members of the Circle of the Crone in New Orleans. He recognizes that he and the more traditional Acolytes share common enemies in the Big Easy, and that each could strengthen the other if they were to ally more closely with one another. To date, these talks have resulted in little more than vague promises and sharing of information. Anything more, and Prince Vidal might discover their communications and take steps to prevent this alliance between his enemies. Most of Cimitiere's discussions have taken place through the legitimate Hierophant, the Gangrel Nathaniel Blanch. Cimitiere, for all his metaphysical awareness, has no reason to suspect Blanch of being anything more than a highly positioned Acolyte. That Blanch might serve another power, one so far outside the factional warfare, has never even crossed the Baron's mind.

If Cimitiere does successfully ally himself with the Circle of the Crone, it will mark the first time in New Orleans' history that an entire covenant fully and completely aligned itself with one of the city's three factions. While the Circle isn't large or influential enough to tip the balance, it would mark a symbolic victory for Cimitiere and a threat to Vidal, which neither side could readily ignore.

Sins of the Father

Cimitiere has never been shy about expressing his belief that he has a rather direct rapport with the loa of Baron Samedi. He claims to have suffered true Final Death in Haiti and to have been returned to the Requiem by the loa himself. Cimitiere believes, furthermore, that it was Baron Samedi himself who infused Cimitiere's essence during the ritual that metaphysically sterilized Prince Vidal. Cimitiere believes, to the core of his being, that he is unlike any other Kindred.

And he is determined to pass that difference on to Kindred yet to come.

Baron Cimitiere sees himself as the first member of a new Damned bloodline, but, more than that, as the progenitor of a new Kindred species. Even as the Ordo Dracul

believe that their own infamous founder was Embraced by no vampire but rather was cursed to the Requiem by God Himself, so does Cimitiere believe that his own future progeny need not be of the same lineage as most Kindred, whatever that lineage may be. To that end, even as the Baron seeks ancient mystic knowledge and studies rites intended to harm his foes, he practices other rituals on himself. He studies Kindred physiology, his own and—on very rare occasions—other vampires who will not be missed, acquired for him by devotees such as Ephram Xola (see p. 102 in **Chapter Five: Working the Street**). The Baron even studies the interaction of Kindred and spirits, and has engaged several ghosts in long conversations regarding the details of haunting and possession. He seeks to understand precisely the ways in which he differs from other Kindred, and to develop mystic rites that will allow him to ensure that all those traits are passed to any he might choose to Embrace. Furthermore, Cimitiere seeks a magical means to transfer those same traits to others who are already Damned to the Requiem, followers he considers loyal enough to make his own family.



CIMITIERE'S BLOODLINE

Leaving aside the more extreme possibilities, such as the ability to Embrace without the loss of Willpower or to transform those already Damned, it's certainly not unlikely that Cimitiere will indeed find himself at the head of a new bloodline. Should the Storyteller wish, characters—perhaps even players' characters—of this new bloodline might appear in the chronicle.

Cimitiere's brood would be a bloodline of the Nosferatu clan, of course. Either through the Baron's teachings or perhaps innate nature, the brood would find themselves drawn to the practice of vodoun, and specifically, Cimitiere's own brand of Crúac. They would favor no particular covenant at first, being loyal only to Cimitiere's interests, but if they ever spread to other cities, they would likely find themselves drawn to the Circle of the Crone, the Ordo Dracul, or perhaps to the new vodoun-based covenant Cimitiere still hopes to found.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

Weakness: Cimitiere's childer share the same uneasy aura, and penalties to Presence- and Manipulation-based rolls. In addition, all of Cimitiere's potential childer are innately tied to their faith. (This is vodoun for the vast majority of them but could be another religion for specific characters.) They must spend two Willpower points to deliberately act in a way counter to the teachings of their faith, or in a way that would harm an entire community of their brethren. If an opportunity to advance the cause of their faith arises, and they do not wish to pursue it, they must spend one Willpower point to ignore the opportunity.



Should these rites succeed, Cimitiere will become more than the progenitor of a new bloodline. He will have the ability to grant his bloodline's traits to other Kindred already undead and, perhaps, even to create new childer through the power of Baron Samedi alone, with no need to expend his own willpower in the process. It is unlikely in the extreme, certainly, but should such an event come to pass, Cimitiere would easily become the most powerful Kindred in New Orleans, and well beyond—for no barrier other than his own judgment would stand between him and any number of newly Embraced childer.

Nathaniel Blanch

To look at him, few would suspect that the unassuming Gangrel named Nathaniel Blanch wields some of the greatest power in all of New Orleans. Most Kindred know that there is a local Hierophant for the Circle of the Crone, but few would think to connect that personage with the scruffy-looking man before them. Indeed, some neonates even default to the assumption that Baron Cimitiere is the local Hierophant (though no neonate who's actually an Acolyte, of course).

In point of fact, Nathaniel Blanch—who is referred to only as "Hierophant" by any resident Circle member—is powerful for three different reasons. First, he is a true elder (though few can say for sure just how old he is), which immediately puts him in rather selective company where New Orleans is concerned. Second, along with Baron Cimitiere, he is perhaps the mightiest practitioner of Crúac for hundreds of miles (with the exception of Sam; see the end of this chapter). Again, many assume by default that this distinction goes to Baron Cimitiere. Many assume wrong. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Nathaniel Blanch knows a very, very important secret.

Like many elders of his clan, Blanch is an incredibly insightful Kindred spiritualist. Over the course of his extensive studies of Crúac, Blanch has learned a great deal about the nature of the Kindred soul, and about its raging Beast in particular. Much of his work with the other Acolytes involves teaching them to look inward and thereby discover the truths of their own spirits. And it was in this capacity that Nathaniel Blanch first uncovered the secret that is at once the source of his greatest potential and greatest apprehension.

To put it simply, the Hierophant of the Circle in New Orleans is the only vampire who knows not only that Sam is more than he seems, but also who Sam really is—or so he thinks. And therein lies the problem.

Borrowed Time

The official dogma of the Circle of the Crone in New Orleans, as laid out by the covenant's Hierophant, revolves around a complex amalgam of

mortal Native American animism and spiritualism. The main body of the Circle sees the work of powerful spirits all around, spirits tied to the land, to animals and even to the undead. Blanch himself believes that the Kindred have the potential to become as one with the most powerful of these spirits and, in so doing, transcend their form.

The problem is that Nathaniel Blanch's beliefs are presently leading him on a dangerous search. Blanch is fully aware that Sam is a vampire, but the Hierophant's belief in what elder Acolytes (and especially those of his clan) are capable of are leading him to think that Sam rose from torpor somehow *changed* in his very essence. The few in-depth conversations the two have shared left Blanch literally astounded by what the *truly* elder Gangrel knew and understood—and thus, what Blanch himself did not. Blanch came away from the exchanges utterly convinced that Sam had, in fact, accomplished—through nothing more than a protracted sleep!—what he himself sought to do all his unlife: Transcend.

A passing reference by the reawakened elder vampire (if he truly was a “vampire” anymore) sent Blanch's mind—and his ambitions—into spin. Sam mentioned a powerful network of spiritual pathways woven into the fabric of reality in the city (some would call them “ley lines”), and further implied that the dynamic energies of these cross-patterns were instrumental in the spiritual progress Sam had made while his body slumbered. As a result, Blanch has grown convinced that what happened is that Sam, as powerful and aware as he was, chose the exact spot where these pathways converged to take his sleep, and thus, somehow benefited from resting deep within the earth at this potent nexus.

When Blanch delicately broached the subject in conversation, Sam merely laughed and reminded him that, even were his theory accurate (and he wasn't confirming that it was), the dynamic pathways had shifted and grown since then, and that anyone else taking his rest in the same spot wouldn't gain the same effect. Blanch accepts this, but, deep within his soul, he yearns for the chance to grow and transcend as he believes the elder did. What's more, he feels he may be running out of time. From what he knows of these spiritual pathways, there is always an optimum time in their ebb and flow, a time when the convergence is where it needs to be in order to draw the most benefit from it. And if he doesn't take the opportunity that's been presented to him soon, he may have to wait a very long time.

For now, he is legitimately enjoying the opportunity to serve as Sam's lifeline to the strange, new world to which he has awakened. His goal, above all, is to protect the sanctity of Sam's privacy and his secret. Blanch is no fool, and he knows full well that Vidal cannot

afford to discover that one even older than he, one who once ruled the domain Vidal now claims as his own, has returned. Besides, if Sam's secret was to get out, there would be only one person to blame, and in that event, Blanch is quite confident that Sam would never assist him with the transcendence he seeks (if not kill Blanch outright for his betrayal).



AN ALLIANCE OF INCONVENIENCE

Unlike in many cities the world over, the Circle of the Crone in New Orleans is a covenant divided. The division comes from the fact that Baron Cimitiere's dogma does not correspond to that followed by the main body of Acolytes. Cimitiere's vodoun model is similar enough to the local Circle dogma (at least on the fundamentals) that no outward hostility exists between the two sub-factions, but nevertheless, the division remains a barrier to a unified Circle in the Big Easy.

While Blanch finds Cimitiere unorthodox at best, and somewhat distasteful at worst, his policy has always been one of mutual indifference where the Baron is concerned. Blanch has, in essence, allowed a second coven of Acolytes to blossom in “his” city, presumably in the name of continued decent relations with the Baron.

Recently, however, Blanch has been pursuing the notion of tightening his alliance with Baron Cimitiere. He knows that Baron Cimitiere is an equally capable Crúac sorcerer, one who also studies the “ley lines” in the city, and Blanch wonders if a real alliance might not help him achieve his greater goal of getting the spirit pathways' secrets laid bare for him. He is, of course, taking his time with this endeavor, as offering too quick a hand after so many years might be seen as suspicious by both the Baron and by Sam (though Blanch has considered the possibility that *nothing* he does is anything but transparent to the elder-cum-demigod Gangrel).



The Secret of Sam

Everybody knows Sam. Sam is the friendly if quiet fellow who meanders around town, occasionally muttering to himself in low and often hushed tones. Sam is the unassuming homeless man who spends most of his time in one of the few New Orleans parks that aren't regularly monopolized by the flow of mortal men in ugly pants (most notably Audobon Park, Louis Armstrong Park and the northern half of City Park). Sam is the crumpled old wino who keeps to himself. Everybody knows Sam—right?

Wrong.

The truth of the matter is that the ragamuffin called “Sam” is a great deal more than meets the eye. While it is more or less common knowledge that Sam is a

vampire (word spread fast after one of the more brash, young Kindred crewes mistook him for a mortal re-past one night in 2002), few have reason to suspect that he is anything other than the quiet, independent neonate he appears to be. After all, why would they? Even if he had more to offer than his scruffy-seeming appearance would imply, he's done nothing in recent years to suggest that he has even the slightest interest in involving himself in Kindred politics in New Orleans.

As a result, all parties involved have agreed to more or less ignore Sam. As is becoming standard operating procedure these nights, any Kindred who remains legitimately neutral in the factional struggles of the city is more than welcome to stay that way. Better that than to have yet another vampire make a choice, and in so doing, make an enemy of himself to two-thirds of the power-players in town. So long as Sam stays uninvolved, he stays unimportant, and thus below scrutiny.

And that is precisely how Sam prefers it.

In point of fact, Sam is without a doubt the single most powerful vampire in New Orleans, if not the entire state of Louisiana. Or at least he was, at one point. These nights, most of his power is consolidated down into his own physical form or into the one network of contacts he still maintains (through his relationship with the Hierophant of the city's Acolytes). The majority of his "political" power, such as it was, faded when he abdicated it voluntarily in the mid-eighteenth century.

Yes, the homeless Kindred known as Sam is none other than the Choctaw elder who once ruled as his own domain the land that would one night become New Orleans. This elder (whose original name is buried deep in his subconscious) knew which way the wind was blowing at the time and chose to manipulate events in such a way that he could quietly withdraw, while simultaneously leaving the few who knew of his existence with the belief that they had destroyed him.

Sam's recent awakening from a long and cathartic torpor has left him puzzled by the current state of both the Kindred and the larger world around him. While he learned and grew a great deal through his meditative sleep, he was nonetheless unprepared for the practical changes he would find upon his return, and he is taking his time both adapting to these changes and sizing up the Kindred of his old domain. His only meaningful contact with other vampires has been through the local Hierophant, who knows that a being of immense power and wisdom walks among the Kindred of New Orleans, but Sam uses that lifeline both sparingly and carefully, lest the truth of his existence spread to other Kindred. Sam knows about the political détente in New Orleans and also that the current Prince is about to take a rest of his own. For the time being, Sam has

decided to watch and wait, at least until the irony that is Prince Vidal's situation has passed.

Sam and the Three

Using Sam in a New Orleans chronicle is a potentially tricky proposition. He certainly has the capability to be a destabilizing force upon an already unstable situation. Given his present course of action, however, it is highly unlikely that he would pose a direct threat to any of the three major power-players until Vidal has passed into torpor. The most effective way, then, of working him into a story is to discuss how the three faction heads would likely react to the truth about old Sam.

For Prince Vidal, the news of the Choctaw elder's return would be nothing short of catastrophic. While Savoy and Cimitiere may be rivals worthy of careful planning and poise, Vidal is nonetheless confident in his ability to best them in the end—ultimately, he is confident of his sheer, objective *superiority* over them. Not so one who is even elder than he, and particularly not the very one from whom Vidal himself snatched all that he now claims as his own. If news of the elder's return were to reach Vidal, he would likely respond by delaying his own rest, though both risky and maddening such a move would be, at least until the matter of the elder was resolved. Depending on how one is running Vidal, news of the elder may be the very thing that drives him over the edge, thus creating a host of new and different problems. In this case, it would behoove those loyal to Vidal, such as his advisor Maldonato, to prevent such news from ever reaching their tired and besieged archbishop in the first place.

It is highly likely that news of a mighty elder's return would strike Antoine Savoy in much the same way as any other interesting development. Savoy's reaction would largely depend on whether or not he was the only one who knew of the elder's return. If Savoy were the only one, he would strive to keep the fact a secret until the very moment when its release would prove most beneficial to himself and most disruptive to his rivals. If the news was not contained within his own faction, Savoy would likely strive to determine how best to play the elder (or even just the elder's reputation) against both Vidal and Cimitiere. If Savoy discovered the elder's importance to the Circle of the Crone, he would surely focus his efforts (at least for the time being) on disrupting the Baron, for fear of the Baron gaining the upper hand in the city. Depending on how the game is run, this may even involve a temporary truce, if not an alliance, with Vidal himself (or at least his Seneschal).

News of the existence of an elder Circle member—one whom the local Hierophant himself reveres for his wisdom and personal mastery—would likely cause a stir

of nervous excitement in Baron Cimitiere's camp. Before any overt moves could be taken, however, the Baron himself would first insist on feeling out the elder's spiritual and political attitudes towards the issues at work in the city in general and towards vodoun in particular. Despite common ground shared on a covenantal level, if the Baron were to discover that the elder had an axe to grind against the Baron's religion or his people, that would color any future dealings between the two. (For the record, Sam bears no inherent ill-will toward the Baron's religion but would probably find it an odd manifestation of Circle beliefs).

Sam and the Characters

While it is not terribly likely that of all the Kindred in New Orleans, the first ones to stumble across the truth about Sam would be the players' characters, the possibility nevertheless remains for Storytellers who wish to pursue it. In this event, the question becomes, what can the characters do with the information?

If the Storyteller is running **City of the Damned: New Orleans** under the default assumption of a neonate coterie, it is highly likely that the characters will see the news as a piece of either social or political leverage. They can turn around and "sell" the information to one or more of the three faction heads, or simply offer it freely in the hopes of establishing goodwill (and perhaps the assumption of a favor to be named later on). Alternately, the characters can attempt to parlay the news into gains of their own accord, irrespective of the key political players. Perhaps the characters intend to unite the other Kindred krewes under their banner and, in so doing, become a force to be reckoned with in city politics.

Whatever the characters decide to do, it should be obvious from the start that directly manipulating, threatening, or harming the elder would be an exceedingly poor idea, and that any gains to be made would have to be made either in accordance with the elder's wishes or entirely in secret, behind the elder's back.

Characters

The city of New Orleans occupies an unusual niche in the secret world of the Kindred. While New Orleans does not bear the distinction of hosting the greatest numbers of their kind—such distinction falls to more densely populated cities like Cairo, São Paulo and Tokyo—it does bear the honor of playing host to more *visiting* Kindred than almost any other city in the United States. The city averages just over 40 Kindred visitors per day, averaged out over the course of the year. During some months, this number is lower (as few as only five non-residents), while in other months the city sees as many as 80 visiting Kindred at the same time.

The Damned presented in this section in each of the following chapters do not include any of these visitors. Indeed, they don't even include all the permanent resident Kindred of the city. Rather, they focus on the most important or politically active residents; just about half of the vampires in New Orleans who aren't the players' characters, in other words. Other characters are referenced both here and in the Appendix of the **Vampire** corebook but are not given detailed descriptions in either book. The ones presented in the Characters sub-section of Chapters Three, Four and Five, then, are the central Storyteller characters of the New Orleans chronicle.

Won't you meet them?

Prince Vidal's Faction

The majority of the vampires in New Orleans are part of Augusto Vidal's faction, by virtue of his being the established authority in the area if nothing else. Although every vampire in the domain is subject to Vidal's laws, every vampire isn't obligated to legitimately support his rule. Of the 60 or so permanent Kindred residents of the city, about 35 to 40 believe—or at least pretend—that it is in their best interests (whether short-term or long) to keep Vidal's house in power.

An important distinction merits stating here. Not every Kindred in Vidal's faction is part of his covenant, the Lancea Sanctum. Although it's true that all of his officers (Seneschal, Sheriff, Master of Elysium, etc.) are among the Sanctified, Vidal's administration has always made sure that members of the other covenants know that they will be treated with respect in New Orleans so long as they abide by the domain's rules. To this extent, even Kindred who are part of the unaligned covenant can still be considered Vidal's supporters. Only those who are publicly opposed to his policies or intentionally neutral in Kindred politics as a whole are considered part of a different faction. These standoffish Kindred, known here as the "Independent," are presented as a separate faction later on in the chapter.

Augusto Vidal, Prince of New Orleans

Clan: Ventruue

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1701

Apparent Age: Mid-to-late 30s

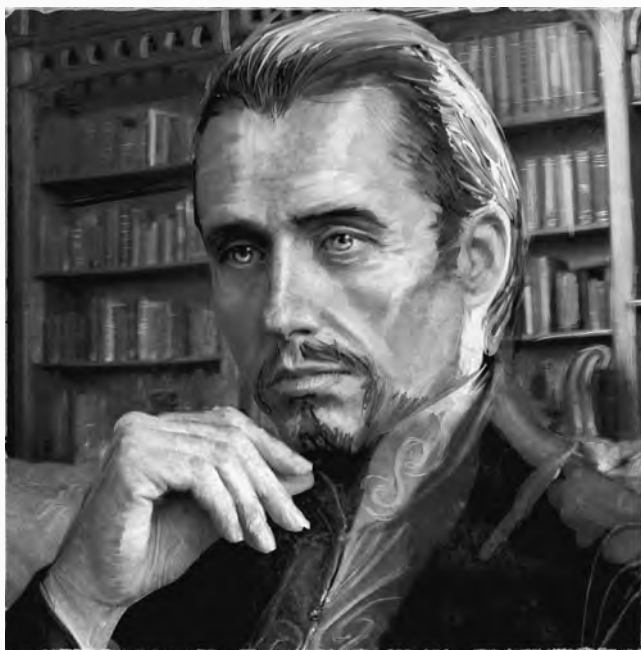
Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 6

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Catholic Dogma) 3, Computer 1, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 6, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4, Weaponry 5



Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Etiquette) 6, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Allies (Local Government) 3, Allies (High Society) 3, Allies (Police) 4, City Status 5, Clan Status (Ventrue) 4, Contacts 3, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 5, Haven 4, Herd 3, Language (English, French, Latin), Retainer 3, Resources 4

Willpower: 9 (reduced from 10 by unlife activities)

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Health: 11

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Speed: 15

Blood Potency: 7

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Dominate 5, Resilience 5, Vigor 4, Majesty 4

Derangements: Narcissism (mild; 5), Suspicion (severe; 7)

Vitae/per Turn: 20/5

Augusto Vidal's star has not shifted from the mansion of fortune for two-and-a-half centuries now, and the simple truth is that he is growing weary. Unknown to even his closest ally and advisor, Augusto Vidal recently slipped beyond the veil of mortal sustenance and into the dark realm of cannibalism. Only by virtue of a loyal coterie of stupefied neonates (see The Storyville Coterie entry in Chapter Three) does the mighty Ventrue even subsist from night to night. He hasn't yet degenerated into actual diablerie, but he fears that night will come for him eventually, and the pressure to get his affairs in order before that happens weighs heavily on Vidal's proud brow in recent nights.

TWO VIDALS?

As mentioned before, **City of the Damned: New Orleans** is meant to be used in conjunction with the New Orleans Appendix from the **Vampire** corebook. Some of the characters introduced there are presented here as well, and the information provided is meant to be combined with that of the Appendix entries. The important thing to remember is that the descriptions offered in the Appendix were drawn with potential New Orleans players in mind. The information presented here was designed with New Orleans Storytellers in mind.

In other words, whereas the Appendix represents the outward appearance of the city, this book represents the secret reality. Where ideas and statistics seem to differ between the two sources, those presented here are the actual, "right" ones.

The truth of the matter is that Vidal has spent so long maintaining his grip on the reins of power in New Orleans that he simply doesn't know *how* to hand the domain over to someone else, never mind to *whom* he should hand it over. Decades ago, he was stripped of the ability to sire a worthy successor, and the blow proved a devastating one for the family-obsessed Catholic Ventrue.

Tonight, Vidal wages a war of attrition against his own sanity. He knows that the appearance of weakness, or at least the inevitable approach thereof, has signaled a call to arms amongst his enemies. He fears that even those who were once bitter rivals have now banded together to take advantage of the one time—the *only* time—when the great Augusto Vidal is at his most vulnerable. Vidal even suspects those closest to him except for his Seneschal, who disappointed him by refusing to run the domain for the extended period of time Vidal intends to be in torpor. Vidal knows that he is on borrowed time now, and he struggles nightly with not only what must be done but with how he could have ended up in this situation after so long in control. He had been so careful.

Philip Maldonato, Advisor and Priscus

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1752

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Mental: Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Humanities) 5, Computer 3, Craft 2, Investigation 5, Medicine 2, Occult (Kindred) 5, Politics (Seneschal) 4, Science (Mathematics) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Weaponry (Sword) 6

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Allies (Police) 4, Allies (High Society) 3, Allies (City Hall) 1, City Status 3, Clan Status (Mekhet) 1, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 2, Danger Sense, Disarm, Fast Reflexes 2, Haven 3, Herd 1, Language (Arabic, English, French, Latin), Meditative Mind, Mentor 3, Resources 4

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Wrath

Health: 9

Initiative: 13

Defense: 5

Speed: 15

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 5, Majesty 2, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 3, Vigor 2

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

Perhaps the only vampire in New Orleans who is under more pressure than Augusto Vidal is his Seneschal and long-time advisor, Philip Maldonado. The elder Mekhet has always borne the brunt of the responsibilities of the domain, especially when it came to cleaning up the Prince's political messes or image, and as Vidal grows more and more erratic in his behavior his loyal Seneschal must work harder and harder to keep things from coming apart at the seams.

Maldonado's loyalty is perhaps the only remaining constant in Vidal's downwardly spiraling unlife, and the responsibility of being such a spiritual anchor is one that the Mekhet has taken very seriously for centuries. What began as casual alliance turned to unshakeable loyalty in post-*Reconquista* Spain, back before either of the two had traveled to America yet. During the chaos of the Seven Years War, rival Kindred tracked Maldonado to Cordoba and set up what amounted to a dragnet that would have snared its target before he could escape the city. Vidal aided Maldonado's disappearance. When Vidal was sent to Louisiana not long thereafter, a grateful Maldonado proudly accompanied him and has left neither Vidal's side nor his service ever since. Maldonado believes he owes his unlife to Vidal, and that fact has shaped much of their history together.

Maldonado almost feels guilty about not wanting to rule his friend's domain in his absence but cannot don the mantle of Prince under any circumstances. Fearing that



even he is causing Vidal troubles these nights, Maldonado recently sent word back to his remaining contacts among the Mekhet clan, asking for someone to send him one of the Agonistes bloodline, who are famed for their ability to facilitate the transition to and from torpor. He feels that such a Kindred could help Vidal get his affairs in order but hasn't yet told Vidal the visitor is coming because he is unsure as to how Vidal would even respond to the news now. Little does Maldonado know that his invitation, while honorable, was perverted by his own contacts in the Old World, and that it is not one of the Agonistes who has arrived to "help," but a Judge of the Sons of Khalil. Depending on how the Judge finds the domain and its embattled Prince, Maldonado may well have just signed Vidal's death warrant.

Philip Maldonado is known for greeting visitors and taking meetings in exquisite, custom-tailored suits in muted tones. In private however, Maldonado is a child of tradition who prefers the loose fit of the traditional *galabiyya* and *fez*, and typically walks barefoot so that he may always feel the ground beneath his feet.

Pearl Chastain, Primogen

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Invictus

Embrace: 1726

Apparent Age: 30-something

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Craft 3, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics (New Orleans) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 4, Socialize (Etiquette) 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Allies (Old Money) 4, Allies (High Society) 3, City Status 3, Clan Status (Daeva) 4, Common Sense, Contacts 2, Covenant Status (Invictus) 2, Fame 1, Haven 4, Herd 4, Language (English), Resources 4, Retainer 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Sloth

Health: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 5

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 3, Celerity 2, Majesty 5, Resilience 2, Vigor 2

Derangements: Depression (mild; 6)

Vitae/per Turn: 14/2

As one of the city's oldest residents, Pearl Chastain is one of the few who can speak of New Orleans' rich history from personal experience. Through all the city's trials and tribulations she has remained, and her current plans serve to ensure that she will continue to remain for many years to come.

It is common knowledge that Chastain arrived in 1727 amid an influx of French settlers. What no city Kindred knows, however, is that she did not arrive alone. Chastain loves to tell other Kindred about how she did what was nigh unthinkable for a neonate of her era: How she traveled, alone, from the Old World to the New, across a vast ocean and with little to her name. The

truth, however, is that Chastain was brought to New Orleans by her sire, an ambitious Daeva lord who called himself the Marquis d'Avignon.

This sire's ambition was to claim the region as his own domain, where he could have his fill of both mortal blood and influence without the interference of other Kindred. And while the "marquis" was prepared for some resistance, he had no idea that an entrenched elder had already claimed the area as its private domain. Once he found out that this elder was a "savage," however, the driven Daeva masterminded an assault that was to have left him and him alone in control. What the assault actually accomplished was the "death" of both the Choctaw elder and its would-be destroyer—leaving Chastain in a strange place, alone.

Were it not for the dream of clan unity possessed by a Daeva named Maria Pascual, Chastain may never have survived her first few years in the region. While the city's other elders know of the relationship between the two Daeva, nobody realizes just how much Chastain valued Pascual's guidance and aid—nor just how much she now burns with the desire to avenge her fallen friend.

Miss Opal, Primogen

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1848

Apparent Age: Middle-aged

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation (Body Language) 3, Occult 2, Politics 4

Physical Skills: Brawl 4, Drive 1, Stealth 3, Survival (Urban) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation (Physical Threats) 4, Persuasion (Rhetoric) 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Labor Organizations) 3, Allies (Local Government) 3, City Status 3, Clan Status (Nosferatu) 3, Contacts 3, Covenant Status (Carthians) 4, Giant (Note: Miss Opal is only 5'6" or so; it is her vast bulk that accounts for this Merit), Haven 2, Herd 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath

Health: 10

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 3





Disciplines: Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Resilience 3, Vigor 4

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Among the city's neonates, Miss Opal is often regarded as the most "accessible" of the domain's luminaries. The Nosferatu's dedication to the Carthian cause has won her numerous supporters, and she strives to encourage the impression that any resident Kindred (especially a fellow Carthian) can come to her whenever legitimate need arises.

Since awakening from torpor, Miss Opal has worked with a renewed vigor the likes of which even she hasn't seen in herself in decades. Her first step, refusing the added title of Priscus, was an important one. Not only did it pave the way for better relations with Baron Cimitiere, the clan's true elder in New Orleans, for whom she holds great respect, but it showed the rest of the Kindred how dedicated she really was to her responsibilities as one of Vidal's Primogen.

In that regard, she has spent the better part of the last 25 years "working" Vidal from within. She knows that her fellow Carthian and Primogen, Coco Duquette, has been unable to accomplish much, given her relative youth and the difficult choices the Prince seems to enjoy foisting upon her. Thus, Miss Opal's plan is to try and "tag-team" Vidal by making it seem as though she and Duquette do not fully see eye to eye on either political or ideological matters. In truth, she admires Duquette's passion, while pitying the situation in which the Mekhet finds herself.

Indeed, Miss Opal has recently come to the conclusion that the fortunes of her clan, ever her top priority, are more inexorably linked to those of the Carthian Movement than she had ever before realized. Given Vidal's crackdown on Baron Cimitiere, it is only a matter of time before cause and clan merge into purpose.

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1957

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Local Business) 3, City Status 3, Clan Status (Ventrue) 1, Common Sense, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 1, Haven 4, Herd 1, Resources 4, Retainer 3

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Majesty 3, Resilience 2

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

On the surface, Gabriel Hurst is everything rotten with the Louisiana Ventrue: religious fundamentalism, old money, cronyism, intolerance—all the hallmarks of loud-mouthed clanmates of his like Pierpont McGinn. The



truth, however, is that the two Ventrue couldn't be more different than if they tried.

Pierpont McGinn, a rabid spokesman for the First Estate in the region, is a violent racist who had abandoned any notion of accountability (to either his kind or his god) even before his Embrace. Hurst, on the other hand, is truly the Southern gentleman McGinn could never be. True, he is a God-fearing Christian, but the concept of loyalty isn't lost on him, and there isn't a racist bone in his dead body. Indeed, his fervent belief that the vampiric state is all *about* accountability flies in the face of everything for which parasites like McGinn and his ilk truly stand.

Indeed, the only thing really holding Hurst back is his age and experience among the Damned, especially as compared with that of his peers in New Orleans. Still, his recent appointment to Vidal's Primogen council was a step in the right direction, and Hurst now believes he may be coming into his own as a force for stability and prosperity in the region. His only fear is that he may be too late; he watches Vidal's grip slip a little every night and, with it, the circling of Vidal's enemies. He fears the only hope may be in uniting the covenant in the aftermath.

Coco Duquette, Primogen

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1892

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics (Kindred) 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 4, Socialize 4, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (City Hall) 3, Allies (Political Activists) 3, City Status 3, Clan Status (Mekhet) 3, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Haven 3, Herd 1, Inspiring, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 8

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Lust

Health: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Dominate 1, Majesty 2, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 1



Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

When Prince Vidal extended the invitation to join his Primogen council, Coco Duquette suspected some strings may be attached, but she had no idea she'd be in for *this*. While it has given her the opportunity to bend his ear on occasion, and certainly to be informed as to all the important issues at work in the city, she fears that the truth may be that the appointment did more to neutralize her than to give her an opportunity to use her stirring voice to political advantage.

What mystifies Duquette is that she has never been anything but a true supporter of Augusto Vidal's. She knows that some vampires in the city actively seek his ouster, and she has always been vocal about the fact that she feels this to be an extremely poor idea in the long run. She, like many others in the city, viewed Augusto Vidal as an eternal fixture of the city and, taking that as given, always framed her ambitions accordingly. Better to make one's self indispensable to a powerful ruler than to try and bring him low.

With the recent rumors of Vidal's impending torpor, however, and all the erratic behavior that has accompanied them, Duquette is beginning to wonder how best to adapt to the changing winds. One way or another, the truth is Prince Vidal will not be sitting atop the pyramid of power in New Orleans before too much longer—the single fact around which Coco Duquette's mode of thinking now revolves. Given her age and political ideology, she knows that she is unlikely to be named as his successor, but she feels that it may be within her power to influence who is so named and how that successor plans to actually administer the domain.

Donovan, Sheriff of New Orleans

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Lancea Sanctum
Embrace: 1865
Apparent Age: Late 20s
Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social: Presence 5, Manipulation 5, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics (Catholic Dogma) 3, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics (Kindred) 5, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Drive 3, Firearms 4, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation (Terror) 5, Persuasion (Coercion) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5
Merits: Allies (Police) 4, City Status 4, Clan Status (Daeva) 3, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style (Two Weapons) 3, Fresh Start, Haven (Security) 4, Herd 2, Resources 3
Willpower: 9
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Envy
Health: 9
Initiative: 10
Defense: 4
Speed: 14
Blood Potency: 3
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 4, Dominate 3, Majesty 4, Resilience 2, Vigor 2
Devotions: Veridical Tongue
Vitae/per Turn: 12/1



By all appearances, Donovan is truly the prodigal son of Vidal's New Orleans. Chillingly poised and refined, the Sanctified Daeva has almost as severe a reputation as the Prince himself, at least among city residents. To a large extent, however, Donovan's icy veneer is, like much in the Kindred world, a smokescreen, intended to distract other Kindred from the truths of his person. And it is a mask the man called Donovan has worn since before his Embrace.

The Sheriff's past is shrouded in mystery, and that is precisely how he likes it. Popular rumor tells that he was the orphaned child of a civil war soldier, and that Antoine Savoy brought him into the Requiem as a means of influencing certain critical aspects of the city's post-war effort during Reconstruction. What is perhaps the greater mystery, at least in Kindred social circles, is what sent Donovan from Savoy's side to the court of his sire's worst enemy. Only the Prince, his Seneschal and Savoy know what really happened, and none of them speak of it openly. Two rumors seem to prevail above others, however: The first suggests that Savoy refused to allow Donovan to create his own progeny, but many don't believe this to be the case as Donovan hasn't created any since taking up with Vidal. And the second suggests that Donovan's feud with Savoy is but another smokescreen, intended to plant Donovan inside the Prince's court. If that's the case, however, then the plan is certainly a long-term one, as Donovan has never done anything to either harm Vidal or aid Savoy in his time as Sheriff.

At first glance, the Sheriff of New Orleans seems more suited to hosting wine tastings or gallery openings than enforcing the edicts of a vampiric domain. Upon closer scrutiny, the source of his notoriety grows quickly apparent—but not due to any substantial physical presence. Donovan is a Caucasian man of average build, clean shaven, who keeps his short black hair combed neat and slick against his scalp. He's even a bit short, standing only a hair over 5'9" tall. No, what makes the Sheriff an imposing figure is his gaze: Donovan's inscrutable eyes are the color of troubled skies, and they seem to pierce through to the very soul of whoever looks into them. Even other Kindred find it hard to hold his gaze.

Lord Savoy's Faction

Antoine Savoy's supporters in New Orleans are few but both avid and capable. The so-called French Quarter Lord surrounds himself with two types of people—those who harbor some resentment towards Augusto Vidal and those whom he believes he can manipulate—and prefers that those closest to him possess at least some measure of both qualities. Savoy's camp includes about ten vampires and three times as many ghouls.

He is, of course, always looking to draw new “believers” to his cause and, in this regard, will likely pay special attention to coteries of impressionable neonates—such as the player’s characters.

Antoine Savoy, Lord of the French Quarter

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: Savoy claims his Embrace occurred in the early 1700s. Kindred who have reason to believe otherwise suspect it to have been closer to 1840.

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Church History) 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Occult (Vodoun) 4, Politics 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Guile) 4, Socialize 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Con Jobs) 4

Merits: Allies (Local Government) 2, Allies (Occult) 2, Allies (Criminal) 2, City Status 4, Clan Status (Daeva) 3, Contacts 3, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 4, Fame 1, Haven 3, Herd 3, Language (English 3, Spanish 3), Resources 4

Willpower: 9

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Envy

Health: 7

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3



Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Majesty 5, Resilience 2, Theban Sorcery 3

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Vitae Reliquary (1); Liar’s Plague (2); Blandishment of Sin (3)

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

After more than a century of patient planning, Antoine Savoy’s time is finally at hand—or so he believes. He finds the irony delicious: Now that Vidal is buckling under the weight of his own years, it is Savoy’s relative youth that puts him in the perfect position to capitalize. (If he were truly as old as he claims, he would presently find himself in the same position as Vidal.) He knows that Vidal would never willingly cede the domain to someone like him but that concerns him little. If all goes according to plan, Vidal’s monster will eat itself, leaving Savoy alone in the seat of power when all the dust has cleared.

Despite his rather vocal claims to the contrary, Savoy has not actually been a resident of New Orleans since 1721, nor did he arrive here as one of the Kindred. In point of fact, Savoy (who was not born named “Antoine Savoy”) spent most of his mortal life living in New Orleans in the late 18th century. Indeed, the majority of his activities were geared towards escaping attention, so it was no surprise that few Kindred knew of him when he finally emerged as a genuine contender. The one vampire whose attentions he did capture was Maria Pascual, and she was so taken by him that she took him for her own. The captivating young Daeva soon became Maria Pascual’s “dark secret” in New Orleans, and it was her fascination with keeping his attentions focused on her that would be her downfall.

By the late 19th century, Savoy’s influence on his sire was so great that he managed to convince her to step down from the Primogen council, all while continuing to keep his activities hidden from the rest of the city’s Kindred. This was the first step in a 30-year scheme that would eventually result in Maria Pascual’s destruction and his subsequent acquisition of her power and holdings. With Pascual out of the way and the French Quarter his own private domain, Savoy was ready to begin the next great scheme of his sordid unlfe: The erosion of Prince Vidal’s support and power base, pursuant to the theft of his domain.

The Baron’s Faction

On a Kindred level, the smallest of the three major factions in New Orleans is that of Baron Cimitiere. Although his mortal supporters are legion, Cimitiere claims only a handful of undead followers, and he would have it no other way. In truth, Cimitiere seems a little distracted by the presence of other Kindred (especially non-vodouisant vampires) and is therefore extremely circumspect about what company he keeps and where. Those

Kindred with whom he is comfortable, however, are treated as equals (or nearly so) and have the Baron's true respect. Such individuals include his advisor Lidia Kendall, Doc Xola, his *mambo* protégé Malia Eliza Curry and his one and only childe, Josue.

Baron Cimitiere, Circumstantial Regent

Clan: Nosferatu (special)

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: Indeterminate

Mental: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 3, Crafts 2, Investigation (Research) 5, Medicine 3, Occult (Vodoun) 5, Politics 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation (Staredowns) 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (Vodouisaints) 5, Allies (Occult) 2, Allies (Mainstream Religion) 1, City Status 3, Clan Status (Nosferatu) 2, Contacts 2, Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) 4, Fame 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Haven (Security) 3, Herd 5, Language (English)

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Health: 9

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3



Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 5

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 3, Crúac 5, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Resilience 3, Vigor 1

Crúac Rituals: Appetite of Limba (Pangs of Proserpina) (1), Rigor Mortis (1); Cheval (2); Deflection of the Wooden Doom (3); Touch of Sousou Panman (Touch of the Morrigan) (3); Blood Price (4); Feeding the Loa (Feeding the Crone) (5); Blood Blight (5)

Vitae/per Turn: 14/2

New Orleans' most enigmatic Kindred is not as mysterious as some would believe. He simply wants for himself and his followers to be left to their own devices, or so he claims. What could be more simple? In a city like New Orleans, dominated as it is by the Lancea Sanctum, such a question is never as simple as it seems. And when it comes to Baron Cimitiere, the truth is always complicated.

The truth is that Baron Cimitiere believes that when Baron Samedi, the patron loa of the dead and of cemeteries, returned him from Final Death, he did so because he intended for Cimitiere to continue the work for which Baron Samedi was always meant. This is why Cimitiere gathers the Kindred followers of vodoun under his banner: To one night unite them all into a single covenant composed of those who revere the loa that allows them to defy death for eternity. Cimitiere believes that all vampires pass briefly through Samedi's realm, and that it is only by his graces that they return to the living world. He views those who fail to honor Samedi and the other loa as disrespectful at best and dangerously ignorant at worst. Neither Cimitiere nor his followers see much point in forcing others to accept the truth, but he does believe his goal is important, and he works toward it unflaggingly.

Although that night is still far off, Cimitiere aims for his eventual covenant to be an offshoot of the Circle of the Crone—one that teaches its members the new brand of blood magic Cimitiere is developing even now. Although neither this new, vodoun-based Discipline nor the covenant to whom it will be available yet exists, this is the goal that occupies much of Cimitiere's time. His mastery of the Circle's powers, along with the mystical changes he claims Baron Samedi wrought upon his essence, has led him to believe he is very close now. He suspects that the key to unlocking the new power lies in his own blood: Once he is ready, his next childe—the first of a new bloodline—will know its secrets.

Nathaniel Blanch, the Hierophant

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Blood Potency: 5

Merits: Allies (Hippies and Neo-Pagans) 2, City Status 3, Clan Status (Gangrel) 4, Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) 5, Fast Reflexes 1, Haven (Security) 4, Language (French, Latin), Resources 3

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Crúac 5, Protean 4, Resilience 4, Vigor 2

Devotions: Arcane Sight

Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina (1), Rigor Mortis (1); The Hydra's Vitae (2); Deflection of the Wooden Doom (3); Blood Price (4), Willful Vitae (4); Blood Blight (5), Feeding the Crone (5)

One of the most powerful Kindred in the city is also one of the most private, making Baron Cimitiere seem sociable by comparison. As the Hierophant of the local Circle of the Crone, Nathaniel Blanch is most often preoccupied with matters of covenant, spirit or both, and has little time for the political games played by his fellow Kindred. Some Kindred know of him, as he is an elder of the city, and he does make the occasional appearance at select Kindred gatherings, but this is done more out of respect for the local Prince than out of any real desire to attend.



Lately, Blanch has grown nigh-obsessed with his latest discovery: He and he alone knows that a mighty elder of his clan—older by far than even the Prince—has recently awakened from his extended slumber somewhere inside the city limits. Blanch, being an experienced Acolyte and elder of the Gangrel clan, has long sought answers to the mysteries posed by the vampiric form, and the secrets this risen elder has to offer have provided Blanch with renewed incentive in his efforts. Although he has no means of confirming this, Blanch suspects that the elder somehow achieved the exalted state of Golconda not only during his great sleep but in large part *because* of it. Blanch now longs to discover if this theory is true, and if so, how it came to pass, and how he may benefit from it as well. Blanch is a master of Crúac, and although the journey has been more than enlightening, he is sharply aware that his humanity has ebbed away in the process. And although Blanch doesn't miss it, he is very keen to know whether or not humanity plays a role in one's ascending to Golconda, if for no other reason than to know for once and for all whether or not the exalted state of being is still an option for him at all.

Nathaniel Blanch was a true Renaissance man in life—an explorer first and foremost, but along the way, a travel guide, fur trapper, and, finally, civil engineer. He was one of the first white men to enter the area after France granted John Law's company the right to charter in fact and was even part of the team that laid out the original street plans for Bienville's new city. He remembers little of those early days, save in the occasional snapshot during his troubled daysleep. Much of his memory is focused on his time as one of the undead and, more specifically, on the rather substantial progress he has made on his own spiritual and mystical development. He prides himself on being attuned to forces and energies to which other Kindred remain blind their entire unlives and doesn't care to concern himself with anything that will take him away from his growth.

Blanch is somewhat short by today's standards but has a commanding force of presence that belies his size. His dark brown hair lays flat against his head, coming to rest in a slight curl just below his ears. A well-groomed moustache and Vandyke would give him an almost roguish appearance, but his timeless hazel eyes betray any sense of youth he might otherwise project. When out in public, he favors the long coat and hiking boots that have served him well for centuries.



Chapter Wheels Within Wheels

*Just take confession,
my son,
and you'll be
free to go.*

*- Father John Marrow,
Sanctified Priest*

Ambition can creep as well as soar.

Donovan

Perhaps the most well-known of the Crescent City's ancillae is the Prince's Sheriff, a powerful Daeva named Donovan. And, with the possible exception of Vidal's errant Hound (see Caitlin Meadows, p. 92), who is nearly all-rampage at this point, Donovan also claims the unofficial title of the city's most *feared* ancilla. As Sheriff, Donovan (who claims to have no surname) is responsible for the night-to-night maintenance and enforcement of the laws of Vidal's domain. He investigates matters on behalf of the Prince, and regularly questions Kindred residents about both their own activities and the activities of those they know.

Unlike his counterpart at court, Gus (the Prince's Master of Elysium), Donovan makes sure his presence is nigh ubiquitous in and around the hallowed halls of power. His commanding mien draws immediate attention from new arrivals, and even social veterans find it difficult not to pause in their conversations (even if ever-so-briefly) as he passes by. The impression many have of Donovan is that he likes to think of himself as a knight of the realm; a Templar to Vidal's Archbishop. His actual reputation, however, more accurately likens him to a judge-inquisitor—a cunning zealot who uses guilt, guile and the threat of force more often than force itself to intimidate or otherwise humble into acquiescence those whom he interrogates. Indeed, more than one shaken neonate has opted to abandon New Orleans entirely following a simple “dialogue” with the city's Sanctified Sheriff.

What is perhaps more intimidating is Donovan's most recent activity. As Vidal's composure nightly ebbs away, Donovan takes a more and more stern (and often direct) approach to his “duties.” He seems to have been instructed, either by the Prince's advisor or by Vidal himself, to be more proactive in the furtherance of his position. What is clear to all is that Donovan far less frequently feels

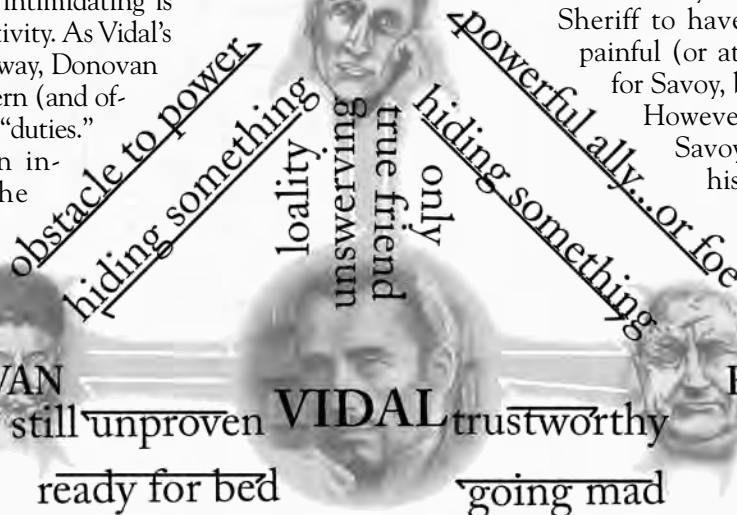
the need to bring an offending Kindred before the Prince directly. It is almost as though he has been given *carte blanche* with respect to his responsibilities, so long as he does not unduly “bother” the Prince with the details thereof or otherwise jeopardize the Prince's standing among his subjects. And many fear that, where once was a cunning judge, now stands a judge, jury and executioner.

A Family Matter

Of the various “open secrets” floating around the quagmire of intrigue that is New Orleans Kindred society, surely one of the most popular is the origin of the Sheriff's blood. The “secret's” popularity is due in part to the juiciness of its subject matter but also in part to the fact that the truth actually corresponds (more or less) with the grist of the social rumor mill for a change. The rumor and truth is that Donovan is the childe of no less a personage than Antoine Savoy, the self-proclaimed “lord of the French Quarter” and bitter rival to Augusto Vidal.

Although his politesse is beyond accomplished, Donovan makes little effort to conceal his outward disgust at his own sire. Few can say what occurred between sire and childe so many years ago, but whatever it was, it was enough to drive Donovan from the shadow of Savoy—and straight into Vidal's court. Very quickly, the Ventrue elder took the young Daeva under his wing and, before too many years had passed, was treating him (in public, at least) as Vidal would his own childe. Many believe the night Donovan was ritually exalted to the position of Sheriff to have been an exceptionally painful (or at least embarrassing) one for Savoy, but none can say for sure: However he actually felt about it, Savoy handled the matter with his usual diplomatic aplomb and, in the years since, has had fewer direct run-ins with his former protégé than some might expect—until recently, of course. Given Donovan's activities of late, many

MALDONATO



DONOVAN

VIDAL

ELGIN

wonder what will become of the already tenuous relationship between the two rival Daeva.

Race Against Time

While many are aware of the not-so-quiet rivalry between Donovan and his estranged sire, what they do not realize is that someone else occupies even more of the Sheriff's thoughts of late. Donovan recently discovered that a person, or persons, unknown has been quietly digging into both his current affairs and his background, apparently sparing little expense to keep those investigative activities a secret in the process. This greatly worries Donovan, as he does indeed have something to hide—something that would ruin him, if exposed.

Donovan's primary fear is that someone has finally stumbled onto his darkest secret: The fact that, while he presents the seeming of a faithful and influential Sanctified, he is truly no more devout or loyal to the covenant than is his sire. From all outward evidence, Donovan is the very model of a devoted member of the Lancea Sanctum—attentive to ritual, knowledgeable in tradition and the *Testament of Longinus*, loyal and respectful to higher-ranking covenant members. But the simple fact is that the apple did not fall far from the tree.

Indeed, in many respects, Donovan is an even-more successful dissembler than his sire. More than one prominent member of Kindred society suspects Savoy's faith to be a ruse (if for no other reason than that he tries to get the “best of both worlds” by being both a voudouisant and one of the Sanctified). His childe, however, has managed to fool *everyone* in the city, even his mentor Vidal—until now. For all of Donovan's efforts, there remains one individual who has seen enough to question the Sheriff's faith. And while Donovan has suspicions that someone is “onto” him, he still doesn't know *who*. Discovering the identity of this invisible rival is fast becoming priority number one for the Sheriff of New Orleans. Should Donovan fail to do so in time, the man behind the mask may well uncover the proof he seeks (or, just as bad, uncover Donovan's true name; see sidebar), and Donovan's unlife, to say nothing of his political future, would be over. Given the current political situation, the revelation of Donovan's betrayal would be more than enough to tip the scales of power.

For more on the schemes of this rival, see **Chapter Five: Working the Street**.



THE NAME OF TRUTH

Despite what Donovan himself may say (if and when he says anything at all), he was, like most people, born with both a first and a last name. Early on, however, unknown events conspired to put him on the supreme defensive where his identity was concerned, and, before long, the cautious young man had built a life for himself under the assumed name of “Donovan Gage.”



Avery



When his future sire, Antoine Savoy, entered the picture, Donovan gave him, too, this pseudonym. And as a result, Savoy's entire experience with his own child is based upon a lie—and that is precisely how the calculating Sheriff prefers it.

Soon after fleeing his sire's side, Donovan dropped his assumed last name and even went so far as to take great pains to conceal the fact that he had ever had one (even a fake one). In time, the only name by which the future Sheriff of New Orleans would ever be known was simply "Donovan." Only three vampires still undead know Donovan's last name—Savoy, the Prince and Philip Maldonato—but even they know only the alias the man called Donovan *created for himself*.

Given sufficient time and resources (represented by no fewer than 4 dots in the relevant Merit), another vampire could eventually uncover accounts that mention the Sheriff by his old assumed name. Indeed, Donovan himself is presently concerned that someone may be doing just that. But what worries him is not that someone might discover what is already known to others (that he was once called Donovan Gage), but rather that someone may dig deeper still and eventually discover something infinitely more damning —

Just who the Sheriff of New Orleans really is.



Coco Duquette

Arguably the most visible, and certainly the most accessible, member of Vidal's Primogen council is the Carthian activist Coco Duquette. The beautiful and articulate Mekhet has come a long way indeed from her mortal days as a red-light prostitute. Her evolution began with her sire, a refined gentleman by name of Starkweather, but it certainly did not end there. After Coco's release from her sire's tutelage, she worked long and hard to ingratiate herself into the Prince's Inner Circle, despite her open (and often vocal) philosophies that ran at times directly counter to those of Vidal's ruling faction, the Lancea Sanctum.

Determination is often its own reward, however, and Coco was eventually offered a seat at Vidal's Primogen council, specifically because of her unwillingness to silence her beliefs, as well as for her willingness to engage the beliefs of others in open and constructive debate. Since then, Coco's voice has been a refreshing one while the council sits in session, and Vidal seems to truly appreciate the Carthian's connectivity to and empathy for the younger Kindred of New Orleans. Or at least she thought he did, up until recently.

Despite some rumors to the contrary, Coco Duquette does not actually have any designs of her own on the domain. She is, in point of fact, a rarity among the Damned: A creature whose secret, personal ambitions fall squarely in line with those she evinces in public. It is not so much that she feels she would make an ineffective Prince. Rather, her love for the Carthian ideal is genuine, and she would prefer to see

some new form of Kindred "hierarchy" put in place instead. She realizes that Vidal is powerful and that his rule is both supported and recognized by Kindred the world over, but she also realizes that nothing lasts forever. She views his impending retirement to torpor as a great opportunity; in many ways, the opportunity towards which she has been working all her unlife. If she can just bolster enough support for the Carthian alternative, either within Vidal's faction or amongst a majority of the rest of the Kindred (or both), she feels that New Orleans needn't descend into yet another period of bleak autocracy.

A Perfect Circle

Perhaps the biggest problem facing Coco tonight is, in an ironic twist of fate, her own dedication to the Carthian movement. She toiled to get herself into the Prince's Inner Circle, but now, as both city Primogen and covenant Prefect, she is grown somewhat at odds with herself (often forcibly so). Recently, she has started to feel like one of the only reasons Vidal invited her to his table in the first place was to test the boundaries and depths of her loyalties. Unfortunately, she is now so thoroughly embroiled in Primogen politics that she's utterly divided as to what she should or even could do about it.

One of the only options she sees before her is to withdraw from the Primogen council, focusing more exclusively on her duties as Carthian Prefect. If she does, however, she's afraid that all the progress she's made over the years both in the council and around the city at large could be lost. Another alternative is to pass the title of Prefect on to another worthy Carthian and to simply dive head-first into the role she has created for herself—that of Vidal's most honest (and thus trusted) Primogen councilor—but the only candidate she feels she could trust is Miss Opal, who is herself a fellow Primogen. Her assistant, a quiet but resolved Mekhet by the name of Roderick Durant, is the logical choice, but she feels he is still too young and fire-eyed (and, quite frankly, idealistic) to function in that capacity. Perhaps after a few more years of tutelage, but, as of yet, he isn't ready.

If another worthy Carthian were to surface, however, this situation might change, and Coco secretly finds herself wishing for another, equally capable Carthian to emerge (though from where, she couldn't possibly begin to imagine). And, so for now, she finds herself at serious loggerheads with her own aims and goals. Whatever she decides to do, Coco is certain that some kind of action must be taken soon, before the Prince makes his final decision as to who will rule the domain in his stead—and how.

Strained Relations

Despite the sense that she is running out of time, Coco is still dedicated to the pursuit of her pre-existing agenda: To supplant her own clan Priscus as Prince Vidal's most trusted advisor. With the Prince's recent withdrawal from public affairs, however, and Maldonato's own increased activities

in his place, the possibility of this happening grows less and less likely with each passing night. When one hardly ever sees the Prince, it's difficult to influence him one way or the other, and this turn of events has shaken Coco's confidence a great deal more than even she would care to admit. She still believes that some strong gains may be made before the Prince takes his sleep, but that hope is fading.

AN UNLIKELY ALLIANCE

Given the recent rise in autonomy displayed by both the Sheriff and the Seneschal, the germ of a new idea has implanted itself in Coco's mind. While every politically aware Kindred in the city knows that a factional tug-of-war is going on, centered on the influential Nosferatu Harpy known as Sundown, what few have bothered to consider is that ideology in its purest form might succeed where factional politics have failed.

Coco wonders if Sundown, traditionally immune to factional appeasements of any kind, might not be more receptive to an offer of a different kind. Would he not, for example, see the wisdom in an alliance based on *covenant*, rather than *faction*, especially when the offer of alliance comes from none of the covenants currently involved in the factional struggle? Coco now believes that if she can sway Sundown (and perhaps those unaligned who look up to him) to join the Carthian movement—especially now, with a real goal in sight and some concrete gains to be made—that the tide might be turned in favor of the one side nobody thought to be a contender when the race began—The people.

Such a deal would be difficult to negotiate, of course, but there can be no denying its appeal.

With Sundown on her side, Coco's dream of leaving both the Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus in the city's rearview mirror may well come to pass.

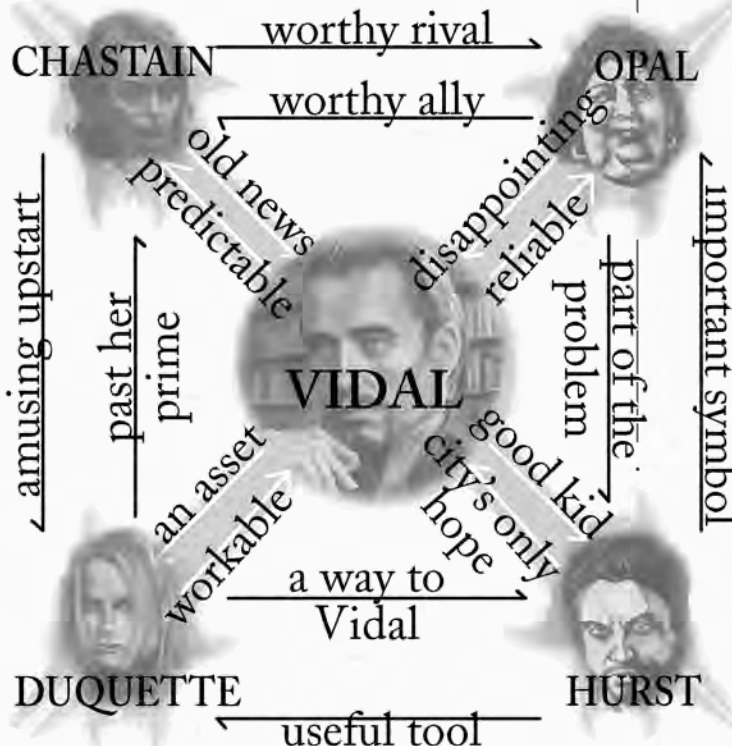
Although it is almost entirely out of character for her, Coco has considered the possibility that simply disposing of the Priscus just might be the only quick and reasonably sure way of accomplishing her goal. While she deplores violence (especially violence of a political sort), she is nonetheless a vampire after all. Such a gambit would be beyond risky, of course. Her clan elder is powerful and savvy, and only a truly flawless plan would stand a chance of both success *and* of leaving her own hands clean of any trace of the act. If so much as one finger pointed its way back to her, she would have lost a man she respects greatly and, in return, gained nothing but her own undoubtedly horrible demise. Thus, she keeps this option buried deep in her subconscious, an act of purely last resort

Gas "Gutterball" Elgin

Much as the servants of the rich and famous, the Master of Elysium often seems to be invisible even without his mastery of the Obfuscate Discipline. Although every member of Vidal's court comes to him at one time or another, to arrange or confirm social plans, and although he announces visitors to Vidal's court and stands ready to deal with any problems that may arise at Elysium, very few Kindred really acknowledge his presence when they do not have a pressing need for him. He might as well be part of the scenery once court has assembled or the party has begun—and Elgin would have it no other way.

Elgin is acknowledged as an expert on all matters of politics and etiquette, as well as scholarly matters relating to the scriptures—of Jesus and Longinus in particular—and all the precepts of the Traditions. Most Kindred, believing that such pursuits represent little more than Elgin's academic interests, are unaware that Elgin is no less a devout member of the covenant than John Marrow or Prince Vidal himself is. Elgin keeps his religious observances to himself, serves the Prince as a devoted Master of Elysium, and puts his own schemes into motion.

No other Kindred in the city is aware of it yet, but Elgin intends to position himself as the next major power in New Orleans. It's not that he himself seeks a title or power—in fact, Elgin prefers operating behind the scenes where possible, and might well turn down the position of Prince if Vidal tried to hand it to him on a silver platter. He believes, however, that both Vidal and Savoy have lost sight of what truly matters, have muddled



their priorities. Both claim to be dedicated to the Lancea Sanctum, yet both devote far more of their energies to battling the other than to increasing the covenant's own position in the city. Gus Elgin sees a New Orleans firmly under the sway of a united Lancea Sanctum, the Sanctified working together rather than against one another. He supports Vidal because Gus believes that the current Prince has a greater chance of pulling this off than does Savoy, but Gus would actually prefer to see *neither* in charge. Elgin is only just beginning to gather his information and learn who among the city's Kindred are truly devoted to the teachings of Longinus. And when he knows who he can trust, who will support him, he intends to form a third Sanctified faction in the city, one loyal to neither of the current contenders for the throne. This, he believes, will *truly* represent the Lancea Sanctum, and will attract others once it rises and will eventually either absorb both current factions or crush them.

An ambitious goal, to be sure. But for a vampire with the patience of a saint and access to every one of the city's major players—granted to Elgin by his position as Master of Elysium—it may not be an impossible one.

Watching the Quarter

As noted elsewhere, Elgin frequently exchanges information with John Marrow. To date, Elgin has not yet told his fellow Sanctified his true intentions, though he may well do so in the near future if he decides the Priest can be trusted to go along with them.

Marrow is not Elgin's only source of information in Savoy's territories, however. As Master of Elysium, Elgin frequently travels to all declared Elysium sites in the city—including those within Savoy's domain. So as to appear civilized, and not instigate a conflict for which he is not yet ready, Savoy allows Elgin to travel unmolested, permitting the Nosferatu to observe firsthand what is happening in the French Quarter and Savoy's other territories. Of course, the French Quarter lord is aware of this and has instructed his people to reveal nothing to the visiting emissary, but Elgin is an observant creature, and fairly deductive.



THE DEATH OF GUTTERBALL ELGIN

Gus Elgin has a plan already in place, for use if and when he decides it's time to make his move, break away from Vidal and begin his own Lancea Sanctum faction. Quite simply, he's going to die.

Using allies he's already made on both sides of the factional divide—such as the Ventrue Primogen Gabriel Hurst and, if he's cemented their alliance by then, John Marrow—Elgin intends to fake an assassination. The "killers" will destroy several Kindred in the process of killing Elgin and attempting to kill Vidal, and they will do so in the midst of Elysium.

If executed properly, this should ignite the final open conflict between Vidal's and Savoy's factions—particularly as Elgin plans to plant all

manner of evidence implicating the French Quarter lord in the attack. Elgin's intent is to lay low, allow the two factions to severely weaken one another, and then step in at the head of a new, unified contingent of Sanctified and pick up the pieces.

Elgin has no intention of putting this rather dramatic—and risky—plan into operation until and unless he has sufficient support, so it isn't likely to happen for years; unless, of course, Vidal should leave his throne uneasy when he finally takes his rest. If and when it should occur, it's entirely likely that nearly all Kindred in the city, including your troupe's characters, will be caught up in the chaos. If they are Sanctified themselves, Elgin might well approach them and attempt to recruit them to shape the city into a new theocracy. Alternatively, they might find themselves caught up in the growing conflict, either on any side or as neutrals caught in the crossfire.



Between these various sources, as well as his ability to eavesdrop unnoticed on many conversations, Elgin probably knows more about the goings-on of the French Quarter and Savoy's other territories than Vidal himself does.

Pierpont McGinn

Pierpont McGinn is, in Kindred terms, a traditionalist. That is, he absolutely believes that the Invictus should rule every Kindred domain, that the Ventrue should rule the Invictus, that the Inner Circle should rule the Ventrue, and that, at least in New Orleans, he should rule the Inner Circle. Constantly frustrated that he is not even part of the Primogen, let alone Prince, McGinn schemes to advance his cause regardless of which way the winds of chance may blow the factional warfare in the Big Easy.

At the present time, McGinn openly supports Pearl Chastain, but it is a poorly hidden secret that he is engaging in frequent talks with Antoine Savoy. Vidal cannot yet afford to move against McGinn for his "treason," for the Prince relies on the support of the Invictus, and Chastain—the voice of the First Estate on the Primogen—relies on McGinn. Should McGinn ever openly join with Savoy in any active sense, however, he knows that Vidal's vengeance will follow swiftly. Thus, he currently offers Savoy access to small amounts of Ventrue resources and influence, with promises of much more to come when "the time is right."

McGinn does not, however, truly wish to see Antoine Savoy as Prince. He supports the Daeva for one reason only: He believes that Savoy will be far easier to overthrow than Vidal. He will use the French Quarter lord to unseat the current Prince and then his own abilities and allies to unseat Savoy.

It has never even occurred to McGinn to ally with Cimitiere; the Ventrue holds too many racial hatreds from his mortal days to even consider such a thing. He has, however, been making subtle inquiries into the beliefs and loyalties of most of Savoy's major supporters and into those of the



many Kindred who have, to date, remained more or less neutral. Any Kindred who truly believe in Antoine Savoy, McGinn leaves alone, marking them as potential future enemies. Many of them, however, support Savoy only because he seems a better alternative to Vidal, and these McGinn entices with promises of a new order when both elders are out of the way—one not tied to the conflicts of the past. So far, McGinn has swayed only a couple of Savoy's supporters to his way of thinking, the most influential of whom is Savoy's own Seneschal, Natasha Preston. Still, while McGinn finds it frustrating that he has not met with greater success, he is willing to bide his time. After all, until Savoy finds a means of overthrowing Vidal, all of McGinn's plans remain hypothetical. Nonetheless, McGinn focuses on the future—perhaps to his detriment. If he continues on his current path, he might weaken Savoy's support sufficiently that the Daeva will have no chance against Vidal, rendering all of McGinn's own ambitions completely moot.

Race Wars

Pierpont McGinn is, in no uncertain terms, a racist of the highest order. While he shows the largest amount of hatred for blacks, he has nothing but disdain for anyone who's not white and Christian—and even then, if they're not Protestant, he views them with no small amount of suspicion. In the many nights since McGinn began his requiem, he has pigeonholed the various clans into similar niches, with the Ventrue at the top of the heap. However, even after so many years of unlife, McGinn considers "purity" of birth to be of far greater importance than Embrace. In his mind, a white Ventrue is superior to a white Gangrel, but a white Gangrel is superior to a black or Hispanic Ventrue. In fact, McGinn lost substantial respect for Vidal when the Prince, over the course of the years, backed down from his positions on Ventrue supremacy and the institution of slavery.

FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Pierpont McGinn's allies in his efforts to overthrow Vidal—and eventually Savoy as well—are not limited to the natives of the Big Easy. The Invictus Prince of Baton Rouge has greedily eyed New Orleans for many years. He has grown ever more furious at the audacity of the Lancea Sanctum in refusing to allow the Invictus access to certain business arenas (or even to promote them among the kine) in New Orleans and firmly believes that the First Estate has every right to the Crescent City.

The Prince of Baton Rouge and McGinn established communication years ago through mutual connections and have remained in contact since. Although the two have never met in person, they have held numerous conferences by letter, telephone and (somewhat reluctantly) e-mail. To date, the Prince has provided McGinn with moral support, a promise that the neighboring Invictus will assist the Ventrue when he finally makes his grab for power, and, most importantly, funds and sporadic access to the Prince of Baton Rouge's own contacts

in state government. In exchange, McGinn keeps the Prince fully apprised of all that occurs in the Big Easy, no matter how trivial it may seem. McGinn is not foolish and believes the Prince has his own reasons for aiding him, above and beyond covenant loyalty, but he also knows that the Kindred's assistance some night may make the difference between the success and failure of his own agenda.

Because of these attitudes, McGinn maintains contacts in numerous white supremacist groups, from older organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan to modern anti-Islamic groups that have sprung up in only the past three years. Through these organizations, McGinn gains surprising access to local businesses and pockets of criminal activity that have remained inaccessible to either Antoine Savoy or Reynaldo Gui.

McGinn hopes to take this a step further. Once he's consolidated something of a power base, he fully intends to feel out the other Kindred of New Orleans—and even, if possible, of surrounding cities—to determine how many of them share his vision. Although he knows it is still many decades away, McGinn dreams of a city, or perhaps even an entire covenant, devoted to the dominance of the pure, white Ventrue.

John Marrow

A true fanatic, Marrow is a devout Priest in both the Kindred and kine senses of the word. A Priest whose influence covers Savoy's territories and extends even to some portions of Vidal's, Marrow ranks high in the local hierarchy of the Lancea Sanctum. He is also devoutly Catholic, and holds midnight masses for a congregation in a church in the Tremé District. Marrow's loyalties are unmistakable and well-known. He holds allegiance to the Lancea Sanctum first, and Antoine Savoy second. So long as the two do not come into conflict, he is one of the fiercest supporters of the French Quarter lord, and he spends much of his time hunting down those who are enemies of both his liege and his covenant. Marrow is an Inquisitor in the true sense of the word, and many who violate the precepts of the Lancea Sanctum find themselves paid a visit by the grim, merciless Marrow.

John Marrow is also one of the single most-well-informed Kindred in New Orleans. He inevitably questions "heretics" before delivering whatever punishment Savoy or the laws of Longinus demand, and, in most cases where the law does not demand anything as severe as Final Death, Marrow includes service in his web of intelligence as a portion of the criminal's penance. Much of this information finds its way back to Lord Savoy, enabling him to further advance his own position in the city, but other portions of it Marrow keeps to himself. He is interested in even the most esoteric piece of knowledge and believes that anything and everything might prove useful against his enemies at some point.

The Confessional

Where Prince Vidal makes use of the confessional for Kindred lawbreakers, offering them the chance—if their crimes aren't *too* severe—for absolution, Marrow takes a different approach. He holds a dim view of the Prince's custom in this regard; so far as Marrow is concerned, his devotion to the Lancea Sanctum is a separate beast, albeit related, from his loyalty to Catholicism. Using the confessional as a means of granting absolution for transgressions against the covenant is, in his eyes, a misuse.

He *does*, however, use the confessional as a means to feed—and for favors or other payment, for other members of the Lancea Sanctum or Savoy's faction to feed. Marrow is known among his mortal congregants for his use of a rather strange penance, in place of the traditional prayers, hymns, Our Fathers and Hail Marys. Marrow, a fire-and-brimstone-style Priest, maintains that the body must suffer to purify the soul. He offers absolution for even the worst of mortal crimes so long as the petitioner is willing to pay the price. Of course, none of the mortals remember the details of what happens in the confessional after they have agreed (and some do not even know for certain *why* they agreed to a penance with which they were unfamiliar), but all find themselves feeling vaguely weak and ill, yet somehow emotionally sated, for days afterward.

The procedure, of course, involves careful use of both Dominate and Majesty (two disciplines with which Marrow is quite familiar) and careful feeding from the entranced congregant. This not only keeps Marrow well-fed, saving him the time required to hunt, but it allows him to feed others as well. Marrow has a very strict rule about how much vitae his “guests” may take from a single vessel, and he has killed to maintain that rule. *None* of his petitioners are to be harmed in any way while within the sanctity of the confessional—or at least, not harmed by Marrow's admittedly self-serving definition of the term.

Savoy knows of this practice and allows it to continue. Vidal does not, and it is unlikely he will react well, if and when he learns of it.

THE TREMÉ MURDERS

For the past year, an abnormal number of disappearances and violent deaths has plagued the Tremé District. Police have unearthed few clues—and may not be looking as hard as they could be, given that Vidal has some strings to pull in the force, and the murders are taking place largely in neighborhoods over which Savoy holds sway. What they have not yet realized, though John Marrow certainly has, is that every one of



the victims has been a worshipper, at least occasionally, if not regularly, at his church.

Marrow has been obsessively investigating these events and has come up largely empty-handed. He does not know who the killer is (or are), or even if the perpetrator is kine, Kindred, or something else entirely. Of the nearly dozen who have disappeared, only five have turned up. Four of those were slain, and the fifth appears to have suffered some hideous trauma; she is scarred both physically and mentally, and seems convinced that everyone she meets is in fact a figment of her own imagination. Even under the full force of Marrow's Dominate Discipline, she was unable to provide any information regarding her attacker.

The Inquisitor is growing increasingly frustrated that his normally infallible web of informants and intelligence is proving unequal to this very personal task. He is growing distracted, and it is only a matter of time before this ongoing problem makes him lax in his duties to Savoy and the Lancea Sanctum. Should any other Kindred prove capable of dealing with the problem for him, Marrow would undoubtedly prove exceptionally grateful—but he is just as likely to focus on any new arrivals, at least at first, as objects of suspicion.



Gutterball

Marrow is one of the few Kindred of New Orleans who understands just how deeply Gus "Gutterball" Elgin's faith runs. Elgin is no less devoted to the Lancea Sanctum than Marrow himself is; the Nosferatu is simply less open about his beliefs and his ideals, preferring to play the part of a simple servant to Prince Vidal.

For many years, Marrow and Elgin have been instrumental to one another's ability to gather information. Marrow offers information culled from his human congregants and portions of the city in which Elgin cannot afford to spend much time. Elgin, in turn, passes along conversations overheard in Vidal's Elysium. In no case does either offer intelligence that could seriously damage their chosen liege; rather, they focus on concerns that impact the Lancea Sanctum or the city of New Orleans as a whole or that simply qualify as interesting tidbits to assuage personal curiosity. Each has aided the other in tracking down enemies of the Lancea Sanctum, and this cooperation has led to the Final Death of more than one of Cimitiere's Kindred followers through the years.

Marrow is increasingly aware that Elgin has plans for their alliance and the information, that go beyond the current factional warfare, but the Priest has not, as yet, pressed the Nosferatu for details. At the moment, Marrow's content to remain in the dark rather than risk the loss of such a fantastic source of information on Vidal's actions.

Lidia Kendall

The right hand of Baron Cimitiere finds herself growing more and more lost with every night that passes.

Until recently, she informally ruled the few local members of the Ordo Dracul. She held no formal rank in the order, but, as the eldest of them, she wielded them as an extension of the Baron's will. Few are more skilled at digging up eldritch secrets or understanding the interplay of various magical forces; and, in Cimitiere's name, Kendall had the Dragons digging into all such matters in the city of New Orleans.

No longer. Less than five years ago, a new Dragon appeared in New Orleans, a hooded figure who bears the rank of Kogaion within the Ordo Dracul. Whom he may be or where he comes from, even Kendall and the other Dragons do not know. He knows all the rites, however, and all the proper lore to prove that he is what he claims to be.

Not only has Kendall lost her sway over the local members of the Ordo Dracul, she is now feeling pressure to declare her loyalty to either Cimitiere or the Dragons, rather than hovering between both as she has done. Her loyalty to the Baron is strong enough that, were she finally forced to choose, she would almost certainly side with him. She struggles nightly with the decision, however, for her devotion to the precepts of the Dragon is only marginally less than her devotion to Cimitiere, and she still believes the Order can serve the Baron as a useful tool and ally. She is gratified that the Kogaion and the Baron communicate with one another and appear to consider each other viable allies against Vidal, but still she considers such an arrangement inferior to the one she used to have. She struggles with the newcomer for power, calling in old favors and alliances among the Dragons, but she knows she fights a losing battle. The Kogaion acts for the benefit of the covenant first, rather than an outside agenda as she does, and that alone will certainly sway the loyalty of the local members. Furthermore, she cannot devote *too* much effort against him, for internecine struggles would only render them vulnerable to discovery and destruction by Prince Vidal, to say nothing of the time it takes away from her duties to Baron Cimitiere.

Yet, even while Kendall acknowledges that the newcomer acts more in line with the teachings and needs of the covenant, she remains furious that he has taken away her own power over the Dragons. The new Kogaion does not permit her to use the covenant's knowledge or resources to find information for the Baron, at least not without clearing it all through him first. It is only a matter of time, Kendall knows, before she receives instructions to keep some valuable bit of knowledge from Cimitiere entirely, and that will mark the moment where she finally must choose.

Dissent in the Ranks

To make matters even more tense, Kendall's position as the Baron's right hand is threatened even as is her status in the Ordo Dracul, for the Mekhet *mambo* Malia Eliza Curry—the most powerful worker of Crúac sorcery in Cimitiere's faction, shy of the Baron himself—has taken on Kendall's own duties and errands numerous times in the past months, while Kendall herself has been distracted by the demands of the Dragons. Kendall has



not yet spoken out against this growing arrangement, as she has no desire to make an enemy out of one of her own brethren, but she's determined not to lose her position with Cimitiere while she works things out.

Therefore, Kendall has reluctantly embarked on a campaign to thwart and discredit Curry, but only in the most minor of ways. Pawns pass along false information intended to waste Curry's time, or to inspire her to prepare against threats to Baron Cimitiere that never actually materialize. Kendall knows she's playing a dangerous game, as she risks not only making an enemy of Curry, but the Baron's fury as well, if her deception is uncovered. Furthermore, her efforts in this direction feed into the very same problem she is hoping to avoid, as they take time that might otherwise be devoted to the needs of the Ordo Dracul or Cimitiere's own faction. Still, she hopes that her efforts are subtle enough they will not be discovered—and that, if they are, the fact that she has only moved to inconvenience, not harm, Curry will protect her from any major repercussions.

The Gang's All Here

One of the endeavors Kendall has undertaken on behalf of Cimitiere that has not yet suffered from her split attentions is her effort to slowly usurp much of Antoine Savoy's influence in the criminal underworld. Kendall has made effective use of her appearance as a lower-class teenager to ensconce herself in several of New Orleans' gangs. She has slowly risen through the ranks, either as a gangbanger herself or as the girlfriend of those who hold power. Through various means—funding, hookups with other criminal suppliers, introduction to vodoun's precepts (something that interests a surprising number of the gang members she's dealt with)—she has slowly but surely made them beholden to her in one fashion or another. To date, her influence extends only over a few select gangs, and only at street level, but she intends to continue working her way up until she is able to steal some of the true movers and shakers out from under Savoy's nose.

She has not, as yet, run afoul of Reynaldo Gui's own interests in gang activity, but such a clash is almost inevitable.

THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Lidia Kendall knows better than to make any direct and personal attempts to learn who the new Kogaion in town might be. She's questioned the other Dragons on the matter, but she's unwilling to take any more direct steps such as attempting to follow him after a ceremony (which might prove difficult even if she tried, due to his mastery of Obfuscate) or calling him out in the midst of a ceremony. Either of these might be interpreted as disloyalty to his rule and the Ordo Dracul itself, and she's not willing to risk cutting ties with the Dragons until and unless she is left with no other alternative.

That doesn't mean, however, that she has any objection to using others to learn more of her new

leader. If an outside coterie were to offer her information on the new Kogaion or even appear to be capable of digging up such information, Kendall would likely encourage them to do so, offering all manner of favors in exchange for that knowledge. A coterie could make themselves a fairly potent ally in this manner—especially, since once Kendall learned who the Kogaion really is, she could almost certainly parlay that knowledge into control over his decisions, and thus over the local Ordo Dracul. On the other hand, any such enterprising characters would have to be wary of the enemies they might make in the process, and a Kogaion of the Ordo Dracul, no matter who he might actually be, is not an enemy to be taken lightly.

Rosa Bale

The most powerful Kindred *mambo* in New Orleans not allied with Baron Cimitiere, Bale is well-known for harboring a hatred of the Baron nearly as strong as Prince Vidal's own. Her public claims—that her hatred stems from Cimitiere's use of the title and imagery of Baron Samedi, and that doing so indicates an arrogance and heresy unsuited to a vodouisant leader—ring hollow in many ears. The Kindred are accustomed to seeing ulterior motives beneath the surface, and few indeed believe that Bale's actions stem from so utterly mundane a source.

They're right, of course, but few understand just what Bale's true motivations are.

For all her exuberance, all her energy, all her apparent zealotry, Rosa Bale is little more than a puppet. Her sister Isobel was always the more dominant of the pair, and Isobel's death at the hands of Roger Halliburton so many decades ago did nothing to change that. (See the sidebar entitled **The Woman Who Slew Halliburton** on p. 18 of **Chapter One: A Look Back at the Big Easy**.) Rosa speaks to her sister constantly and, through her, to a whole gathering of ghosts numbering at least half a dozen, and possibly several times that number. Isobel and the other spirits for whom she speaks all share one thing in common—each and every one of them was slain by a vampire.

The wraiths wish to see nothing less than the destruction of the current Kindred society as it exists in New Orleans. Unfortunately, they cannot act on this impulse alone; their ability to affect the material world is too weak, and they fear some of the magics the Kindred can bring to bear against them. Thus, they work through Rosa Bale, turning her against the vampire they see as the single biggest threat to their schemes and allying her with another who (they hope) will someday be in a position to influence the course of the entire Damned society in the Big Easy.

Because Baron Cimitiere is the greatest Kindred blood magician in New Orleans, and because he claims to have some sort of rapport with Baron Samedi himself, the wraiths see him as the greatest threat to their efforts. Rosa Bale's

own efforts at destroying or supplanting Cimitiere have nothing to do with her opinion about his arrogance—though she does, indeed, see him as an pompous bastard—but rather stem from an effort to “protect” her sister.

Frame-Up

As part of her growing alliance with Antoine Savoy, Bale has taken on the task of instigating further hostilities between Baron Cimitiere and Prince Vidal. She, her Kindred followers, and, in a few cases, the spirits for whom she speaks have committed numerous crimes against Vidal's laws, all within or near territories controlled by Cimitiere. She has slain a few neonate Kindred, leaving behind evidence of vodoun ritual. She has allowed mortals, if they know where to look, to observe supernatural activities cloaked in the trappings of vodoun but clearly Kindred—and thus, threats to the Masquerade. And she has slowly moved these crimes further into Vidal's territories, the better to simulate an incursion by Cimitiere's followers. No matter what else he has to deal with, Vidal cannot afford to let these affronts continue for much longer. In fact, many in Vidal's own court are surprised he has taken no action as of yet, and Bale has begun to worry that, just maybe, he knows more about the true nature of those crimes than he should. She doesn't worry that he knows she's the perpetrator, else she'd likely be dead already, but if he's figured out that Cimitiere is not responsible, all her efforts and risks have been for naught. Bale is seriously considering one last, *major* crime—possibly an attack on one of Vidal's own people—in hopes of forcing him into action.

The 411

While Bale is currently allied with Savoy, the goals she shares with her ghostly companions require her to obtain as much power as she can throughout the entirety of local Kindred society. Bale has recently realized that, in the wraiths, she has a nigh-perfect collection of spies at her fingertips.

THE RETURN OF HALLIBURTON?

As the nights progress and Bale becomes ever more deeply entwined with Kindred politics and the world of the restless dead, she grows ever more uneasy. The boundaries between the physical and the spiritual grow thin. Particularly near areas of great death, such as cemeteries or crime scenes, but more and more often in other locations as well, Bale has begun to feel a strange presence looking over her shoulder, watching her from the shadows. Strange, yet familiar. A presence she has not felt since she was a child—

The very presence that slew her sister.

So far, Bale has kept her suspicions that Roger Halliburton has returned from the grave to herself. She fears that Isobel, in particular, might fear Halliburton too much to stay by her side if he truly has returned. Moreover, Bale has been unable to actually see Halliburton, despite her ability to see

spirits and the fact that she has felt a familiar presence on more than one occasion. The *mambo* has determined, then, that Halliburton has most likely possessed one of the other Kindred of New Orleans, hiding within a cloak of undead flesh and manipulating society from a position of power. Although she is not, as of yet, devoting a great deal of her time to the search, Bale has determined that she *must* learn which one of the local Kindred is playing host to Halliburton (assuming it's just one) before he has the chance to accomplish in death what he could not during his Requiem.

The fact that Bale has *no* evidence to support this theory, has never seen Halliburton, and has based her entire theory on what amounts to a few “bad feelings” does not seem to have dissuaded her in the slightest.

Thus, Bale has begun selling her services as an information broker to any vampire with the exception of Baron Cimitiere or his closest compatriots, who can afford her prices. In some cases, she demands cash or feeding rights; in others, favors are to be named later. In any event, she offers to find out one specific piece of information as requested by the buyer, and then the ghosts go to it. Most of the time, they are able to learn the desired bit of information fairly easily. On those rare occasions they cannot, Bale takes no payment from the client.

This is, despite the ghosts' inherent advantages, not nearly as effective a web of intelligence as those maintained by John Marrow or Gus Elgin. Bale lacks the intimate knowledge of Kindred politics, and of the individuals involved, to simply collect all manner of information and put it together into coherent conclusions. She does not analyze; she simply passes along facts that may, or may not, be meaningful out of context. However, neither Marrow nor Elgin customarily hire out their services; thus, Bale's own endeavors are becoming rather popular with many of the city's less-well-connected Kindred. Bale has not yet given any sign as to what she might do with the various favors she is accumulating, but it will almost certainly be something fairly large and dramatic when the time comes.

Gastlin Meadows

Meadows is quite possibly the most feared Kindred criminal in New Orleans who isn't actually wanted for anything. Everyone knows that the former Hound has gone rogue, abandoning her direct service to Vidal for something a bit more violent. She is reportedly responsible for attacks on several major Kindred, and a small handful of less notable vampires have disappeared in the months since she went rogue. Yet Vidal has not yet called a blood hunt on her, or leveled any other sort of punishment against her. In fact, Meadows still appears at the occasional Elysium, engaged in polite conversation with many of Vidal's court. Many Kindred believe that she still serves as the Prince's weapon against those who would oppose him, and that her desertion was a

front designed to grant Vidal plausible deniability when she violates his own laws on his behalf.

In truth, they're half-right. Vidal himself isn't so un-subtle as to attempt a deception that could so easily be penetrated. Meadows really did leave his service; she feels she can do him the most good that way.

Caitlin Meadows is fully aware of Vidal's swift decent towards torpor, a discovery she made mere nights before her brief disappearance from Kindred society. It was at roughly the same time that she went absolutely, stark-raving insane. Precisely what happened to her is unclear; as few other Kindred even know that she has gone mad, none can possibly have investigated the cause of her dementia.

Meadows firmly believes that Vidal must remain Prince—for his own good, the good of the city, and the good of the Lancea Sanctum. She also believes, however, that he lacks the strength to do what he must to maintain his rule. Meadows is absolutely convinced, beyond the possibility of rational discussion, that every one of Vidal's primary rivals is in fact a figment of his own imagination, manifested through the strange mystical forces of New Orleans itself. She believes, further, that she herself represents another portion of his subconscious, manifested in order to do battle with his rivals and thus purge both his mind and his city of weakness. If she can eliminate all his rivals, he will regain the personal strength he once had, and will no longer need to enter torpor at all. Every attack she has launched against other Kindred is intended toward this end. In addition, she requires no proof of a vampire's danger to Vidal. She is suspicious of "Gutterball" Elgin, for instance, though he has never overtly acted against Vidal, and, because she believes they are both manifestations of Vidal's mind, she interprets that suspicion as actual knowledge of Elgin's objectives. She does not yet feel herself strong enough to directly take on Antoine Savoy or Baron Cimitiere, but it's only a matter of time.

She has not told Vidal of her beliefs. When he is ready to know, she feels, he will come to the "proper" conclusions on his own. Any efforts he makes to rein her in or curtail her activities are, in her mind, the result of one of the other "personalities" (such as Savoy or Cimitiere) temporarily gaining control over Vidal's actions.

Wise Counsel

Meadows' madness does not prevent her from scheming with others for the benefit of Vidal's rule. She speaks on a regular basis with Philip Maldonato, knows that Maldonato is almost as concerned with Vidal's reign and well-being as she is, and knows that she can trust Maldonato to provide her with accurate information. She questions him to learn who threatens Vidal most, and what activities the Prince can overlook versus those against which he will have to take action. (For his own part, Maldonato apparently sees Meadows as a tool by which he can address Vidal's grudges without the Prince himself sullyng his hands and directs her accordingly.)

This allows Meadows to act on knowledge to which she might not otherwise have access. It also, however, forms the basis of her backup plan. Should she ever be forced to answer for her crimes—a circumstance that she believes will arise only if Vidal is completely overwhelmed by one of his "other personalities" but is still a distinct possibility—she intends to reveal her interaction with Maldonato. She will claim that she was acting entirely under his orders, and that he led her to believe the orders came from Vidal himself. She doesn't wish to see Maldonato destroyed as they fight for the same cause, but she believes that, if it comes down to it, Vidal needs her more than he does the Seneschal.

It Would Be a Crime

Meadows has recently engaged in several conversations with a relative newcomer to New Orleans, a vampire by the name of Reynaldo Gui. Although he serves in Savoy's court, Gui has convinced Meadows that, as an outsider, he doesn't truly support the French Quarter lord; rather, he simply wishes to see the status quo maintained. As such, he does not wish to see Vidal harmed any more than Meadows does. As Savoy's Master of Elysium, Gui has access to information, hints that certain Kindred are plotting against the Prince, and he has dropped several names to Meadows. She has not yet decided to what extent she can trust Gui. The newcomer may be what he claims, or he may be yet another manifestation of Vidal's weaknesses. (She doesn't believe this last is likely the case, however, because Gui is, in her estimation, a coward, and she cannot see even the worst of Vidal's manifestations showing cowardice.) Despite this distrust, Meadows has found much of Gui's information believable and has, at his instigation, slain a few neonates who were connected to Savoy's organized-crime interests. Because she sees everything as part of Vidal's conflict with the city's other Kindred, it has not yet occurred to her that Gui might have other motivations totally unrelated to the factional conflict.



METHODS TO MADNESS

The precise cause of her sudden and rather dramatic descent into madness may never be known. If you wish to make an issue of it in your own chronicle—perhaps as a plot point, perhaps because a similar fate may await one of your player's characters—here are a few possibilities.

Possession: Meadows was a Hound, and thus a cold-blooded killer, long before she went mad. The number of lives and unives she's taken in her time undoubtedly numbers in the dozens at least. In a city as haunted as the Big Easy, it's not a stretch to imagine that one or more of her past victims could not rest easy and attempted to usurp control over his killer. Perhaps Meadows successfully fought off the ghost, but damaged her own psyche in the process. Perhaps she was possessed by more than one entity, and the conflicting intelligences destroyed her mind. Or perhaps the attacking spirit *intended* to drive her

insane rather than possessing her, condemning her to a potential eternity of madness.

Horrific Locales: New Orleans has numerous places that are haunted, not by ghosts, but by the echoes of people and events that have occupied them in the past. Some of these, places of faith or of violence, have already been touched upon in the **City of Virtue, City of Vice** sidebar on p.31 of **Chapter Two: Points of Entry**. If a location was host to both substantial madness and violence, however, such as the former site of an asylum for the criminally insane or the basement in which a serial killer kept his victims, the atmosphere of the place might well harbor madness within it like a dormant disease. Such places would have to be rare, of course, or else more of New Orleans' Kindred would be mad, but if even one exists, it's entirely possible that your characters might well stumble onto it.

The Wrath of the Loa: It is worth noting that, while Antoine Savoy is widely considered Vidal's greatest rival, Meadows has directed most of her efforts against Cimitiere. Of the three most widely known Kindred she has attacked in recent months, one was the Baron himself, and another was his closest aide. Most Kindred believe this is because Cimitiere is not merely an enemy of the Prince but also of the local Lancea Sanctum, but what if this attack is a result of a personal vendetta? Perhaps Meadows, acting in her role as Vidal's Hound, attacked the Baron or slew one of his followers in the nights *before* she went insane? Is it possible, then, that her insanity is the result of retaliatory magics—or perhaps even the anger of the loa themselves, enraged that she would assault one of their own?



Sundown

For a self-proclaimed “apolitical resident,” the Kindred known as the Afterhours King has grown to become a veritable lynchpin of the political climate of the city tonight. As New Orleans' most distinguished Harpy, Sundown holds great influence over the hearts and minds of the city's Kindred, despite having neither official political power nor even official political affiliation. Indeed, it is this last distinction—the fact that Sundown claims no side in either the factional struggle nor its attendant covenantal dispute—that gives the Nosferatu the bulk of his political leverage.

The remainder of Sundown's power comes from the fact that his chosen field of business, his near-stranglehold on the independent nightlife of New Orleans, has put him in a position where he can and does cater to members of all walks of unlife. Indeed, the savvy Kindred socialite plays frequent host to all three major power players as well as their followers, retainers and entourages. His “Kindred-friendly” clubs are the talk of the town (in Kindred circles, anyway) and have been for many years. What started as an enterprising attempt to capitalize on the backlash against Prohibition has turned into a veritable empire for Sundown.

Indeed, the Afterhours King is widely regarded as a prime example of what a Kindred can accomplish with the long years afforded him by his Curse.

Because of his reputation, Sundown suffers little of the scorn nor distrust directed towards other members of his clan in Orleans parish. Where other Nosferatu are feared (such as Baron Cimitiere) or accepted grudgingly (such as Miss Opal) in “polite” society, Sundown is welcomed with open arms. It is almost as though the city's Kindred have come to *rely* on his presence even, as though it were the glue that kept every vampire comfortable with every other vampire. It can be truly said that Sundown's even-handed neutrality has become vital to the maintenance of the simple social order among the Damned of New Orleans. In that regard, he is more of a social lynchpin than a political one, but in a world where the social interactions *are* politics, one can make little distinction between the two.

Son of the Lion

Despite Sundown's reputation for political neutrality, he is nonetheless a vampire, and he keeps secrets of his own. What is undoubtedly his single greatest secret pertains to his vampiric lineage. What no other vampire in New Orleans realizes is that Sundown is the childe of Leon—the poor Nosferatu whose body and soul was torn asunder by the ritual conducted during Prince Vidal's brief collusion with Baron Cimitiere so many decades ago.

Sundown, then a quiet Creole boy by the name of Honoré, was a mere fledgling as a vampire at the time his sire went missing. Given the care and patience Leon had taken in preparing the boy for his Requiem and the depth of the relationship the two had shared, the neonate had little doubts as to whether or not he'd simply been abandoned: He knew beyond all doubt he had not. And, given his sire's capabilities where survival were concerned, that left only foul play as the culprit. Honoré spent several years “underground,” adapting alone to unlife on the streets of the Big Easy. At first, he sought only the truth behind his sire's disappearance. But when all of Honoré's anxious seeking eventually pointed to the responsible party being a powerful Kindred, the neonate shifted his attentions to the formulation of the ambitious plan that would mark his Requiem ever after.

When Honoré finally emerged into Kindred society at large, he did so under the identity of Sundown, a Nosferatu entrepreneur whose political neutrality was both unswerving and unable to be bought. He has spent the long decades since cultivating both his businesses and his reputation, all in the furtherance of his one primary goal: To discover the truth behind his sire's disappearance and to punish those responsible in a way that will make the intervening decades seem like seconds. Since he knows that a person or persons of great power were behind Leon's death, he knows he must be patient. And he has been so very patient, indeed.





Weird Séance

Sundown appreciates all those in New Orleans who stand alone against the might of the Lancea Sanctum or the faction war as a whole. And he respects even more those who manage to avoid getting swept under as a result. The list of those who can claim such a thing is short indeed, but any fool could see that the two names nearest the top belong to Sundown and to Baron Cimitiere's *mambo* nemesis, Rosa Bale.



A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Everyone knows that Pearl Chastain is finished in New Orleans. Everyone knows that she passed her prime decades upon decades ago. Everyone knows all this and more—everyone except Sundown. In this tired, aged Succubus, the wily Nosferatu has seen a potential accomplice (albeit an unwitting one). With each passing night, Sundown watches the vain Daeva sink deeper into herself, and, with each passing night, he sees more and more potential in the fallen starlet.

The fact of the matter is that Pearl is the *only* vampire of sufficient age whom Sundown has more or less ruled out as responsible for the death of his sire. (After all, no one Embraced after about 1910 could possibly be responsible, at least not directly.) And although it would be nice to find and punish the weapon used, that would be but the icing on

the cake compared to finding and punishing the hand that set it in motion. If it turns out the two are one and the same, so much the better.

As is his wont, Sundown pays attention to all that transpires around him. And he knows that one of the only remaining embers still glowing in Pearl's dead heart is her seething revulsion at the members of her own clan. He watches her practiced contempt when either Savoy or his bastard childe, Donovan, enters the limelight. And as the evidence mounts, indicating that Donovan could be well on his way to being declared heir to Vidal's throne, Sundown sees more and more potential in tired old Pearl Chastain —



After discovering that the rumors about her trafficking with spirits were based on truth, Sundown grew intensely interested in Rosa as a potential ally in his own private war. In his dealings with his fellow unaligned, Sundown has had occasion to interact with Rosa in a number of different capacities and ways. While she rarely frequents the places for which he is most well-known, Sundown prides himself on getting around and has made a point of coming to *her* on more than one occasion. (Even if he had no ulterior motive, such advances can only benefit Sundown's standing among the status quo, for every time he is seen with her, Vidal's agents grow that much more confident in Sundown's lack of loyalty to Baron Cimitiere.)

For her part, Rosa has watched Sundown carefully to see whether or not his vaunted neutrality extends to his fellow Nosferatu. And when Sundown was satisfied that Rosa was satisfied with his level of standoffishness towards the Baron, he took the next step toward gaining her trust as a potential ally: Sundown has extended to Rosa Bale the wealth of hospitality at his disposal. In addition, he has essentially “given” her one of his less successful properties—a small, second-story storefront in a quiet section of the Tremé district. From here, she is free to run her own operation, at whatever costs and times she prefers to keep, and more or less rent-free. Sundown has even made sure to leave no trace of himself there; no hidden cameras or electronic bugging devices of any kind. (He is certain she could detect such things, and expects her to try and do just that.)

Sundown does all this for one simple reason: When one is plagued with questions—particularly while trying to give the seeming of one who cares little for answers—one can scarcely do better than to acquire for one’s self a gifted, *politically neutral* spiritualist with access to an entire network of invisible, intangible informants. While Sundown knows that Rosa is no fool, he is equally certain that even she needs allies, and when it comes to getting around the Big Easy, one can always do worse than to have a friend like the Afterhours King.

Death Is Only the Beginning: The Ghosts of New Orleans

As mentioned previously, the Big Easy is a hotbed of supernatural activity—historically, and even more so in the modern nights. The combination of ambient faith, unusual burial practices and a murder rate that always ranks among the highest in the world combine to create a population of ghosts far larger than any found in most comparably sized cities.

Bale may have a great many wraiths standing behind her (and possibly pulling her strings), but these hardly represent the entirety of New Orleans’ restless dead. The ghosts of New Orleans have their own agendas, their own desires, their own needs, and, perhaps most significantly, their own *hatreds*. While most wish to be left alone or focus entirely on resolving whatever issues remain from their mortal lives, a substantial minority involve themselves in the actions of the *other* undead. In fact, Rosa Bale’s involvement in a chronicle almost guarantees that other city’s ghosts may involve themselves in Kindred affairs as well. Some possible ways this might happen include the following:

Rival Factions: Even the dead may gravitate toward this cause or that. A small collection of wraiths may oppose those who are working alongside Rosa Bale. Perhaps they still maintain some sympathy for the living and realize how much death will result from the complete dissolution of Kindred government that Isobel seeks. Alternatively (and perhaps

more likely), they may simply hold personal grudges against Isobel or her fellows, and not wish to see their puppet obtain any real power. Whatever the case, these spirits are likely to make their presence known as Bale gains influence in New Orleans and may even begin dealing directly with Kindred capable of seeing and speaking with them.

Opening the Floodgates: Other ghosts of New Orleans might be inspired by Isobel and Rosa to attempt their own political machinations. Some might also be intrigued with Kindred society, whereas others might actually attempt to influence the direction of the city’s mortal government and culture. This can easily change the entire direction of a chronicle if it gets out of hand, but with a careful Storyteller who concocts reasonable plots and objectives for the wraiths in question, it can form a combination horror/political story like none the players could ever anticipate.

Back From the Dead: Bale’s connections with the dead make a perfect way to return a deceased character to the story. This might be a Storyteller character with whom the players dealt with on a regular basis, a rival they *thought* they’d finally seen the last of, or even a player’s character who feels he has more left to accomplish. This opens up all manner of story possibilities, especially if the returning character knows something the players would find extremely damaging, or otherwise holds a grudge against the coterie.

Characters

Gus “Gutterball” Elgin, Master of Elysium

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1859

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Blood Potency: 3

Merits: Allies (City Workers) 3, City Status 4, Clan Status (Nosferatu) 1, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 1, Haven (Location) 3, Haven (Security) 4, Herd 2, Resources 3, Retainer 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Vigor 3, Resilience 2, Theban Sorcery 3

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Vitae Reliquary (1); Liar’s Plague (2), Curse of Babel (2); Malediction of Despair (3)

Of all the wolves at Vidal’s door, the closest is also the most well-hidden—a fact that makes him the most potentially dangerous. While Gus Elgin was at one time a genuine supporter of Prince Vidal, that time has come and gone. The devout Nosferatu has spent the better part of a century watching (and, at times, assisting) as the Prince spent too much time battling his fellow Sanctified rather than



pursuing ways of uniting the covenant in the region. Elgin sees the glory of what could be, and has grown increasingly frustrated at the never-ending cycle of political strike and counterstrike within the city's Lancea Sanctum.

Elgin certainly has no love for Antoine Savoy, of course. Savoy uses the covenant solely as a means of gathering power for himself, and his ham-handed attempt at twisting its tenets to court vodouisant support leaves Elgin disgusted. In a perfect world, Gus Elgin would see Antoine Savoy destroyed as an example to the others, once the new order is in place. Ever since it became apparent that Vidal is on the verge of entering torpor, Elgin has stepped up his efforts to put his once long-term plan into effect. He would prefer if Vidal could be "persuaded" to hand the reins of power to either Elgin or one of the few whom Elgin deems worthy, if only to secure the resources necessary to make his dream a reality. Elgin doesn't really want to be Prince himself, but he knows the strife and eventual bloodshed that might follow were Vidal to name the "wrong" successor.

"Gutterball" Gus, as he is occasionally known, gets his nickname from the twisted shape and appearance of his rounded head. In life, Elgin was an operator for the New Orleans & Carrollton streetcar line. One night, as he was pulling in from his last run, he thought he saw a huddled figure lying in the path of his streetcar. Thinking he could help, Elgin hurried to the figure's side, but the moment he reached out to touch the body, the horses behind him suddenly panicked. Elgin was trampled, his head crushed by the rolling wheel of his own streetcar. In the last, sublime moments of his death, Elgin watched helpless as the figure stood and turned to him. Its radiant face shone with the light of God, and, in that instant out of time, Gus Elgin knew he was in the presence of the divine. Rather than welcome him into the kingdom of Heaven, however, the figure bent over him, bathing him in its holy light as he slipped into sleep.

When he awoke, Gus Elgin found he had become one of the Damned—but he had also found his purpose.

Pierpont McGinn

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Invictus

Embrace: 1896

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Blood Potency: 3

Merits: Allies (Unions) 4, Allies (Klan Members) 2, City Status 3, Clan Status (Ventrue) 1, Covenant Status (Invictus) 2, Haven (Security) 5, Haven (Size) 4, Herd 3, Resources 4, Retainer 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Dominate 4, Majesty 4, Obfuscate 2, Resilience 3

Devotions: Iron Façade

The most bombastic voice in New Orleans' Inner Circle belongs to the Ventrue schemer Pierpont McGinn. His star has been on the rise in the local Invictus in rough conjunction with the decline of Pearl Chastain's, and thus the two are not on especially good terms. And, of course it doesn't help matters that Chastain finds the upstart Ventrue socially coarse and morally repugnant. Still, McGinn's successes are hard to argue with, and the fact remains that he has emerged as one of the leading members of the region's First Estate.

A child of the American Reconstruction, McGinn was born into wealth and prestige, and has worked to maintain both in the decades since his Embrace. Given his lingering social attitudes, one of the biggest threats to



McGinn's standing (as he sees it) is his secret relationship to another of the city's Ventrue, the Kindred *mambo* Rosa Bale. The fact that the two share the same sire is a source of unending shame and discontent for the purity-obsessed McGinn, and he spends nearly as much effort concealing the truth of their co-sanguineness as he does pursuing his own agendas. McGinn clings to the notion that Bale somehow "seduced" their sire in order to rationalize what he sees as his sire's poor judgment. McGinn would never allow Bale to do anything so overt or manipulative as blackmail him, but he does keep her up-to-date on certain political goings on in exchange for her continued silence about the ties between them. Their sire, who is no longer a resident of New Orleans, is still on good terms with them both, and, so long as he is, McGinn cannot afford to take any real action against Bale. For now, he placates her desire for information, all the while waiting for something to happen that would allow him to silence her for good.

Pierpont McGinn is a tall, steel-jawed Southern man with dirty-blond hair and chalky-blue eyes. He dresses in light-colored suits that accent what he likes to think of as his "perfection of breeding," and is rarely seen in public without his favorite affection—a fine Southern cigar—nestled between two white fingers.

Father John Marrow

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1887

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Gluttony



Blood Potency: 3

Merits: Allies (Parishoners) 2, Clan Status (Daeva) 1, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 2, Haven (Security) 3, Haven (Size) 2, Herd 3, Resources 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Dominate 3, Majesty 4, Obfuscate 2, Vigor 1

If there is one ace in the hole in Savoy's operation, it is Father John Marrow. The other members of Savoy's Inner Circle, including Natasha Preston and Reynaldo Gui, are openly and publicly affiliated with Antoine Savoy. Marrow, on the other hand, plays the role of the faithful Sanctified, interacting with Savoy "only" because he is an elder of the Lancea Sanctum. Indeed, Marrow spends just as much time engaged in discourse or covenant rites with Sanctified of Vidal's camp as he does pursuing his own and/or Savoy's interests.

This, however, is precisely part of what makes him such an effective spymaster for Savoy. The two Kindred walk a fine line, due to the fact that Marrow is legitimately devout in the ways of his covenant, but as Savoy is not foolish enough to stand in the way of Marrow's beliefs—indeed, he has grown quite adept at using them for his own gain—the end result is the same. While few Kindred in the city are naïve enough to believe John Marrow to be truly neutral in the feud between Vidal and Savoy, many would be surprised at the lengths to which Marrow has gone and continues to go in his support of his fellow Daeva. Much of the knowledge and power at Marrow's disposal is bent toward advancing Savoy's aims, and in addition to amassing quite a catalog of information on the city's various residents over the decades, Marrow has even been responsible for the "disappearance" of a couple of undesirable Kindred over the years as well. Aiding him in these and other efforts is Marrow's own coterie, which includes his childe Orson in addition to a brother-sister pair of co-sanguineous Gangrel who were orphaned by their sire and left to Marrow's care in the late 1970s.

Father John Marrow is an unassuming white man who dresses almost exclusively in the black suit and white collar that characterizes his profession. Although Embraced in his thirties, Marrow's deep-set eyes and receding hairline give the casual viewer the impression of slightly advanced age. The wily Daeva has learned to use this impression to his benefit over time, combining it with his priestly attire and sagacious manner to win the confidence of others, or at least to put them at ease around him.

Lidia Kendall

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Embrace: 1869

Apparent Age: Mid-teens

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Occult 4, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Larceny 3, Survival 4

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (acting) 4, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Kindred Activity) 4, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 4

Merits: Allies (Vodouisaints) 2, City Status 2, Contacts 2, Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) 1, Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 3

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Envy

Health: 8

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 14

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 2, Protean 3, Resilience 3, Vigor 1

Coils of the Dragon: Blood Seeps Slowly, Conquer the Red Fear

Lidia Kendall is a vampire with a lot on her mind. She has always been a woman of divided loyalties—loyalty to Baron Cimitiere, her faction head and adoptive father figure, and loyalty to her covenant, the Ordo Dracul—but the division between the two has grown almost exponentially in recent nights. With the arrival of a new and ambitious Kogaion, she is forced more and more frequently to make decisions that put one or the other of her loyalties in jeopardy.

In addition to the constant threat of political or even physical fallout from Vidal's regime, Kendall now finds herself facing dissent from within, as Cimitiere's embittered

childe Josue hovers like a vulture, waiting for her to finally make a mistake that is too costly for the Baron to overlook. To make matters worse, Kendall believes the bigger threat comes from Malia Eliza Curry, not Josue. Kendall isn't stupid, and she knows better than to trust any vampire who has something to gain by her failure, but she simply believes Curry is the bigger threat. Meanwhile, the mysterious new Kogaion seems to be taking an almost perverse pleasure in demanding her time and attention, especially when she seems to be the most busy tending to Cimitiere. Kendall is devoted to her progress in the order but is finding it more and more difficult to accommodate its leader's needs.

Piled atop all of this is Kendall's growing concern over the rumors surrounding Vidal's allegedly errant Hound, Caitlin Meadows. In the first 20-some years of Kendall's Requiem, she saw quite a bit of Caitlin Meadows and knew that some strange relationship existed between Meadows and her sire, Roger Halliburton, but neither Halliburton nor Meadows ever discussed the matter with her during that time. Then, soon after Halliburton's death, Meadows began turning up in Vidal's court, and eventually became known as the Prince's informal Hound. In the century since, Kendall has always suspected that Meadows was somehow watching over her, but it's always been more of an intuitive sense than anything seen. As a result, Kendall has come to suspect that Meadows is a fellow childe of Halliburton's, but has no idea that she is responsible in large part for his death. Even so, the notion that her sister-in-blood has now gone rogue, and possibly even mad, concerns her almost as much as anything else in her turbulent unlife.

The Independent

The "independent" is a catch-all term for those Kindred who do not readily fall into any of the three major factions in the city. Most of the time, such as in the case of Shep Jennings and his followers, this is due to their affiliation with the covenant of the unaligned. Few of those who consider themselves neutral in covenant matters are eager to take up with the cause of any one political faction. In other cases, such as the local Kogaion of the Ordo Dracul, it doesn't pay to get involved, publicly or otherwise, with the city's factional struggle. Such individuals are assumed to be "with" Vidal but only by virtue of his position.

Sundown, the Afterhours King

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: 1915

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Business) 2, Computer 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Politics 3, Science 2



Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 4, Firearms 3, Stealth 5, Survival 4, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Hospitality) 5, Streetwise (The Rumor Mill) 5, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (Nightlife) 4, Allies (City Bureaucracy) 2, Barfly, City Status 5, Clan Status (Nosferatu) 3, Contacts 5, Fame 3, Haven 3, Herd 5, Resources 4, Stunt Driver

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 9

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Majesty 2, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Resilience 2, Vigor 2

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

The man who was once called Honoré has come a long way from his humble roots as a homeless Creole orphan on the streets of pre-World War I Louisiana. Known as “Sundown” since his emergence on the Kindred political scene during Prohibition, few Nosferatu can claim Sundown’s success in such unusual arenas. Sundown’s expertise lies in the ever-growing nightlife industry, and he has built for himself not only a thriving business but also a reputation to rival that of the most popular Daeva or accomplished Ventrué.

While it is true that Sundown has spent the better part of nine decades insinuating himself into New Orleans’ nighttime entertainment world, he has spent even longer planning for the night when he will stand face to face with his sire’s murderer. Sundown’s sire, a Nosferatu mystic named Leon, was so much more than anyone knew at the time—anyone but Sundown, that is. Not only did Leon take Sundown off the streets, give him shelter and a steady supply of food, but he *communicated* with him as no one before or since has. While the young Creole boy failed to grasp much of what his sagacious host had to teach, he was a willing listener and as apt a pupil as Leon could have found.

After some months of co-habitation and instruction, Leon’s disposition turned grim, and for a period of about three days, he said very little to his mortal protégé. By this time, the truth of Leon’s existence had pushed through to the boy’s understanding, and he struggled to understand what the fascinating creature before him was trying to accomplish by taking him in (and not killing him). After three days, Leon came to him; the dark demeanor had shifted to an aura of sublime acceptance, as though some great truth had been revealed. It was then that he brought his guest, student and friend into his own Requiem. The boy was shocked to find that their deep connection only intensified after death.

Although he would not come to realize it for some years, Sundown eventually pieced together enough about his early experiences to recognize that his sire somehow *knew* what fate had in store, and that he decided that what he must do was to pass the torch to Sundown, rather than try and fight destiny. The epiphany has been a tough one, but it has also given him hope, a strength of purpose, and even an unexplainable awareness about the target of the justice he seeks. There isn’t a doubt in Sundown’s mind that, were his sire’s killer to ever be destroyed, he would know right away. This surety is part of what has kept him going so strong.

Eastlin Meadows, the Unleashed Hound

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Embrace: 1863

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 5, Medicine 3, Occult 3, Politics (Kindred) 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (City Hall) 2, City Status 3, Clan Status (Gangrel) 2, Contacts 3, Covenant Status (Lancea Sanctum) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Haven (Security) 4, Herd 1, Iron Stamina 2, Resources 2

Willpower: 9

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Justice



Vice: Wrath

Health: 10

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Speed: 13

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 3, Protean 4, Resilience 4, Vigor 3

Derangement: Special (see below)

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

While most Kindred of the domain know that Vidal maintains a Hound, and the majority of that number are aware of the Hound's identity, few realize just how long she has truly been in Vidal's service. Aside from his Seneschal, no officer of Vidal's court has served longer or more fervently than Caitlin Meadows.

Caitlin Meadows was an orderly at a small mental asylum when Roger Halliburton arrived in Louisiana in 1862. On a tour of the facility later that year, Halliburton was impressed with the cool vigor with which the young woman manhandled even the most disturbed—or heavily muscled—of its patients. After learning that she had once tracked an escaped inmate across town, subdued him with no assistance, and brought him back to the asylum, Halliburton decided he could use a woman like Caitlin Meadows. His own perverse predilections required the skills of an aid who could procure for him his “supple, young treats,” and a woman with a trusting face was the perfect one to do it.

After nearly three decades in the service of a true monster like Halliburton, Caitlin Meadows' mind was on the verge of collapse. She had tricked or beaten countless innocent young girls into becoming sacrificial offerings on the altar of her sire's twisted desire, and she found herself haunted by the cacophonous sounds of their collected suffering during her daysleep. Bound as she was to her sire's will, she could neither stop herself nor gather the resolve to flee his side, and was on the verge of self-destruction when she decided to turn to the only one who could help: Augusto Vidal. Because Halliburton was a powerful member of the Kindred community by then, Vidal could not simply do away with his Gangrel foe, even if he personally felt justified in doing so. Instead, he offered Meadows a chance: If Halliburton were to be destroyed in such a way that would not obligate Vidal, as Prince, to punish Halliburton's destroyer, he would see to it that not only would Meadows not be punished, but that she would be rewarded for her ingenuity, too.

Ultimately, all Meadows had to do was to let fate take its course. Halliburton's activities eventually kindled the ire of a frightened community, and they surprised him en masse one early evening as he roused himself from sleep. According to legend, the enraged mob beat Roger Halliburton “to death” with wooden shoes, dolls, and other objects that



once belonged to the young girls he had mutilated. In the aftermath, it was a simple matter for Caitlin Meadows, who knew the mob was coming, to set upon her torporous sire and drain him of his unlife's essence. This one sanctioned diablerie would tie her forever after to her new master, Vidal.

The connection between Vidal and Meadows remained strong, each bound to the other by way of their mutually shared secrets, for over a century thereafter. As Vidal grew more extreme towards the end of the 20th century, however, Meadows too began to suffer a shift in the tides and fortunes of her own sanity. When Vidal began to withdraw from Kindred society, preferring to speak through intermediaries such as Maldonato or Donovan—or more preferably, through their direct and often unforgiving deeds—Meadows came to believe the only way for her to “save” the sanity, and thus the domain, of her own savior was to eliminate the stresses that were causing him to break down. While this effort started small, it has since grown into a full-blown campaign for Meadows, who has lost all sense of cause and effect at this point, and has even gone so far as to destroy those she believes lie at the root of Vidal's growing madness. Aside from Vidal, the only vampire in the city who is truly safe from her misguided mission is her secret sister-in-blood, Lidia, to whom she feels a quiet, maternal devotion. Were anything to happen to Lidia, Meadows may well and truly snap.

Rosa Bale

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Embrace: 1920

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Blood Potency: 3

Merits: Allies (Vodouisants) 3, Allies (Spirits) 2, City Status 2, Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) 3, Haven (Security) 4, Herd 3, Kindred Medium, Meditative Mind, Resources 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Crúac 4, Dominate 3, Resilience 3

Crúac Rituals: Appetite of Limba (Pangs of Proserpina) (1), Rigor Mortis (1); Cheval (2), Blood of Damballah (The Hydra's Vitae) (2); Deflection of the Wooden Doom (3), Touch of Sousou Panman (Touch of the Morrigan) (3); Blood Price (4), Willful Vitae (4)

Few vampires in New Orleans give others as many creeps as Baron Cimitiere's rival in vodoun, Rosa Bale, whose presence would put most Nosferatu to shame. Physically, she presents nothing especially eerie or disturbing—a mulatto woman in her late 30s, with a bush of straw-like salt-and-pepper hair tied up in a brightly-colored scarf. Even her eyes, usually the windows to a crazy person's soul, aren't especially off-putting. Indeed, when she's trying, Rosa Bale can be quite the charming conversation companion. No, the source of her reputation is the palpable aura of otherworldliness she projects. Even those who haven't heard of her reputation as a spirit-medium can tell within minutes of talking to her that Rosa Bale trafficks with forces beyond the normal. Depending on the circumstances (usually when she's especially stressed or focused on something), these forces can and will even manifest themselves; for example, several people have reported seeing candles wink out or have their flames turn a chilling shade of blue when Rosa Bale passes too close by.

Rosa Bale was born in New Orleans in the late 19th century, the daughter of a white tradesman and a freed

slave of Haitian extraction. She and her younger sister Isobel were inseparable as children, and showed a keen interest in vodoun, the religion of their mother. Their father discouraged it, however—not out of any parochial superstition, but because Reconstruction-era Louisiana was hard enough on persons of mixed color without throwing a much-misunderstood religion into the mix as well. Nevertheless, the girls' thirst for knowledge (as well as their latent rebelliousness) kept them coming back for more, and as their father accepted the fact that their mother practiced it, there was little he could do to stop his daughters' education in its ways.

Life went more or less as expected for Rosa and Isobel up until a vampire named Roger Halliburton tore it all apart in a single, violent moment. Although it was to be the catalyzing event that would lead to Halliburton's death at the hands of an enraged mob, that was little consolation for the grief-stricken Rosa, who immediately turned to vodoun as both consolation and a means of reconnecting with her lost sister. Ironically, she would not find that reconnection until many years later, when her Embrace finally re-opened communication with Isobel.

For her part, Isobel has no recollection of the traumatic events leading up to her grisly demise. If she did, or were she to suddenly remember, she would likely inform her sister as to Caitlin Meadows' involvement in those events, but might very well also recall (or otherwise know) that Meadows was not only unhappy with that involvement but also had a hand in Halliburton's destruction. But those questions are all hypothetical as yet (and entirely in the Storyteller's hands).

NEW MERIT: KINDRED MEDIUM (•• OR ••••)

Prerequisite: Vampire; Wits ••

Effect: A vampire with this Merit sees dead people, all the time. He can detect when wraiths are nearby and can even converse with them—but only some of them. The most curious thing about this Merit is that the sensitivity it involves seems focused on wraiths who have some connection to the Kindred—either those who were killed by vampires, or those who lost loved ones to vampires, or even those who once *were* vampires. A Kindred Medium can freely see and converse with such spirits but can only sense the general presence of all others. A Kindred Medium is especially sensitive to the passage of his favored spirits and to the impressions they leave in either places or on objects, and may detect the age and relative intensity of those impressions with a successful Wits + Occult + Auspex roll (variable difficulty), even without a wraith's direct presence.

The cost of this Merit is variable, depending on when the player purchases it. If he purchases it right after his character becomes a vampire, the cost is halved. If purchased later on in the game with experience, the cost is double that number.







Chapter Working the Street

*You don't mind if me
and a few of my crew
crash here for a few
nights, do you?*

*Yeah,
I figured
you'd understand.*

- Shep Jennings

Nobody can be so amusingly arrogant as a young man who has just discovered an old idea and thinks it his own.

Gabriel Hurst

Among the political movers and shakers in New Orleans' Kindred elite, Gabriel Hurst is an afterthought at best. At worst, he is actively pitied. For, despite the fact that the Ventrue neonate claims a seat on Vidal's Primogen council, Gabriel Hurst lacks the one thing all vampires, regardless of clan or political affiliation, must come to respect: Power.

There can be no denying the fledgling lord's ambition. What little influence Hurst has amassed in his short time has been hard-won, to be sure. But try as they might (assuming they would even care), few of his peers can see past Hurst's age or his nearly iron-clad reputation of being a child of privilege. In the eyes of his fellow undead, Gabriel Hurst only sits on the Primogen council because it pleases the Prince to see him there. With Hurst on the council, both the Ventrue and the Lancea Sanctum are well-represented, and while his opinion may carry little weight among his peers, Hurst's is nonetheless an equal voice at the table.

What few would suspect is that Gabriel Hurst isn't nearly the "yes-man" many believe him to be. While it is true that he is young, especially when compared with the likes of his fellow Primogen Pearl Chastain and Miss Opal, what Hurst lacks in age or experience, he more than makes up for in determination and—to the undoubted surprise of those who know him (or, rather, think they do)—sheer *grit*. He plays upon his own mediocre reputation to lull others into a false sense of security, knowing full well that the more he is ignored, the more he can actually accomplish, not only for himself, but for his clan, his Prince and his covenant.

The Most Dangerous Game

The Crescent City's youngest Primogen is presently embarking on the riskiest gambit of his relatively brief unlife. For many years now, Gabriel Hurst has suspected another member of Vidal's court of hidden schemes, if not outright betrayal, regarding the Prince. Only recently, however, did Hurst feel, with at least a passing semblance of security or anonymity, justified in (or even capable of) following up on his secret suspicions.

The reason why Hurst must take such delicate care in pursuing his answers is that the individual he suspects of betrayal is none other than Donovan, the Sheriff of New

Orleans and Augusto Vidal's would-be prodigal heir. Hurst, himself a loyal and reasonably sincere adherent of the *Testament of Longinus*, has come to question Donovan's faith in the covenant and its core tenets. After paying especially close attention to his "fellow" Sanctified during covenant rites over the course of several years, Hurst began to see a level of artifice no one else seemed to notice. He found Donovan's recitations *too* polished, his movements *too* perfect. It is as though Donovan merely wears a mask of piety; over what, however, was the question. And it is this question that drives Hurst's efforts.

EYES ON THE GROUND

Like any good vampire, Gabriel Hurst is forever searching for ways to one-up his fellows or otherwise accomplish his goals. Unlike most of the other power-players in Crescent City politics, however, the enterprising Ventrue is more than willing to consider reaching out (or down, as the case may be) to those "beneath" his station. Indeed, Hurst's self-effacing willingness to traffick with any and all Kindred, should they have something to offer, is one of the things that distinguishes him from his vain and often prideful peers.

To wit, Hurst is always on the lookout for new arrivals to the city. Whether they be newly Embraced locals or simply visiting Kindred from other domains, he knows that some of his best chances at potential allies (or at least unwitting dupes) lie in those who do not yet have a vested interest in any of the existing power struggles at work in the city. This would make a coterie of neonates such as the players' characters eminently attractive, as prospects go—even more attractive should one or more of their number be either Ventrue or Sanctified. And should events just happen to conspire to put the characters in the young Primogen's debt (a favorite tactic of Hurst's), he'll take utmost advantage of it.

Hurst never goes so far as to put himself in jeopardy on such neonates' behalf, of course, but he has no qualms about assisting them in whatever ways he can, should they provide him with adequate incentive to do so.

To this end, Gabriel Hurst has been digging—as quietly as he possibly can—into the current affairs and past history of Vidal's Sheriff. He hopes to uncover evidence that will

somehow confirm his suspicions about Donovan or otherwise implicate the Sheriff in something that would drive him from Vidal's favor. While Hurst's suspicions are genuine, his motivation is what drives his seeking: Hurst has long resented the fact that Donovan, a strutting peacock of a Daeva and the bastard child of Vidal's sworn enemy, has come to sit at the Prince's right hand. Hurst recognizes that he is still but a neonate, but he reasons (and perhaps rightly so) that a loyal, Sanctified Ventrue neonate is a better scion to the mighty Augusto Vidal than a pandering, preening, lying Daeva ancilla could ever be.

Of course, Gabriel Hurst is no fool. He is fully aware of just how high the stakes are, and he knows that his timing must be perfect. With the Prince so close to taking his sleep, even legitimate proof of wrongdoing could backfire if presented poorly. Hurst has considered the possibility that, given his state of mind in recent nights, the Prince could respond to news of Donovan's treachery with wild, unhinged rage. And although Hurst is reasonably sure that he would not be the target of Vidal's fury, more than one messenger has been beheaded for delivering news that displeased the ears of its royal recipient. In addition, Hurst must consider the fact that, should Donovan ever get wind of Hurst's intrusions into his past and privacy, the powerful Daeva would likely respond by beheading Hurst himself—especially if the Sheriff truly *does* have something to hide.

(For more on this game of cat and mouse, see Donovan's entry in **Chapter Four**.)

Reynaldo Gui

Savoy's effusively dubbed "Master of Elysium" is only a neonate in the strictest definition of the term. True, he's been a vampire for only fourteen years, but in terms of total age, he is even older than several of New Orleans' ancillae. From the height of Prohibition up until his Embrace, the Daeva was a ghoul for a gangland-affiliated Kindred in the city of Chicago. He has served this Kindred for many decades, and considers his Embrace less of a "reward" for services rendered, and more of a simple evolution or promotion—not entirely unlike a young Mafioso finally becoming "made."

Gui has come to New Orleans to pursue both his sire's agenda and his own, agendas that revolve largely around organized crime. Although the criminal "pipeline" between New Orleans and Chicago is not what it was during the gangland era of the 1920s and 1930s, it is still a valuable corridor for drugs, weapons, stolen parts and other smuggled cargo. Gui and his sire both have substantial interest in expanding their domain beyond the Windy City—especially as his sire is giving serious thought to fleeing Chicago in the face of Prince Maxwell's return to power. (Gui's sire was far



more involved in politics than Gui is, and was a close ally of Maxwell's predecessor.) Thus, Gui intends to sink his fingers deep into the organized criminal underworld of New Orleans, making room for himself and his sire, and displacing any who would get in his way. He cares little for the interests of the covenants in New Orleans—he considers himself unaligned—and even less for the factional struggles that grip the Big Easy. In order to advance his position and goals, however, he behaves as though this were not the case, expressing great public zeal for Savoy's faction.

Gui has insinuated himself into Savoy's good graces, even to the position (informal though it may be) of the French Quarter lord's Master of Elysium. This is the perfect political position for a Kindred in Gui's position. It allows him to keep tabs on political goings-on, and to work his way up through the ranks of Savoy's faction—the better to observe (and perhaps co-opt) Savoy's own organized crime contacts. Vidal's people largely ignore him, because his position is relatively meaningless. Savoy's followers speak relatively freely in front of him, but they expect him to do little other than maintain their gathering places and lead various ceremonies.

That's just the way Gui likes it, as it leaves him free to pursue his true agenda.

Underground Alliances

When he is not occupied by his duties to Savoy, Gui is making forays into New Orleans' underworld, moving his own people in from out of town to take over certain operations and areas, and that puts him in potential conflict with his false master, Antoine Savoy. To date, however, Gui and Savoy have avoided any direct conflict. Savoy has agreed to permit his Master of Elysium to move in on certain areas of the New Orleans underworld, in exchange for which Gui must use his Chicago connections to enrich Savoy's own criminal endeavors. This suits Gui fine, for the time being, as it allows him to build strength before moving in on some of the operations for which Savoy has not granted his permission. Gui is certain, of course, that the French Quarter lord does not trust him, despite having offered him a minor position in the court. Savoy, he knows, is keeping an eye on him, and possibly planning to usurp Gui's own operations as he is planning to do to Savoy's, but so far Savoy has not let slip any hint as to when or how he will act.

Duty Work

Perhaps the biggest hurdle Gui must face is the fact that other Kindred are involved, to one extent or another, in the New Orleans criminal underworld. Antoine Savoy, the most powerful of the lot, has numerous connections with many of the city's most powerful criminals. Dr. Xola deals drugs and performs illegal operations for, among others, gangbangers. Lidia Kendall is working her way

through the gangs, attempting to mold them into Cimitiere's tools. Sundown, while not involved in organized crime itself, still maintains a few contacts in that arena from the days of Prohibition. Even the detective Peter Lebeaux has numerous informants who could tell him if something big were going down. And all of these characters, of course, don't even include the handful of neonates who simply belong to various gangs or organizations as members as opposed to manipulators.

Gui, quite simply, needs them all out of the way. He doesn't dare attempt to take them on directly or by any means that can be traced back to him, so he has gone the same route that has worked for the Mafia for so many years: Use outside muscle to deal with the problem.



THE VAMPIRE HUNTERS

Reynaldo Gui tends to think of the vampire hunters with whom he has been dealing as little more than tools. True, they have been fairly easily manipulated to date, but these people are not fools, and they are not to be trifled with.

Operating out of several different havens of their own, including a suite of offices on the campus of Tulane University and a small bookstore in the French Quarter, this band of hunters is remarkably well-informed about the nature of the Kindred. That is, they remain unaware of the various cultural aspects of the Requiem, such as covenants and clans, but they know the basics of Kindred physiology (stakes paralyze rather than kill, sunlight burns, garlic and running water are myths, and so forth). They have already sent three vampires to Final Death, and while all were young neonates, this still suggests these mortals are something to be reckoned with.

The current members of this little band of hunters are Professor Michael West, who has a PhD in psychology and an MA in mythology; Nicholas Racine, a mulatto voodooisant and librarian; Kiera Parks, a traffic cop; and Wayne Jensen, a defense attorney.



So far, Gui has made use of two separate tools to attack those Kindred who stand in his way. The first, as discussed previously, is the mad vampire Caitlin Meadows (see p. 92 of **Chapter Four: Wheels Within Wheels**). While Meadows is not anywhere near to trusting Gui completely, the wily Daeva has been able to drop sufficient hints that she has eliminated a few neonates as "threats to Vidal"—neonates who actually held positions in various gangs that Gui wanted for his own people.

Gui's second tool, and potentially a much more dangerous one, is a small band of mortal hunters. These kine from in and around the French Quarter have become aware of the presence of the supernatural in New Orleans and have determined to do something about it. Gui discovered them entirely by accident not long after first arriving



in New Orleans, and determined to use them to his advantage. He makes occasional contact with these hunters, usually through letter drops and other cloak-and-dagger-style methods, never seeing them personally. He has not let on that he himself is a vampire, instead portraying himself as a fellow crusader against the “dark forces,” but one who cannot afford to be exposed. He drops just enough hints to lead the hunters to various local Kindred—and while Gui has not pointed them solely at Kindred criminals, in case they might put two and two together regarding his motives, the hunters have indeed slain several vampires who stood in the way of Gui’s own people. He hopes that these hunters will one day be potent enough that he can risk sending them after one of the major players, perhaps Lidia Kendall or even, if luck is with them and him, Antoine Savoy himself.

Peter Lebeaux

Lebeaux shoulders a remarkable number of responsibilities and ambitions for so young a vampire. The NOPD homicide detective has experienced the Requiem for less than a decade. Supposedly the childe of Coco Duquette (though neither Lebeaux nor Preston have ever confirmed this long-standing rumor), Lebeaux is a faithful servant of Antoine Savoy not because of any “familiar” ties, but because he truly believes in Savoy’s cause. Lebeaux despises what he has seen of Vidal’s reign, and while he does not harbor Savoy’s hatred of Baron Cimitiere, he does not believe the Nosferatu *houngan* is a viable alternative Prince.

Quite simply, Peter Lebeaux believes in law and order, no less so than he did as a mortal, but he also believes in the just application of the laws. In Vidal, Lebeaux sees only abuse of power, whereas he believes Savoy’s promises of a more enlightened rule. (Whether Lebeaux’s loyalty will survive if he ever discovers that Savoy is pure politician (all promises with no true intent) remains to be seen.) Lebeaux believes the Kindred require firm but fair guidance no less than the kine, and he intends to bring that about by whatever means he can. Lebeaux does not desire any true political power for himself—though this could well change in years to come, given how young the Mekhet is as a vampire—only the position necessary to do his job. He intends to serve as Savoy’s Sheriff once the French Quarter lord is Prince of New Orleans. That and ensuring that Savoy *does* become Prince are currently the limits of his ambitions.

Lebeaux has a neonate’s understanding of history, which is to say that he doesn’t yet truly comprehend how far back things go. He remains unaware that Vidal’s draconian practices are, in Kindred terms, a recent development, and that Savoy has been seeking the position of Prince since well before those practices began. He sees the city in black-and-white terms and judges other Kindred’s actions based on their current repercussions

without considering the longstanding grudges or alliances behind them. Lebeaux has the makings of a true Sheriff, but only if he survives long enough to gain a true understanding of Kindred nature. As things stand now, he views Vidal as a corrupt leader, Savoy as a political contender, and most other Kindred as either law-abiding citizens or criminals. A very cop-like view, yes, and one that influences most of Lebeaux’s decisions, but hardly accurate.

Internal Affairs

Lebeaux serves as one of Savoy’s most vital pipelines into a police force that is largely influenced by Prince Vidal. The young Mekhet’s presence allows Savoy to determine, at least in some instances, what Vidal has planned for his pawns and allies on the force, where they will be operating in large numbers, what sorts of stings they might have going against Savoy’s organized crime interests, and so forth. This font of information is slowly drying up as Vidal’s people begin to recognize that Lebeaux is not to be trusted, but, for the time being, the detective’s reputation and influence in the force is still sufficient to open both doors and mouths.

Lebeaux does more on the police force than just keep an eye on other cops, however. The detective also works to ensure that Savoy’s allies in organized crime do not linger needlessly in jail. He does nothing as blatant as opening their cells or stealing evidence. Instead, he uses more subtle techniques such as altering important details in paperwork or breaking evidence seals so that they are no longer as viable in court as his preferred methods. Lebeaux hates that he is responsible for such actions at all; it grates on his sense of right and wrong. Still, he understands that letting a few criminals go free now and then, however much harm it may do to the mortal system of justice, is vital to keep Savoy a strong contender for the Princedom.

Lebeaux is also delving into old police records during his spare time, seeking anything that might be useful to Savoy’s cause. According to gossip, Vidal’s own Sheriff, Donovan, was once a police officer himself, and Lebeaux hopes to find something in his past service that would grant Savoy leverage over him. To date, Lebeaux hasn’t had much luck as he only has access to the records of his own precinct (and he has no idea just how old Donovan truly is, to boot).

It’s also worth noting that Lebeaux has a relatively friendly working relationship with most of the coroners who serve the NOPD. Although these friendships do not extend so far that these doctors would happily break the law for Lebeaux, he can be relatively certain that, should any unusual corpses turn up—say, those that do not look quite human, or that seem to wake up and take offense to being examined—he’ll be one of the first to hear about it.

Stakeouts and Stings

Lebeaux has, in recent months, determined to use his position on the police force as a weapon against Vidal’s and

Cimitiere's operatives. After all, every single vampire in the city is guilty of, at the very least, some form of assault; most have committed crimes far worse. Surely, Lebeaux believes, he can use the fact that Kindred are inherently lawbreakers as a means of inconveniencing Savoy's enemies.

To date, Lebeaux has not actually arrested any Kindred. The potential for a breach of the Masquerade if a vampire were thrown in prison or transported during the day is simply too great to risk.



WE'RE UNDER ARREST?

Whether it's because they've angered Vidal (who has numerous connections within the police force) or Savoy (who has Lebeaux and a few others), or simply because they're engaged in all manner of unsavory activities, it's entirely possible that your players' characters are eventually going to violate the laws in New Orleans to a sufficient degree that they'll have to deal with the police. Running and hiding is always an option, but it doesn't always succeed, and any group foolish enough to try fighting will inevitably learn that there are always more police, and they can call on larger armaments than even the most well-connected vampire.

If your troupe's characters are ever arrested and unable to free themselves in a relatively short span of time, they're almost certain to encounter Peter Lebeaux. The Mekhet detective fully understands the need for maintaining the Masquerade, so he'll likely offer to help even operatives of Prince Vidal escape (unless he feels he has the means and opportunity to eliminate them with no repercussions, but things are rarely so simple). However, his help does not come cheap. Any Kindred who find themselves in prison will have to offer Lebeaux—and, by extension, Savoy—all manner of future favors if they wish to step outside before the inevitable dawn.



Instead, Lebeaux uses his access to various stakeout equipment—wire taps, directional microphones, and the like—to keep tabs on Savoy's rivals. Certainly, he's not the only police officer making use of illegal surveillance to aid one or another of the Kindred factions, but Vidal and Cimitiere would both be surprised at just how many locations and conversations Lebeaux can listen in on. Due to his various contacts elsewhere on the force, it requires little effort for Lebeaux to have almost anyone—even, so long as he doesn't abuse the ability, fairly important city officials—called in for questioning or held briefly as material witnesses. Even if it's only for a few hours, this can be sufficient to interfere with their activities on behalf of other Kindred, forcing them to miss meetings, preventing them from pushing through legislation or other paperwork, or simply granting Lebeaux a few moments to question them with the help of Dominate.

Natasha Preston

Many of the Kindred involved in the politics of New Orleans have begun to wonder if Preston's loyalty to Antoine Savoy will survive much longer. The Ventrue has been the French Quarter lord's Seneschal for many years, and, until recently, she seemed to back him in every way imaginable. Since Vidal's reign has grown harsher in the past few years, however, Preston seems to have drifted away from Savoy in her notions of what sorts of actions are appropriate. Preston, who rarely grows emotionally agitated over anything, clearly believes that Savoy is not taking sufficient action to take advantage of Vidal's new attitudes. Savoy is not, she believes, aggressive enough in courting allies, in converting Vidal's own followers in the face of the Prince's behavior. Even more surprisingly, she has spoken out against Vidal at various Elysium gatherings, not only in Savoy's territories but also in Vidal's own. She says things even Savoy seems hesitant to utter directly, accusing Vidal of all manner of crimes against Kindred society and entreating others among the Damned to turn against him. She has also argued over this matter with Savoy, loudly and in public, even forcing the French Quarter lord to order her to leave more than one official function. Formally, she still serves him as Seneschal, and they appear quite able to work together on other matters. Informally, even those nearest Savoy wonder how long it will be before Preston finds herself replaced.

As is so often the case with the Kindred, it's all a deception. Preston is as loyal to Savoy as she ever was. Her public accusations against him are intended to cover the fact that he is moving, subtly and slowly but steadily, to increase his support in the face of Vidal's activities. (See more on Savoy's own schemes on p. 53 of **Chapter Three: Games of the Elders**.) Savoy and Preston are carefully orchestrating the façade; if she isn't vocal enough, it won't be believed, but neither will anybody believe that she would abruptly abandon Savoy utterly. Thus, the careful balancing act—argument and reconciliation, cooperation and conflict. Odds are, they won't be able to maintain the deception for long before other Kindred begin to wonder why one hasn't given up on the other; but by then, Savoy should have succeeded in drawing several more Kindred to his side without Vidal or anyone else being the wiser.

This deception allows Preston to make contacts and possibly even alliances with Kindred whom Savoy cannot—specifically, vampires who oppose Vidal but feel, as Preston appears to, that Savoy is not moving fast enough. If she can encourage them to act as a fellow member of the “disillusioned and disenfranchised,” she has succeeded in causing that much more trouble for Vidal, without Savoy himself being directly involved or risking any of his own pawns.



The Business of Politics

Preston, far more than most other Kindred, views the factional struggle in New Orleans as less of a war and more of a business conflict. Given her background and expertise, she frames the entire conflict in such terms—and, perhaps not surprisingly, is attempting to solve the conflict in those same terms.

Preston has made occasional overtures to the various independent groups in New Orleans, such as Jennings' unaligned Kindred, the Nosferatu Sundown, and of course a great many neonates who either have not yet chosen a faction or are not yet set in their choice. Preston does not begin discussions by arguing the morality of Savoy's cause; she saves that for later, when she's gotten their attention. No, Preston has begun trying to hire Kindred to join Savoy. She's had little luck as of yet, partly because most independent Kindred in New Orleans like it that way, and partly because she herself doesn't have the sort of funds to offer the amounts of money she'd like to. As of now, she has been unable to convince Savoy to contribute money to her efforts, and she doesn't wish him to do so obviously, anyway, as that would defeat the purpose of their current "feud."

Thus, Preston has devoted much of her attention to increasing her own fortune, in hopes that she can then use those monies to entice others to her cause. She has begun a long-term scheme of buying a small business, using her contacts (and Savoy's) to bolster it as much as possible, then selling it for profit. She hopes to work her way up the business ladder in this fashion, beginning with a single storefront and ending—she hopes—with entire companies. She is currently studying the economics of the city in hopes that she can select businesses owned by or affiliated with other Kindred, thus weakening their own resources when she buys the companies, and killing two birds with one stone.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

In her zeal (some might say desperation) to find allies for Savoy, Preston has tentatively joined forces with Pierpont McGinn. The two Kindred are engaged in a dangerous political dance. Preston is certain that McGinn intends to use her, and all his allies, to eventually supplant Vidal and Savoy both. She has no true interest in supporting McGinn over Savoy; her loyalty to the French Quarter lord is unshakable. She has convinced McGinn that she will support him once he has aided Savoy in overthrowing Vidal, however, simply because she wants McGinn to aid her own master. Afterwards, she fully intends to betray McGinn to Savoy.

However ambitious, racist, and narrow-minded McGinn may be, he's far from stupid. Preston must remain convincing enough to make the Ventrue believe that her publicly declared anger at Savoy

means that she will support McGinn in the future, yet she cannot be so convincing that other Kindred learn of this intended "treason" and make a public show of revealing it. Doing so would force Savoy either to take steps against her and McGinn or to reveal the duplicity in which he and Preston have been engaged. Either option would weaken Savoy's standing, and Preston wants no part of that.

An enormous number of Kindred attempt to play both sides of any given conflict, whether it's as major as the city's factional warfare or as minor as two vampires engaged in a business partnership. Should the players' characters ever learn of Preston's duplicity in this matter, however, they will have acquired both a powerful bit of leverage and a large target on their backs. Preston will take almost any action necessary to keep news of her double-dealing from reaching either McGinn or the public in general, and McGinn certainly doesn't want Savoy knowing that McGinn's support of Savoy is both provisional and temporary. Characters who make careful use of this information can expect substantial power over both vampires. Those who make careless use of it, however, can expect to suffer greatly before at last entering the waiting arms of Final Death.

Josue Ventrue

While it is common knowledge that both Augusto Vidal and Antoine Savoy sired progeny who turned out to be far less than their sires had hoped, the fact is that Baron Cimitiere—for all he cares to distinguish himself from the other two—is in much the same position. In a twist of irony that is not lost on the Baron, the very same events that robbed Prince Vidal of his ability to ever again sire childer also precipitated the chain of events that would lead to Baron Cimitiere's attempt at creating the perfect one.

And, much like the efforts of the other two elders, the results were disappointing.

After the night of the ritual that marked the dawn of the current era in the city's shadow history, Baron Cimitiere realized that he, too, had changed. He felt the power and the majesty of his patron, Baron Samedi, like he never had before. He saw the city around him, especially as it pertained to the supernatural, with eyes that seemed new and somehow more potent. Before long, he felt confident that he had grown powerful and transformed enough to take the step that would seal his fate in Kindred history: He would start a new bloodline, named after himself.

The subject of his first attempt at doing so was a young Voudouisant prodigy named Josue. But the result of this first attempt was utter failure—at least in Cimitiere's eyes. When Josue awoke from his Embrace, he was no closer to Baron Samedi or the other loa than any other Nosferatu. In fact, Josue wasn't even close to Baron

Cimitiere anymore, as the Embrace seemed to only further enhance the young black boy's unearthly mortal beauty! Cimitiere felt that this result was a punishment from Baron Samedi, a curse levied for ultimate hubris.

The problem, of course, was that Baron Cimitiere now had a childe of his own.

Sibling Rivalry

Josue realizes that he is all but useless to his sire, and that his sire would probably prefer to forget Josue ever existed (except as a reminder of Cimitiere's own failings). But when some would abandon all hope, Josue has pushed on. When all one has is hope, one hopes a great deal, and frequently.

While Josue recognizes that he will never be the true prodigy Cimitiere once wished for him to be, he still believes he can make himself invaluable to the Baron, and thus eventually earn his sire's precious favor. The best way to do this, Josue theorizes, is to one night usurp Lidia Kendall's place at his sire's right hand. Doing so will be tricky, however, for Kendall is both trusted and powerful, and any overt attempts to discredit her will likely be viewed as petulance at best, and dissent within the ranks at worst. Thus, Josue's only hope is to gather enough evidence of either her treachery or incompetence to force the Baron's hand.

Fortunately for Josue, Lidia Kendall has provided him with just the opportunity he seeks. Due to her affiliation with the Ordo Dracul, she is often called upon to leave the Baron's side in order to tend to covenant duties. While many Kindred face the prospect of being pulled from different directions on a nightly basis, very few face the inherent conflict of interest Kendall faces. And if Josue can catch her (or force events to conspire to make her) off-guard, he just may have a chance.

DESPERATE MEASURES

Due in part to his worry that Kendall will lead him astray in the coming crucial times (and due in part to his own growing frustration), Josue has embarked on an incredibly risky gambit in the hopes that it will pay off, eventually putting himself, and not Lidia Kendall, at his sire's side. Josue's privileged position as the Baron's childe gives him more or less free rein to come and go as he pleases in the Baron's tenurial domains and in and around the various places he holds court. This, in turn, grants Josue access to a number of sensitive materials that would otherwise be off-limits to anyone who is not Lidia Kendall or the Baron himself.

Recently, Josue has started the practice of revealing secrets of a supernatural origin in general, and his sire's own mystical practices specifically, to agents connected with the Ordo Dracul. Josue is doing this in the hopes that those in the Ordo Dracul will bite on the hints and pieces of mysticism dropped, and in turn, grow more active and

involved in the city. Indeed, this gambit is paying off, as evinced by the increasing demands the covenant has been placing upon its sister Lidia. For every clue dropped and followed up on, Lidia is forced to once again bring her own conflicting interests to forefront when she is pulled away from her duties to the Baron and his own followers.

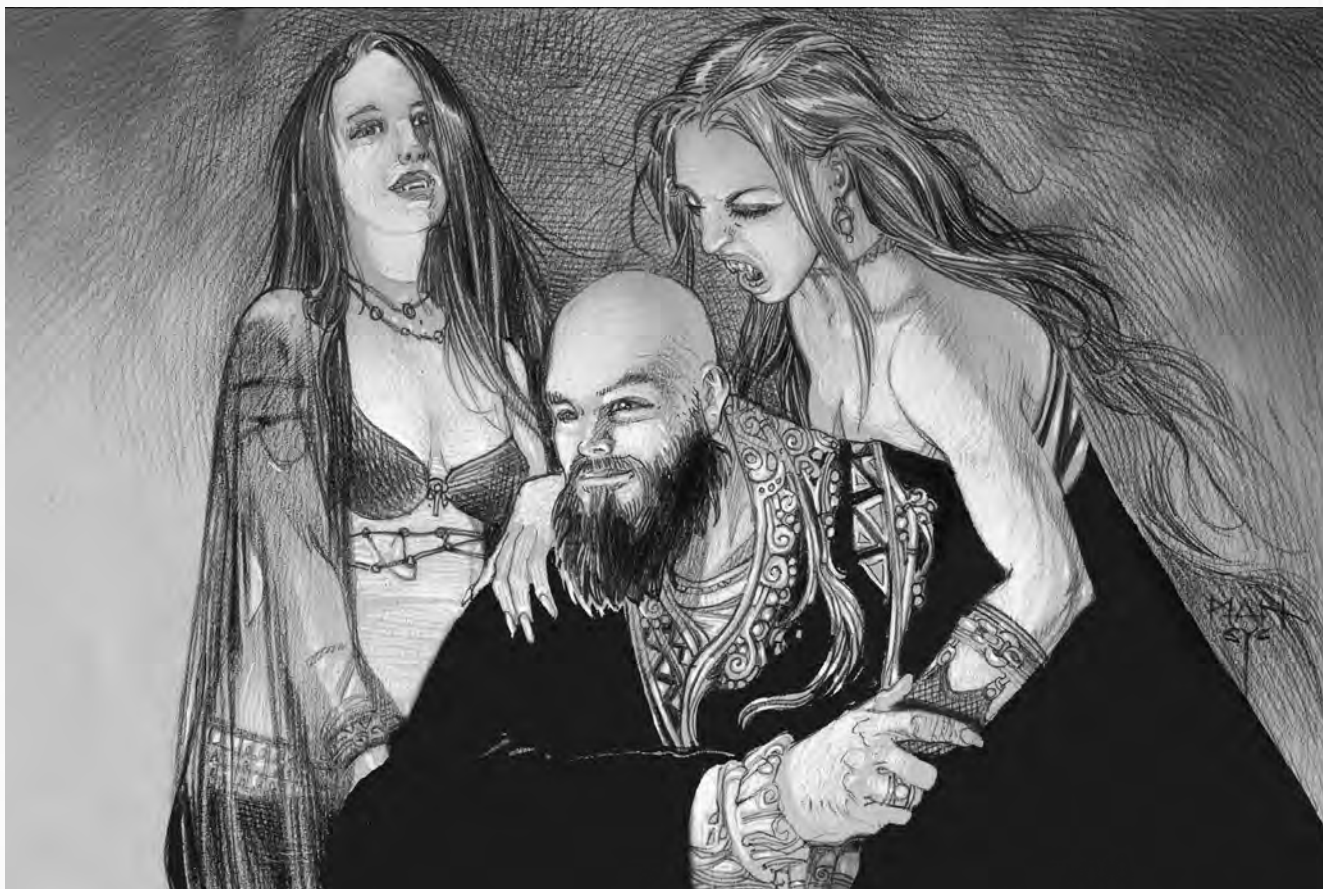
Josue must be very careful, though. Although the Baron's faction does have enemy voodooists in the city, there is only so much that Josue can blame on Rosa Bale and her followers. And the more he exploits his reserve of ancient secrets and mystical trinkets, the higher the likelihood that Kendall herself will trace the occurrences back to Josue himself. And if the Baron forced to choose between his errant childe and his trusted advisor, Josue is confident that the Baron would forsake his childe. Until such time as the tables on that equation have turned, Josue will continue to operate with only the utmost discretion where his activities are concerned.

Dr. Ephram Xola

Every one of the Kindred may be Damned, but Dr. Xola is truly a monster. He carries the title "doctor" as both a medical and vodoun title, and is equally skilled in matters anatomical and mystical. Dr. Xola focuses his worship on the Rada loa, a relatively dark and destructive—though not "evil" per se—family of spirits. He is an unpleasant individual to be around, arrogant and bullying, and were it not for the fact that he is a devoted servant of Baron Cimitiere, with all the protections that implies, it's entirely likely Dr. Xola would have been slain by now. As things stand, most younger Kindred (and some elder ones) are terrified of him, and those with the power to actually do something about him are not quite sufficiently pissed off to do so.

Xola has two driving ambitions: to gain as much comfort and power for himself as he can and to ensure that Baron Cimitiere and his faction continue to prosper. Xola has appointed himself "protector" of Cimitiere's faction, and often takes steps against its enemies that he feels the Baron is, perhaps, not able to take himself. At times, Xola's excesses drive even Cimitiere to consider taking steps, but the Baron knows that the young Gangrel, however repulsive he may be, is a valuable member of his flock.

The doctor operates a private, back-alley clinic in one of the poorest and most downtrodden neighborhoods in Cimitiere's territory. The doctor accepts payment only in cash (or favors, where Kindred are concerned), and he is willing to treat any condition, from STDs to bullet wounds, without asking questions. He is a street surgeon, an illegal abortionist, a drug dealer and a *bokor*. Perhaps most disturbingly, it is from these various roles that he gains most of his sustenance, collecting blood lost from patients during these various procedures. (Other horri-



fied Kindred have actually reported seeing Dr. Xola sucking thoughtfully on an aborted fetus while in deep conversation.) Several of his regular patients, community leaders and criminals alike, are ghouls, fed portions of Xola's vitae along with other medications.

Banking and Warehousing

Xola makes his various "supplies" available to other Kindred, so long as they are able to pay. (He does not restrict his business to Cimitiere's followers, though he charges them substantially less.) These "supplies" might include various restricted drugs, which Xola is only too happy to supply. More frequently, however, other Kindred come to him for blood. Xola stores the blood spilt during his operations that he himself does not consume, and he makes it available to others for emergencies. He is, in fact, willing to rent out the cooler in which he keeps this blood as a last-ditch shelter against the rising sun, though the cost is astronomical. Xola keeps the blood sorted, not only by type but also by the age, gender, and creed of the individual from whom he took it, so that he may supply any Kindred who has particularly refined tastes.

the Baron's direction, sometimes on the doctor's own initiative. And the Gangrel is certainly equipped to handle the job. He is an enormous man, built like a wrestler, and completely unencumbered by anything resembling scruples. He makes use of his knowledge of vodoun imagery, Crúac sorcery, the Nightmare Discipline (learned from a badly injured Nosferatu desperate for shelter against the sun), and anatomical weak spots to terrorize and torment his victims before ending their lives (or unives). As a warning to others who might move against Cimitiere, Xola has even gone after the family and friends of his victims, reveling in the terror he causes and the power he believes it grants him.

This, then, is the force with which players might have to deal, should they prove themselves a threat to Baron Cimitiere. Of course, Xola is only a neonate himself (albeit very near to becoming ancilla), so it's possible a well-coordinated coterie might be able to take him on. He is absolutely merciless, however, and has no qualms about hunting down his enemies and their loved ones one by one until the job is complete.

Perhaps even more disturbing, a coterie of characters allied with Cimitiere might find themselves having to work with Dr. Xola. They will have to look deep within themselves, and decide if their goals can really justify them cooperating with someone as horrific and cruel as the undead doctor.

THE BARON'S ENFORCER

As mentioned above, Dr. Xola serves as muscle and enforcer for Baron Cimitiere, sometimes at

Xola stores more than mere blood, however. He has whole bodies, patients who died on the operating table with no friends or relatives to claim them, in cold storage. He has, as well, the ashes and other decomposed remains of dead Kindred, some of whom he himself slew during the course of his duties as Cimitiere's enforcer. He uses these during dark rites that go well beyond vodoun as mortals (or even, in some cases, Baron Cimitiere) practice it—and Xola makes these bodies and ashes available to other blood magicians as well.

Finally, Xola offers his medical services to the Kindred as well. Of course, Kindred will eventually heal from almost any injury with the right expenditure of vitae. Should a vampire need a bullet removed before it naturally works its way out or an obvious knife wound stitched shut until she can feed enough to heal it herself, Xola is the man to see.

Few Kindred come to Dr. Xola for any of these services, for most of them find the hulking Gangrel disturbing even by the standards of the Damned. Nevertheless, Xola has an undead clientele large enough that he has developed a small network of favors. None of his customers would sacrifice anything for him, but he can, at least, gather information from across the city at a moment's notice, information he can then deliver to Baron Cimitiere.

Cleavon "Shep" Jennings

The so-called "voice of the unbound" in New Orleans is not quite as loud, articulate, or effective as the man to whom it belongs would like it to be. Ever since the late 1960s, Cleavon Jennings (known rather mystifyingly as "Shep") has strived to bring equality and enfranchisement to the unaligned Kindred of what he feels has become Augusto Vidal's private religious sanctum. For the first thirty-odd years of this campaign, however, any gains made toward this goal were either too miniscule or too temporary to have much impact in the long run. Before long, the oppressive weight of the Lancea Sanctum's influence would inevitably bear down, crushing what few advances Jennings had achieved.

In the last few years, however, Jennings seems to have somehow straightened out his act. This is due in part to his appointment of an official emissary (a Gangrel neonate by name of Desirae Wells), and in part to the simple fact that his moves, like his politics, have grown much more savvy and finessed in that time. Where once his overtures would meet with only stony defiance, he now finds amenable if not openly agreeable hosts. The overall impression, at least politically, is that Shep Jennings has finally learned how to play Kindred politics.

Unfortunately for Jennings (and for the unaligned as a whole), his timing has been poor. He started this political campaign (or "movement," as he likes to call it, co-opted from his somewhat more successful Carthian

brothers) around the time when Augusto Vidal began sliding into autocracy in earnest. Jennings has always blamed this shift towards intolerance and ultra-conservatism—manifested most directly in the nightly power struggle between Vidal and Savoy—for Shep's rather public inability to gain any real power or influence of his own, and thus on behalf of the unaligned. With Jennings' recent gains, however, he has allowed his own rather considerable impatience (he is not the wise ancilla he claims to be; see below) to get the better of him, and he now believes that more drastic action needs to be taken (see *Soldiers and Pawns* sidebar).

The Not-So Great Pretender

Unlike some of New Orleans' Kindred, the secrets Shep Jennings keep exist to hide his own personal failings, rather than any particular diabolical schemes. Taking a page out of Antoine Savoy's book, Shep Jennings presents the façade of an established ancilla who has, over the course of many years, built for himself a steady reputation as the "father figure" of the unaligned in the Big Easy. Despite the patron-like grandstanding he displays, however (especially where his ward Desirae is concerned), Jennings himself is, in actual fact, but a neonate. To be fair, he was brought into his Requiem in the late 50s, so he is *almost* a legitimate ancilla, technically speaking. All the same, from the content and general tenor of his political bravado, one is led to believe that he is substantially older—perhaps by as much as three or four decades—than he is in truth.



SOLDIERS AND PAWNS

In his escalating frustration at both the current political détente and his own seeming inability to make any significant progress without Desirae Wells' aid, Jennings has, after so many years, finally put a concrete plan of his own design into play. Although he keeps telling himself it is merely a "contingency plan," he does so less because the term is truly accurate and more because it helps him feel better about the plan's dangerous nature. No, deep down, Shep Jennings knows full well that he intends to see this latest initiative through to its end, though bitter that end may be.

Jennings' bitterness about his own situation has led to his growing determination to put an end to the factional power struggle that stands at the core of the city's sordid story. Jennings bides his time for now, but only because he knows Vidal will be in torpor soon enough anyway. All his current planning is preparation for the undoubtedly volatile time after Vidal has entered his sleep but before the incoming power structure is solidified. Unlike other political players in the city, Jennings is no longer open to the possibility that bloodshed can be avoided and certainly not when his aim is the destruction of not one but three Kindred elders. No, Jennings intends to



launch all-out war between the factions once the Prince is out of the way. He'll not be satisfied until both Savoy and Cimitiere are removed and the power of the Lancea Sanctum reduced to little more than scraps.

In this ambitious bid for change, Jennings realizes he needs help. Even if he intends to be subtle (by getting the post-Vidal power-players to war on one another), Jennings still requires individuals capable of putting such plans into motion. In this regard, he has started to keep a wary eye out for new arrivals whom he can entice or bend to his own designs. This new initiative is perhaps the one and only secret (besides his true age, of course) that Jennings keeps from even his own Gangrel advisor. As a result, the ringleader of this operation (though even he is unaware of its final goals) is a fire-eyed young Daeva named Marcio de la Cruz. Marcio, a disillusioned expatriate from the Carthian movement, believes in Jennings' cause and the cause of all unaligned, and would sooner see New Orleans liberated in a spectacular moment of fire than watch it suffocate slowly in the mire that is the political ambitions of small-minded vampires it has become. Thus, whereas Desirae Wells has grown to become the "face" of Jennings' unaligned movement, it is de la Cruz who is its secret functionary on the ground.

to perpetuate this charade. While it is relatively common knowledge that he did not rise to any level of real involvement until the civil rights movements of the late 1960s, the impression that he "waited" until then to get involved is but Jennings' own propaganda, spread by his own hand or by his various agents in the decades since. Rather than already being an ancilla by then (or at least nearly so), he was barely a decade into his actual Requiem. If Shep Jennings has any real talent, it's his capacity for almost shameless moxie.

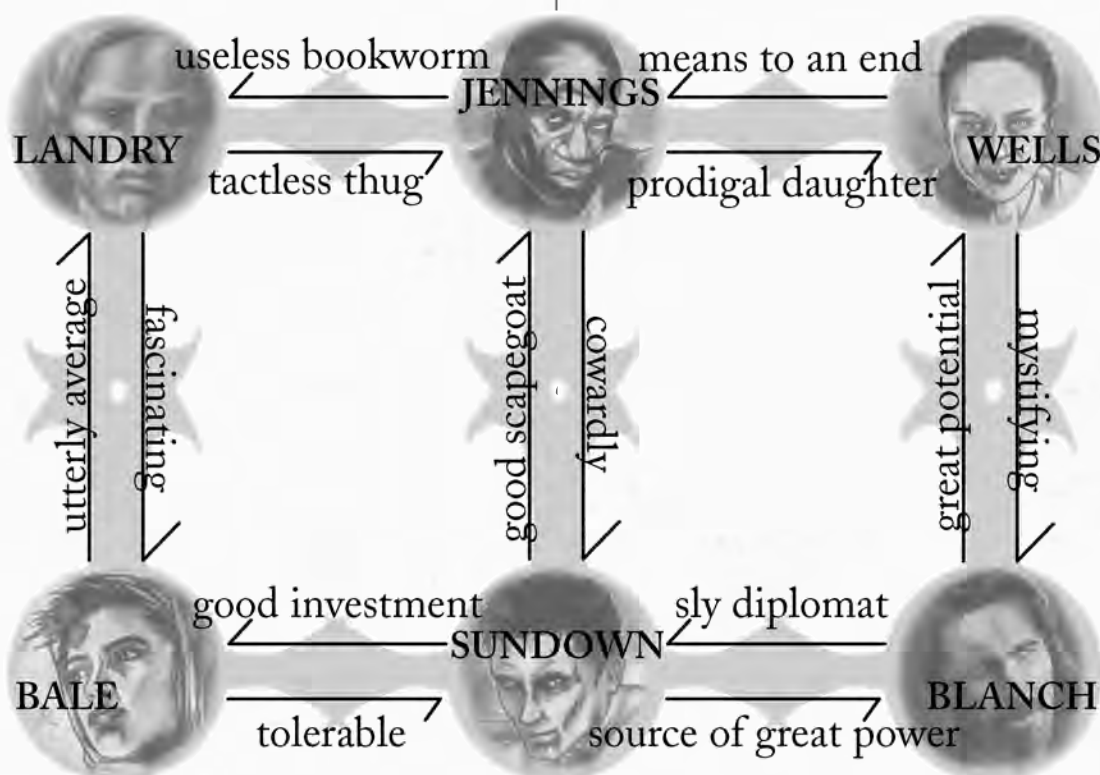
In addition to the rather protracted ruse concerning his age, Jennings also hides the truth of his reliance on his ward Desirae Wells. Much of his influence hinges on his reputation as the fatherly guiding force behind the drive for unaligned enfranchisement in New Orleans, and were the depths of his reliance—and, thus, his incompetence—made public, he would lose most if not all of his power.

For more on this relationship, see Desirae Wells' entry later on in this chapter.

Carter Landry

The Mekhet Carter Landry is a newcomer to New Orleans, a relative newcomer to the Requiem itself (he has been a vampire for less than thirty years), and the newly assigned Kogaion of the Ordo Dracul in New Orleans. Is it any wonder, then, that the vast majority of

Ironically, it is Jennings' status as one of the Unbound that first allowed (and, indeed, continues to allow) him



his efforts are devoted to hiding his identity from ally and enemy alike, for fear of what may happen when others discover that the lead Dragon in the city is so weak?

In truth, Landry is not nearly the pushover his age might suggest—or that he himself seems to think he is. An Ordo Dracul prodigy, he possesses a mastery of occult lore, the Coils of the Dragon, and several Kindred disciplines that belie his age and inexperience. Nevertheless, Landry is in over his head as Kogaion, and he knows it. He isn't certain as to why his elders in the order granted him this position, especially in a town with such a strong mystical resonance as New Orleans. He knows that the Ordo Dracul population of the city, small as it is, may not be enough to interest more powerful Dragons—yet the order certainly isn't willing to utterly abandon such a potentially powerful Wyrms' Nest. He theorizes that they *want* him (and, by default, the other local Dragons) to keep a low profile while examining the city, staying beneath Prince Vidal's notice, and that throwing him into the deep end was a means of forcing him to do so—but this is pure speculation on his part.

Thus, the young Kogaion makes every effort to disguise his identity, and to present the façade of a Great and Mysterious Figure With Whom You Do Not Wish to Trifle. He appears in meetings and at rituals of the Ordo Dracul clad in voluminous black robes that completely obscure his features, and speaks in a deep, sepulchral voice. His entrances and exits are swift and mysterious (aided by no small helping of Obfuscate), and he seems constantly aware of any attempts to follow him or delve into his true nature (thanks to his clan-favored Auspex). He devotes the efforts of the Dragons under him to a redoubled investigation of the city, tracing mystical energies and all manner of historical oddities in hopes of understanding what makes New Orleans such a Wyrms' Nest of mystical and ghostly activities—and of distracting his own people from contemplating their new leader's true nature. He is particularly troubled by Lidia Kendall, as he knows the vodouisant Gangrel has divided loyalties and is accustomed to wielding more power in the Ordo Dracul than his own presence now permits. As Kendall has access to blood sorceries outside those practiced by the Dragons, Landry is certain that it will be she, if anyone, who ultimately learns the truth about him.

Landry is also aware that Rosa Bale has taken a strange interest in the new Kogaion, and has operatives both flesh and spectral following his movements. He has, to date, been able to detect and avoid them, but he's not certain how long he can continue to do so. He's unsure why the *mambo* has taken an interest in him, or what, if anything, he can do about it.

Negotiations with the Baron

Despite his misgivings about Lidia Kendall, Landry recognizes that Baron Cimitiere is his most powerful

potential ally in New Orleans. Both are mystics, both have reason to wish their activities to go unmarked by Prince Vidal, and both are constantly in need of allies. Landry has never met with the Baron personally, for fear the Nosferatu will see through his façade. Instead, Landry facilitates communications through messengers, particularly Lidia Kendall. (Landry hopes that her loyalty to both factions will keep her honest, and that the added duties will prevent her from looking into his own activities.) So far, no firm alliance has come of these negotiations; Cimitiere does not yet trust Landry, and Landry doesn't want it known that he's thrown in his lot with one of Vidal's greatest enemies. The two parties have exchanged substantial occult knowledge, however, leading to new avenues of research for both.

The Dragon's Breath

Although he has been in town for only a brief period of time, Carter Landry has already made a dramatic discovery, one that might eventually result in an increased Ordo Dracul presence in the Big Easy. He and his fellow Dragons have recently discovered an *incredibly* powerful thread of mystic energy running through New Orleans, not quite like any other they've ever encountered. Dubbed, by Landry, the Dragon's Breath, the phenomenon is much like a ley line, but somehow deeper, more subtle, almost as though it were a natural part of the environment. The Dragon's Breath flows from the northeast and literally wraps around New Orleans like a coiling serpent, winding and spiraling through various neighborhoods until it finally seeps into the earth very near the center of the city. The areas through which it passes, perhaps unsurprisingly, seem to include more frequent hauntings and more mysterious "hot spots" of ambient faith or violence than does the rest of the city, though such phenomenon certainly aren't limited to these regions.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH

Carter Landry does not, of course, spend every waking moment of his Requiem clad in black robes and leading Ordo Dracul ceremonies. The vast majority of the time, he's simply Carter Landry, Mekhet neonate, with no major ties to any of the various factions and covenants operating in New Orleans. He has the most effective disguise imaginable in Kindred circles—that of an uninvolved youth with nothing to offer. He has no real territory of his own and no authority outside his secret position as Kogaion.

It is as Carter Landry, and not as the Kogaion of the Ordo Dracul, that he is likely to interact with most coteries. Landry may end up as either an ally or rival of the players' characters, but in either case, it's unlikely they'll see him as anything other than just another neonate, trying to make his way in the Big Easy. That he has some truly frightening



abilities, allies, and knowledge that he can bring to bear, either for or against the coterie, is a secret that can drive many a story before it comes out—assuming it ever does.



Landry and the other Dragons have attempted to draw upon the Dragon's Breath for their rituals, empowering their own magics with the power inherent in the ley line—only to learn that some other, far more potent force is already drawing substantial strength from the Dragon's Breath. Landry assumed, at first, that this was Baron Cimitiere, but further delving into the matter suggests that whoever is on the other end of the Dragon's Breath is *not* one of the Kindred known to dwell in New Orleans. Landry has no idea what this may mean, or who could be drawing so much power from so esoteric a source, but he is determined to find out—and before either Prince Vidal or Baron Cimitiere does.

Desirae Wells

For an unaligned neonate with no political clout to speak of, Desirae Wells has certainly carved out a niche for herself in New Orleans. She serves as emissary on behalf of Shep Jennings, who himself claims to speak for all the city's unaligned. And in this capacity, Desirae's presence has become a familiar one—and more importantly, a universally accepted one—in Kindred circles. Both Vidal and Savoy have given her leave to frequent their respective territories, and, given Jennings' ongoing (if shaky) acquaintanceship with Baron Cimitiere, Desirae is no stranger to the remainder of the city either.

Although she more or less stumbled into the role of emissary, Desirae is undeniably well-suited for it. Her widely circulated reputation for being an amnesiac has only served to lower the guard of other Kindred in the city where she is concerned, almost as though her lack of memory somehow translates into a lack of motive or even political ambition on her part. Of course, few would be so foolish as to actually believe a causal relationship exists there, but the fact remains that Desirae Wells has a tendency to put other Kindred at ease with considerably less difficulty than some of her peers.

In the several years since Jennings first found her walking the streets of New Orleans, Desirae has parlayed her "innocuous amnesiac" image into quite a respectable reputation for a neonate. It did not take long for her to realize that Jennings (or at least his ideology) was his own worst enemy, and that if he was going to be successful at all in his aims, it would only be with her help. As a result, it was Desirae herself who convinced Jennings to dub her his emissary (though she was subtle enough to make him think the idea was his own). Indeed, most of the gains she

has made since, whether they be in favors or simple goodwill among newly minted allies, have been made at her own instigation.

Of course, Desirae has no illusions that Jennings is unaware of her savvy socio-political nature. The arrangement between the two unaligned is more than mutually beneficial. If the extent to which Desirae was truly the "power behind the throne" were to come to light, both vampires would suffer politically as a result—Jennings would look the absolute fool (not to mention looking incompetent without the aid of an amnesiac neonate), and Desirae herself would lose her reputation for being both neutral and largely harmless—and many of the gains the two have amassed in tandem would be lost.

A Case of Mistaken Identity

As should be clear by now, the truth of the matter is that Desirae Wells is not the vampire many believe her to be. While it is true that she remembers very little of her time before Jennings took her under his wing, it is not quite so true to say that she *cares*. To be sure, the only thing she really cared for at first was to find the answers she sought. But as soon as the opportunity for advancement presented itself, Desirae quickly realized the power of the card fate had dealt her.

And Desirae would be twice damned if she refused to play that card.

It is not that the young Gangrel no longer cares for answers. She still desperately longs for the truth behind her memory loss. She is still legitimately plagued by nightmares that haunt her daysleep, taunting her with brief flashes of experiences that might once have been her own. She still anxiously ponders the question of who brought her into her Requiem—and why.

But the fact is that Desirae Wells knows that she's running out of time. The card she plays cannot be played forever. After a sufficient period of time (and who knows just how long that will be?), the Kindred of New Orleans will no longer view her as the largely innocuous neonate they presently believe her to be. Before too long, she will have ingrained herself too fully into the political system to take advantage of such leverage. Before too much time has passed, everyone will know that she has replaced her lost memories of experiences of the past with fresh memories of experiences of the present. And when that time comes, she will become the thing she dreads becoming most: Just another neonate vampire.

When that happens, Desirae Wells shall, in a morbid twist of irony, lose the identity she has so carefully constructed for herself in her new home. She will, in essence, become a "nobody" once more. Thus, Desirae has prioritized her unlife in this fashion. To her way of thinking, she has eternity to uncover the lost secrets of her past—but only a short time to make the most of her time in the present.





AND THE TRUTH IS...

Some Storytellers may well be curious as to what really happened to make Desirae Wells the way she is tonight. While this curiosity is understandable (and appreciated, even), the true source of the Gangrel's amnesia has been left intentionally vague to facilitate a broader range of story options for the game. Sure, the authors may have had something specific in mind when the character was written, but at the end of the day, the "truth" about Desirae is in the Storyteller's hands alone.

All the same, in the name of providing precisely these types of options, consider the following story hooks. Use any one idea as written, or perhaps combine two ideas together for a more involved background. The possibilities are endless.

Flawed Requiem: The Embrace is a traumatic experience for even the most resilient or adaptive mind. For Desirae Wells, it was nothing shy of devastating—the single moment that would shatter her consciousness, and in so doing, single-handedly shape the person she is tonight. Although she doesn't know it, Wells' Embrace night holds the key to regaining all she's lost, if she can only remember.

Mortal Terror: Something even older than Wells' Embrace is to blame for her fragmented memories. Unknown to Desirae herself, she was an amnesiac before her mysterious Gangrel sire happened upon and brought her into the Requiem, and her Embrace only further aggravated her fragile state of mind. To discover who she is and what happened, she must dig deep into her own mortal past.

Manchurian Candidate: Desirae Wells' greatest fears are well-founded. The truth she shudders to discover is that her mind did indeed survive both her mortal life and her Embrace intact. Shortly after Wells' Requiem began, however, another vampire (her sire, perhaps?) seized the soft clay of her fragile mind and twisted it to suit his or her own diabolical ends. Perhaps it was extensive and meticulous application of the Dominate Discipline. Whatever the cause, Desirae Wells could be a walking time-bomb, unable to rest until her mind is freed at last.

Belial's Brood

They have no regular presence in the city, these horrific, monstrous Kindred—a fact for which Vidal, Cimitiere, and Savoy are all grateful. If these most demonic of the Damned ever tried to set up a permanent haven in the Big Easy, that development might actually prove to be the impetus for a temporary cessation of hostilities between the three factions, as old enemies cooperate with one another to drive this corruption from their city.

As things stand, Belial's Brood does put in an annual appearance in New Orleans. As might be expected, it happens during Mardi Gras, when even the most alert of Vidal's sentinels cannot possibly keep track of the comings and goings of all Kindred, not in the midst of the thousands of tourists constantly flowing tide-like in and out of the city. It almost seems to be a rite of passage of some sort for some local cabals of the Brood, for the incursion each year appears to consist of different Kindred than the year before. They are always young, they are always outsiders to New Orleans, and they are always as bloodthirsty and violent as the worst legends of their covenant would suggest.

Each year, from several nights to a week, a band of Belial's Brood enters New Orleans under the cover of the Carnival tourists. Although the band wishes to avoid capture by Vidal's or Savoy's people since the result is always a painful execution, these monstrous Kindred make no attempt to keep their presence secret. The number of mortal deaths and—in some years—Kindred murders as well takes an alarming upturn during these nights. The Brood defaces religious institutions and historical monuments and has even made several attempts on the city's various Elysiums.



A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

While Cimitiere, Savoy and Vidal are all vehemently opposed to the notion of cooperation with Belial's Brood, that doesn't mean that nobody in New Orleans is willing to consider it. Should someone be able to make contact with the Brood, and somehow convince them that they have something to gain by working with an outsider rather than slaying him, several of the Big Easy's undead inhabitants might be willing to try to manipulate these truly Damned for their own ends.

Among the many possibilities are "Shep" Jennings, who might see an outside force (even one as violent and repulsive as Belial's Brood) as the only means of ending the stranglehold the Lancea Sanctum has on the city; Reynaldo Gui, who might view them as a means of clearing out more of the city for himself and his sire; Rosa Bale, who might see them as potential pawns, as her ghostly comrades could possibly masquerade as demonic entities and steer the Brood toward their own ends; and Pierpont McGinn, who, while as opposed to and frightened of the Brood as anyone, might someday become desperate enough to accept any ally in his own quest for power in the city. Using these, or many others among the city's Kindred, an ambitious Storyteller could easily involve Belial's Brood in the already complicated events in the Big Easy for many stories to come.



Once any of the major Kindred factions in New Orleans has detected the presence of Belial's Brood, the Kindred normally make an immediate effort to alert the

others. For these nights, the three factions scale back their efforts against one another; if Vidal, Savoy, and Cimitiere cannot honestly be said to work together against the Brood, at least the three rivals do not add to the chaos and mayhem. Not one of the city's major powers wants to give Belial's Brood even the slightest chance to make themselves a permanent fixture in the city. Vidal, Savoy, and Cimitiere have, at various times, considered trying to find ways to use the yearly incursion of the Brood against one another, and all have rejected such a ploy as far too risky. Should Belial's Brood ever decide that even a small portion of the city would welcome them, that they could possibly survive here for longer than a few nights during the most hectic time of year, it might become impossible to ever root them out.

Characters

Natasha Preston

Clan: Ventrue (Malkovian)

Covenant: Invictus

Embrace: 1967

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 3, Medicine 1, Politics 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: City Status 1, Contacts 1, Covenant Status (Invictus) 2, Eidetic Memory, Haven 1, Resources 3

Willpower: 7



Humanity: 6
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 8
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 4, Majesty 2, Resilience 1
Derangements: Obsession Compulsion (severe; blood-line), Irrationality (mild; 6)
Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

The overall presence of the French Quarter Seneschal provides a stark (and entirely intentional) contrast to Savoy's own demeanor. Whereas Savoy is cordial and approachable, always ready with a grin or bit of Southern wit, his right-hand woman is no-nonsense from head to toe. This contrast facilitates two critical objectives simultaneously: First, the comparison serves to further exaggerate Savoy's own affability; the more humorless his companion, the better he looks. Second, it reminds people not to underestimate him when it comes to matters of any import. The ultimate effect, and Savoy knows this well, is that he comes off as agreeable and even trustworthy, but sharp as a tack and not to be trifled with.

For her part, Preston doesn't mind playing the role on which Savoy capitalizes. She is familiar enough with the nuances of politics in general, and her patron's ways and means in particular, that she understands the purpose it serves and appreciates the necessity of it. On top of this, Preston secretly owes Savoy a considerable debt, and is thus perhaps more agreeable to his various affectations and devices than she might otherwise be.

Many years ago, Natasha Preston was indebted to a different vampire—her sire, Constance—in an entirely different way. Constance, a Ventrue relic from the Old World, had recently emerged from a long and troubled torpor, and she claimed she needed Preston to act as a liaison with a modern world that was largely unfamiliar to her. In truth, Constance had awakened almost entirely insane and had few concerns beyond the slow and steady intellectual and emotional degradation of her new childe. For many years after her Embrace, Preston was little more than a slave in every way but in name. While she lacked the strength to betray her feelings to any outsider, Antoine Savoy was perceptive enough to see through to the truth of her situation—and offer her a way out.

Part of the arrangement was that Preston never ask what became of Constance, but, knowing Savoy as well as she does, Preston feels confident she will never again be plagued with the sight of her former exploiter anywhere but in dreams.

Reynaldo Gui

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1991
Apparent Age: Mid-20s
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Blood Potency: 1
Merits: Allies (Gang) 1, Contacts 2, Covenant Status (Invictus) 1, Herd 2, Language (French, Spanish), Mentor 3, Resources 2, Striking Looks 2
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Majesty 3, Obfuscate 2, Vigor 3

Embraced in 1991, Reynaldo Gui may be the youngest vampire in Savoy's Inner Circle, but he's not the youngest *person*. Gui spent several decades "coming up" as a ghoul to one of the more prominent members of organized crime's Kindred element in Chicago before being brought into his own Requiem. Once he was thus "made," the first substantive test of his loyalties and capabilities was to move himself and his operation to New Orleans, there to reinvigorate the old criminal corridor between the two underworld capitals.

Gui was born to a French-immigrant mother and an Hispanic American father on Chicago's South Side in 1904. As a teenager, Gui had gotten mixed up with the fringes of his neighborhood's criminal element, and after his father was killed by an over-zealous police officer, Gui turned to his street contacts for help. Once they'd helped him exact bloody revenge on the policeman responsible, Gui had little choice but to turn to a life of crime in earnest. After a few years and more than a few



pieces of work, Gui drew the attention of a local Daeva who was making a move on several of the Mafia's lines of business and needed some aid. Some sixty years later, the same Daeva ended Gui's apprenticeship and made him one of the undead—on the condition that he'd continue to serve his sire's interests in New Orleans, at the side of a well-known clanmate named Savoy.

Although Gui considers himself politically disinterested, he soon recognized the wisdom behind taking up with a covenant that could help him accomplish his and his sire's goals, and it was in this capacity that he would work with Savoy's advisor Natasha Preston. With her help, Gui quickly became a reasonably active part of the First Estate in New Orleans, though he is careful not to grow *too* active, lest he jeopardize his true goals and activities.

Reynaldo Gui appears as a tall, attractive young man with a thin frame and sparkling brown eyes. His dark hair has a slight wave to it, and it hangs down to the top of his shoulders. Gui's skin is dark, especially for a vampire, and he often wears his button-down shirts with the top buttons left undone, to better accentuate his model good looks. Always quick with a smile or laugh, Gui's is the first face to greet most of Savoy's visitors, and he likes to put them right at ease.

Peter Lebeaux

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Invictus

Embrace: 1994

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Greed

Blood Potency: 1

Merits: Allies (Police) 2, Contacts 3, Danger Sense, Haven (Security) 4, Herd 2, Language (French), Resources 2

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Obfuscate 2, Vigor 2

Embraced in 1994, Peter Lebeaux is one of the only Kindred in New Orleans' history to remain an active part of city government after his death. In his case, he saw no reason to leave the New Orleans Police Department just because he was now a vampire. He simply had to ensure that he could continue to work nights, much as he had for the seven years prior to his Embrace.

Of those who know him—who are relatively few, given his low profile—the popular rumor is that Lebeaux was Embraced because he had stumbled onto the truth of the existence of the Kindred in New Orleans. Since Lebeaux refuses to discuss the circumstances surrounding his Embrace, and little evidence of the matter exists beyond the nature of his clan, the issue is all but moot at this point. What is known is



that Lebeaux is exceptionally gifted at observing all the Kindred traditions, especially the Masquerade and even the ones associated more specifically with the Lancea Sanctum. He does not care for Augusto Vidal, nor for the way Vidal and his officers enforce their idea of Kindred law, but, so long as Vidal remains Prince, Lebeaux abides by both the letter and spirit of Vidal's laws. Once Savoy is in power, Lebeaux intends to overhaul the Kindred justice system.

An air of quiet occlusion surrounds Peter Lebeaux, allowing the natural tendency of someone's gaze to pass over him without notice. When he speaks, his voice carries the firm and commanding tone typical of a law enforcement officer, but unless he is specifically and intentionally making his presence felt, he seems to sort of fade into the background, content to let things transpire around him rather than because of him. Physically, Lebeaux is a short but well-built Caucasian, nearly stocky, with a square jaw line and a full but well-maintained moustache.

Doctor Ephraim "Doc" Kola, the Black Baker

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Embrace: 1953

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Investigation 3, Medicine (Improvising) 4, Occult 4, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Persuasion 5, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3



Merits: Allies (Clinicians) 2, City Status 1, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) 2, Haven (Security) 3, Herd 3, Language (French), Resources 3, Retainer 2, Strong Back

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 3

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Lust

Health: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Nightmare 2, Protean 3, Resilience 3, Vigor 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Though Doc Xola'd perhaps be apprehensive to admit it, the truth is that the hulking Gangrel known as "the black *bokor*" is an essential part of Cimitiere's operation. Xola's medical procedures, while unsavory, do have the combined effect of turning some much-needed profit for the faction while indebting others to its members. In addition, Xola's role as the Baron's "enforcer" is one of the things that keeps direct assaults on the Baron or his people at a bare minimum. Just about every Kindred in New Orleans—even the neonates—know the gruesome and, in all likelihood, protracted fate that awaits them, should they give Doc Xola an excuse.

In life, the black *bokor* was "Dr. Xola," a back-alley surgeon and abortionist at a time when abortion was not a legally or ethically viable option for many. Born the son of a Polish-immigrant father and a native Creole woman, Xola was orphaned at the age of 11 when both of his parents died in a freak accident at his father's shop. The child

was left in the care of his grandmother, who was a local *mambo* and her neighborhood's resident "medicine woman." She cared for him as effortlessly as she cared for the rest of the community; she taught him much about both vodoun and the interplay between the body and the spirit and how both could be affected by the application of various herbs, procedures, and techniques.

When his grandmother passed on, she left her house and everything in it to Xola. He soon set up shop of his own, taking care of those who needed things fixed, and either couldn't or wouldn't get them fixed elsewhere. Unlike his grandmother, however, Xola made sure to charge every person who came through his door, whether in money, favors, or other ways. Eventually, the overall color of his clientele took on a darker hue, and he began having to chase down some of his former patients to make good on their promises to him. One night, during the height of Mardi Gras in 1953, a pack of Kindred hooligans followed the scent of blood to Xola's "clinic" and busted in uninvited. When the leader, a Gangrel with a bone through his nose, saw what Xola did, he howled in glee and Embraced the startled *bokor* there and then. Xola expected to die, but he awoke soon after, only to find himself and his clinic entirely unharmed.

Doc Xola is a stocky Caucasian man with broad shoulders and a thick, full beard. Although he is actually well over six feet in height, he walks with a slight stoop that makes him appear a bit shorter than he is. When he speaks, which isn't very often, he does so in an impossibly low voice like the sound of distant thunder.

Josue Vendredi

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Embrace: 1963

Apparent Age: Late teens

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Envy

Blood Potency: 1

Merits: Allies (Vodouisants) 4, Covenant Status (Circle of the Crone) 2, Haven (Security) 3, Herd 4, Language (French), Mentor 4, Retainer 3, Resources 2, Striking Looks 4

Disciplines: Crúac 2, Majesty 2, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 2

Crúac Rituals: Appetite of Limba (Pangs of Proserpina) (1), Rigor Mortis (1); Blood of Damballah (The Hydra's Vitae) (2)

It's not easy being a walking mistake—ask Josue Vendredi. By the early 1960s, Baron Cimitiere had begun to think that he might be ready to pass along the fullness of the change that Baron Samedi had begun



when Cimitiere raised him from Final Death in Haiti so many years before. Cimitiere's mastery of Crúac had been complete for years by then, and he felt that the fateful rite he conducted for Augusto Vidal (see Chapter One) had pushed Samedi's essence into the place it needed to be in order to pass along his bloodline's traits; Baron Cimitiere was confident that his childe would rise from its Embrace displaying all the qualities thereof.

It did not.

Furthermore, it almost seemed as if Baron Samedi was punishing Cimitiere for his haste and presumptiveness, because the childe he had chosen—a beautiful young vodouisant boy named Josue—had not warped the way Cimitiere and others of his clan seemed to be upon their Embrace. Indeed, it was almost as if the Embrace made the boy even *more* attractive and alluring, and Cimitiere felt he had little choice but take it as a sign of his own hubris.

Baron Cimitiere felt he had made a mistake and had sired a childe before the Baron's blood was ready. But the childe was there now, and Cimitiere vowed to keep him by his side as a constant reminder of the Baron's own arrogance and failure. The effect this attitude had on Josue, who looked up to Cimitiere even before his Embrace, was crippling. Tonight, it is all Josue can do just to keep his sire's attention, never mind earn his admiration or, Heaven forfend, his respect. While Josue enjoys the attention that being Cimitiere's only childe brings, it is but a hollow enjoyment, bereft of the deeper meaning such a relationship would normally imply.

To make matters worse, Josue knows that even this attention must eventually come to an end once Cimitiere is ready to select and Embrace his "real" childe. And should that new childe prove to be everything its sire desires, rather than just another mistake like himself, Josue knows that he will forever lose all hope of winning his sire's respect.

For now, Josue does what he can, working on his rituals and looking out for his sire's interests, in the hopes that a growing stack of minor accomplishments may some night amount to something approaching "worth" in his sire's obdurate eyes. It isn't much, but it's all a Kindred boy can hope for.

Josue Vendredi seems to be a living work of art, though he is as dead inside as his sire's unbeating heart. He stands just under six feet tall, with a nearly perfect physique and soft, almost feminine features. He is one of the most striking African American men most have ever seen, and he often turns both male and female heads as he walks. But his beauty is only a mirage, an optical illusion that fades the longer one is in his presence. Those who interact with him for any length of time begin to grow uneasy, though they cannot readily identify the source of their discomfort. If pressed to name it, most would describe it as being in the presence of something truly sad, like the stink of failure or unrequited love.

Oleason "Shep" Jennings, Voice of the Unbound

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: 1958

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts (Automobiles) 4, Investigation 3, Occult 1, Politics (Kindred) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Drive 4, Firearms 3, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 3



Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Chop Shops) 3, Brawling Dodge, City Status 2, Contacts 4, Covenant Status (Unaligned) 4, Fighting Style (Boxing) 4, Haven (Location) 3, Herd 2, Resources 3

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Sloth

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Majesty 2, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 2, Vigor 4

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

If the unaligned knew what Shep Jennings had in store for them and for the city itself, they might not be so quick to refer to him the “voice of the unbound.” While he has made undeniable gains in recent years, perhaps the most notable of which was the recent declaration of an “unbound-only” meeting ground in Mid-City, the fact remains that his long-term goal is a hot war between the factions. Four decades of frustration have taken their toll on Jennings. He’s tired of playing politics and forever kowtowing to the inequities of small men, and he’ll not be satisfied now until the entire system lies in ruins at his unchained feet.

The local “head” of the unaligned was born Cleavon Jennings, Jr., in a small, stuffy apartment in Prohibition-era New Orleans. Times were hard when he began his life, and they only got harder as the Great Depression swept through the South during the 1930s. Jennings’ father did what he could to provide, but the opportunities were few and far between for under-educated black families in Earl Long’s Louisiana. The only marketable thing Jennings, Sr., had to pass on was a passable skill with automobiles, and he was pleased to see his son take to the trade with surprising acumen. Before long, they added the legend “and son” to the garage’s sign, as business began to rise with the automotive boom of the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. After his father died in 1955, however, Jennings, Jr., lost his way and soon began taking up with the shadier side of his profession, stealing cars and running circuits between several area chop shops. One night, he and his friends stole the wrong car, and soon they found themselves on the wrong end of angry Mekhet’s fangs. For reasons still unknown to Jennings, the vampire decided to Embrace him rather than let him die. Jennings still recalls seeing the vampire sitting there, smiling smugly—but before a word could pass between them, Jennings was in frenzy, tearing at his sire with rage he never knew he had.

Shep Jennings is a large, black man with a long face and full lips. He was Embraced with what would be considered an astoundingly unstylish hairdo today, so the first thing he usually does upon waking each night is to shave his head bald. (He thinks going bald makes him look more imposing, anyway.)

Carter Landry

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Embrace: 1969

Apparent Age: Late 20s

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Blood Potency: 1

Merits: Allies (Occult) 1, Contacts 3, Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) 3, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven (Security) 2, Mentor 3, Resources 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Obfuscate 4

Coils of the Dragon: Blood Seeps Slowly; Conquer the Red Fear; Chastise the Beast, Lure the Beast, Exhaust the Beast

The local Kogaion of the Ordo Dracul is not the man his covenant-mates believe him to be. Given the importance of a city like New Orleans, the few Dragons who maintain residence here expected the arrival of some learned elder, or at least a gifted and influential ancilla, when they heard word that a new Kogaion was being sent in. Little did they know that Carter Landry, a Mekhet of relatively paltry age and experience, especially when compared to veteran local Dragons like Lidia Kendall, was whom they were getting.



To his credit, Landry is a gifted prodigy in the order. He has already mastered one of the Dragon's Coils and has begun serious work on two others. In addition, his powerful mind is like a steel trap when it comes to the occult, and he could very likely stand his own ground in a discussion with even the most learned occult scholars in the city. As proof of this, Landry has begun a correspondence with Baron Cimitiere—a tentative exchange of relevant knowledge, in preparation for a potential alliance of greater degree down the line. Since the content and tenor of these exchanges is all the Baron has to go on, even he is blind to the truth of Landry's inexperience in other areas. But both of them need allies, and, for now, Landry is content to bide his time, quietly pursuing his own interests.

Carter Landry is a relatively recent import to the Big Easy, having moved here several years ago from his previous home, in Austin, Texas. He was Embraced by the local Kogaion there, an elder Mekhet who saw in Landry the potential for greatness, and it was due in part to his sire's recommendation that Landry was relocated here. Although Landry is only thirty-some years undead, he is an exceptionally fast learner and should never be taken for granted on account of his age. Landry is a corn-fed Texas boy, with high cheekbones and sparkling blue eyes. He was a bit of a bookworm as a youth, but he bloomed into a fine adult just before his Embrace.

Desirae Wells

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: 1998

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Blood Potency: 1

Merits: Allies (Urchins) 2, City Status 2, Contacts (Couriers) 3, Covenant Status (Unaligned) 3, Haven (Location) 3, Haven (Security) 3, Herd 2, Inspiring

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Majesty 1, Protean 2, Resilience 1

It is a strange phenomenon that one of New Orleans' most well-informed Kindred is also one of its youngest. The fact that she cannot remember much of her life before her Embrace (nor even her Embrace itself) does not seem to slow her down any; indeed, it seems only to further embolden the young woman to focus on the here and now. In addition to her fame due to her amnesia, or

perhaps partly because of it, Wells is becoming fairly well-known as the emissary of Shep Jennings, and thus of the unaligned in New Orleans. Her presence is fast becoming not only accepted but welcome in all areas of the city, and across all faction lines, of late.

Although she is unaware of it, the biggest threat facing Wells tonight is also the source of her greatest strength: Her connection to Shep Jennings, the voice of the unbound in New Orleans. Given their close working relationship, it is fair to say that the fortunes of both vampires are inexorably linked to one another. Should the truth of Jennings' activities and ambitions come to light, there is little that Wells could do or say to avoid going down with his ship, guilty by association. Although he is careful to avoid revealing anything that would put Wells on her guard, the potential exists for her to discover the truth behind her so-called boss. If she does, it would only be the beginning, for what would she do with the knowledge?

Desirae Wells is an attractive, young African American girl with short, black hair and a round, pleasant face. Her voice is soft, but capable of carrying over great distances with little difficulty, and people often wonder where they've seen or heard her before after listening to her speak. She dresses in popular fashions, but has a tendency to modify her attire subtly (with accessories and the like), depending on who she is going to meet or in whose territory she'll be traveling.







Chapter Storytelling

YOU LOOK
LIKE YOU SEEN
A GHOST

- Graffiti outside
the haven of
Dr. Ephram Xola

*It ain't no sin if you crack a few laws now
and then, just so long as you don't break any.*

So now you have the tools. Everything written up to this point is intended to provide you with what you need to run a New Orleans chronicle. It's a lot of material though. Don't feel bad if you're finding yourself a bit overwhelmed. This chapter is designed to give you advice on how to use everything offered thus far.

Make certain you've read the Storytelling chapter in **Vampire: the Requiem** before you continue any further. That's where you'll find all the basics on telling a **Vampire** story. This chapter is specific to New Orleans, and, in fact, takes many of the concepts presented in the corebook and illustrates them in the context of the Big Easy.

Planning Your Chronicle

The first step, as in most cases, is to decide what sort of story you want to tell, what sort of chronicle you want to run. The fact that you're setting your story in and around New Orleans is certainly a major part of that decision, and you should let it shape almost everything else you do. But that doesn't mean you don't have a goodly amount of planning left if you want to make your story everything it can be.

Letting Your Players Do the Work

Always remember that, from the very first step in the process, you can allow your players to do a substantial portion of the work for you. If you haven't yet developed a clear idea of what sort of story you want to tell, you can let them conceptualize their characters based solely on the information (or whatever portion of that information they should reasonably have) presented in the book. Their choice of characters might dictate the direction of the chronicle, and it will certainly dictate what manner of subplots and Storyteller characters are likely to be involved. If a majority of your players create characters that take advantage of New Orleans' religious atmosphere, such as vodouisants and devout Catholics, you can be relatively confident that they're interested in a chronicle with spiritual overtones. If most of them have political ambitions, you're likely going to make them happiest with games centered around the intrigue of Elysium and the clash between the

city's factions. Even if their character concepts are disparate rather than all falling along a single path, the interplay between those concepts might inspire you with story ideas. For instance, suppose you have four players: One of them wants to play a vodouisant, two are political opportunists, and one is a young Turk who despises the current power structure. That combination of personalities suggests a coterie loyal to Savoy's faction, or perhaps some of the more ambitious members of Cimitiere's. They aren't likely to keep to themselves, so the chronicle can focus on their involvement in the ongoing struggle. Due to both their political and religious beliefs, they're likely to attract the hostile attentions of Prince Vidal, which may force them on to the larger playing field of New Orleans politics even if their characters themselves might not choose to take that step.

Alternatively, you can come up with a chronicle concept first, and then solicit character concepts from your players. This restricts their options somewhat; few reasonable players are going to create, say, an apolitical Nosferatu vodouisant member of the Circle of the Crone if you've told them upfront that they're all members of Prince Vidal's court (though it might be an interesting juxtaposition, for all that). At the same time, it allows them to create characters they know will have a place in your planned stories, and perhaps even offers the opportunity to portray a character they wouldn't normally consider.

Don't make the mistake of thinking, however, that just because you've already decided the basic elements of the chronicle, your players can't still help you shape it. One of them might create ties to a Storyteller character you hadn't thought to include, or one of them might decide to come from a background that brings a whole new element into the campaign. If, for instance, one of your players decides to play a former federal agent (to pull just one example from the **Vampire: the Requiem** corebook), that decision just might inspire you to include a subplot about a small task force investigating the strange goings-on in New Orleans. More than a group of potential witch-hunters, these characters represent a major Masquerade breach waiting to happen—a complication you might never have considered without your players' input.

In short, remember that even though you may have your chronicle already envisioned—and even though you have an entire sourcebook from which to draw—your players are not merely an audience but co-creators. Never be afraid to take inspiration from them and run with it.



A MORTAL CHRONICLE

Obviously, this book is written under the assumption that you're running a **Vampire: the Requiem** chronicle. Consider, however, the possibilities inherent in using **City of the Damned: New Orleans** as a setting for a mortals chronicle. The city is absolutely rife with vampiric conspiracy (to say nothing of the ghosts who haunt the place). It's confusing enough for neonates to try to keep track of the city politics; imagine the difficulties a band of mortal characters, completely ignorant of Kindred ways, would encounter. The slow discovery of multiple factions, the dawning horror as they realize just how entrenched the vampires are in all layers of society, up to and including both church and state. This can provide a sort of horror entirely different, but no less gripping, than that experienced by a Kindred character.

In fact, the chronicle need not even be one or the other. Imagine a series of stories in which a band of mortals grows ever closer to the horrific truths of New Orleans—only, at the last, to have proved themselves so resourceful that the Kindred decide it's worth their while to Embrace these presumptuous mortals into the Requiem....



Theme

Deciding on an overriding theme (or themes) for a chronicle is at least as important a decision as where to place it. Since the location is already determined, it's worth examining what sorts of themes are especially appropriate to a New Orleans chronicle. You'll recognize some of these from the corebook, modified to fit New Orleans specifically, while others are new.

In the Name of Faith

People cling to many beliefs in a desperate attempt to force the world to make sense. The Kindred are no different. In fact, their clearly unnatural state seems almost to serve as proof that something, be it God, the loa or what have you, exists beyond the realms of mortal comprehension.

The Kindred do an infinite number of unspeakable things in the name of that higher power. New Orleans is a city built on faith and houses numerous worshippers of two interrelated yet mutually exclusive religions. Catholic Kindred struggle to maintain the dominance and "purity" of their faith against a pagan

religion that dares to usurp the Catholic saints into its pantheon of spirits. vodouisants demand acceptance but must labor under the lash of a Prince who sees their very existence as anathema. Each faith is convinced that they are in the right, that God and the other powers of the divine are on their side. And each faith commits atrocities to maintain or advance their position, "knowing" full well that they will be forgiven. After all, if they were not intended to be violent predators, they wouldn't have become vampires, would they?

Because New Orleans is so heavily steeped in the traditions of two different religions, it's entirely appropriate for characters to regularly face the ethical and moral quandaries of their faith. Are they prepared to preserve their faith by committing acts that fly in the face of that faith? Can they even reconcile their beliefs with the Requiem, their former faith with the state of undeath? (Just because many Kindred can doesn't mean they all manage it. The process by which your players figure it out can make for a dramatic story all its own.) Are they so confident in their own faith that they're willing to declare someone else an enemy for holding differing beliefs? So much of New Orleans' Kindred conflict is the result of opposed religious dogmas. Even those vampires who wish to stay out of such partisan struggles may find themselves drawn in against their wills.

The Ravages of Age

New Orleans is an old city, at least so far as American cities go. It boasts a venerable Prince and several entrenched elder Kindred. And all of them, city and vampires alike, are past their prime and clinging to the past with both hands. Torpor threatens Vidal even as the swamplands suck greedily at the Big Easy itself, and both seem to have an instinctive sense that they're running on borrowed time.

Nearly everything about New Orleans and its Kindred is a struggle of age versus youth. The ornate and gothic buildings slowly crack and decay, and the greatest efforts of the municipal government can barely slow the degradation. Elder vampires cling to obsolete ways and positions of power, leaving little room for the young. New Kindred and new ideas are put down with an iron fist, as the aged fear the looming loss of everything they have.



ELDER CHARACTERS

Consider, if you're looking to run a chronicle somewhat different from the norm, having your characters portray elders in the New Orleans power structure instead of neonates or others with little authority but boundless ambitions. The overall situation does not change—they must still



deal with the conflicting factions, the growing tyranny of Vidal's reign, the religious conflict—but from an entirely different viewpoint. The players would be the Kindred behind these conflicts rather than the cat's-paws caught in the middle. The players might be second only to Vidal, Savoy and Cimitiere themselves. They might even portray those characters, if you've got a particularly mature and experienced troupe who'd like to give it a go.

You'll need to prepare a different sort of chronicle, just as your players prepare different sorts of characters. Unlike most chronicles, where the players' characters spend as much time reacting to events as they do instigating their own, they will be initiating many of the events in this one. They'll decide—or at least have some voice in—when Vidal finally moves against Savoy or when Cimitiere decides to cease playing defensively. At the same time, the players will have to defend themselves against weaker but determined rivals from below, who are eager to see the elders taken down so that younger Kindred can take their places. And they'll have to watch the shadow of inevitable torpor creep ever nearer, and take precautions to ensure that they don't lose everything while they slumber.

It's an entirely different feel of story, but one this book is well-suited to, as it is to the more traditional chronicle.

Divided Loyalties

Just as the Kindred are beholden to the conflicting interests of the Beast and Humanity, so too must they divide their loyalty to themselves and the numerous factions and faiths that surround them. It is nigh impossible to remain loyal to a single faction in New Orleans, even though many of the local Kindred appear to do so. *This is a critical point:* No Kindred is so single-minded that she has no ambitions of her own. No Kindred is so simplistic as to be working for a one-dimensional concept such as covenant or clan. Surely, some Kindred may seem that way, but that's just how other characters see her without understanding her true goals and desires.

Vidal holds power and legal authority, and is certainly a rallying point for faithful Catholic Kindred, but, night by night, his rule grows ever more authoritarian, leaving all but his most zealous followers to wonder if they're on the right side. Baron Cimitiere is a rallying point for both Vodouisants and the Circle of the Crone, but he is not aggressive enough for some supporters, and his interests in Acolyte doings extends only to how they affect his congregations. Those of Savoy's supporters taken in by his charm grow disturbed at his actions; those who chose him for political expediency wonder if he can be trusted to follow



through on everything he's claimed he will do when he becomes Prince. The conflict between Vidal and Savoy forces members of the Lancea Sanctum to struggle against their own and to turn to other covenants for aid. Kindred youth feel drawn to their peers, yet see advancement only through serving the needs of the elders. Even the most devout of Kindred must consider acts against their faith in order to prosper, or even survive. Trust is a rare commodity in Kindred circles under even the best of circumstances. In New Orleans, where everyone serves (or at least must acknowledge) two or more masters, trust is practically unheard of.

The Danse Macabre

The "undercover" struggle that is the Requiem for the Kindred bubbles far more closely to the surface in New Orleans than it does elsewhere. The city, with its wild Carnival and strange mixture of religion and superstition, can tolerate a bit more prodding at the Masquerade. The city's three main factions, which do not fall neatly along clan or covenant lines, add a new layer to the struggle of Kindred against Kindred. Few of the undead in the Big Easy even have the option of being left alone, of avoiding the endless dance. The growing crackdown by Vidal, the constant maneuvering of Savoy, and the omnipresence of Cimitiere's followers threaten to drag even the most solitary and distant Kindred into the morass of this rapidly warming, political cold war. Each one requires more power and influence, either to aid the warring factions or to stand against them, and those who allow scruples to interfere find themselves swiftly overrun. Like the religious celebrations held by New Orleans' kine, the Danse Macabre here is loud, boisterous, disorienting and hides a multitude of dangers.

Bound by Invisible Chains

Although taken from the corebook, the name of this particular theme is perhaps inappropriate. The chains that bind the Kindred of New Orleans are so thick that they're hardly invisible any longer. As discussed previously, only the tiniest minority of the city's undead inhabitants truly manages to avoid the links of fealty and obligation that wind through the Big Easy like serpents. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that, in order to avoid or escape obligations to Prince Vidal, most of the Kindred must pledge themselves to another lord, almost as powerful. Staying off the radar and avoiding all obligations is a challenge of its own, a task so difficult it requires nearly all of a Kindred's time and efforts. Those who do so rarely advance their own positions, remaining fringe elements and drifters at the lowest rung of Kindred society. And even this is not true freedom, for the requirements of secrecy and the demands of the Requiem serve as a chain all their own. In New Orleans, the

choice is rarely between serving a higher master or not but simply which master you choose.

Redemption

It seems almost impossible to believe, particularly in light of matters already discussed, but it is possible for New Orleans Kindred to seek redemption, to try to elevate one's self above the city's endemic evil, and the evil within a Kindred's own heart. For all its tarnished luster, all its violence and slums, all its debauchery and decay, New Orleans is still a city of faith, and faith offers hope. God forgives, be he Jehovah or Bondye. The loa have a purpose and destiny to which they guide all their followers, kine and Kindred alike. Surely no curse can be so horrific as to completely remove the victim from all hope of God's forgiveness?

True or not, this is the hope to which some Kindred cling. They see the tyranny of Vidal, the scheming of Savoy, the single-minded obsession of Cimitiere, and the pain and suffering caused by all Kindred in their struggle for power, influence and blood. They see it, and they rail against it, certain that there must be another, better way. And even if they stand alone, they will make every effort to find it.

Most fail and utterly give up within a matter of years. The Beast cannot be denied. The powers of the city are everywhere, each one demanding fealty. Like the churches and *hounfours* of New Orleans, hope grows old and cracked, until it is often little more than a façade, a mask of faith over corruption and despair. Only the rarest of Kindred can stand long against the pressures of the Big Easy. Will your characters be among them?

Home Lies the Heart

Characters may try to rejoin their mortal families in New Orleans, to one extent or another. How well they manage it depends entirely on the circumstances.

Many of the city's kine may actually have little trouble believing that their loved one has returned as a vampire. This is a city steeped in religion and superstition, one that many believe to be haunted. The notion of the undead is not a foreign one to many of the people here, and even if they don't truly believe, they likely will not find the idea as shocking as mortals elsewhere.

Of course, this doesn't mean these people will be accepting of vampires. More likely than not, their response will be to run immediately to their Priest, *houngan*, or whatnot, who either will not believe them, or will rail that his followers are up against the "demons" in their midst. Those mortals who do accept an undead loved one for what she has become might romanticize the Requiem, seeking to become one of the "children of the night" and refusing to accept the Kindred's evidence of the true horrors of undeath. Such

people are victims waiting to happen, and it's simply a question of whether their own relative loses control and kills them, or whether they follow her to some place they shouldn't be and find themselves slain—or even Embraced—by another.

Who Are the Characters?

In a New Orleans chronicle, you're going to have a few questions that you're going to have to answer for your players to create their characters. Even if your answer is "Decide for yourself," it's important that you consider the implications on your chronicle.

Faction, Covenant and Clan

Are you allowing members of all the various divisions and covenants within the city? Are you forbidding one but allowing others? Requiring that players all come from one of them? While it's certainly possible to run a mixed coterie, as described previously, it's not easy. Inexperienced groups, or experienced ones that simply don't wish to deal with the hassle, may prefer to have certain guidelines in place before character creation. Don't be afraid to tell the players "You all must be part of, or at least sympathetic to, Baron Cimitiere's faction," or even "I want to run an all-Nosferatu-and-Gangrel chronicle." You're entirely within your rights to make such decisions; just be certain you do so early in the process, so you don't have a player develop an attachment to a character concept that won't fit your requirements.

Ignorance or Experience?

A great deal goes on in New Orleans' Kindred society. You need to decide how much of that your player characters know. (And remember, just because a player has read the book and knows everything ever written about New Orleans doesn't mean his character does.) The players' characters may be utterly ignorant of New Orleans' ways or they may be experts, but even Prince Vidal or Baron Cimitiere don't know everything happening in the Big Easy, and neither should your characters.

Part of deciding how much the characters know is based on where they're from, and how long they've been on their own. A native to New Orleans will, almost by definition, know more about Kindred affairs than someone just arrived. Similarly, a childe still bound to her sire or a newly released neonate likely knows only what her mentor has taught her, whereas a vampire who's been independent for even a few years will have picked up more information.

Again, if you're going to restrict which options your players have available in order to achieve a particular theme, mood, or story, that's a perfectly valid decision. Just tell them early in the process.

AN ALL-OFFICIAL CHRONICLE

Most starting characters in **Vampire: the Requiem** are Kindred of relatively little import. Just as you can choose to start a story as elders, however, so too can you choose to start a story as people of power. This doesn't mean you begin with one of your characters portraying Prince Vidal or anyone of that magnitude. Nothing prevents you from creating a coterie of Kindred who all work for Sheriff Donovan, however. Perhaps they're a pack of Hounds, eliminating threats to the Prince (or Lord Savoy or whomever) that their master cannot deal with publicly. They might simply be Regents of their own tenurial domains, answerable to the court but wielding authority over other, lesser vampires.

Obviously, such a chronicle assumes that the players' characters are relatively knowledgeable about the affairs of the city. Such a chronicle also might overlap well with the elder-chronicle concept, though it certainly doesn't have to; not all Kindred in official positions are elders.

As always, make certain that, if you choose to go this route, you have your story set up appropriately. The ironic thing about the Requiem is that the power the Kindred crave really doesn't make their unives any better, and an all-officials chronicle should present just as much hardship and horror as any other.

General Events

Once you have an idea of the general theme of your chronicle, and possibly a notion of what sort of characters are involved, your next step is to develop the actual storyline. It's important to find the right balance between insufficient and excessive planning. Do too little, and you'll be unprepared when your players decide to take some action you completely failed to anticipate. Do too much, and they may feel railroaded, as though their choices are meaningless and nothing they do makes any real difference to the story. It's not vital that you know everything that is happening or will happen in your version of New Orleans, only that you know enough to believably wing it when the coterie takes a turn you didn't expect.

It may seem a hefty responsibility, coming up with the plot for the story, but it's really simply a combination of several relatively simple steps. Don't be afraid to make use of the material presented in this book; that's what it's for, after all. And again, don't feel you have to know everything upfront. Your players portray the main characters in the story, and they're going to change things.

The following steps should be sufficient to build a solid skeleton of a story, enough that the actions and decisions of the players themselves can flesh it out.

Which Major Characters Are Involved?

The first decision to make is, which characters—not the players' characters, but the Storyteller characters presented in this book and the corebook's Appendix—are going to be heavily involved in the events of your story. This decision should come from the themes on which you decided earlier. If the chronicle is a heavily political one, you'll likely involve many of the powerful characters, such as Vidal (and many of his Primogen and followers), Savoy and the like. If your theme is religious, you may focus on the burgeoning holy war between Vidal and Cimitiere, with Rosa Bale thrown in as a wild card. Focusing on personal endeavors might not involve the Prince or Regents at all, and the players might instead interact and compete with apolitical Kindred, such as Sundown, and younger vampires such as Reynaldo Gui or Dr. Xola. The players might not even interact with other Kindred much at all, if they're the type to try to stay out of the political arena; perhaps the supporting cast in such a game is made up almost entirely of mortals, with the occasional Kindred or ghost appearing now and again.

Again, don't feel the need to be too comprehensive. You can always add more characters as the story progresses and changes shape, and you need not make full use of those characters you plan to include from the beginning. The goal here is simply to give you a sufficient base from which to work, so that you're not completely stumped when the players eventually say—and they will say—"All right, we're doing such-and-such. What happens?"

To give yourself a reasonable starting point, do this: Select anywhere from three to six Storyteller characters whom you intend to play a major part in the events to come. For each character, come up with two or three schemes and goals in which the character is currently engaged. Some of those schemes may involve the players' characters or the other Storyteller characters you've selected. Others may have no relation whatsoever to any other elements you're currently working with. Having these different schemes, however, gives you a rough idea of what these characters are doing, so you know full well how they should act and what sort of help or hindrance the players' characters may provide.

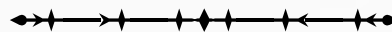


MOVERS AND SHAKERS

If you're an experienced Storyteller working with experienced players, you might consider granting the players a little more control over the shape of things in the city by allowing them some input when you're actually creating your storyline. For instance, rather than come up with a list of which Storyteller characters you intend to use, you might ask each of your players—assuming they

know something about New Orleans, either from the corebook's Appendix or this one—to suggest one major Storyteller character they would like to see involved in the plot. You might even ask them for some input as to what sorts of schemes they think these characters would have in motion, but you have to be careful with this one. Do it only if you're certain your players are mature enough not to use such out-of-character knowledge to their advantage, or if you plan to take only the basic seeds of their ideas and then alter them substantially.

This can make for a fascinating chronicle, because it all but ensures that the players will be interacting with the characters they find interesting, and that the various ongoing schemes will be of the sort that the players will wish to involve themselves. We wouldn't recommend it as a standard technique for inexperienced groups, or for people who don't trust their fellow gamers implicitly. As a change from the ordinary, however, it can add a whole new element to the Storytelling experience.



For example, you decide, based on the interests of your players and the themes you've selected, that you're going to run a faith-oriented story. You decide that Rosa Bale, the *mambo* who opposes Baron Cimitiere, will be one of the major characters. You decide, as well, that she currently has three different plans in motion: She's attempting to frame Cimitiere's own people for crimes against the Prince, in hopes that Vidal will move against the Baron. She's spying on the Ordo Dracul, in an attempt to learn why they've suddenly expressed an interest in certain areas of New Orleans. And she's devoting some of her efforts to protecting a few specific mortal families who dwell in the old neighborhood in which she grew up.

Right there, you've given yourself numerous possible plot hooks. How is she trying to frame Cimitiere without risking discovery of her own crimes? What is the Ordo Dracul up to? Will she wind up allied with them, or opposing them? Why does she care what happens to this particular family, and who is she protecting them from?

Do this for a number of characters, and you've instantly got a web of plots and stories that should offer all the tools you need to keep the chronicle going no matter what your players decide to do.

What Will Happen If the Players Do Not Change Events?

This is a step that even experienced Storytellers often fail to consider. Given the schemes you've set forth in the previous stage, what will be the outcome if the players' characters don't change things? Certainly, it's a safe bet that the players will become involved in the plot; otherwise, you don't have much of a story. But they may

well involve themselves in ways other than ones you anticipate, or they may act exactly as you expect but fail at some crucial juncture. In either case, you need to have at least some idea of what the result may be, or else you'll find yourself stuck.

Using the previous example, maybe you expect that the characters will uncover Rosa Bale's attempt to frame Cimitiere's people for crimes against the Prince and will expose her as the true culprit, or at least use their knowledge as leverage to force her to cease and to do them a favor in the future. What if they fail to do so, though? Or what if you do such a good job in roleplaying her and explaining her beliefs that the players decide to side with her? You need to have some notion of what's going to happen if her plan runs unchecked by the players. Will someone else expose her? Will her plan succeed? Will Vidal himself realize he's being duped? And how will that change the characters' own circumstances?

When deciding these sorts of things, however, remember that you're planning a "what if" scenario, not scripting the end of a fixed story. Just as it's not safe for the chronicle to assume the players will succeed at something, it's not safe to assume they won't. Don't get your heart set on any of these contingencies. Simply have them in place in case they're needed.

Does the Story Begin/Take Place During a Specific Event?

This is less vital than the preceding steps, but it's still worth considering. Even if it's not a specific aspect of the plot, having some sort of special event running in the background can work wonders for the feel of a story, and even add story hooks that might not otherwise be apparent. The obvious example for use in New Orleans is Mardi Gras. The sudden influx of tourists, the crowded streets, the drinking and debauchery, and the flurry of political favors that whirl around Antoine Savoy, can make the city a very different place than it is during the rest of the year. It may even allow you to tell certain stories you otherwise could not. Consider, for example, the fact that Belial's Brood has a notable presence in New Orleans only at this time.

Of course, the special event need not be quite so overwhelming. Something as simple as a motorcycle rally or a political convention offers substantial fodder for stories. Consider setting your story during a religious holiday, and see how that changes the behavior of Prince Vidal and the other devout Kindred of the city. What about an election year, when Cimitiere mobilizes his mortal followers to try to vote one of Vidal's allies out of office? Or perhaps you might set a game in the midst of a terrible storm, one that frightened citizens both living and undead believe is

the "big one," the hurricane that will finally sink the entire city beneath the Louisiana swamp.

IN THE WAKE OF THE STORM

Should you take inspiration from the above example and actually include a hurricane in your stories, it's probably a safe bet that New Orleans—despite the fears of its populace—survives relatively unscathed. After all, you normally won't want to obliterate your chronicle's setting, unless you're looking for a dramatic end to a final chapter.

However, it might make for an interesting and unusual story to have New Orleans badly damaged, almost destroyed, by the storm. Entire sections of the city are not merely flooded but subsumed by the surroundings. Buildings are gone, and city services are hampered, if not shut down completely. Because the city is a disaster area, the governor calls in the National Guard to keep order and serve as *de facto* police. Crime skyrockets, the economy plummets.

Kindred lines have to be redrawn as well. Vidal no longer has nearly as much power, as the city's politicians and police are in disarray; but then, his rivals probably cannot take advantage of that fact. Entire Kindred domains vanish, leading to a spike in poaching and conflicts over territory. Many Kindred perish in the aftermath, as their havens collapse around them or flood completely, leaving the vampires to awaken without shelter from the sun when the storm finally passes. Unlike the mortals, who can count on outside aid from the state and federal government—to say nothing of organizations such as the Red Cross—the Kindred are on their own, with no higher authority to turn to.

Sure, the result isn't going to be a "traditional" **Vampire: the Requiem** chronicle. You'll most likely find that you'll have moved from gothic horror to a much more visceral struggle for survival. The politics and conflicts will certainly continue though, no matter what form they now take, and the result would certainly make a fascinating story.

Conflicts

No story is complete (or even really a story, by strict definition) without some sort of conflict. That doesn't necessarily mean combat, though there's nothing wrong with including a good helping of violence now and again. It simply means that your players' characters must have obstacles to overcome.

As with the themes previously presented, this section takes a look at the traditional sorts of conflict presented in the corebook, adds a few new ones, and offers suggestions on how to make use of them in a New Orleans chronicle.

Kindred vs. Himself

It's worth pointing out again how the dichotomy of New Orleans affects all who dwell within the city. The Kindred may face a struggle between his faith and his ambition, his morals and his desires. A believer in Cimitière's cause may be tempted to become a turncoat and ally with the more influential Prince Vidal. The Kindred may believe that the struggle between the city's factions is evil, harmful to the Kindred and kine population, yet be drawn to the perks and influence that participation and alliances offer. He may, depending on his religious beliefs, even believe himself damned to the Requiem as punishment for some sin, developing a deep loathing for himself (and possibly for God), yet all the while struggling to survive and thrive.

Kindred vs. the Beast

New Orleans can bring out the worst in everyone. It's got an obscenely high murder rate, and tourists in the city—particularly during Carnival—do things here they'd never consider doing anywhere else. The Beast thrives in the Big Easy, and the Kindred can do little but struggle to keep it leashed. The constant pressure of the tripartite conflict, and even the potential end of the city itself, weighs on the soul, making frenzy and Röttschreck a constant danger. The masses of tourists passing through, unobservant, unprotected, and in great quantities,



makes Wassail almost as great a risk; any vampire may be tempted beyond endurance by the overwhelming tide of blood available during Carnival, no matter how determined she may be to hang on to her Humanity. A few portions of the city are so heavily awash in faith that the Kindred are repulsed, struck by a nameless fear that terrifies the Beast beyond reason. Others call to the Beast like the scent of blood, threatening to draw it forth beyond all control. And so many of New Orleans' Kindred are angry all the time, as their rivals in the Vidal/Savoy/Cimitière conflict outmaneuver them, that one wrong word or deed can lead to animalistic rage and violence.

Kindred vs. Kindred

The Kindred of New Orleans have numerous reasons to struggle with and hate each other. The traditional competition for position exists here, of course. In some instances, it's even stronger, as Kindred who believe they have right to a given domain, having received Regency from one lord or another, must struggle against another who received the territory from someone else. Conflict due to religious differences is also common, as the local Kindred seem only to accentuate any friction that might exist between Catholics and vodouisants. Of course, many

people, mortal or not, simply don't like each other. But many of the reasons for Kindred conflict in the Big Easy go far beyond the individual.

Faction vs. Faction

One conflict unique to New Orleans is that of the city's various factions. Certainly other cities also have divisions of power that do not fall neatly along clan or covenant lines, but none are precisely the same as the struggle between Prince Vidal, Lord Savoy and Baron Cimitiere. Although open war between the factions is rare—and relatively swift, when it does arise, much like gang—the conflict is constant in more subtle ways. Rivals attempt to take down one another politically, maneuvering for alliances with other Kindred and influence over mortal institutions. The Kindred lords grant domains in their enemy's territories, forcing them to fight to hold onto what they have. Social cliques snub one another at Elysium or offer insults that threaten to tear away the façade of civility in a burst of frenzy-induced (and punishable) violence.

It is vital to remember, however, that the lines between Kindred vs. Kindred conflict and faction vs. faction conflict are blurry almost to the point of nonexistence. Much of the discord between members of the different factions easily qualifies as both. If one vampire develops a grudge against another due to their respective covenant affiliations, and thus acts against his enemy, which category does that fall into? It is conflict instigated by a single Kindred, not by the faction, yet it came about because of the factions.

Do not feel the need to strictly define these sorts of conflicts. What is important is that they happen, and that they affect the story accordingly.

Age vs. Youth

This is a conflict common to most Kindred domains, but it's particularly accentuated here. The Kindred never die, unless something violent happens to them, and it may take them several lifetimes even to fall into torpor. This leaves little room for the younger Kindred to move up in the world, as elders rarely vacate the positions they already hold. When they do, it's often only after they've made every effort to ensure someone they've handpicked takes their place. This is bad enough in a city with a single governing body. In a city with three prominent elder leaders, and all the associated hangers-on, it's a wonder any of the Kindred youth acquire any power at all.

Where youthful ambition is frustrated, it runs head-on into elder fear. All the Kindred in power in New Orleans have one thing in common: They're relatively old. In Prince Vidal's case, and possibly Cimitiere's, it's not even relative; they *are* old. And each one is determined not merely to hang onto his current power but to

gain more. They've already got sufficient enemies among their fellow elders; the last thing they need is some young upstart coming along and trying to unseat them. Thus, each in his own way, they direct their energies at keeping the younger Kindred down, powerless so that they cannot grab for more power. In so doing, the elders simply lay the foundations for future conflict, as the neonates and ancillae concoct their own schemes, achieve what influence they may, and plan for the night they can take on an elder lord.

MIXED COTERIES

The default assumption for most troupes is going to be that every member of the characters' coterie is on the same side in the factional struggle, or at least are relatively neutral in the whole affair. This is certainly the easiest way to go about it, but that doesn't make it the only one. Consider allowing the players to portray Kindred from two, or even all three, of the various factions. This requires more work, on both the Storyteller's and players' parts, because you need to find some justification for such a mismatched group to hang together. It may be worth it, though, for the added opportunities for conflict and drama.

What would inspire Kindred (who aren't big on trust to begin with) to form a relatively tight bond with members of an opposing faction?

First, they might have been acquaintances, friends, or even family before the Embrace, or before they aligned themselves with Vidal, Savoy or Cimitiere. The Embrace does not immediately or inevitably sever all previously existing emotional ties. The odds are very good that the coterie will drift apart as the years progress and each member becomes more and more attached to his chosen faction, and it might even eventually tear itself apart in a paroxysm of betrayal and violence; but for the nonce, it still functions as a group of people who have not yet forgotten how to trust one another.

Alternatively, they may be enemies who develop a pressing reason to work together. Perhaps they all share a belief that the tripartite conflict is damaging the city, and they wish to prove that the three factions can work together. Perhaps all three factions feel the need to devote at least some attention to a common goal or threat, such as locating a hunter with his sights set on all Kindred or preventing the next upsurge of Belial's Brood during Carnival. Maybe the factions realize they're heading for a war that none of them are prepared for, and each leader needs to devote some manpower to averting that war, without being blatant about backing down and thus losing face.

The storytelling opportunities are nigh endless. Even for Kindred, the members of such a coterie are going to distrust one another. Are you trusting a spy to watch your back? A heathen to help bolster you against loss of humanity and soul?

Even if your fellow Kindred joined you with the best of intentions, can you be certain they won't turn tail if a better option arises? How much of your opinions, your beliefs, your strengths and your weaknesses are reaching the ears of your master's rivals? Maybe, once they've served their purposes, you should consider eliminating them before they can turn on you....



Weak vs. Strong

This conflict usually, but not always, parallels the age versus youth conflict. That is, in the vast majority of cases, the elder Kindred are stronger—politically and personally—than the younger. This isn't always the case, though. A conflict of weakness versus strength might involve something as simple as a struggle for authority within a coterie, or a number of Kindred trying to outdo one another in order to receive a particular reward or task for an elder. Any sort of "establishment" can be the strength to the characters' weakness, from one of the given factions to a specific religion to a government agency to the local leader of a clan or covenant. New Orleans, fractured as its Kindred community is, has ample authority figures who can serve as challenging obstacles for your stories.

Clan vs. Clan

This conflict is, unsurprisingly, a relatively rare one in New Orleans. Perhaps it's because most of the Kindred are too caught up in the factional and covenant struggles to focus on family feuds. To ascertain extent, the Ventrué and the Nosferatu clans are at odds, but this is really less of a clan dispute and more of a vendetta on the part of Vidal personally to both keep Baron Cimitiere and Miss Opal from gaining power in their respective positions. The Ventrué and the Daeva sometimes butt heads, as Vidal and Savoy are rivals, but again, both factions have members of both clans, so this rarely erupts into anything truly attributable to clan.

Covenant vs. Covenant

Far more common than clan versus clan, the covenant struggles, as with so much else in New Orleans, often reflect the vagaries of the Vidal/Savoy/Cimitiere conflict. The Lancea Sanctum, which hardly needs an excuse to hate the Circle of the Crone, is even less tolerant of the Acolytes here than they are elsewhere, due to Prince Vidal's hatred of Baron Cimitiere. The Invictus largely opposes the Circle of the Crone, if only because most of the Invictus Kindred who hold power do so in Vidal's court. Both of those covenants also make every effort to quash the Carthians, though this struggle rarely grows as heated, since the Carthians of New Orleans tend to try to manipulate the system from within the court, rather

than opposing it outright. All of them keep a close eye on the unaligned, but they have not yet drawn any major attention. The same holds true for the Ordo Dracul, which has only a very small presence in the city. The Circle of the Crone is keeping tabs on the Dragons, however, though whether this eventually results in alliance or enmity is yet unclear.

Clan vs. Covenant

Other than the fact that the majority of Ventrué in New Orleans are allied either with either Vidal or Savoy, and thus oppose Cimitiere and the Circle of the Crone for those reasons, the divisions of New Orleans rarely break down to clan versus covenant.

Individual vs. Society

This is not an uncommon conflict in New Orleans, and it grows nightly as Vidal's fist tightens around his domain. Many Kindred, particularly among the modern neonates, do not view any of the three rivals as viable options. To their way of thinking, the power structure of New Orleans is archaic and needs to be rebuilt. Some of them have Carthian sympathies, and wish to see the system changed. Others don't mind the feudal model; they just want to swap out the Kindred at the top. In either case, the Kindred rail against society as it is built in the Big Easy, unhappy with any of their choices.

Others in New Orleans rebel against Kindred rule for far more personal reasons. Their faith may prevent them from acknowledging the need to bend knee to an undead Prince, no matter who it might be. The constant influx of fresh blood may tempt them to violate the laws of the domain, feeding at whim and in any territory, even endangering the Masquerade. Vidal's refusal to ever grant right of Embrace to certain clans and factions inspires them to sire illicitly, in violation of the laws of the Prince and his vaunted *Testament of Longinus*. Those very few Kindred who know the Choctaw elder has awakened may well believe that New Orleans' vampires should see a return to the old ways, wiping away every aspect of society that has sprung up during the past centuries.

Kindred vs. Mortal World

While the Kindred of New Orleans face the same threats and struggles with mortals they do elsewhere, a few specific varieties are worth calling out as particular to the Big Easy.

The first is the reaction of religish groups to the presence of the Kindred. Catholics and vodouisants, many of whom are abnormally devout, make up a notable portion of the population. These individuals may detect the Kindred more easily than others, and religious leaders here are more likely to believe reports of vampires or demons in their midst. So many folk already believe that the city is haunted



and that *houngans* can raise spirits; is it really that great of a leap to add vampires to the mix? Neighborhoods that house churches or *hounfours*, or that are simply occupied by an unusual proportion of the faithful, are danger areas for the Kindred. They must tread carefully, else they might just see, on a small but lethal scale, what the masses of humanity can do when exhorted to action.

Perhaps because of the city's religious inclinations, or simply because of its reputation as a haven of the mystical and supernatural, New Orleans draws more than its share of mortal vampire hunters. From the fanatic Priest who travels from church to church across the nation to small independent groups such as the hunters who have allied themselves (albeit unknowingly) with Reynaldo Gui, they come and go from the city, often hidden among the many tourists. Few are a threat individually, but *en masse* they can cause substantial disruption in Kindred society—especially since, unlike outsider Kindred who come to town, they are largely invisible to Vidal and his operatives until and unless they begin causing damage.

Kindred vs. Other Supernatural Creatures

For the most part, the Kindred are the dominant supernatural force in New Orleans. Unlike other cities, such as Chicago, that have a broad mix, the numbers in New Orleans definitely lean in the direction of the vampires (with one exception). Certainly a few werewolves dwell in the outlying neighborhoods, and mages exist among the populace, but the city boasts few of either, not counting tourists.

Ghosts, however, are another issue entirely. New Orleans' reputation as a haunted city is absolutely deserved. Between the high death rate, from both traditional violence and Kindred depredation, and the mystical atmosphere, the dead seem very reluctant to depart the Big Easy. It's obviously not feasible to take a census of ghosts, given that they appear and disappear regularly, often fail to manifest in any detectable form, and new ones constantly appear as the old finally move on to whatever awaits them. It wouldn't be unreasonable to say, however, that they outnumber the Kindred, and a surprising number of local vampires have encountered a spirit of some sort in their years of the Requiem. Of course, ghosts, for the most part, do not organize, rarely have overlapping agendas, and have a difficult time influencing the world around them. Thus, they pose little threat to the Kindred culture of the city. Ghosts are much more dangerous to individual Kindred, however, and a vampire who angers a ghost—or whose actions caused the ghost to come about in the first place—may find that he has far worse things to worry about than his political rivals.



OTHER SUPERNATURAL CHARACTERS

New Orleans is, in supernatural terms, a Kindred city. **City of the Damned: New Orleans** is a **Vampire** supplement.

But this is the World of Darkness, not the World of Vampire, and other supernatural creatures do dwell here. It's not impossible, then, that one or two of them might find themselves caught up in Kindred affairs from time to time.

You should resist the temptation to have one "weirdo" in every chronicle or fall into the trap of thinking that "creative character" must mean "something so unexpected that I can't even model it with a Kindred character." The other supernatural entities of New Orleans are rare. More than that, they're mysterious, as obscure and frightening to the Kindred as the Kindred are to the kine. (The same holds true in reverse as well.)

If you intend to allow a player to portray a non-Kindred character, either because it fits your story or because one of your players *really* wants to do so, make certain that you account for its presence. Don't just throw the outsider into a Kindred coterie and expect him to get along. These creatures know little about one another and often fear one another. Even if the coterie accepts the werewolf, mage, or what-have-you, nobody else has. He will probably not be welcome at Elysium, outsiders may mistrust his motives for keeping vampiric company, and the coterie may even be branded as criminals (or at least potentially dangerous) merely for associating with the interloper.

Furthermore, you risk diluting the themes of the chronicle. What makes a **Vampire** game truly successful isn't always the same thing that works in a **Werewolf** or **Mage** story. Be certain that you can fit the newcomer in without removing the focus of the chronicle from its true stars: the Kindred themselves.

If you really need to include a character of another supernatural type, you might best be served doing it for a limited duration. Tell the player that he can play the werewolf or mage for the duration of a specific plotline that overlaps on his "race's" own concerns, but, after that point, the character will most likely go back to doing his own thing. If, in the intervening time, the player has managed to play his character in such a way that you feel comfortable keeping him around, so be it. If not, he goes on his own way, possibly to pop up again later, and the player can begin play with a Kindred character. This option allows the player the opportunity to do something different, without throwing an x-factor into the entire chronicle.



Beginning the Chronicle

Now that you've got the basics planned out, a sense of the characters, and a few contingency plans to implement when the players do something unexpected, you're ready to dive into the chronicle itself. You've still got a few details to pay attention to, though.

Description and Mood

Go back and take a look at the introductions to this book and to the New Orleans Appendix in **Vampire: the Requiem**. Both discuss the mood of the Big Easy in the World of Darkness and provide the sort of descriptions that mood entails. Some cities exist where you can get away with just saying "It's a church" or "It's a cemetery" and leave it at that. New Orleans doesn't work that way. The city has too much history and too much of its own aesthetic for something so general to do it justice. Make certain you consider all the various descriptions given in these two sourcebooks. Even better, see if you can find pictures of the city, in books or on the Internet. They don't have to be pictures you actually plan to use; just consider them inspiration for your descriptions. So much of New Orleans' mood is tied into its physical appearance, it would be almost impossible to gain full use and enjoyment of a New Orleans chronicle without it.

Assembling the Coterie

It sounds simple enough, but it's often the most difficult part of getting a chronicle off the ground. Why are these characters working with one another? The Kindred aren't big on trust, cooperation, or sharing. Even if they can intellectually acknowledge the need for allies and companionship, what makes these Kindred the ones to deal with? The Storytelling chapter of the corebook deals with assembling a coterie. Here, we take those ideas and offer suggestions for making them work in a New Orleans context.

The Gang's All Here

It makes sense that people who knew each other before the Embrace might cling together afterwards, at least for a time. But why, given the Traditions and supernatural imperatives against siring, to say nothing of Vidal's draconian policies on the matter, would a handful of Kindred Embrace childer more or less at once?

The characters might have been Embraced as a weapon—or diversion—in the tripartite struggle that grips New Orleans. If Savoy is prepared to move against Vidal, a pack of unaccustomed neonates running the streets would certainly split the Prince's attention. One

of the three rivals might have wanted new allies, allies who, while weak and inexperienced, are also unknown to the other factions. It's highly unlikely that the struggle between Vidal, Cimitiere and Savoy would ever reach a stage of such open violence that any of the factions would consider Embracing new members purely as cannon fodder. That's not only a perversion of the process but a waste of the mental strength of the sire, but you never know.

More likely, the multiple Embraces have little to do with the factions. One of the weaker covenants in town might feel the need to bolster their numbers. Several favored ghouls or pawns might be injured, with no option to save them but the Embrace. Perhaps one of the players' characters, ignorant of the laws of the domain, Embraced one of the others.

Finally, suppose the Embraces don't happen at roughly the same time? Although it may stretch the bounds of coincidence a bit, suppose several people are Embraced at various times over the span of 20 or 30 years, only to discover during their introductions to Kindred society that some of the other (relative) newcomers are people they worked with or went to school with. This is probably too unbelievable to explain an entire coterie, but it works for, say, two of the members.

Your best bet, if using the "gang's all here" technique, is to combine the above, using different justifications for how each member knows one or more of the others.

The Sire's Ready Hand

Given the sectarian nature of the New Orleans Kindred, it's entirely possible that a number of them would come together to discuss the strategic advantages of siring specific individuals to work together. The sires might be followers of Baron Cimitiere, looking to increase his Kindred power base. They might be members of Vidal's court, seeking operatives who can not only move against the other factions but increase their combined influence in their own faction as well. (This differs from the "gang's all here" scenario in that the mortals selected for this purpose likely don't know one another to begin with.) Kindred sick of the whole factional struggle might Embrace selected childer to increase their own power base in hopes of developing a faction strong enough to counter—or at least stand up to—the other three. It's even possible that the Choctaw elder and his followers might Embrace a coterie of operatives who know the city better than they, who can be their eyes and ears in Vidal's domain. The coterie might not themselves know who sired them, or why.

As the Prince—or Lord, or Baron—Commands

Prince Vidal is a strict ruler, and he absolutely expects his orders to be followed. If that means he needs to pull a group of Kindred away from their



own affairs to handle something for him, he does so with no hesitation. Savoy and Cimitiere are less autocratic, at least on the surface, but they're also willing to assemble a coterie of followers for a particular purpose if need dictates. Certainly, all three have their own loyal followers already. The problem, however, is that most of the factions keep track of each other's activities. Vidal knows the names and general capabilities of most of Savoy's and Cimitiere's followers, Savoy knows most of Vidal's and Cimitiere's, and so on. Sometimes they need people with whom they are not closely associated. Alternatively, they may need a task completed (perhaps something as simple as a delivery, security for a location, or the elimination of a rival's minor pawns) that isn't worth more powerful Kindred's time.

And again, it need not be a faction leader who assembles the coterie, though others may have less authority to demand obedience. Miss Opal may require someone to be her eyes, ears, and fists in matters impacting her agenda. If Sundown needs a favor, he cannot turn to any of the three factions for fear of his acts being seen as partisan. Anyone with even a modicum of power in New Orleans may have need for new pawns, and most neonates are not in a position to refuse.

Outcasts

True outcasts don't tend to last long in New Orleans. If their crimes are severe enough to make them true pariahs, odds are Vidal has sentenced them to exile, if not Final Death. That, in and of itself, could certainly serve as viable motivation to band together. If the characters are remaining in the city, or even its outskirts, in violation of the Prince's edict, they cannot afford to trust anyone except those who have just as much to lose. It's almost inevitable that they will be discovered some night, and perhaps subjected to a blood hunt, but you can create all sorts of stories regarding their struggle to remain undetected and to survive against overwhelming odds.

Spirits of Like Mind

Many of the faithful Kindred of New Orleans band together with others who share their beliefs. It's not uncommon to see coterie made up entirely of vodouisants, for instance. Kindred of like faith not only aid one another in hunts and political affairs but conduct ceremonies and pray together. The fact that such religious coterie often also fall along factional lines—with the Catholics banding primarily with Vidal, and the vodouisants with Cimitiere—is secondary to the fact that they are truly drawn together by a shared faith that extends even into the Requiem.

THE PRINCE IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE PRINCE

The Kindred are static creatures, but that doesn't mean your chronicle has to follow suit. It's extremely difficult to change the face of Kindred politics, or for those on the bottom to claw their way to the top, but it's not impossible. Don't be afraid to let your players' actions dictate changes in the setting. What we've presented in this book represents the way things are when the chronicle begins, not the way things must remain forevermore. It should be extremely rare, the culmination of intensive effort and long stories, but let your players change the balance of power if that's what they're trying to do. At least give them a shot at it. Maybe they're responsible for Savoy finally taking Vidal's place. Maybe they manage to attain so much power that one of the players' characters actually becomes the new Prince, surrounded by a Primogen formed of his former coterie!

It's extremely unlikely, yes. All but impossible, in fact, unless your characters become significantly accomplished. They should be able to make a difference of some sort, however. Always remember, no matter how many more Kindred are out there, and how much more powerful they may be, it's the players' characters who are the stars of this particular story. Don't hand them victories, don't make things easy for them, but don't relegate them to the background either. And don't take anything written in this book as so completely immutable that there's no chance of it being changed.





The Dead Travel Fast

*Don't think of it as
a favor...
think of it as
lagniappe.*

*- Antoine Savoy,
Lord of the
French Quarter*

The only way around is through.

In the story *The Dead Travel Fast*, the characters find themselves thrust suddenly into the upper echelon of Kindred politics in the Big Easy. By witnessing the murder of one Kindred, at the hands of one who is herself the subject of much discussion at court, and the flight of another (the cowardly neonate “Mason”), the players’ characters have made themselves of great interest to all three of the primary political factions in town. By the conclusion of the story, the players’ characters will have met with leaders from each of those factions, as well as a number of other officers of the undead social hierarchy (titled and otherwise). And depending upon the actions they’ve taken, they will have established themselves in city Kindred politics perhaps more quickly than any other neonate coterie in recent memory—or they may have made at least one powerful enemy for themselves, if not more.

The Story They Know

The story of *The Dead Travel Fast* begins in the Prelude to **City of the Damned: New Orleans**. The second-person narrative described there is, for all intents and purposes, the voice of the Storyteller speaking to the players of his troupe. The Storyteller can either run the Prelude as an introduction to the story (during which the actions of the characters are pre-decided), or he can simply read them the Prelude. The action of the real story picks up where that vignette leaves off: With the coterie standing in Louis Armstrong Park, watching the body of Spook Wilson decompose before them.

As far as the characters were concerned, all they were in for was a brisk, albeit tense trip across town. In exchange for helping a fellow neonate, they would have garnered for themselves not only a favor from the Kindred in question but the potential favor of the Sheriff of the domain as well. Having agreed to protect “Mason” on this journey, they were indirectly agreeing to fight in his defense, too, but from the description he gave them of his krewes, the practical threat seemed small (especially with them in tow).

When the coterie arrives in Louis Armstrong Park on the heels of their charge, they see him run ahead, quickly disappearing around the corner of a nearby building. When they round the bend, they see a severe-looking woman with dark hair and claws, who immediately grows

enraged and tears a nearby black man from stem to stern. She then vanishes into the night, followed shortly thereafter by their guide and would-be charge.

WELCOME TO THE PARTY, KIDS

Just as the setting material in **City of the Damned: New Orleans** is presented with an eye towards a coterie of neonates, so too is the sample story intended for a coterie of neonates. Indeed, part of the idea behind *The Dead Travel Fast* is to examine what happens when a handful of politically inexperienced neonates suddenly become a cause célèbre in and around the halls of power. While the basic conceit—a coterie of factionally unaffiliated vampires witnesses one of the Prince’s officers destroying another Kindred—doesn’t specifically require neonates, other elements of the story certainly do. (For one thing, Duchamps wouldn’t have targeted a coterie of ancillae, or even experienced neonates.)

If the coterie has been actively involved in city politics for more than a little while, or if any of its members have already “taken sides” in any meaningful way (aside from their default state as Vidal’s subjects) in the faction war, then this story may require a bit of tweaking in some places. The *Dead Travel Fast* makes an excellent opening story for a New Orleans chronicle, but it probably shouldn’t be run too far into an existing chronicle.

What Really Happened

In the Machiavellian world of the Kindred, what you don’t know could easily kill you. And in this case, there is much that the coterie doesn’t know. For starters, the man who approached them in the Sasparilla Club is truly named Arthur Duchamps, not “Mason.” And he is an ambitious, young disciple of the lord of the French Quarter, Antoine Savoy.

Some time back, Duchamps began a cautious correspondence with a member of Baron Cimitiere’s camp, a fellow Mekhet by name of Spook Wilson. Long had Savoy been looking to place someone sympathetic to his position inside Cimitiere’s Inner Circle. When evidence of Spook Wilson’s frustration with Cimitiere found its

way to Duchamps, the possibility of such a “double agent” became very real indeed, all of a sudden. After the usual rounds of feeling one another out, Wilson and Duchamps began talking in secret.

Meanwhile, the Prince’s erstwhile Hound, Caitlin Meadows, was sniffing around, looking for precisely this sort of collusion between rival camp members. When she uncovered proof of her suspicions—evidence that members of Savoy’s and Cimitiere’s camps were talking in earnest—she reasoned that the only possible purpose behind the relationship was the plotting of some large-scale move against Prince Vidal, and she immediately began tracking the movements of the two conspirators. Cimitiere’s man proved the easier of the two with regards to this surveillance, and it was he whom Meadows was watching from afar on the night in question. This very night.

She watched Wilson take a phone call at a secluded location and then travel to Louis Armstrong Park on foot, alone and out of sight. The Hound of New Orleans had seen enough. But when she emerged from the shadows, claws bared, the young Mekhet restrained his own Beast, throwing his hands into the air and pleading with her to allow him the chance to explain. She did so (without withdrawing her claws), holding herself steady while the anxious Voudouisant spilled everything. Well, everything he *knew*.

The truth of the matter is that Wilson and Duchamps were both deceiving each other. Wilson, truly loyal to the Baron after all, had been working Duchamps as a means of getting information on Savoy’s activities. He now gladly offered up Duchamps as a “sacrifice” to Meadows, in part to be rid of one of Savoy’s most intolerable flunkies and in part to save his own unlife. All that Meadows had to do, Wilson explained, was follow him to the meeting place, and then she could see—and act—for herself. In the meantime, however, Duchamps had slowly grown convinced that Wilson was not the turncoat he claimed to be, as Wilson had not offered Duchamps even a single piece of useful information about Cimitiere’s activities during the duration of their association....Early in the evening, Duchamps arranged a meeting with Wilson, the secret purpose of which was Wilson’s destruction. In an attempt to kill two birds with one stone, as it were, Duchamps concocted a scheme by which a coterie of unaligned neonates could be made his accomplices in a murder that would look, for all intents and purposes, like self-defense on “Mason’s” part (as far as they were concerned, anyway). Furthermore, when the characters were subsequently investigated for the crime, they would learn that no vampire matching the name or appearance of “Mason” was a resident of New Orleans.



As a result of deceptions on both sides, the end result is that Wilson was not expecting Duchamps to be in the company of the coterie upon his arrival, and Duchamps was not expecting to see Wilson in the company of Caitlin Meadows. The one perhaps most surprised was the unstable Gangrel, who flew into a rage the moment her Beast got a whiff of the presence of not one but *multiple* new vampires. Instinctively suspecting a set-up, Meadows exacted brutal vengeance on the one she believed responsible and then fled back into the night. For his part, Duchamps was too stunned to do much more than run. His ultimate goal—Spook Wilson’s Final Death—was achieved, but not even remotely in the manner he’d intended. Caitlin Meadows, one of the most feared vampires in the city, was involved now and things were getting ugly, but quick. Duchamps, along with his would-be patsies, had just witnessed her murdering a Kindred. If he played his cards right, he could turn it all to his advantage....

The Dead Travel Fast

The individual scenes of this story are presented in the order in which they are most likely to occur, but Storytellers have a great deal of leeway within that basic framework. Logic should dictate the story’s actual path, and which scene the characters go to next is largely dependent upon the choices they make. While no pre-written story can possibly account for the multitude of options at a given coterie’s disposal, these seven scenes represent the most likely “bottom line” encounters, given the nature of the story. To further the transition from one part of the story to the next, each scene concludes with suggestions as to which scene should follow, depending on what the characters do.

Scene One

After the events of the Prelude, the characters find themselves standing in the park late at night, watching the body of Spook Wilson slowly decompose before their eyes. The scene should be played as simultaneously tense and hollow, as though the characters were standing in the echo of a solitary but thunderous gun rapport. They are all likely taken aback by the events they have just witnessed, and the moments after “Mason’s” departure should be filled with shock and uncertainty as to how to proceed.

It is highly unlikely that any of the characters recognize either of the two Kindred encountered in the park. Spook Wilson kept himself intentionally off the radar, so he was virtually unknown outside of Cimitiere’s circle. And while Caitlin Meadows used to make the occasional appearance at the various Elysiums scattered throughout the city, the frequency of those appearances has dropped off rather considerably of late. Unless the

Storyteller specifically wants Meadows to have not only encountered the characters at such a place in the past but also to have been pointed out and specifically identified by some other Kindred at that same time, she remains just as mysterious to the coterie as Wilson.

Knowing Meadows on sight, however, is a very different thing from having heard of her by reputation. The Storyteller should have the players roll Composure + Streetwise (keeping in mind the –1 die penalty to the pool for using the Ability unskilled). Any Kindred whose player achieves success on this roll recalls enough about Caitlin Meadows by reputation to make a mental match with what he just saw. Barring some extremely potent means of disguise, Caitlin Meadows was Spook Wilson’s murderer.

Before the characters have time to act on this revelation or otherwise plan their next move, five black men stroll purposefully into the scene. All of them are obviously armed. The leader of this group is tall and youthful-looking, with a striking appearance that can almost be described as “pretty.” This is Josue Vendredi, Baron Cimitiere’s own childe. He wears a russet-colored brocade jacket with a high-back collar on top of a tight black muscle shirt and black denim pants. He is the only vampire among the group, and the rest of his men—two ghouls and two mortals, all of whom are Voudouisants—are dressed similarly but not identically, and all dressed to blend in with popular city fashion. If none of the characters have met Josue before, each of them must make a roll for the Predator’s Taint (as per **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 168). Needless to say, any vampire who frenzies and attacks Josue will be shot repeatedly and then staked.

After giving the coterie a moment in which to decide whether or not to make a fight of this situation, Josue steps forward, his automatic pistol tucked into his waistband. Once he’s verified that one of his brethren lies dead here, he pulls out a cell phone and presses one of the speed dial buttons on it. Over the next 30 seconds, Josue mostly just listens, but he does whisper a few brief words into the phone. Characters need to have Auspex 1 activated to hear what he says, and even then, they only understand him if they speak French as well. If they understand, they hear him say, “Spook is dead, sire. There are neonates here. Shall I bring them to you?”

At this point, Josue’s purpose is not to engage the characters in any way other than to inform them that “the Baron” wishes to see them. (His tone of voice suggests that the impending meeting is truly a *fait accompli*, rather than merely a request.) Louis Armstrong Park, like the rest of the Tremé district, is his sire’s domain. Josue will not, under any circumstances, allow the characters to leave the park unless it is with him, and any who resist will be forcibly “escorted” from the park.

The two mortal voudouisants gather up the remains of Spook Wilson, making sure that none of his personal effects are left behind (or on the characters' persons). Josue will not allow any non-voudouisants to handle his comrade's corpse.

Resolving the Scene

Given both their state of mind and the firepower that surrounds them, it is highly unlikely that the coterie will be looking for a fight. If for some reason they feel they must engage their hosts physically, however, Josue and his men fight to subdue rather than destroy. Their first priority (after securing their fallen comrade's remains) is to provide some answers for the Baron, and they'll have difficulty doing that if the coterie is too busy crumbling to ash to answer his questions.

Josue's statistics can be found in the chapter that precedes this Appendix. Storytellers should use the Rogue Ghoul template provided on page 228 of the **Vampire** book for the two ghouls, and the Gangbanger template on page 205 of **The World of Darkness** for the two mortal Voudouisants. The only substantive additions to the statistics provided for these individuals are as follows: Each of the two ghouls has Firearms 2, and an Ingram Mac-10 with three ammo clips. Josue and the two mortals have Glock 17 pistols and three clips. Josue and the ghouls also have silencers for their weapons.



ALONG CAME A SPIDER

For his part, Duchamps has decided to make the most of this bizarre turn of events. Once he's had a chance to get his bearings, he realizes that he can still use the characters to dial up the current level of open conflict between Vidal and Cimitiere. He reasons, and rightly so, that the characters will immediately become the prime suspects in the murder of Spook Wilson. He further suspects that the coterie will say anything to prove their innocence, not the least of which is the truth—that Wilson's true murderer is Caitlin Meadows, an officer of Vidal's court.

Duchamps intends to use all this as the already accomplished first phase in a plan intended to make it appear as though a strike-counterstrike has occurred between Vidal and Cimitiere. In order to accomplish this, he must contrive the murder of one of Vidal's own, now that one or more of Vidal's followers has attacked one of Cimitiere's disciples. This leads to his attempt at implicating Gabriel Hurst in the murder of Spook Wilson (see Scenes Five and Six). All things considered, it's an exceptional plan....

Little does he know that he'll not survive to see it come to its fruition.



Barring a large-scale (and foolhardy) melee, the characters have little choice but to proceed directly to Scene Two from here. Should they break free of their escort, allow them to go wherever they wish—a decision which could lead to any one of a number of scenarios presented—but make it clear that it's in their best interests to tag along.

Scene Two

Once the coterie has agreed (or been coerced) to meet with Baron Cimitiere, the two mortal voudouisants pull a number of lengths of what appear to be dark-red silk from their jackets. They proceed to blindfold each member of the coterie, making sure that no gaps are apparent in the binding. Josue does not insist that the characters be handcuffed or otherwise physically restrained, but any vampire caught messing with his blindfold is unceremoniously advised to "leave it be, now." Josue won't tell them twice.

While the characters are in no position to appreciate this, Josue takes the assembly on a rambling scenic tour that eventually deposits them in the heart of the Tremé District. The house where Cimitiere awaits is more or less unremarkable from the outside: Two stories of wood and stone, with a windowless bottom floor and an arched, gabled roof. Josue leads the coterie up a short walkway, where he opens the wrought-iron gate that bars access to the door proper. The entire street is deathly silent as they approach.

Once inside, the characters are advised to "watch their step," as the floor of the room they've entered is a sunken one. Indeed, the ground of the large open chamber beyond is but natural earth, absent of either foundation or flooring. All four walls are decorated in colorful but disturbing murals, each featuring a different aspect of the loa and the voudouisant's relationship therein. The ceiling is open through to the second floor but for a four-foot wooden border that runs around the room's perimeter. A thick, white pole in the center spans the height of both stories, all the way up to the true ceiling some thirty feet above. Anyone succeeding in a Wits + Composure roll (at a -1 penalty) hears the telling creak of someone standing overhead. An exceptional success on this roll results in the character feeling certain that *multiple* individuals stand on what remains of the ceiling.

Pressed against the far wall is a massive altar, spanning the nearly 25 feet that separate the two wooden doors on either side of it. In front of the altar, positioned almost directly "behind" the pole from the entryway is a large, high-backed chair. Sitting in this chair is Baron Cimitiere, dressed in full regalia, including hat and white make-up. On either side of him stand two ghouls, each carrying a sub-machine gun and a

stake. The ghoul standing to the Baron's left seems Caucasian at first glance, while his right-side counterpart is an incredibly dark black male, clearly of sub-Saharan African origin.

The characters have their blindfolds removed just in time to see the two mortals in Josue's krewes step around them, together bearing the corpse of Spook Wilson. The Baron watches as they place the body on the ground before him, and only after they've withdrawn to the sides of the room does he begin to speak.

Baron Cimitiere points to his dead follower, and asks the characters to explain how this came to be. Rather than letting them spew a cluttered stream of information at him, however, he makes them choose a single speaker, and then halts that speaker every so often during his recollection of the evening's events. The Baron makes a pretense of clarifying things the speaker says, but in reality, he is giving himself time to use Aura Perception on the speaker to determine whether or not the speaker is lying to him at various points.

The Baron lets the character finish whatever he is going to say before interjecting any information of his own. If the character mentions Caitlin Meadows, either by name or by description, the Baron's inscrutable brow furrows a bit, but he does not otherwise react. Assuming the character is honest, and doesn't decline to mention how they came to be in his territory so late, the Baron offers the characters two important pieces of information: First, that the dead man, whom he identifies as a loyal voodooisant named Spook Wilson, was not a member of any "Dirty Throws Krewes." And second, that no vampire calling himself "Mason" is a permanent resident of New Orleans, to the best of the Baron's rather considerable knowledge. Their so-called charge was most certainly playing them.

If the characters probe Baron Cimitiere for information, they aren't likely to get much out of him. He's playing his cards fairly close to his chest (as usual), and he knows that a rather considerable political tempest could arise from what has transpired tonight. If Caitlin Meadows did kill his man, and in the fashion the neonates described, it means that someone is trying to use the coterie as a foil against him. The Baron does not specifically acknowledge this, but instead plays the role of the angered patron. He does not dispute that Meadows was the weapon, but if another was responsible for her being pointed in Spook's direction, he wants to know who and why.

Cimitiere's aim is to get the characters to offer to be his informants in this, and for them to think it was their idea. Whether or not they do so, he advises the characters to avoid going to the Sheriff until they can find out what was really going on. Caitlin Meadows may still be working for the Prince, and in that event,

the characters' unives could well be in jeopardy because they witnessed her killing another vampire. If, however, they uncover proof that Spook's death was just as much (if not more) the fault of another, they may just be able to emerge from this potential disaster not only unscathed but bearing the good graces of Baron Cimitiere as well.

Resolving the Scene

If the notion of combat was unwise in Scene One, it's patently absurd here. The coterie is literally surrounded by almost a dozen well-armed individuals, including two vampires, one of whom is Baron Cimitiere! The Baron does not provoke a Predator's Taint roll, and he has the Deflection of Wooden Doom ritual activated when they arrive. The two ghouls on either side of the Baron have the Monster Hunter template (**The World of Darkness**, p. 207) with the Rogue Ghoul template added on, thus giving them the best aspects of the two templates. In addition, they each have Resilience 1 and carry an Ingram Mac-10 and four clips. The three men looking down into the room from the second floor walkway have the Gangbanger template, but one also carries a Remington shotgun (with 12 shells).

Once the characters have answered questions to Baron Cimitiere's satisfaction, he orders them once again blindfolded. He then beckons Josue to his side, whereupon he whispers into Josue's ear (in French), "Return them to the park. Let me know if you're seen." As the characters have little else to go on at this point, they will more than likely proceed immediately to Scene Three. If they absolutely refuse to do anything with the remainder of their evening (other than retreating to their havens or otherwise ignoring the story), simply proceed to Scene Four. It is probably just after midnight by this time.

Scene Three

Once the coterie is within sight of the edge of Louis Armstrong Park, Josue's men remove the blindfolds and draw back into the night without so much as a parting word. The primary focus of the first part of this scene should be on the utter aloneness the characters should be feeling at this time. They have a whole world of trouble awaiting them, and they've been offered not a whit of help in the process. After describing the quiet solitude of the area around the park, the Storyteller should simply wait for the players to decide what their characters must do next.

The options are many, but the most logical include the following:

Follow the Trail: The characters may decide that the best thing to do next is to try and track down the man who claimed to be called "Mason." Unfortunately, this

isn't likely to net them much progress. "Mason"/Duchamps is an exceptional sneak, and if they start with the direction he ran off in, that will take them right back into the heart of the Tremé District. If he wasn't sneaky enough to do that and get away with it, Cimitiere's men would certainly have spotted him by now, so going back in there won't be much help. (Duchamps ran *away* from the French Quarter, so as to avoid implicating Savoy at all.)

Father Knows Best: Knowing the direction in which "Mason" ran might prove useful, if only to give them a place to start. Any character succeeding in an Intelligence + Streetwise roll will recall that one of the only vampires in that district who *isn't* loyal to Cimitiere dwells not too far from the park. This vampire, a Daeva named Father John Marrow, runs a small mission out of an old church nearby. Any character who gets three or more successes on his Intelligence + Streetwise roll recalls hearing some negative rumor about Marrow but doesn't recall the substance of it. In truth, Marrow is one of Savoy's most trusted lieutenants, and any conversation they may have with Marrow will serve only to further muddle things, as is Marrow's wont, while ensuring that Savoy remains informed even before he seeks out the characters himself (see Scene Four).

We Give Up: Standing there in the dark shadow of the park at midnight, the characters might just decide to "turn themselves in" and entrust their fates to the hands of the capable Sheriff. At this juncture, that would be an exceedingly unwise idea. Without someone else to blame, the coterie would very likely be throwing themselves on a grenade meant for someone else. Their word means very little to Donovan (or to Vidal, at this point) and admitting that they were duped without having even a real name or appearance to give him would not necessarily remove them from the list of suspects. In addition, there's always the possibility that it was Donovan (or Vidal himself) who orchestrated Spook Wilson's destruction—in which case, the characters are clearly next. Only by verifying that someone else was behind it can they meet with Donovan safely. If they decide to go try and find the Sheriff anyway, proceed to Scene Four. They aren't *obligated* to speak with Savoy before finding Donovan, but they'll probably want to.

Digging for Clues: In their search for answers, some characters may wish to turn to mortal allies or other sources of influence. Should they opt for this approach, the Storyteller should encourage all the avenues at their disposal. When all is said and done, however, very little information about this particular dilemma will come to light through the use of such resources. The Storyteller can, however, use the attempt as an opportunity to clarify some of the basics of the city and its politics

for the characters. Caitlin Meadows' reputation, for example, could be uncovered through use of Merits (even though Baron Cimitiere had not been forthcoming with the very same information before).

Resolving the Scene

No special, broad-based considerations exist for resolving this scene. The Storyteller should simply allow the characters to strike out on their own, in whichever way best seems to suit their needs and then direct the transition to Scene Four accordingly. Their searching should probably take no more than an hour or so, but if it runs longer, the Storyteller should feel free to hold off on Scene Four until the following evening. The only exception to this is if the coterie is on its way to the Sheriff, in which case Scene Four should come before they find him (though, again, the coterie isn't obligated to do it).

Scene Four

This scene should come after the characters have exhausted their own personal avenues of information, or else when they've (foolishly) decided to turn themselves in. While the characters are back on the street downtown (depending on what they'd decided to do during Scene Three), they are approached by one of the horse-drawn carriages that routinely tour the area in and around the French Quarter. Sitting atop the driver's stoop is an elderly black man with a salt-and-pepper beard, wearing a white hat.

As he nears the assembled coterie, he waves genially before engaging in a brief spat with his horse, who doesn't seem to want to slow up, despite having been asked nicely. When the carriage finally rolls to a stop (a few meters beyond where the driver had intended), the man turns to the characters and introduces himself as "Oscar," adding that "this crotchety ol' nag here is Daisy." He says that he was asked to extend to them an invitation to join Lord Savoy, as his guests, for a drink in the Quarter. Oscar doesn't know what ulterior motive, if any, his master may have, merely that he should do what he can to encourage the neonates to climb aboard.

Assuming the characters agree, Oscar steps down and holds the door open for them, taking special care to make sure that any ladies are supported fully when stepping in. Oscar plays the "elderly gentleman" to the hilt, but there's a hint of impish perversion in his manner that might put especially delicate sensibilities on the defensive. The open-air carriage is black, with red velvet trim along its twin seats, and it seats six comfortably. Oscar treats the coterie as he would any other "fare," and so regales them with colorful anecdotes about various French Quarter sites as the carriage rumbles along. The

Storyteller should use this opportunity to actually relay some interesting facts about the Quarter, especially for players unfamiliar with the area. Oscar's voice is husky and dry, but rich and full of Southern character, and his favorite phrase is, "Dat da N'awlins way."

Oscar's destination is two-story townhouse near the middle of Bienville Street. Like other houses in the area, Savoy's place is cool blue in color and festooned with elaborate cast-iron filigrees in the general shape of numerous clusters of grapes. Unlike other houses, however, a 14-foot high iron fence secures this house's entire perimeter. Oscar deposits the coterie at the gate in front of the house and tells them to "go on in." (The sense of openness and acceptance is a vital part of Savoy's plan for the group.)

Once inside, the characters are treated to an all-out assault on the senses. First, they hear laughter, then the sound of bawdy jazz (from the 1930s, if anyone knows enough about music to tell) carried through the place by means of a state-of-the-art sound system, the twin smells of smoke and alcohol blast visitors the moment they step into the room, and the décor is some of the finest the characters have ever seen. The sight that greets the coterie is a large, loud room full of carousing men and women lounging around on seemingly priceless antiques.

As soon as the characters enter, a tall and extraordinarily handsome Cajun rises with a grin and strides forward to greet them. He acts for all the world like he's been expecting just these very people, despite having never met or even seen them before. He welcomes them to "Evergreen Plantation" with a knowing smirk—it's Savoy's nickname for the house and its lot—and bids them follow him to the interior courtyard out back. After stepping through a pair of narrow double doors, the characters find themselves in a delightful open-air garden area covered by a wrought-iron canopy. At the center of the peristyle is a white iron table and matching set of eight chairs. Seated at the table in two of the chairs are Antoine Savoy and his advisor, Natasha Preston. They appear to have been in the middle of some amusing recollection, for Savoy bursts into laughter upon the arrival of the coterie. When he notices them, he smiles and beckons them sit.

Savoy's primary motivation here is to be the coterie's "friend." He begins with pleasantries and asks the Cajun to bring enough of "the good wine" for everyone. Savoy talks of nothing serious until the "wine," which is really fresh human blood, arrives in a matched set of blue-and-white china on an antique silver tray. Savoy makes sure to let the characters pick their glasses first, so as to show they need fear no deception. Once the ice is sufficiently thawed, Savoy begins by leaning over and whispering conspiratorially that a little bird told

him that the characters had a bit of a run-in tonight. He then waits for one or more of the characters to fill in the blanks, nodding all the time.

It's possible that the characters won't want Savoy to know the whole story, but by leaving parts of it out (such as Meadows' involvement), they will be telling him a great deal anyway. In addition, even if the characters were savvy enough to "prepare" a group story on the way over, Savoy can get the details from Oscar (who, despite his appearance, has Auspex 1 and speaks French, Spanish and Latin, as well as English).

Savoy will reveal nothing about his own knowledge or agenda. If the characters ask if he's seen or heard of a man who claims to be named "Mason," he will frown and shake his head disappointedly. The only questions Savoy will be forthright in answering are those that pertain to Vidal or his operations. Savoy will gladly confirm just how dangerous Caitlin Meadows is and will even try to imply that she is responsible for several other deaths of late. If asked, he'll confess that he thinks she is still working with the Prince. He'll also try to get the coterie to reveal that it met with Baron Cimitiere, and if possible, the substance of that particular discussion, but he will only do so if he can do it subtly.

If the characters ask Savoy why he's so interested, he'll smile and "confess" that he's intrigued by the situation they're in. If the rumors are true (whether or not they've admitted as much), they've just seen Meadows commit a crime, and nobody else in the city can say as much. He merely wants "to know what happened," and to see if there's anything he can do "to help." Whether or not the group believes him remains to be seen.

Resolving the Scene

As the entire purpose of this little meeting is to put the coterie at ease with respect to Antoine Savoy, the likelihood of combat or other unpleasantness is probably remote. All the same, Savoy did not survive as long as he has by taking unnecessary chances. At the first sign of conflict, he activates Sovereignty (Level Five Majesty), and any character who wants to be uncivil, let alone violent, must beat him in the contested roll. Even those who succeed may only act as they wish for the moment, unless Savoy's roll results in dramatic failure, as the full force of Savoy's Majesty comes crashing back in.

In addition to himself and Natasha, Savoy also has four armed ghouls watching the scene in the courtyard. Each of these has the Rogue Ghoul template, plus a heavy pistol (Colt .45) with three clips each, and they will attack anyone who attacks Savoy.

Once the meeting is over, whether by mutual agreement or the eruption of conflict, the characters are escorted out the door, down the walkway, and through

the iron gate, which is then closed and locked behind them. Barring truly strange circumstances, the characters will more than likely proceed straight from here to Scene Five.

Scene Five

Once the characters have left the French Quarter, the time is right for Arthur Duchamps to put the next stage of his scheme into motion. By orchestrating an attack on their unlives, he believes he can implicate someone in Vidal's camp—in this case, Vidal's prodigy errant, the Primogen Gabriel Hurst. By leaving a trail of clues that point to Hurst as the party responsible for not only Spook's murder but their own attempted murder as well, Duchamps hopes to manipulate the coterie into dispatching Hurst themselves. With Hurst's demise coming so soon after the destruction of one of Cimitiere's followers, open conflict between the Baron and Vidal would be sure to follow.

For this job, Duchamps has procured two of the lesser "gangster-looking" thugs he knows. In addition to the promise of considerable monies, Duchamps has given them both suits and cell phones. The thugs believe the cell phones are both a way to keep in contact with Duchamps and a small down payment on the compensation they are to receive. In reality, the cell phones are false clues that will lead the coterie inexorably to Hurst: The most recent incoming call on both cell phones was made from the same public telephone on Chestnut Street in the Garden District. (Simply calling the number found results in a passerby answering the pay phone and relating its location to the character.) Any player succeeding on an Intelligence + Streetwise roll knows that the area in question is part of the tennurial domain of Gabriel Hurst, one of Vidal's Primogen.

In addition to this first deception, the last *outgoing* call made from one of the two cell phones was made to Gabriel Hurst's office line at his house in the Garden District. The characters may not know this right away, nor may they have the resources to run a trace on the number, but if they employ the same technique—simply calling the number found—the caller will hear it ring and ring without being picked up. If the character waits long enough (at least eight rings), an answering machine will click on and inform the listener in a surprisingly personable Louisiana drawl that he has "missed me" and should leave a message after the tone. Anyone who has met Hurst in person can recognize the voice as belonging to Gabriel Hurst. Others can identify only that the voice is that of a Caucasian or Creole male no older than forty, probably a lifelong local.

Duchamps has provided his hired thugs with everything they'll need to stage the attack: Guns, an

untraceable car, and a complete description of the coterie. He also knows that the characters were just in the French Quarter, so he'll probably instruct his goons to lie in wait just outside. (If this scene takes place on the following night, just have them find the characters wherever is most appropriate, given their actions at the time.) As far as the thugs themselves are concerned, they are going there to *kill* the coterie. They have no idea that their would-be targets are vampires, and Duchamps expects them to fail. His goal is to get the characters to go after Hurst, preferably just after the failed attack.

Resolving the Scene

Given that the thugs have more than one target, as well as the fact that they aren't armed with anything capable of spraying automatic fire, the "drive-by" approach won't work. In all likelihood, the two attackers will park their vehicle after spotting the coterie, whereupon they'll get out and pursue the characters on foot. The Storyteller should take care in making it appear as though this is a genuine attack. The assailants are fairly street-smart, and will use their knowledge of the city and its layout to their advantage, especially once they've spotted the fact that they're outnumbered (if, indeed, they are). They'll have to get close to make their move, given the range of their weapons, but would certainly take advantage of position, given the opportunity.

When all's said and done, however, the two thugs are nothing more than street slime with handguns. They both have the Gangbanger template with no modifications at all. Even if the characters have no weapons of their own, Duchamps believes it is more than likely that they'll prevail. And if by some chance his thugs get the drop on the vampires, there's no way they can destroy them outright. When the characters heal, they'll remember that they were attacked and by whom.

If the characters kill the two assailants, they'll have Duchamps' "evidence" to lead them to their next destination. If, however, they take the thugs alive, the characters can squeeze out from the thugs the fact that some guy (whose description matches the coterie's own image of "Mason") hired them to do this one hit. They're not part of anyone's regular service. At this point, the coterie can still pursue the leads that point them to Hurst, but they will probably do so out of curiosity, rather than the anger for which Duchamps had hoped.

Scene Six

After surviving or recovering from their "ordeal," the characters should now be in a position where it seems likely that Hurst is their next objective. If they believe the veracity of the evidence they found, they'll want to

question Hurst personally (at the very least). If they found the evidence suspicious, then they'll still want to talk to Hurst to find out who may be setting him up, and to get one more person on their side in all this.

After such an incident, the coterie may feel that the time is now right for it to go to the Sheriff. It has the attackers' cell phones, if not the attackers' bodies themselves, and *surely* that would be sufficient. Wouldn't it? The answer to that question, sadly, is no. First, the characters still have no proof that it wasn't Donovan himself who set them up. The tension between Donovan and Hurst is common enough knowledge (for anyone making a successful Intelligence + Streetwise roll) to make the theory that Donovan might do this a distinct possibility. Furthermore, they still don't know the real identity of the man who got them into all of this in the first place, and without that, what's to say?

Assuming the coterie decides to go see Hurst, they can find his Garden District house rather easily. Not only do the characters have the street and the phone number, but anyone succeeding on another Intelligence + Streetwise roll knows that one of the most "famous" havens in New Orleans is the house Augusto Vidal gave Gabriel Hurst upon the latter's joining the Primogen council. He even knows the whereabouts of this house, which Hurst uses as an office and as a place to meet Kindred guests, by reputation.

If the characters try calling first, perhaps in the hopes of setting up a meeting ahead of time, they get no answer from either of the numbers they have. If they head over of their own accord, they find the house in question nestled in a quiet part of Chestnut Street. The house proper is set back from the road, veiled from the sight of the outside world by means of a row of carefully cultivated greenery, the centerpiece of which is an ancient live oak tree, draped in a beard-like coat of Spanish moss. A tastefully elegant wrought-iron gate spans the driveway, connecting two brick columns on either side. A flat plaque on the face of one column welcomes visitors to this address in stylish gold ormalu.

The coterie will have to stop at a small guardhouse in front of the gate if they wish to pass, whether they arrive by car or on foot. In truth, all they need do is give their names to the two guards and ask to see Gabriel Hurst, who is, in point of fact, expecting them. Even if the characters give the guards a hard time without ever mentioning who they are or whom they wish to see, the guards will notify Hurst of their arrival right away. Once Hurst sees who it is, he'll give the guards the go-ahead to let the characters pass. If the coterie is coming under the impression that Hurst wants them dead, they may just try to kill or incapacitate the guards before breaking in and entering the premises. In this event, Hurst and his security chief will spot the action and stage an ambush inside for the

coterie. Hurst still aims—even in these circumstances—for a chance to talk it over.

Once any possible conflict has been resolved and the coterie is safely inside, Hurst cordially invites them to join him in his ready room. He (and thus, they) are escorted by two more of his guards down a hardwood hall and into an opulently appointed den with a large, wooden desk that faces a bank of security camera monitors. A stoic black man in a grey suit, a submachine gun slung over one shoulder, stands behind the desk, staring intently into one of the monitors. Hurst introduces the man as "Terrence."

Hurst invites the coterie to sit on the russet-leather and gold-studded chairs, and then asks them what brings them to his home. If the characters are honest with him (and he does his best to encourage as much honesty as he thinks he can get) he listens intently, and after they're finished, begins to nod slowly. He then goes on to explain how his security had picked up a scent and was just now going through surveillance tapes from the last 24 hours. He tells them that he received an unusual phone call the night before—someone calling from a blocked number, who hung up the moment Hurst answered.

When the characters mention the payphone number being found in the attacker's cell phone, Hurst asks Terrence to find the surveillance tape from that place and time. After a minute, Terrence succeeds but seems confused. Hurst follows his glance to the monitor, smiles, and then invites the characters to step around the side of the desk. What they see in the monitor is a faint, blurred image of what might be a man—one suspiciously similar in shape and size to the man who called himself "Mason"—creeping cautiously into the phone booth, and after a moment, ducking back out. Terrence says, "But that can't be. We were watching this booth, sir. I swear it." Hurst nods, turns back to the coterie and asks, his Louisiana grin broadening, "How would you boys like to know who set all this up?"

Assuming they're all ears, Hurst proceeds to break it down for them: The attempt at framing him for their attack points inexorably to the true culprit being either Antoine Savoy or someone in Savoy's camp. As Savoy would never do something that direct (or that stupid) himself, the logical blame falls to one of his several prodigal plotters. And the only one of said neophyte plotters who is known to be able to conceal his movements to that degree is a little worm of a Mekhet named Arthur Duchamps. After a moment, Hurst smiles coldly and whispers, "I'm sure Terrence can provide an address."

Resolving the Scene

Hurst's guards number five in total at this particular place and time. All five guards have the Rogue Ghoul template, and are further equipped with Colt .45s (four



clips), silencers and night-vision goggles. His head of security, a ghoul named Terrence, also has an HK MP 5 with a laser sight and three clips.

Terrence gives the characters the address of an apartment in a run-down part of Mid-City. At this point, they can either go there on their own, or take this time to seek out Donovan. While the characters now know who was behind the attempt on their unives, they still don't know how he was involved in the original crime—a crime for which they're still prime suspects. And given Caitlin Meadows' involvement, which is probably seeming more and more inscrutable by this point, they can't reasonably be sure of anything, yet. All the same, if they wish to find the Sheriff or other authority figure now, the Storyteller should allow them to. In that event, the characters still proceed to Scene Seven next, only they do so now with the Sheriff (and/or whomever) in tow, as well.

Scene Seven

When the coterie arrives at Duchamps' place, they need to tackle the problem of getting in. The front door of the apartment building has a buzzer, but pressing the

button associated with Duchamps' unit results in no response. Given the neighborhood, they could probably just wait for someone to come in or out and "piggy-back" their way in. Alternately, they could pull the old "buzz someone and claim to have forgotten your key" routine. However they get in, Duchamps' apartment is on the third floor.

Duchamps' door, like the one downstairs, is locked when the coterie arrives. If they knock they'll receive no reply, and there's no sound coming from within. If the Sheriff is with them, they could let him knock as well, but even the chilling sound of Donovan's voice isn't enough to provoke a response. The door itself is a simple wooden door (see p. 136 of *The World of Darkness*) and can be forced open by amassing two successes on an extended Strength + Stamina roll. Alternately, the lock can be picked by achieving five successes on an extended Dexterity + Larceny + Equipment roll. Picking the lock is impossible without a tool of some kind, even if just a bobby pin.

Once inside, the coterie immediately detects a faintly unpleasant odor in the air. The apartment is a mess, the floor of each room covered in numerous stacks of piled

things. In some cases, it's vinyl LPs or plastic CD cases, in others it's piles of spiral notebooks. The windows are all boarded up from the inside, with curtains drawn to make it seem as though they weren't, and a large charcoal fire blanket rests on the back of a ratty couch.

When the characters arrive in the back room of this one-bedroom apartment, they are greeted with a disturbing sight. Lying on the bed is what appears to be a corpse in an advanced state of decomposition. Its charred, claw-like fingers are curled up around its neck, as though trying to tear out its own throat. The cadaver is dressed in a New Orleans Saints athletic t-shirt, black sweatpants, and white sneakers. If the characters investigate the body, they'll notice that the bottom of the sneakers are scuffed, and bits of mud and grass are pushed into the grooves of the sneaker's tread. This is, without a doubt, the same individual who led them through Louis Armstrong Park....

The coterie has found Arthur Duchamps at last.

A casual search of the room reveals a closet, a night table, and a desk with a lamp on it. In the closet, they find the very same jacket they saw last night. On the night table, they find a memo pad with a few scrawled notes written in it, one of which reads, "SW at LAP, 11 p.m. Come prepared." The desk, however, is strangely empty, devoid of either mess or stacks of anything. If the lamp is on, however, any character looking at the desk with Heightened Senses will pick up two faint outlines made by the relative absence of dust across the desk's surface. One of them is a rectangle—roughly the size of a laptop computer, if anyone asks—and the other is roughly cell phone-sized.

If the Sheriff is with the coterie, he tells the characters he's "seen enough." There is more than enough evidence, he assures them, to lift suspicion of Spook's death from their shoulders. As far as they're concerned, he says,

the matter is closed. If the Sheriff is not with them yet, the characters have the opportunity to do a little digging on their own. They will, however, have to tell the Sheriff eventually, and when they do, they might just be surprised at what he has to say.

Conclusion

Whether the Sheriff was with the coterie when it arrived at Duchamps' place, or whether he was brought in subsequently, the end result is the same. Donovan thanks them for their responsibility, and offers them—as a token of appreciation from a grateful Prince—a piece of reasonable feeding grounds in any part of the city they choose, barring areas that are already spoken for (such as the French Quarter and the two Garden Districts). Donovan makes it clear that this "token of appreciation" goes hand in hand with the coterie's *silence*. Their involvement in the affairs of the last 24 hours is over and done with, and all related matters are now in Donovan's hands. This will likely give the coterie the impression that Donovan is "covering up" for Meadows, but, as Donovan reminds the neonates, the true culprit here was one of Savoy's circle. And now that said culprit is no more, the matter is closed, at least where they're concerned.

But is that truly the end? The coterie may wish to pursue the matter of how Duchamps died, for that remains unclear. Was he silenced by his own master Savoy, in an attempt to prevent him from revealing something much more sinister? Or was it Meadows, returned to finish the job she began in Louis Armstrong Park? Perhaps the killer was one of Baron Cimitiere's men, sent to even the score between the two rival factions. Whatever the Storyteller decides, the seed has been planted for a second installment of *The Dead Travel Fast*, if that is where he looks to take his troupe.

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I call it home.*

— Antoine Savoy, Lord of the French Quarter

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