

City of the Damned
LOS ANGELES



A Vampire the Requiem City Sourcebook

V 2.0



Andy :)

City of the Damned
LOS ANGELES

V 2.0

WRITTEN by DARKWOLF

DESIGNED by RÖMA NÂIM

Proofreader: Matt Harvey

Art and Photographs donated by: Craig Bickford

Leonaheidern: <http://leonaheidern.deviantart.com>

Supported by Shadownessence: www.shadownessence.com

The City of Fallen Angels	4
The History of LA	5
Lay of the Land	13
Weird Los Angeles	27
Political Landscape	33
Kindred Factions	45
The Fallen Angels	51
Story Hooks	81



The City of Fallen Angels

Some say this is the
promised land,
that if you can somehow
get here then everything
will work out just fine.
I'm here to tell you that's
bullshit;
you're as Damned here as
you are anywhere else.
But hey, it was a nice
dream.

Jocelyn Marsh,
Prince of Los Angeles

The rambling metropolis of Los Angeles sprawls across a thousand square miles of a great desert basin, knitted together by an intricate network of congested freeways between the ocean and the snow-capped mountains. Its colorful melange of shopping malls, palm trees and swimming pools is both mildly surreal and startlingly familiar, thanks to the celluloid self-image that it has spread all over the world. Los Angeles is a bright and eclectic patchwork of neighborhoods and lifestyles. Made up of dozens of communities, there is no one unifying experience that sums up the life and the heartbeat of this city among cities. From the eternal sunshine and glitz to the traffic and smog, this City of Angels will forever be many things to many people.

Or so it seems on the surface. It's a city of illusions, America's Dream Factory, and as false as the image it projects. Incredible wealth exists side by side with crushing poverty, the glamor of Hollywood transposed to the shadows of the street and the shattering symphony of gangland violence. A melange of cultures and people crammed into an oasis in the desert, perched upon the edge of an abyss. Agony and ecstasy dance side by side in a bipolar march of bright lights and long, deep shadows that shade every heart and darken every corner. Dreams and reality intermix in vivid illusions as nightmares are born silently in the darkness and long shadows stretch forth to shroud the soul. Even the dead must tread lightly here.

Welcome to Los Angeles.



God, Gold, and Glory: The History of Los Angeles

"Perhaps no city in modern times has been so universally envied, imitated, ridiculed, and, because of what it may portend, feared."

– *Encyclopedia Britannica*

Los Angeles is a young city, especially by Kindred standards, that has only recently left its childhood behind to begin a tumultuous adolescence. Yet in a sense there is no better way to describe its past than these three words: God, gold, and glory. The three pillars on which it was built: the hope of missionaries, the dream of gold, and the manufacture of glory. This was also the call that triggered the spark of greed, and hope, within the hearts of white men. This was the call that motivated Europeans the brave the dangers of the ocean, disease, and hostile natives to carve out their own kingdoms in the Americas and sweep aside all opposition. The history of Los Angeles is no different, born of the conflict of Old and New World, writ in blood and ash.

The Bay of Smoke

The old history of the Los Angeles region is murky. Long before Europeans ever set eyes on the shore, various tribes of Native Americans were known to occupy the area, though almost nothing remains of them. A number of local tribes constructed a settlement in the region, the village of Yang-Na (under what is now the Civic Center), but Spanish settlers destroyed it. History suggests that the natives were a largely peaceful people who did not significantly resist the Spanish, and seemed to accept Christianity readily enough, although the records left behind by conquistadors and missionaries are not exactly reliable on this matter. Yet, archaeological evidence recently uncovered suggests that warfare between tribes was more common than first suspected, and the acceptance of the Spanish may have been less a choice than a necessity.

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the first white man to see what would one day become Los Angeles, arrived in 1542 by ship and dubbed the region the Bay of Smoke. But it was not for another two hundred and forty years that much would be done with his discovery.

Mission de San Gabriel

The first true white settlement in the region was the San Gabriel mission founded by Pedro Cambon and Angel Somera in 1771. Although nothing spectacular by any standards, the seed had been planted and from it wicked fruit would grow. At first, the mission was little more than a trading post for Spanish colonists, soldiers, and merchants moving further north or returning to more settled lands in Mexico. By 1777 the mission had grown into a small town (El Pueblo) to meet these needs and, reputedly, the first Indians were baptized here at this time. But religious duties and intentions were soon enough to be swept aside by practical necessity and the human tendency to indulge in vice. Evidence also suggests that a massacre was perpetrated against the locals at this time, although the archaeologists who uncovered the mass graves have not been able to determine who was responsible. European artifacts were found on site, however.

The history of the Kindred within Los Angeles is also believed to have begun at this time. In 1782 a Spanish missionary named Father Junipero Serra arrived in El Pueblo. With him came the first missionaries of the Lancia Sanctum. Father Serra was appalled by what he found, condemning the moral conditions and immoral habits of the residence, and launched a campaign against them, though his efforts

were largely ignored. The Sanctified conducted a similar campaign, testing the residents and culling sinners from the herd. And yet despite this, or perhaps because of it, Los Angeles continued to grow and prosper, especially when the Mexican government began to issue land grants in California, establishing the first ranchos in the region. Although still only a minor town when compared to the vast wealth of Central and South America, Los Angeles was coming into its own.

It would not last.

Blood and Gold

The era between 1782 and 1842 was probably the calmest sixty years the city had ever, and probably would ever know. Los Angeles continued to grow as more and more ranchers and farmers made their homes here. Merchants and traders continued to push north, ships began to anchor in its harbors, and the arrival of oranges in 1804 created a new, booming industry. Despite two floods in 1811 and 1815 and an Indian revolt in 1810 that followed the damming of the Los Angeles River, the future looked bright. A city council was established in 1812, a school was built in 1817 (though it failed almost immediately), and Santa Monica Bay was becoming a port of call for foreign merchants. But signs that times were changing would not be long in coming.

In 1828 the village of Yang-Na was sold to John Groningen, who immediately expelled the last residents and demolished the structures. Mystics warned Groningen that he was angering the spirits of the land, but the warnings were ignored. Perhaps there was something to it. Just three years later plans were made to secularize the missions of California; plans that sparked a change in government, the exile of several prominent Los Angeles citizens, and eventually a minor revolution. Two years later the plan was carried out successfully, although missionaries killed over 100,000 cattle in protest. But the bloodshed (both human and animal) led some to wonder, and the civil war between Northern and Southern California that broke out in 1836 only deepened these doubts. Had the Golden Age passed?

Yet in some sense, the Golden Age was only just beginning. Land and cattle may have

created Los Angeles, but the City of Angels was made from bricks of gold with blood for mortar. In 1842 gold was discovered in the Placerita Canyon of the Santa Clarita Valley. For California, it was only the tip of the iceberg; for Los Angeles it was the beginning of greatness. Officially recognized as a city but a handful of years earlier, settlers and wildcat miners began to flood into the city. With them came vice and danger, but the wealth they delivered was enough for most to turn a blind eye to these faults.

Even the Sanctified found it hard not to glorify in this newfound wealth and the power that came with it. Their hold on Los Angeles, and through it Southern California, was strong. In fact, the Lance's leader in L.A., Antonio Huarez, was able to claim the title of Archbishop in 1844, making him the undisputed master of all Kindred within L.A. proper.

The Eagle and the Bear

Cattle made Los Angeles grow, oranges made Los Angeles prosperous, but gold made it wealthy. But wealth has its own downsides, beyond corruption and sin; it tends to attract attention. Especially the unhealthy kind. The Invictus claims that it first sent scout coterie to California at this time, but evidence for this is sparse at best. But the unknowing ally of the Invictus, the young United States, was moving West. With the cry of Manifest Destiny, war was declared against Mexico in 1846. Even as the U.S. army began its march on Mexico City, American settlers and homesteaders (and secretly Invictus Kindred) traveled to Los Angeles under the banner of John C. Fremont and his troops. His troops took the city easily, but, unwilling to accept abuse at the hands of their conquerors, the locals rose up and shortly forced the Americans back to San Pedro. Reinforcements under Stephen Kearny arrived early in 1847 and after the brief but bloody Battle of the San Gabriel River, Mexican troops were forced to retreat to L.A. Fremont's troops returned but a few days later, and the citizens of Los Angeles agreed to surrender to him without resistance.

American control of Alta California was now complete, and the settlers raised the Bear Flag over their new republic. For the Invictus

and the Sanctified, however, the battle was just beginning. By right, the Sanctified considered what was New Spain theirs. It was Sanctified Kindred who had risked their Requiems to establish new outposts and Sanctified Kindred who had ruled these young cities since their birth. It was not a control that they were willing to surrender lightly, especially to these arrogant American vampires. The First Estate had other plans, however, and both the will and the means to implement them.

As the Sanctified drew upon, and strengthened, their connections to leaders and religious figures within the Spanish speaking community, the Invictus continued to strengthen its grip on the power structure, co-opting businessmen and lawmakers. Using this power, they pushed Sanctified retainers and pawns from power, culminating in the Land Act of 1852, in which all of the remaining old land grants around Los Angeles were wrested from the original ranchero families and given to American families. It is a testament to this silent warfare, and the tensions that both sides tried to stir up, that L.A.'s murder rate climbed dramatically in 1854 and that numerous protests, marches, riots, and guerrilla battles were conducted by former Mexican citizens.

But with their big guns rapidly removed, the entire conflict proved to be academic for the Sanctified. By 1876, with the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Pico Canyon Oil Field, Californian wealth and American industrial might had won the night for the First Estate. Los Angeles was now tied to American interests and Invictus-backed secularization, anti-Catholicism, and racism shattered Sanctified praxis. While still a force to be reckoned with, the Lance would take many years to rebuild its support base. By 1879 Archbishop Huarez was forced from power, and a new Prince in the form of Alexander Hunt (an Invictus Elder) sat on the throne of L.A.

A Celluloid Noose

As young Kindred, particularly Carthians, are fond of saying, the world has changed more in the last hundred years than it did in the previous thousand. This is certainly true in Los Angeles, and the current balance of power between the covenants reflects this. Between

1880 and 1976, the Invictus strengthened its grip on the city through control of key industries and political figures, yet was not able to fully grasp the changes overcoming the city. The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the Santa Fe line as well as the Santa Monica Pier made travel to the region easy (by mortal standards at least, though some daring neonates attempted it with varying degrees of success). This opened the door. And while the grip of the First Estate tightened – most famously it forced the incorporation of many cities and communities into L.A. through the Owens Valley Water Project in 1905 – the grip could never fully close. The Invictus was slowly being left behind, even if it would be decades before they noticed.

Although their power was nearly unassailable, the Invictus also realized that it could not maintain this position forever; the balance was too unstable. The Sanctified were rebuilding their base of operations, and the borders were growing rapidly. Therefore, the First Estate did something almost unprecedented; it actively aided other covenants in establishing themselves in the city. Certainly they maneuvered the others into weaker positions, but the Invictus cannily realized that with only a bit of manipulation it could force both the Circle of the Crone (1891) and the Ordo Dracul (1885) into opposition with the Sanctified. It worked. However, for the brief moment that Los Angeles' borders were fully open, the Carthian Movement slipped quietly in the door. And like unwelcome guests, they refused to leave.

Unlike the other covenants, which the Invictus tried to cultivate as allies or cat's paws, the Carthians were never officially welcome in the city. Barred from Court and isolated from most centers of power, they were forced to get creative in order to survive. Fortunately, being creative is something that the Carthians do very well. A number of forward-thinking ancillae and ambitious neonates began to sink resources into a new and exciting business: the making of motion pictures. Seen as little more than a fad by most Kindred, and many kine, few really expected this ploy to work, which is probably the only reason the First Estate did not interfere. After 1914, the Carthians laughed last and best.

They've been laughing ever since. With access to both wealth and power, not to mention powerful tools of propaganda, the Carthians became an established power within the city. At the time few worried what the rabble might do with this newfound power, but the dynamic of Los Angeles had been changed for all time, as events would later prove.

The World on Fire

It was a heady time to be alive or undead in the 1910s and 20s. Los Angeles had grown large and exciting, a magnet for desperate dreamers and an oasis of wealth and prosperity in the desert. Once again, its residents failed to learn from the past, and the lesson that great heights almost always precede even greater falls. Almost as a portent of things to come, a 1928 study announced that L.A. possessed the highest suicide rate in the country, a dubious distinction that it maintains to this night. Again the city ignored these signs, pushing forward plans to construct an airport (Mines Field), and in 1929 completed construction of the Pacific Stock Exchange.

The Great Depression officially began one week later.

Depression hit Los Angeles as hard as any other city in America. Businesses closed, fortunes evaporated, and jobs simply vanished. Racial tensions also boiled over and a mass deportation of Mexican laborers was begun. Even so, in a display of astonishing hubris, the city hosted the Tenth Olympic Games in 1932, bringing in some 105,000 spectators. An impressive number, but nothing compared to the massive crowds that events in the East had been known to draw, though still an absolute smorgasbord for local Kindred. As if in punishment, the Long Beach Earthquake and the Mineral Wells Canyon fire claimed over 150 lives and inflicted over \$41 million in damage the next year.

The darkest chapters were yet to come. In 1936 police were mobilized to try to stop the flood of migrant laborers fleeing the Dust Bowl. Although few records are kept, it is evident that violence broke out on more than one occasion resulting in an unrecorded number of deaths. No official inquiry was ever conducted. 1937 saw the bombing of the home of Clifford

Clinton, a man well known for his probes of corrupt city hall politics and crooked cops. This attempt, like the second in 1938, both failed to kill the political crusader. 1938 also saw severe flooding that killed 78 people and inflicted over \$100 million in damages. As a result of these combined tragedies, the city's mayor, Frank Shaw, was removed from office for his connections to various vice rings and, unofficially, for the attempt on Clinton's life. A decade of decay and pessimism was coming to a head, a fact that Nathanael West grimly painted in his novel *Day of the Locust*.

World War II brought almost everything to a head (especially with the Japanese Internment and Mexican-American Gang War of 1942 as well as the infamous Zoot Suit Riots of 1943). But at the same time, the war benefited Los Angeles greatly. Although it paid a high price in the blood of its sons, Federal dollars poured into the city, revitalizing a shattered economy. Hard times had passed, or so it seemed, and as the war finally ended L.A. emerged once again as a jewel of the West, and a vibrant city of dreams. As memories of world war faded, only to be replaced by tensions of a cold war, the city marched on.

Under New Management

In a city that had known so much turmoil and tension in the past, Los Angeles seemed more than ready to leave behind decades of depression and war. Industry was booming, wages were rising, and citizens seemed ready to enjoy the fruits of their labors. But even as chaos was calming in the mortal world, tensions within Kindred society were polarizing. Invictus control was still absolute, but cracks were beginning to appear. The First Estate had maintained its control by keeping the other covenants weak and divided, but as the "Golden Age" of the 1950s rolled on things were changing. The Sanctified had recovered their power base, the Dragons and the Acolytes were becoming tired of Invictus games, and the Carthians were growing ever stronger. Tensions grew so high that some even suggested that Invictus plants fanned the anti-Communist attacks on the film industry in order to break the Carthian hold on Hollywood.

Things began to come to a head in the 1960s

as protest and reform became the words of the day. Even Kindred far from the center could feel that pressure was building, just waiting for the right moment to explode. All through the sixties and early seventies a series of hidden clashes were fought between the vampire cliques of the city. The 1961 Bel Air-Brentwood Fire was blamed on Carthian agitators attempting to flush out Invictus Kindred. The Watts Riots of 1965-66 were also blamed on Carthian Kindred, although the area is actually within the Ordo Dracul's sphere of influence. A third riot in East L.A. in 1970 (a result of the anti-Vietnam Chicano Moratorium March) was the last major civil disturbance blamed on the Carthians. But if those years had been bad, L.A. hadn't seen anything yet.

In 1976 everything finally exploded, in some cases literally. In that year the old Prince, who had led the Invictus since the 1880s, fell into torpor. For a brief instant, the iron grip of the First State faltered; it was an opportunity that no one could pass up. In the early evening hours of July 4th, as citizens across America were celebrating their nation's 200th birthday, Carthian ghouls infiltrated the Los Angeles

Harbor at San Pedro and set fire to an oil tanker. The resulting explosion killed five and successfully drew the attention of all L.A. to the waterfront. In the long shadows of the fire, a devil's alliance of the Carthian Movement and Ordo Dracul made their move. All through the night, as eyes were averted, blood and vitae flowed freely as Invictus Kindred were plucked from their ivory towers and left staked for the sun. When the dust settled, the Invictus had been broken and Carthian masters sat on the throne of the City of Angels.

Even now, over thirty years since the infamous Coup of '76, the chaos has not fully faded. The Carthian/Dragon alliance has held firm despite repeated challenges, and the Invictus has begun to claw its way back, burning with rage. Sanctified Kindred continue to press for their lost power and the Acolytes grow agitated as repeated attempts at alliance with the Carthians have been rebuffed. Tensions grow within and between the covenants as L.A. continues to expand, a hidden powder keg just waiting for the right spark.

Welcome to Los Angeles, neonate; please watch your step.





Lay of the Land

*Los Angeles, it should be understood, is not a mere city.
On the contrary, it is, and has been since 1888, a commodity;
something to be advertised and sold to the people of the United States
like automobiles, cigarettes and mouth wash.*

– Morrow Mayo

The problem with attempting to outline the City of Angels is the fact that its design and layout are somewhat haphazard. To an outsider the entire, massive urban sprawl might all be called L.A., and such an observation has some merit. But technically, many of these areas and suburbs are independent cities that have resisted incorporation into L.A., even as they have grown together as population continues to rise. For the Kindred it is much the same. While there is a Prince of Los Angeles, she only controls a finite amount of this metropolis. As one moves farther and farther from L.A. proper the power of the Court diminishes, until the city degenerates into a virtual no-man's-land, an endless power vacuum where nomads and the unbound rule.

The City Center:

The Price of Power

Los Angeles can loosely be divided into three rings. The first, L.A. proper, is the political and economic center of the city (though geographically it is not centrally located). Here the covenants rule the night and the authority of Prince and Court is absolute. When most people, Kindred or kine, think of L.A., this is where they mean. For vampires, this part of the city is divided by which covenant holds praxis there.

Carthian Movement

The center of Carthian power has always been, and likely will always be, Hollywood,

Studio, and Universal City. In addition the Carthians control a significant chunk of the Downtown region; territory west into West Hollywood; Westwood (though this area is strongly contested by the Invictus) to Santa Monica; and south along the coast to Westchester and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The Movement also has a minor, but significant, presence in the South Central region and in Long Beach (the original location of the motion picture industry).

Circle of the Throne

The Circle controls a territory central to all of the other covenants, and was purposely granted these areas by the Invictus to create a buffer zone with the Lancea Sanctum. However, the areas they do control are rich in mystical significance and, by necessity, well defended. Primarily the Acolytes possess a strip of territory that centers on Griffith Park and the Forest Lawns Mortuary and winds its way south through Silver Lake, Echo Park, Elysian Park, and Westlake. The Circle also possesses territory in Southeast Los Angeles (side by side with the much stronger Ordo Dracul presence) as well as enclaves in South Beach.

Invictus

The Downtown region and its businesses have long been the stronghold of the First Estate. Though that monopoly has since been broken, it remains an important holding to this night. The Invictus has also pushed southwest into Culver City, Baldwin Hills, View Park, and

Inglewood in order to limit Carthian expansion in this area. The border between Inglewood and LAX is hotly contested by the two. West and north of Hollywood has also long been an Invictus stronghold, and the location of many Invictus havens. Beverly Hills, Beverly Crest, Bel-Air, Brentwood, and Pacific Palisades (in other words the suburbs of the rich and famous) have been Invictus territory as long as anyone can remember.

Lancea Sanctum

The Sanctified primarily control what they refer to as the "Old City," the parts of Los Angeles that were, reputedly, the first colonized by vampires. To this end, they control areas east of the Acolytes territory: primarily Eagle Rock, Glassel and Highland Parks, Lincoln and Boyle Heights, El Serino, and most of Pasadena. The Sanctified also control a finger of territory south into San Gabriel, a site they consider most sacred.

Ordo Dracul

Officially the Order only maintains a small strip of territory compared to the other covenants. Along with a chunk of the Downtown region, they also control the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as well as a strip of territory in South and Southeast Los Angeles along with Watts, Leimont and Hyde Park. Unofficially, many mystically important sites within Los Angeles have been declared Elysium and fall under the jurisdiction of the Order. For now this seems to suit their purposes.

Unbound

While there are unbound Kindred in Los Angeles proper, as there are unbound vampires wandering virtually every major city in the world, they do not really control any territory in the city center, with one major exception: Chinatown (and several other surrounding ethnic districts, though they are all lumped together in the same title). From the court's perspective, the foreign Kindred who inhabit this domain are considered unbound. The Lord of Chinatown and his servants would consider themselves anything but, having their own organization and their own "court"; however, they are willing to accept the title. For now.

The Ring of Regents:

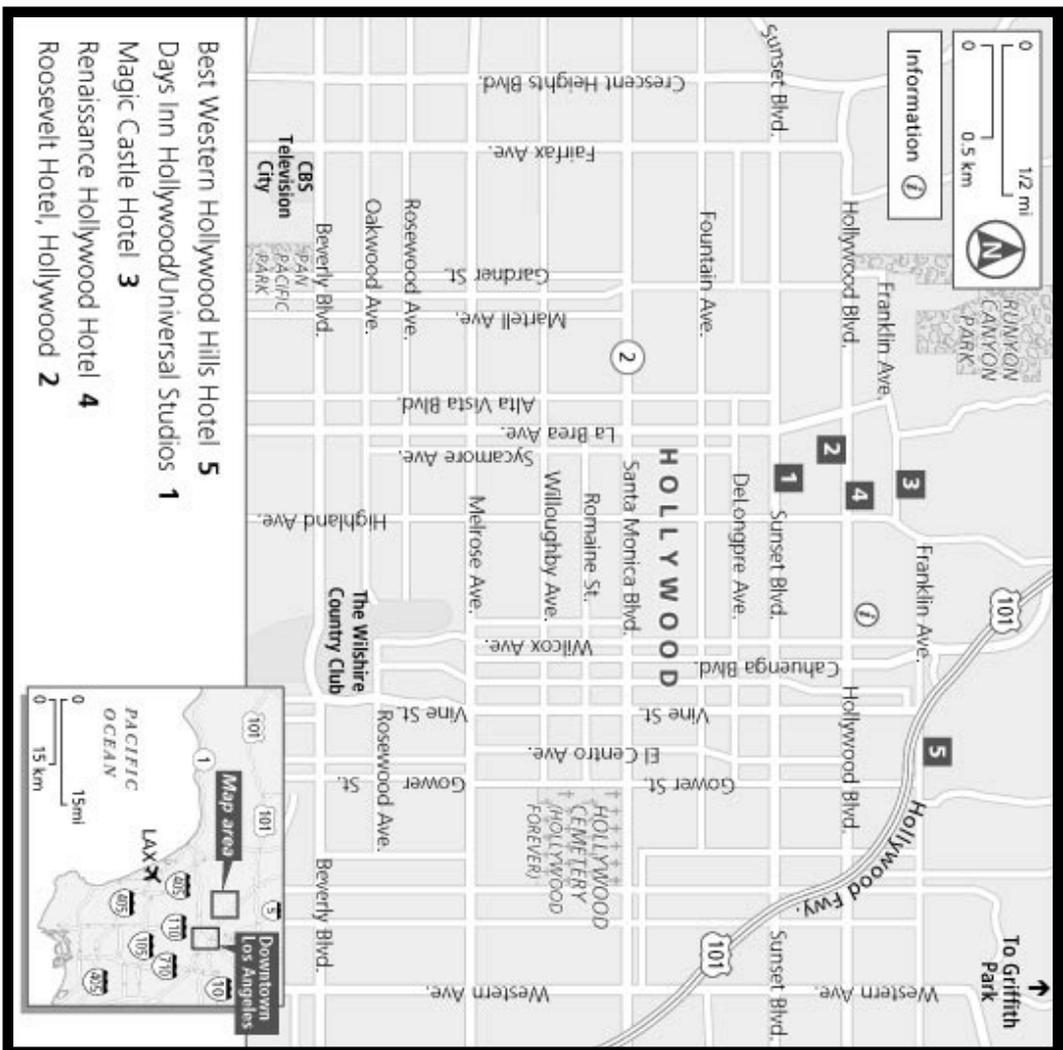
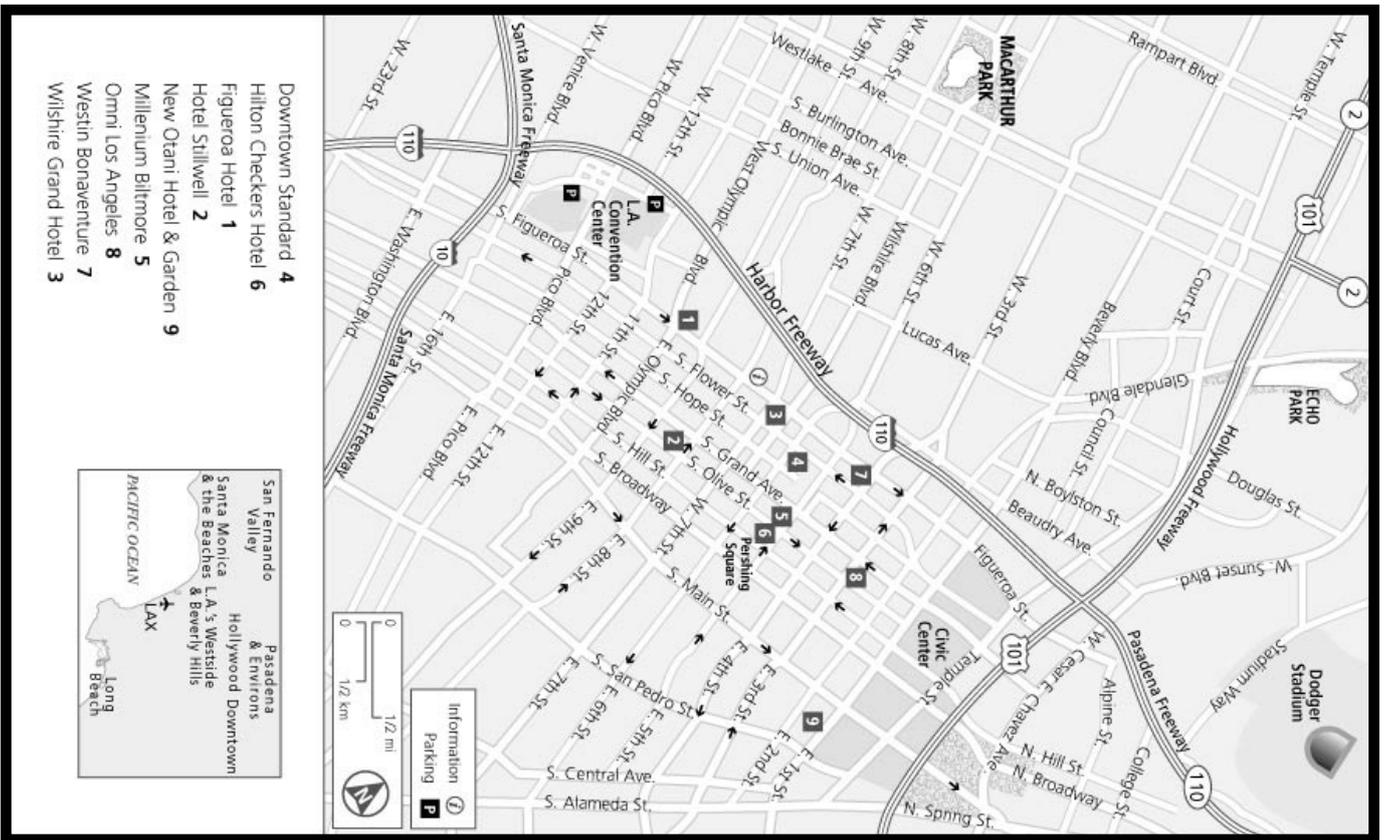
On the Edge

The second "ring" of Los Angeles is a little more difficult to qualify. Stretching roughly from Encino through Burbank, around Pasadena and south to Long Beach as well as the Pacific coast from LAX to Ranchos Palos Verde, the Ring of Regents is a vast and widely varied area. These domains lay on the fringe of the Court's influence, and technically are held by regents bound to obey the dictates of the Prince. And while many of the Kindred who claim domain in these areas are regents of the Court who were given their lands and titles by various Princes, this is really only a technicality. While some of these regents do regularly attend Court, enforce the Prince's law, and honestly strive to be dutiful vassals, just as many could care less. And in reality, without the expressed permission of the regents in question, there is precious little that either Court or covenants could do in these areas. Yet this is a balance the covenants themselves are determined to maintain. The Ring of Regents is a place where ambitious neonates can be turned loose with promises of feeding rights and regency should they succeed; and complete oblivious should they fail. These domains also serve as a useful buffer to the lawless lands beyond.

The Fringe:

No-Man's Land

It doesn't get any lower than this. If you find yourself in the Fringe, then odds are you burned all of your bridges in L.A. and had better get used to being unaligned. It's not that these territories are all that violent, or that Kindred from the center never travel there (though it is rare), it's simply that this far from the known centers of power, wealth, and blood the Fringe seems a barren wasteland. This is, of course, not true, but out here the Court's influence goes from slim to none very rapidly. A few, very few, areas are under the control of formally recognized regents, but these regents controlled their domains long before any formal recognition. Indeed the Court's "recognition" of these lords and ladies was more a recognition of reality than anything else.



Rather loosely defined, the Fringe is anything beyond the Regent's Ring out to the far edges of the suburbs. In reality, though, the Ring itself is in constant flux as old regents fall and new ones rise, and several powerful packs of Lupines are known to roam the fringes of the city, keeping the vampire population in the farthest reaches very low. Eventually you just hit the Edge, where the city gives way to the wilderness of mountains and desert. The Bruja are strong in this area, riding the south desert highways by night while packs of werewolves keep the mountains and the north under their claws. Although its reputation has certainly grown, the Fringe is nevertheless a dangerous place for vampires. There is blood to be had, but feeding is not nearly as easy as it is in L.A. proper. And while many consider it an advantage that the Court and covenants hold no sway here, it also means that the only justice available is that which you are willing or able to dish out. The unbound rule here and individual Kindred scratch out what territory they can. The Fringe is also the home of malcontents and fools who thought that the city's reputation for the strange meant they could ignore the Masquerade. It is also widely believed that large bands of nomads move through the Fringe, temporarily settling before moving on again.

On Closer Inspection

But of course, it's really not that simple. On paper, the various districts in and around L.A. can be neatly categorized by covenant, with the rest classified as unbound territory. But the reality is that the covenants are not truly unified in the least and the territory they control is far from homogeneous. Certainly they stick together, and present a unified front to an outside threat, but the Danse Macabre is deeply ingrained in all levels of Kindred society. And while on the surface it might seem a simple division between ideologies, these are merely umbrellas for deeper (and in some cases shallower) conflicts between Kindred who, it should be noted, would be better off as allies. But such is the nature of the curse. As such, the territories that each covenant controls are vastly different. The various regents plot against each other as much as they do against their covenant's enemies and the flavor of each

domain is radically different. For example, the Kindred of West Hollywood and the Kindred of Compton are both nominally part of the Carthian Movement, but have very different ideas as to what that means. One group window shops, the other breaks shop windows.

Important Sites:

Elysium

Los Angeles is home to a great number of Elysium territories, some of which stretch back to the first night of Lancea Sanctum rule, while others are as recent as a few years. Over the years several historical sites, private homes, hotels, important businesses, and mystically significant sites have all been declared Elysium. In terms of Kindred politics, however, only a handful of these sites see anything like regular use by the covenants and the Court.

Gage Mansion

The Gage Mansion is the oldest surviving structure (or at least private residence) in Los Angeles. Prince Hunt declared the mansion Elysium for the Invictus in 1891 for reasons that are still obscure. Legend states that the Gage family were, in fact, the ghouls and blood bound servants of a powerful Invictus lord. This seems unlikely, though if their regnant disappeared it would explain the sickness and death that later plagued the family before its destruction. The Invictus commonly holds formal functions and gatherings here (as well as in several other historical, private homes), though rarely are guests from outside the covenant welcome. Stories suggest that a series of chambers beneath the house may serve as a torpor-tomb for the First Estate.

Greek Theatre

Located in Griffith Park, the Greek Theatre is an old and important cultural center for Los Angeles, although it has certainly declined in popularity in recent years. Plays and other events are still performed here, though strangely enough public performances are never held at night. Occasionally private nocturnal gatherings are rumored, however. At night the monsters of the Circle of the Crone come out to play, for they consider this entire land

sacred. The Theatre itself is an important site for the covenant and has been used for decades as a meeting hall as well as a temple to perform their bloody rites – a role which the entire park has served on more than one occasion. As a sign of silent solidarity, the Theatre also hosts the monthly Rants, massive meetings open to all Kindred within the city where they may voice their concerns and opinions directly to the Prince.

Mann's Chinese Theatre

Probably one of the most famous tourist attractions in the entire city, or at least in Hollywood, Mann's Chinese Theatre has been an Elysium territory almost as long as it has existed. Control of the theatres was vital for control of the film industry, and the Carthians were sure to get their fangs in early. For reasons unknown or forgotten, this theatre was chosen as focal point of Carthian power in their Hollywood domain. In reality, of course, the Theatre is too public and too popular to see constant use, especially after it became a landmark. But, on occasion the Carthians have secretly rented it out for late-night "private screenings," and it remains an important symbol for the Movement. Over its history many important decisions and debates have been hatched here. It is widely believed, but never confirmed, that the Carthian/Ordo Dracul alliance and the call for revolution in 1976 both had their birth in the halls of the Chinese Theatre.

Mission San Gabriel

San Gabriel is not just the oldest European settlement in Los Angeles, it is also the city's first Elysium – according to the Lancea Sanctum, at least. Declared neutral ground, and a holy site, in the late 18th century, San Gabriel has long been central to the Lancea Sanctum. The Sanctified themselves consider it a testament to the hard work, faith, and sacrifice of their forebears who established the covenant in Alta California. The mission is also believed to have been the first haven of Sanctified vampires settling in the area, though no records of any type have ever been produced to support these claims. But belief is a powerful thing and the Mission de San Gabriel is considered so important the site actually has its own Bishop. Beyond any

historical significance (Kindred or kine), the mission is undeniably an important ritual site for the Lance. Numerous sacred rites and holy ceremonies have been conducted here. And to this night, in the secret subterranean chambers constructed when the mission was moved to its current location, sacred rites are still conducted on high holy days.

U.S. Bank Tower

The tallest building in Los Angeles and the 7th tallest building in the country, the U.S. Bank Tower (once known as the Library Tower) is an important building in the downtown skyline and an important center of business in the city. It is also the site of the nascent Carthian Court. The Old Court, which was located at the Los Angeles Museum of Art, was supposed to represent the ties of the Invictus to the history and high culture of the city. After the Coup of '76, the Carthians looked for a new location to hold Court, seeking to break with tradition and provide a visible symbol that times were changing. Eventually they settled upon the U.S. Bank Tower, convinced they could hide Court functions under the guise of business meetings. On the first Tuesday of every month, formal Court is held on the 13th floor of the tower. A floor that, according to the official blueprints, does not exist.

Popular Racks

Feeding in L.A. has never been what one would call hard, at least in the city's center and popular tourist areas, although visiting vampires are warned that Last Call is 2:00 AM and many bars close after that. The city's reputation alone provides a great deal of leeway for nocturnal undead predators. But more than that, America's Dream Factory sees a constant flood of travelers and wannabes looking to see the sights or trying to achieve their dreams. People who are rarely known, and will even more rarely be missed. A lucky few do achieve their goals, finding work within the city, or even becoming a cog within the Dream Factory itself. But for every one who finds success, a dozen more will slip through the cracks, never to be seen again. And L.A. welcomes them all, beckoning like a hungry god.



LA International Airport

The Carthian Movement got their hooks into LAX and the surrounding restaurants, hotels, and tourists traps early. Partly because they were looking to the future and partly because, at the time, the existing power cliques had little interest in such a "passing fad" as airplanes. To which the Carthians now respond, "What's that? I can't hear you over the jet engines!" Nevertheless, LAX is one of the busiest airports in the country, bringing thousands into the city every day. Thousands of faceless, largely unknown and exhausted travelers, who are, perhaps, not as on guard as they should be. Easy hunting, if you know what you're doing. Of course, the Carthians have worked hard to maintain this control and keep the Masquerade, as well as deal with more mundane aspects of security and keeping the scrutiny of law enforcement and the Federal Aviation Administration away. The Regent of LAX and his subordinates are very busy indeed. Then, of course, there are the more... unusual events that, at times, seem to occur on a nightly

basis. Just those little oddities that make the night shift such a joy to work. A gutsy nomad on a red eye, a wandering pack of werewolves or cabal of mages, ghostly spirits clinging to passengers, unusual luggage, and mysterious disappearances are just the most common oddities that the Kindred of LAX have to deal with. They never know quite what to expect; they just know it when they see it.

Pasadena Rack

When one considers the hot spots of L.A.'s nightlife, one does not usually think of Pasadena. Besides its annual Tournament of Roses, little seems to happen here, at least to outsiders. But those within the city know that numerous bars, nightclubs, and other hot spots are scattered around the district. These hot spots provide excellent feeding for Kindred in need of blood, and an added measure of security since most scrutiny tends to fall on the more famous racks further west. And the number of vessels swells rapidly when the Rose Bowl opens, making this prime hunting ground indeed. But this is Sanctified territory and the primary source of



that covenant's vitae and victims, and the Lance does not look kindly upon poachers. Even more treacherous, this rack overlaps with Acolyte territory, a bitterly contested border between the two covenants. While overt violence is rare, an incautious feeder can easily stray into a war zone without realizing it.

Pine Street

This rack runs between Pine Street, the Pike, and Blueline all the way from Long Beach into Los Angeles proper. It's a wall to wall ribbon of bars, clubs and every conceivable form of entertainment. Revelers are common, overindulgence a fact of life and the hunting very sweet indeed. For the socially inclined hunter, it is a paradise, and even those more brutal vampires who prefer more physical forms of hunting can find more than enough seedy bars and dark alleys to suit their purposes.

Santa Monica Pier

Once the major port of Los Angeles until the docks were moved south to San Pedro, the Santa Monica Pier, much like Santa Monica itself, sits like a forgotten child on L.A.'s west coast, silently slipping into decay beneath the restless eyes of the Damned. And yet the Pier has reinvented itself to a degree as a tourist attraction, and while it is more of a daytime attraction, vessels are nevertheless drawn. Those who come to see the Pier usually stay long enough to experience what nightlife Santa Monica has to offer. And though quiet in comparison to other districts, the nights can become wild, and bloody, indeed. The feeding here is not particularly good, but enough to sustain a surprisingly large population of vampires.

South Bay Rack

Much like Pasadena, South Bay is not an area many outsiders would consider when looking for the nightlife. But it nevertheless supports a considerable number of bars and nightclubs. Both the Carthians and the Circle have a presence here, but that presence is minor at best. Once the South Bay region was a stronghold for the two covenants, but when their power centers shifted north to Hollywood and Silver Lake, they abandoned the bay.

This means that the South Bay Rack is largely open territory, controlled by no one covenant or regent, and only minimally policed by the Court. Therefore, South Bay is a common hunting ground for nomads, fugitives, and the unaligned and a very dangerous place to be.

Sunset Strip

Probably the most infamous rack in the entire city, and definitely where most people would think of when they ponder the nightlife of L.A. It's the hangout of the rich and famous, a Mecca for reporters, photographers, actors, writers, directors, and wannabes of all stripes. But for such an incredibly rich rack, it is equally dangerous to hunt in. The Court and the Carthian regent of the domain both keep a close eye on everyone and everything that happens here, and come down hard on even minor breaches of the Masquerade. While this rack may have a reputation for the strange, far too many of these vessels are too important, or too well known, to be safely fed from. And woe to the vampires that ignore these warnings. Of course, hunting is still easy here if you know what you're doing. For every star there are a hundred nobodies who will probably never be noticed; people who will almost certainly never be missed. Just a few more stones on the path, a little more blood to grease the wheels of the Dream Factory.

Universal City Walk

Located, not unsurprisingly, within Universal City, the Universal City Walk is the second major rack associated with Hollywood. While certainly not as famous, or as raucous, as Sunset, it is nevertheless a rich hunting ground, and a safer one by most standards. While certainly not as much caution is required when feeding here, and the Court does not watch so closely, young Kindred are still advised to keep themselves firmly in check. Just because the city's most famous tend to congregate elsewhere doesn't mean forbidden fruit doesn't travel the Walk.

Specific Hot Spots:

Although it's something of a popular misconception, amid the various nightclubs, bars, taverns, and parties that cater to mortals a variety of "vampire only" clubs do exist within

L.A. Most don't actually have a specific policy that bans the kine, but such places are often very exclusive or very dangerous (by reputation, at least) and therefore only visited by Kindred, their ghouls and mortals with a death wish.

The Pale Night

The oldest of all the vampire clubs, the Pale Night is a very unusual, but very upscale, coffee house/café in Downtown, the heart of Invictus territory. Owned and operated by Jacob Marin, one of the most powerful and influential of the Invictus regents, the Pale Night has long been a place where Kindred of quality gather to politic, cut deals, or simply relax over a cup of O-positive. Built along the lines of a European café with rich hardwoods and hammered glass (and of course no mirrors or chrome), the Night is a far cry indeed from the loud and often tacky bars that most Kindred and kine haunt. Indeed, the elders of the Invictus much prefer it this way and the club has garnered Marin a great deal of respect and leverage.

Mortals are allowed in during the day when the Night serves as a true café, but banned from attending at all other times, though retainers or thralls are allowed if accompanied by their regnant. Indeed, anyone not of the Invictus and in good standing is discouraged, though Society Kindred can bring guests if they agree to vouch for their compatriots, a risk that some are willing to take in the hope of completing some backroom deal or another. In addition to a variety of drinks, blood in various flavors (from animals, plasma packs, and even fresh from the veins of blood dolls) is available, though the Masquerade is carefully maintained. The staff is heavily Dominated and blood bound, if they are not already ghouls, and various obtuse phrases are used by patrons when ordering blood. Anyone so crass as to openly ask for vitae is not likely to remain welcome for long, and is likely to receive an unpleasant visit from the Sheriff. Marin himself has little direct involvement with the club, though he provides the capital when necessary and collects the lion's share of the profits. Primarily he uses the club as a site to conduct his own business, as well as collect the secrets of others. Nearly every table and booth is thoroughly bugged and Marin reviews the tapes at least weekly.



The Sepulchre

One of the newer additions on the scene, the Sepulchre is the latest trend among the undead. Located in Carthian territory on Sunset Boulevard, this club was one of the earlier nightspots to cater to the young (such as it is in some cases) and countercultures, particularly the goth and punk scene. Tastefully decorated with black marble and brass, the club is designed to look like a mortuary, or a tomb, albeit one in which the dead have risen. By and large the Sepulchre tries to avoid the cheesiness and shallowness that tends to pervade such clubs, but even it cannot seem to resist poking fun at itself in subtle ways. While popular among neonates, the club is generally disdained by elder vampires, though even some of these august undead cannot help but attend and chuckle under their breath. The popularity of the Sepulchre is aided greatly by dint of its management, especially as it is an open secret that Jocelyn Marsh, the Prince of Los Angeles, owns the club.

The first floor is open to all comers, mortal and supernatural alike, and projects a dark and

somewhat gloomy atmosphere, though in a blackly humorous way. It is a place of cheap drinks, loud (generally macabre) music, and shadowed corners. Vitae is on tap, but only to those who know the appropriate codes, and all vampires are reminded to be mindful of the Masquerade, or else. It is the lower floor, however, that is for vampires and ghouls only and is the source of much speculation. Only a select clientèle is allowed and if the stories are to be believed anything goes. No one knows quite what that means, or at least they aren't talking, but rumors abound. And even if rumors like the Prince working there as a dominatrix are probably just that, they still make for a great story. The last Kindred who suggested this within earshot of Jocelyn Marsh though isn't expected to wake from torpor anytime soon.

The Last Round

This rundown, ramshackle watering hole is, quite literally, a pit located on the old Carthian/Invictus border, in the Downtown area. Looking more like a biker bar than the chic clubs that dominate much of the city, the

Last Round nevertheless is thought of fondly by the Carthian Old Guard, and by many of the New Guard as well. While never a politically important site (at least never officially important) like Mann's Chinese Theatre or LAX, the Last Round was nevertheless a popular site for Carthian vampires to relax, blow off steam, or rage against the system in relative comfort and safety. In the last few decades most of the Old Guard have moved on to new pursuits, but a few still gather here. These nights it is the fiery New Guard that haunts the halls of the Last Round, raging against the system much as their predecessors and sires did.

There is no specific policy banning mortals here, but few are brave enough to enter it. The Last Round has a reputation of being, "mad, bad, and dangerous to know," and this it not an entirely unfair reputation. Some might call it a knife and gun club, but fang and claw might be more appropriate. The bar has no real security, not even a bouncer, and fights are all too common. Drug- and alcohol-laced blood is widely available in a variety of "flavors" and few restraints are placed upon the patrons, though there is at least some talk of keeping the Masquerade. Some even keep this in mind, though few are foolish enough to display anything too supernatural to the occasional kine that wanders in. Although to be fair, few mortals who wander in wander out again. All in all the bar serves its purpose. Beyond simple nostalgia in the eyes of many older Carthians, it provides a venue where vampires are allowed to cut loose and it gives the real troublemakers a place to vent their fury.

The Raves

While more sophisticated Kindred (and in some cases that term can be applied quite loosely) prefer the more famous clubs like Pale Night and the Sepulchre, many vampires prefer their entertainment to be a bit earthier and a lot less restrained. The massive parties known as Raves are quite popular for this reason. Usually held by teenagers and other young people in abandoned warehouses and hangars; it's a place to meet and greet, as well as a venue in which loud music, drugs, and sex are easily available. Many Kindred attend these parties, looking to escape the weight of the Requiem and the

Danse Macabre for a little while at least, and the hunting is always good. But only a few of these massive parties are actually organized by the Kindred themselves.

Every once in a while a vampire will organize a Rave, though. Generally advertised by word of mouth, and employing complex systems of code words, contacts, and clues to screen out wannabes, poseurs, and narcs (as well as hunters and other dangerous figures). Most vampires that do choose this route aren't doing it for status or recognition, unlike the more famous vampire clubs. These parties are more of a way for young vampires to meet people, make friends, and establish herds. A successful Rave can do a lot for these Kindred, as many vampires do attend while ghouls and blood dolls can be recruited aplenty.

Angeles National Forest

The Angeles National Forest was, in fact, the first national forest to be established in California, a fact that the locals are quite proud of. The forest's 694,187 acres includes almost the entire San Gabriel Mountain range, providing the striking backdrop to the city of Los Angeles. Topography on the forest ranges from mountain peaks over 10,000 feet to low-lying canyon bottoms at a mere 1,200 feet above sea level. Dense pine and fir stands cover the higher elevations, while shady riparian areas and broad expanses of chaparral cloak the foothills and lower elevations. It's a breathtaking sight, and incredibly popular with both visitors and locals, drawing over 3.2 million guests a year. In addition to numerous campgrounds, over 500 miles of trails, and designated hunting and fishing areas, the Forest also sports six ski resorts and is quite popular as a location for Hollywood films.

But the locals understand that for all this grandeur, they are best advised not to spend the night beneath its branches, or at least to stay in well traveled areas. But every year foolish individuals, or unknowing tourists, do just that. The lucky ones even wake up the next morning. This is very much an "urban forest," and not just because Los Angeles borders it on all sides. For every tourist looking to gawk at nature and every local just looking to get



away from it all, there are two businessmen, politicians, or criminals who look to the forest as a way to conclude a dirty deal or dispose of evidence. With nearly 700,000 acres of land and over 500 miles of nature trails, it's not hard to do either. The Forest Service is woefully inadequate to the task of policing this domain, and for the most part they don't even try. The more studious rangers will patrol the trails to look for any signs of trouble, but all they're likely to find is a bit of trash and the occasional body. And beyond these well-defined areas of the park the patrols are almost non-existent.

Dark things, and not just vampires, roam this forest after night falls. For vampires, the Forest is almost a rack in its own right, and were it not located in the Fringe more would probably hunt here. Even so, it does serve as a common stopover for nomads and other travelers, particularly of Clan Gangrel, looking for shelter and blood. Several packs of werewolves also dwell here, but they are easily avoided and

generally don't look to start a fight. The same remains true of the handful of mages and "witches" that make use of the forest for their rites and rituals. But all stay clear of this land's regent, the dreadful Lady of the Forest. Azrael, a particularly old and angry vampire, claims the Angeles Forest as her own domain and kills all those who claim otherwise. Even the Court has extended a loose regency over the forest to her, though this far out such a proclamation is little more than a placating gesture.

Wyrms' Nests

Mystically speaking L.A. is an interesting place, a fact that probably wouldn't surprise many. But geomantically speaking it is an absolute treasure mine to those who know how to use it. The San Andreas Fault brings energy up from deep within the Earth where it meets with the power of the Pacific Ocean. Combined with the sheer energy of the city, and the buried blood of its past tragedies, the night air

practically sings with power. Of course, there is a downside to all of this. The massive amount of energy available means that Los Angeles is a tangled snarl of ley lines that even the finest mystics and mages would be unable to untangle. As such, even though the city sports numerous Wyrms' Nests, many of them shift and even dissipate rapidly. Some move as often as once a month, a rare few even faster. This unstable nature means that permanent nests of power are extremely rare. To compensate the local Ordo Dracul has poured resources into learning how to exploit Haunted Nests (Ordo Dracul pg. 44) for their more stable energies. But Los Angeles does sport two very powerful and very stable Wyrms' Nests that have remained unchanged as long as any vampire has been studying them.

Griffith Park

Located to the east of Hollywood, Griffith Park is one of the oldest, and probably most well known, parks in Los Angeles. It is also a potent mystic site and considered sacred by members of the Circle of the Crone. As such, the Acolytes closely guard the area and do not suffer outsiders to enter save in very specific circumstances. While the park's Greek Theatre is considered an Elysium, and thus more "public," the park itself is closed to outside Kindred. For it is here that the Acolytes perform their most sacred rites and ceremonies, sacrificing vessels, shedding vitae, and engaging in acts that would probably send any right thinking member of the Lancea Sanctum into an apoplectic fit. The deepest heart of the park is also the home of a large mandragora (Ghouls pg. 59) garden communally "fed" by all Acolytes, and from which the Circle's Hierophant and her closet attendants harvest lachrima for various rites and rituals. Some Acolytes speak of the "Blood God of Griffith Park," a spirit, demon, or god (depending on whom you ask) that sleeps beneath the soil and is the source of this Nest's power. It might even be true, though no one has ever been foolish enough to try to dig it up.

University of California LA

Some would probably be shocked to know that UCLA was built over the most powerful Wyrms' Nest on the West Coast. Others,

knowing the true and darker history of strange events on campus, might well think it explains things nicely. And dark and mysterious things do happen here, as they happen anywhere where intelligence flows deep and wisdom runs shallow. Overly curious and incautious students have been known to study all manner of things that are best left alone. Things that, in some cases, even the Kindred fear to contemplate. It also explains why the college is under the control of the Ordo Dracul, even though its primary strongholds are further south. The Order enforces this control, though it allows outsiders to visit. However, it does enforce a sort of pseudo-Elysium here, specifically banning feeding except under specific circumstances. Of course, the surrounding bars and nightclubs that cater to the student population are not under such protection. Questions remain, though, of how much of the campus the Dragons actually control. It seems likely that campus security is heavily infiltrated with ghouls and the blood bound, but as to the faculty, staff, or student body; none can say for certain. Except for the Order, of course, and the Dragons ignore such questions.

Other Sites:

Bradbury Building

Constructed in 1893 by Louis Bradbury, the office building that bears his name is something of a relic in Los Angeles. With its wrought-iron railings and cage elevators it serves as a common gathering site for period films and special events, and a place for nostalgic Kindred to lament the passing of years.

City Hall

Completed in 1929, this building with its pyramid-shaped roof dominated the downtown skyline for many, many years. As the location of both the mayor's office and the city council it serves as the center of city politics, and for many years was under the thumb of the Invictus. The Carthians specifically targeted these Kindred in the Coup and since then have declared a quarantine around the building. Prince Marsh has placed a number of ghouls and thralls within the city's political machine, but has been adamant that vampires stay away.



Evergreen Cemetery

Evergreen is the oldest cemetery in the city, and has long served as the resting-place for L.A.'s "nobility". The Workmans, Hollenbecks, Lankershims, Van Nuys, Coulters, and Bixbys have been lain to rest here, more or less quietly. A few restless spirits are known to roam the area, attracting mystics of all stripes. As such, the cemetery has been placed under the jurisdiction of one of the city's three Masters of Elysium, Mariko Saito.

Los Angeles Central Library

Although it has declined in recent years due to budget cuts, the Central Library is still an important intellectual center in L.A. and an extraordinary research center for both Kindred and kine. In 1986 the building was damaged by fire during an incursion by Belial's Brood, but it has since been restored. Rumors suggest that an elder of unusual power lairs within the library's basement, but these stories remain unconfirmed.

Los Angeles Museum of Art

Once the site of Alexander Hunt's Court, the Museum of Art is now silent as far as Kindred politics is concerned, but is still the repository of one of the finest collections of international art on the West Coast. Pieces both modern and prehistoric from the Far East to American, Europe, and Africa line the halls. Paintings, sculpture, and even furniture as well as decorative art, metal, and glass from Egypt, Greece, Rome and Assyria can all be found here. The museum also hosts a fine collection of pre-Colombian art, the Gilbert silver collection, the famous Shin'enkan paintings, and a massive collection of netsuke in the Japanese Pavilion. At one time the museum was used to represent the connection the local Kindred shared (or believed they shared) with the high culture of the city, but tonight it has been freed from the labyrinthine chords of the Danse Macabre. But still, vampires from across the city come here to admire humanity at its finest.

LA State and Country Arboretum

Located east of Pasadena in Lancea Sanctum territory, this park includes some 130 acres of botanical life arranged by continent. It

also boasts a horticultural research center, a reference library, and a bird sanctuary. The park is not open to the public after dark, so when the sun sets the Kindred have free reign here. In general the park is considered a place for meditation, contemplation, and quiet reflection but in the more remote areas a few Sanctified maintain extensive mandragora gardens. These mandrakes are specially cultivated to provide lachrymalis (Ghouls pg. 62) for the Lance's sacred ceremonies.

Museum of Contemporary Art

Considerably newer than the Museum of Art and never particularly popular among the Kindred of old, the Museum of Contemporary Art has become something of a symbol for the Carthian Movement. Housing modern

art from the 1940s to the present, the museum offers paintings, sculptures, environmental pieces, and mixed media as well as performing, interactive, and multimedia arts. In fact, the building itself, designed by Arata Isozaki, is something of a piece of modern art itself.

The Music Center

Accessible directly by freeway, this three-theater complex has long served as a center for the classical arts in Los Angeles. Operas, plays, and concerts of all types have been performed here at one time or another. In the nights of Prince Hunt and Prince Vistante, the Center served as an important meeting place and cultural center for the Kindred. It still does, but since the Coup the classical arts have fallen out of favor.





Weird Los Angeles

"Turn the world over on its side and everything loose will land in Los Angeles."

– Frank Lloyd Wright

To some, the expression "Weird L.A." is pointless, even ridiculous. (Dude, it's L.A.) But even so, beneath even the strangeness of the kine and the supernatural world of vampires, werewolves, and wizards lie stranger tales that even these enigmatic groups do not fully understand or want to understand.

City Beneath the Sea

Unlike many other large cities, Los Angeles does not have an extensive underground network of tunnels. Subways exist (notably the Red and Orange Lines), but most public transportation is conducted by above ground rail or bus. Large sewer networks and access tunnels have, of course, been carved, but the massive tunnels of the old sewers have been bricked up for years. For reasons no one can positively identify, Los Angeles is a city that avoids looking underground. There are, of course, many practical reasons (from geology, to finance, to economic viability and government corruption) for this, but many cannot help but wonder if something else is responsible.

Regardless of the efforts of city government and police to keep things quiet, stories persist. Stories of abandoned tunnels, storage bunkers, lost crypts and forgotten platforms constructed or discovered when the subways were first being carved, only later to be sealed away. And if you look out the window in just the right spot you can catch a glimpse of strange things as the train passes. Abandoned platforms, empty tunnels, boltholes, fallout shelters, and even stranger things.

For example, a proposed line to Santa Monica was abruptly abandoned during construction. Officially a geological instability that resulted in the loss of a boring machine created concerns about the tunnel's safety, thus forcing its closing. Unofficially, the workers that had built the tunnel were given a generous severance package, quietly split up, then let go. The tunnel plans have subsequently been "lost" by the Department of Transportation. Other stories from the 1940s discuss the discovery of a body washed out into the bay. Although not a terribly uncommon event, a subsequent search of the sewers discovered several other bodies (mostly of the homeless) that appeared to have been mauled to death, though zoologists failed to identify what had inflicted the wounds. The animal responsible was never found, but workers reported seeing strange things and hearing odd noises out of the shadows. Four months later the Department of Sanitation ordered several sections sealed off without explanation. In the seventies some of these tunnels were reopened and searched by police, but within a few weeks were sealed again. No one, not even work crews, have set foot in the tunnels since.

Most people scoff at such tales, and even vampires are skeptical, but sires tell their childer to beware the underground, just in case. Hopi legends were said to describe a race of "lizard people" who built three great underground cities near the Pacific Coast, including one beneath Los Angeles, some 5,000 years ago. In 1934, mining engineer W. Warren Shufeld took up the cause of researching these legends



and locating the cities. Shufeld reported that the city beneath Los Angeles was laid out in the shape of a lizard that extended from Dodger Stadium to the downtown Central Library. Using a device Shufeld called a "radio X-ray," he claimed to have located tunnels and a treasure room beneath Fort Moore Hill in downtown Los Angeles. After acquiring funds to do some excavating, Shufeld obtained permission from the authorities to drill a 350-foot shaft. The work was interrupted by cave-in concerns and, shortly thereafter, Shufeld disappeared.

Still, the curious flock into the subways and the old sewers seeking some inkling of the truth, whatever it may be. Most return with nothing but filth, or perhaps some interesting stories. Others never return at all. A small group of loosely aligned vampires, known as the Tunnel Rats, do make their lairs underground, but these strange Kindred do not speak of what, if anything, they have ever encountered. Yet the filthy, bedraggled, and more than slightly insane look that many of these vampires sport leads some to wonder...

Curse of Griffith Park

It is without a doubt that the location that is now Griffith Park is charged with mystic power. But the exact type and source of that power remains a mystery, though numerous stories exist. Many Acolytes believe that something sleeps there; the Dragons offer more mundane explanations of ley lines and geomantic nexuses, and still others believe the land is cursed. Stories told by the kine lend some credence to this. In 1863, Don Antonio Feliz died of smallpox and left all his lands to Don Antonio Coronel. Don Feliz's blind, 17-year-old niece, Dona Petranilla, finding herself left with nothing, was said to curse Don Coronel. In the years that followed, a mysterious series of disasters did indeed strike the various owners of the land that would later become Griffith Park. Colonel Griffith, the last private owner of the land, turned the entire 3,000-acre property over to the City of Los Angeles in 1896 to serve as a public park. Seven years later, Griffith was convicted of the murder of his wife in a Santa Monica hotel.

Devil's Gate Reservoir

The Devil's Gate Reservoir, adjacent to Oak Grove Park Road on the Pasadena-La Canada Flintridge city boundaries, was the site of several mysterious disappearances, the most distressing of which was the disappearance of four children in the 1950s. On August 5, 1956, Donald Lee Baker, age 13, of Azusa, and Brenda Howell, age 11, of Fort Bragg, disappeared while riding bicycles near the reservoir. An extensive, months-long search which even involved sending divers in the reservoir failed to turn up anything except their bicycles and Brenda's jacket. On March 23, 1957, Tommy Bowman, age 8, disappeared only a few yards from his family while hiking the trail above the reservoir. A thorough week-long search by 400 police and volunteers failed to turn up any clues. Three years later, Bruce Kremen, age 6, disappeared just yards from a YMCA camp in the area. Another massive search party failed to uncover any clues to his disappearance.

Most simply blame human predators for these tragedies, and leave the matter at that, though some crackpots at the time made various bizarre claims about "skin-changers" and "witches." But after over forty years, little interest remains. Some Kindred in the area believe Lupines were responsible (they would likely blame each other had the attacks not occurred during the day, though some have blamed the Ordo Dracul regardless). At least one group of mages has explored the site, but their findings were inconclusive, although surviving fragments of their notes suggest that powerful spirits might have been bound into the Earth here. If so that does suggest the involvement of werewolves, though powerful blood sorcerers or mortal witches could have easily been responsible instead.

The Happiest Place on Earth

Anaheim, California, home of the "Happiest Place on Earth" (though Orlando, Florida might contest this) is strange for one very unusual reason: strange things don't seem to happen here. Even as the city decays around it, this oasis remains untouched by the horrors of the World of Darkness. Vampires cannot stand the

area around Disney Land, Lupines avoid it like the plague, ghosts do not congregate here, and even mages report feeling uncomfortable. And no one is entirely certain why. The park is not located on a Wyrms Nest, it does not seem to be holy ground, and no evidence of magic or a curse of any kind has been found. And yet every so often, when an overconfident vampire, foolish mage, or brave werewolf does try to carve out a hunting ground or lair here the attempt inevitably ends in failure, sometimes quietly, sometimes violently. This has led some to wonder if this land is not so much free of horror but rather protected by something even more horrible. If so, what price do residents pay for the peace they enjoy?

Haunted L.A.

The ghosts of Los Angeles are many indeed, far too numerous to list here. Most of the following locations are still private residences, though a few are open to the public. Researchers and scholars of the Ordo Dracul study, and in some cases own, many of these sites.

Hollywood Park Memorial:

Strange lights and sounds have been reported in the vicinity of the Abbey of the Psalms, a mausoleum in Hollywood Park Memorial Cemetery. The mausoleum is said to be haunted by a glowing specter thought to be the late actor Clifton Webb of the original Mr. Belvedere series. Webb died in 1966. He is also said to haunt his old house in the Hollywood Hills.

Queen Mary

Lights flicker and doors slam on "G" deck, thought to be the location of the ship's morgue. A ghost of a middle-aged woman in an old-style swimsuit dives into the empty ship's swimming pool. A young woman in a mini-skirt paces around the pool area and disappears behind a pillar. Unknown sounds of shouting and splashing can be heard from the deserted poolside deck. A mysterious, elegantly dressed woman in white can be seen around the salon's piano. A ghostly ship's officer can be seen walking near the ship's bridge. Lights mysteriously turn on and off, dishes move and utensils vanish from a ship's gallery where a



cook was killed in a brawl when the ship ferried troops during World War II. A mysterious black-bearded man in coveralls can be seen riding the engine room escalator. The engine room seems to be the most haunted location on the ship. Ship's staff and tour guides report strange sounds, chains dangling in mid-air and balls of light moving slowly across the walls. No "ghost" on the Queen Mary has yet been identified. Tom Hennessy, a Long Beach Press-Telegram writer and ghost story skeptic, spent a night near the Queen Mary's engine room to see for himself. He reported strange movements of objects, some sort of presence, noises and voices.

1337 South Main Street. LA

Now a part of skid row, the site was once the most famous theater in Los Angeles: the Belasco. It declined through the 1960s when it became a stripper theater. About 1965, some reported seeing a red-haired young woman clad in a white negligee who wandered the back stage of the theater.

Calabasas

The Leonis Adobe: Miguel and Espiritu Leonis originally inhabited the restored adobe. Miguel was a Basque immigrant who aggressively ranched much of the western part of the San Fernando Valley. He acquired a bad reputation for his harsh treatment of any perceived intruder or squatter on his land (much of which was legally public domain), hauling them to court and jail or allegedly just shooting them on the spot. He became one of the most hated men in the county. He died in a wagon accident in 1889, but it was rumored that he had been murdered. Miguel left almost nothing to his Indian wife, Espiritu, in his will, forcing her to fight his relatives in court over possession of the adobe and lands. Local authorities, having little interest in the well being of an Indian woman, drew out the case until her death in 1906. Afterward, her son from a previous marriage acquired the property but agreed to sell to Miguel's relatives in 1922. Shortly thereafter, reports of strange noises and untraceable odors began to occur.

Haunted Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel

The historic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, built in 1927, has been the scene of many ghostly experiences, especially around the time the hotel was refurbished and reopened in 1985 (some suggest the spirits were disturbed). Among the haunted locations in the hotel is room 928 where Montgomery Clift lived for three months while filming *From Here to Eternity*. There is also a mirror located in the lower level elevator landing where Marilyn Monroe's sad-faced reflection has allegedly been seen. Others have reported a cold spot in the Blossom Room that could not be traced to a draft or air conditioner. The reports of unusual events became so numerous in 1985 (such as phone calls from an unfinished room that had not yet had a phone installed) that the Security Manager began to keep a log.

Monster of Elizabeth Lake

Legend has it that a monster lives in Elizabeth Lake (17 miles west of Palmdale on Elizabeth Lake Road). It was said of old that the Devil himself created the lake and kept one of his pets in it. The stories go as far back as the 1830s when Don Pedro Carrillo abandoned a ranch on the lakeshore after a mysterious fire. He named the lake La Laguna del Diablo. In 1855, American settlers tried moving into the area but later abandoned it claiming that it was haunted. Not long afterward, Don Chico Lopez and two other men claimed to witness

the ascension of a huge monster with bat-like wings from the lake. Lopez also abandoned his lakeside ranch, selling out at a loss. He claimed that his livestock were quickly disappearing. Rancher Miguel Leonis, who later acquired the lands, also claimed to sight a griffin-like creature over the lake. In 1886, yet another rancher, Don Felipe Rivera, claimed to see a beast over the lake. There have been no similar sightings reported since the 1880s.

"Vampires" of L.A.

In 1995, the late Stephen Kaplan, a parapsychology teacher at the Vampire Research Center in Elmhurst, New York, reported that Los Angeles was home to 36 vampires: the highest concentration of vampires in the world. He described vampires as sexually charismatic, high-energy people, who fitted well into L.A.'s mainstream, drawing little attention due to L.A.'s acceptance of the unusual. Kaplan explained that vampires were not to be feared, that they are pleasant people who require only a very small amount of blood.

As might be expected, this claim caused quite a stir among the local Kindred population, and some suspect that Kaplan was murdered on Jocelyn Marsh's order. Of course, it quickly became apparent that Kaplan was also a crackpot with no real knowledge of the Kindred, their numbers (closer to 100 than 30 in L.A.), or ways, especially after his description of vampires as pleasant and non-violent people.





Political Landscape

*"On thinking about Hell, I gather
My brother Shelley found it was a place
Much like the city of London. I
Who live in Los Angeles and not in London
Find, on thinking about Hell, that it must be
Still more like Los Angeles."*

– Bertolt Brecht

Tense would probably be the best word anyone could use to describe Kindred politics in L.A. A mildly ironic situation in a city that prides itself on being a bastion of stability and tolerance (even if that is not necessarily true). Los Angeles is a young city, only about two and a half centuries old, yet it has witnessed a great deal of violence, overturn, insurrection, and revolution. No fewer than four Princes have sat on her throne, and one of them ruled for less than a year. Three covenants have also held power over the ages, and each one intends to either recover that territory or hold on to what it has. This has led some to describe L.A. politics as explosive, but that would, perhaps, be too mild a word. For the last 30 years or so the city has known relative stability, but most believe that this is just the eye of the storm.

Political Structures:

The actual political structures of L.A. tend to feel rather... haphazard. Oh, on paper the division of power and authority makes sense, but the actual application and the staggering number of exceptions muddy the waters considerably. Outsiders thrown into the fray often feel lost and deeply confused. Truth be told, many L.A. Kindred are equally confused but they have mostly grown used to the (barely) controlled chaos that has come to define the reign of Prince Marsh.

The covenants themselves are expected to deal with their own problems "in house," as well as see to the control and rule of the domains they claim, though they are required to follow the city's laws. As high minded as this may sound, the covenants rule as they will regardless, and the Court does not have the authority to do much about this either way. But in matters that affect the city as a whole or in business between two covenants (and in theory the unaligned) the Court has the authority to intervene. Many matters are still handled privately, but the covenants do turn to Prince and Primogen remarkably often to settle such disputes. Partly this is an attempt to curry favor, but mostly it is yet another tactic to try to outwit their foes.

As it Stands

It is unusual for a city to have a Carthian "Prince." Even stranger that the Prince actually refers to herself as "Prince" and not by some more egalitarian-sounding title. The reason for this is simple: the arrival of Carthian rule took everyone by surprise, even the Carthians. No one expected Prince Hunt to go into torpor when he did and while the Carthian/Ordo Dracul alliance agreed that it was an opportunity they could not waste, they had no real plan for what to do once power was theirs. As such, they opted to create a more traditional Court on a "temporary basis" until matters could be



settled. It was also hoped that this might ease the transition slightly and convince the elders of other covenants that, even though things had changed, it was still business as usual.

Of course, with the Kindred “temporary” has a nasty habit of becoming “permanent.” Since then the Carthians have tried to develop a more egalitarian, or at least democratic, system, but have been held up by two major stumbling blocks. First, the Movement still has powerful enemies in the Invictus and to a lesser extent in the Lancea Sanctum. Prince Marsh has been able to keep these enemies at bay thus far and they have come to respect her, if not like her, and that is a tool many Carthians are loathe to abandon. Second, the Movement is also divided against itself, riddled with factions that espouse different political philosophies. The current controlling faction is a group of moderate, centrist democrats but their control is by no means absolute. For the last fifteen

years they have been pushing to democratize the process, but at best they have achieved a sort of enlightened despotism. Many of the Carthian Old Guard are still hopeful that they can achieve their dream, but whether they can pull it off before factionalism sparks another revolution is anyone’s guess.

Division of Power

The Prince may be the recognized ruler of L.A. but she does not rule alone; she serves as a powerful chief executive or prime minister. On the other side, the Primogen serve as a legislature of sorts. The council itself is composed of the city’s regents as well as representatives elected by the Carthian’s Conclave and selected by the Order’s Sworn of the Mysteries and the Voice of the Unbound. They bring up issues and debate policies, voting on decrees and laws before the Prince can enact them. They are also responsible for recognizing new regents and

removing old ones (though in many cases the individual power of the regents in question or their backers makes this difficult). Six of the Primogen, known as the Inner Circle, also serve as the Prince's personal advisors.

Once issues have been decided by the Primogen, it is the duty of the Prince to enact those decrees. This is where it all begins to break down. While the Sheriff and the Hounds serve as a sort of police force, there are no vampire courts; the Prince must serve as judge, jury, and executioner. Because she is responsible for adjudicating conflicts between the covenants and regents as well as individual Kindred, the Prince has been given a great deal of leeway in enforcement by necessity. This is doubly so in issues dealing with the Traditions, particularly the Masquerade, where the Prince can issue decrees without the Primogen's approval (though such decrees are subject to later review). The Primogen have kept certain powers, such as the authority to declare Lextalionis, but when it comes to law enforcement the Prince's word is, quite literally, law. Some fear that if she truly cared to, the Prince could make the council irrelevant through pinpoint interpretation and application of the law. As the Carthians are learning, it's difficult to put the genie back in the bottle.

Still, many Kindred believe that the reformatting of the Primogen marked the first major change to the city in decades, and sent the message that Carthian rule would be different. But for the Carthians, the current Primogen council is just a placeholder, an important first step but by no means the last. In theory, the Old Guard would like to expand this legislature both in size and authority. Some even dream of allowing all of the covenants, or perhaps even all Kindred, in L.A. a place upon the council so that they may have their voices heard, like New England Town Meetings. Many others are far less enthusiastic about this, given that it could (and likely would) undercut Carthian power. Most do agree, however, that the Court will continue to evolve while the "anachronistic feudalism" of Kindred politics is dismantled and rebuilt along more "egalitarian" models. If the Carthians could only agree on what that means, they might even be able to do it.

Rants

The tradition of the Rant began in the early years of Jocelyn Marsh's rule. In the years before the reorganization of the Primogen, the Prince wished to appear more accessible, to give some credence to the idea that Carthian rule was more open and egalitarian. The Rants, as they are now known, are a sort of direct democracy that grew out of this idea. On the last Tuesday of every month (a mirror of Court itself, which is the first Tuesday of every month) the Greek Theatre in Griffith Park is open to all Kindred of all covenants or none to attend. The Circle technically hosts the event and usually provides refreshment, but not always, so Kindred are reminded not to depend on this. At these events all vampires in attendance may address the Prince directly, bringing their concerns and request to her. Neonates and other young vampires, particularly among the Unbound, are very fond of the Rants, most likely because it's more of a social custom than a political one. The normal rules and decorum that rule the Court (even if they have been drastically toned down by the Carthians) simply do not apply. It's a place to meet and greet, to politic and scheme, or just to cut loose.

The Rants are politically less important now that the Primogen have evolved into a true legislative body, but they are still important to the vampires of L.A. The Prince usually does address the issues brought to her at these events or at the very least turns them over to the Primogen for debate. More than that, it helps to make Jocelyn Marsh seem more accessible than her predecessors. Given her reputation this is not always a good thing, but it has proven effective for Carthian propaganda.

Regents

The regents of L.A. form an interesting middle ground. In theory they are the officers of the Court, or perhaps more accurately vassals of the Prince. In the City Center this is fairly accurate. Of course the first loyalty of all the regents, save to themselves, is to their covenants; loyalty to the Prince is secondary at best. But even so, the system works fairly well within L.A. proper. Outside the center, in the Ring of Regents and



beyond the individual regents are Princes in their own right. Technically most of them are recognized by the Prince (or the Primogen in recent years), but in reality they rule as they will. If necessary, the Court can usually remove one or two troublesome regents, but in many cases it's just too difficult, and in the Ring the regents tend to stick together, at least against outside aggression. Therefore, as long as the regents tend to behave themselves and keep a lid on their territories, they are left alone. But the threat of removal is always there. More than once, the titles and duties of a recalcitrant regent have been given to an ambitious young newcomer who must then fight to take what they are owed. In the Fringe even this tactic is of questionable effectiveness. Any regent out this far has either the numbers or the power to take control of a region with or without the Prince's backing. Such a vampire is not going to be dislodged easy, and perhaps not at all. Of course, this far out neither Court nor covenants have many interests and so things are usually let lie.

Law and Traditions

Although it has been repeatedly said that the Primogen make the law of the city, most of their laws deal with the political process. How territory and feeding rights are divided up, the powers and limits of the regents and other authority figures as well as procedure for their removal, relations between covenants and other minutiae of rule. But on the street level, most vampires only need to concern themselves with the Traditions, which are enforced ruthlessly, and the decorum that surrounds Elysium. Of course, it must be remembered that the covenants have rules of their own that they enforce within their territory. Anyone who wanders into another domain is well advised to keep that in mind.

First Tradition: Masquerade

In some ways Los Angeles is an easy city to hide in, because most people don't even blink an eye at odd things and those who do are rarely taken seriously. In part, however, this is because the Masquerade has been stretched to

near breaking several times. As such, the Prince is expected to ruthlessly enforce the secrecy of the Kindred. Out in the Fringe there may be little she can do, but in L.A. proper Kindred are advised to beware. The punishment for this particular crime varies. Neonates and first time offenders are usually given no more than a slap on the wrist, provided the breach is not serious. Repeat offenders, and those who should know better, may be stripped of resources or titles, subject to a Vinculum or even face exile or execution. The Masquerade is serious business.

Second Tradition: Progeny

The Tradition of Progeny is not quite as tightly enforced as the Masquerade, but it is still important so as not to disrupt the predator/prey balance of the city. Technically, one needs the permission of the Prince to Embrace, but so much territory lies outside of the Court's control that it is not hard to slip out and create a childe. Usually these wayward children then wander back into the city claiming to be nomads or rogue Embraces by the Unbound, while the sire rather conveniently offers to serve as mentor. Most know exactly what's going on, but it is usually tolerated. When it is not, again the punishment varies. Embraces that occur after a Frenzy or a careless feeding, while not common, are less harshly punished (probably as the Prince herself was Embraced this way), but even so the sire suffers a loss of face and authority and may be expected to make reparations to the Court. Those who willfully flout the law (and are caught) can be summarily executed. Any titles and lands the sire possessed revert to the Primogen for reassignment, while resources, herds, and ghouls become the property of her childe. Sadly this rarely ends well for the childe either, but a few hardy and resourceful individuals have managed to use these new boons to their advantage.

Third Tradition: Amaranth

Diablerie is one of the most horrid crimes a vampire can commit, and it is almost universally punished harshly. And yet, the enforcement of this tradition is somewhat uneven. The Ordo Dracul has some situations in which diablerie is allowed, even demanded, and while the

Carthians may not like it, they have been forced to accept it. And besides, during the years of Invictus rule and the Coup some of the Carthians went a little wild themselves. As such, the Prince cannot afford to send her Hounds to check every aura they can find and punish those who are marked by their sins. Yet, at the same time, she doesn't want L.A. to gain a reputation as a diablerist's playground. Therefore, whenever a vampire is killed the Sheriff investigates fully, using all mundane and mystical resources to determine if Amaranth has been committed. If it has, the perpetrator is ruthlessly hunted down. Lextalionis is often declared and in any case it is exceedingly rare that a diablerist will be allowed to live, although forced torpor (usually for a period of centuries) is an option. The usual punishment is instant death, often by beheading though sometimes by being sent to face the sunrise. In the case of repeat offenders, or particularly unrepentant souls, the diablerist can be handed over to the Sworn of the Dying Light to be diablerized himself. It is a rarely used punishment, but also one of the most terrifying weapons in Jocelyn Marsh's arsenal.

Covenants



The Carthian Movement

In the common, sometimes nightly, battles that mar the streets of the City of Angels, the Carthians are the current victors. The covenant has held power since the successful Coup of 1976, although it could be argued that their power in the region was not fully solidified

until the early 1980s when the last members of Prince Vistante's court were hunted down and ejected from the domain. In any case, the young rule the nights here, and that rule is firm. Both the current prince, and most major members of the Court, are Carthians themselves or allies to the Movement. And while many L.A. Kindred are not allies of the Movement, many neonates have begun to like what they hear.

As the nights pass it becomes increasingly evident to visitors that Carthian rule might just be here to stay. Already, Prince Marsh has begun to introduce reforms at what most Kindred would see as breakneck speeds, and these changes have begun to take hold. From the expansion of the Primogen Council to include a representative from the Unbound to the establishment of special Elysium events that all Kindred may attend to have their voices heard – events that elders derisively referred to as “Rants,” a name that Prince Marsh formally adopted in defiance. More damning to the eyes of those elders is the fact that the Carthians have weathered several assaults to their power and have not just survived but even emerged stronger. Gall them though it might, many among the Invictus, the Sanctified, and the Circle of the Crone have begun to bend knee before this Carthian Prince in hopes of salvaging what they can.

Yet not all is completely calm among the Carthians themselves. Jocelyn Marsh is a centrist and has walked a careful, moderate path for her entire reign. And while this path has been successful so far, both conservative and radical elements within her own covenant have criticized her policies. Reform, while advancing at a steady pace, is still too slow for most. Moreover, overtly democratic factions within the Carthians have begun to look askance at her nearly three-decade rule and some have begun to openly call for elections. Currently, more moderate members have quelled this call reasoning, rightly, that until Carthian power is firmly entrenched a steady hand is needed. How long these moderates will control the debate is unknown, as are what steps Marsh may find necessary to maintain her power. That she does not also lead her covenant only aggravates this problem.



The Ordo Dracul

For many, many years (in fact, since its establishment in the region in 1885) the Order of the Dragon was simply there. Its numbers remained relatively small, though it drew in converts and young Kindred at a steady pace; it professed a strict neutrality in relation to other covenants, and had agreed to tacitly support (or at least not oppose) Prince Hunt. For over seventy years the Dragons continued their studies silently, and most simply assumed that it would remain so for all time. The Ordo Dracul surprised everyone in 1976 when it openly announced its alliance with the Carthians and unleashed the Sworn of the Axe against the old Court.

No one, least of all the Carthians, are certain why the Dragons ended their neutrality. Sure, the two share some similar philosophies and the current arrangements benefits both, but many are uneasy with the true motivation of the Order, mostly because such motivations remain unknown. To the Dragons, however, it seems perfectly obvious, even if they refuse to elaborate.

The nature of politics in L.A. is an uneasy one, and as such the Sworn of the Mysteries rules the Order here (Ordo Dracul pg. 59). For decades this seemed to be a prudent course. The Dragons were well aware of the fact that they had neither the strength nor the allies to seize the city themselves. Moreover, the canniest members of the Mystery Sworn knew that the

Order was being used as a political cat's paw by the Invictus. Even so, the Sworn of the Axe are a close second in power, and often resent the diplomatic bent of the covenant, especially in light of the fact that they were often called upon to protect it. But nearly all recognize that compromise has been essential to survival here, and the Mystery Sworn have done an exceptional job of it. This only makes the Coup of '76 all the more impressive, and served as proof that the Mystery Sworn really did know what they were doing.

Of course, tensions do exist. For now, the Axe Sworn are content with their new role as enforcers in Court, but that might not last forever. After all, while the Mysteries may have preserved the Order politically, and produced the necessary alliances to create the Coup of '76, it was the Axe Sworn who shed their Vitae to achieve it. Increasingly, the Grandmaster of the Axe has been calling for an expansion of his third of the Dragon's Tongue. As cracks within the Carthians begin to appear, these voices only grow louder. The Mystery Sworn remain in control for now, but that could change. The only other major faction within the Order, the Sworn of the Dying Light, is largely indifferent to the vagaries of L.A. politics. Rather, they are positively salivating over the unprecedented access they have to the city's mystic sites. Yet if they are ever pressed to pick a side, no one knows where they will fall.

Curiously enough, Los Angeles is particularly well suited to the Order's goals. Here the energies of the land and the sea meet with the most active fault lines in the United States as well as a number of other, still unknown mystic convergences. The city is also home to two of the largest and most stable wellheads known to exist, and the Order is lucky enough to control one of these Wyrms' Nests. The other is in Crone territory, but the Order is pressing hard for access. The ley lines in and around L.A. are a tangled snarl of energy that produces dozens of minor, and almost constantly shifting, Wyrms' Nests that the Dragons constantly explore and catalog. In addition, the city is quite haunted (though this is nothing compared to cities like Chicago), and a number of powerful Haunted Nests can be found at such sites. This has led

to the rare Dragolescu bloodline enjoying a status here that they are rarely, if ever, granted elsewhere.

This mystic background, coupled with the city's tolerance for the bizarre, the sheer size of the population, and the high volume of tourists makes a large and potent recruitment pool of mortals for the Order (either as vessels, retainers, or potential childer). Indeed, it is enough to suggest that the city was almost made for the dead – a comment that usually provokes brief laughter from an elder Dragon, and then serious contemplation.



The Invictus

The First Estate languishes in a sad state within the city of Los Angeles. A mere three decades ago it controlled the city with nearly unassailable power; tonight they are forced to bow before Carthian pretenders. Yet they are still the single most powerful covenant in the city, even after the decapitation (both literally and metaphorically) of their leadership in the Coup. Despite this, the fact that every attempt to regain their lost power has ended in failure both puzzles and frightens the remaining elders. It is possible that Carthian rule has become that strong? Matters are not helped any by the fact that during the Coup many powerful Invictus elders were plucked from their ivory towers and left to face the sun. This has, however, had some positive consequences. While the remaining elders have dug in, the

unprecedented vacancies left behind have created incredible opportunities for ambitious ancillae and neonates. And if one thing can be said of Invictus members, they do not lack for ambition. This has left the Invictus of Los Angeles in a surprisingly dynamic state.

Of all the covenants, the Invictus (unsurprisingly) despises the court of Jocelyn Marsh the most. The City of Angels is theirs by right, and no mere ancillae has the right to sit upon their throne. Not that anyone has been foolish enough to proclaim this openly, of course. The irony is not lost on younger members that a similar, and even bloodier, Coup established Invictus rule some one hundred years previously. The Sanctified, who were pushed out of power in that Coup, certainly find it amusing. But even so, the Invictus is too powerful a force to be completely swept aside. Individually the covenant could probably push any one of the others out of the city, though the price would probably make such a victory costly at best. The real problem lies in the fact that the Invictus has no allies within the city. Their own ruthless pursuit of power has alienated the Lancea Sanctum, the covenant's traditional ally, and their blatant use of the other covenants as cat's paws against the Sanctified won them no friends among the remaining factions.

The Invictus has been active within Los Angeles since 1846, when the first coterie arrived under the cover of the American invasion led by John C. Fremont. The First Estate claims that it had agents within the city since at least the 1830s, but their presence did not make itself known until the Mexican-American War. In the decades following, a long and bloody shadow war between the newly established Invictus interests and the Sanctified led to the eventual victory of the First Estate in 1879 under Prince Alexander Hunt. For nearly a century his iron-handed rule endured, the other covenants divided and weak. But when the old prince retreated into torpor, his new, weaker successor, Michael Vistante, could not maintain it. The now infamous Coup of '76 soon followed, and the rest is history.

Tonight, the Invictus is at its lowest ebb in decades, even though it remains (on paper) the strongest of the five in Los Angeles.

Languishing in disarray, its strongest leaders gone, and without allies in the Dance Macabre, the Invictus is struggling to maintain its current holdings against Carthian and Dragon poachers. And yet, the young within the First Estate do not doubt that their covenant will rise again like the mythical phoenix. The pretenders may hold power for now, but the true rulers of the Damned will return one night. Let the rabble beware.



The Lancea Sanctum

In some ways, the Lancea Sanctum has never really accepted the fact that it no longer rules Los Angeles. The reality of this fact is undeniable, but on some level the leadership of this covenant simply refuses to acknowledge it. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that the head of the Sanctified in L.A. still claims the title of Archbishop more than a hundred years after the fall of Antonio Huarez. The Sanctified aren't stupid, however. Even if their leaders wax nostalgic for the old nights and the old ways, they recognize that if they want power back, they must take it and that such a path will not be free of enemies. Of course, the Sanctified have been trying to take back control of the city for decades, and have yet to succeed.

It is more than just divine right, or their exalted place as heralds of morality among the Damned; the Lancea Sanctum has a history in this part of the world. It was Sanctified Kindred who first risked their unlives to travel to the New

World. It was Sanctified Kindred who carved out the first domains here and influenced the governments of the new colonies. And, most importantly, it was Sanctified Kindred who remained, and remain, a bastion of order and stability. And this shared history is a powerful tool, both to motivate members of the covenants and to draw in new recruits. If the Sanctified can be said to have any real flaw it is the fact that they have made relatively few efforts to expand their influence beyond their historic bastions within the Hispanic community and the Catholic Church. At this point it seems to be more an issue of habit than anything else, but it is still a potentially dangerous Achilles Heel.

At the core of it, though, the Lancea Sanctum suffers from the same shortcoming that the Invictus does: a lack of allies. Within Pasadena and their surrounding territories, the Sanctified are nigh impregnable, but their ability to extend control beyond those boundaries either directly or indirectly is severely hampered. The truth of the matter is that Alexander Hunt divided his enemies well. The traditional alliance between the First and Second Estate does not, and probably cannot, exist here. The Carthians and the Dragons have little interest in or need of Sanctified ideology and zealotry. That leaves the Circle of the Crone. And while such an alliance is not impossible it is highly unlikely, and would at best be short term only. Moreover, in L.A., these two covenants have been at each other's throats almost as long as they have been in the city. That leaves the Second Estate with few options, save to try to bring in converts from other covenants or form alliances with groups of the unbound. Both tactics are used; neither has been terribly effective.

But this is not to say that the Sanctified are weak. Their control of their territories is strong, their ties to the mortal world solid (while the Second Estate may not have the reputation for using mortals as effectively as the Invictus or the Carthians, they are far from ignorant on this subject), and their membership united. In particular, the current Archbishop is a fiery and passionate leader, as well as a skilled public speaker. Indeed, the very unity that this leadership has achieved is one of the key

strengths of the Sanctified. While there has been some conflict between the different Creeds of Longinus, those in power have kept this under wraps and through skilled negotiation, back-room deals, and naked force a surprising amount of unity has been achieved within the covenant. If the Sanctified are ever able to bite the bullet and form an alliance with one of the other covenants, they could easily become a serious threat to the Carthian/Dragon Court. Even now they are a force to be reckoned with.



The Circle of the Crone

There's not much that can be said about the Circle of the Crone, at least not much that the Acolytes would approve of. The covenant is moderately strong in Los Angeles and has managed to attract a fair number of recruits and converts. Unfortunately, it does not control much in the way of territory. Compared to the vast tracts claimed by the Carthians and the Invictus, and to a lesser extent the Ordo Dracul, the domains of the Circle seem small indeed. But the areas it does control are mystically significant, and the Kindred population of these territories has thoroughly dug in over the decades.

However, for all of their advantages and power, the Acolytes lack the unity of the other covenants. Even the fragmented Carthians can claim more solid ideological lines than the Circle, which is saying something. This is more

a symptom of the covenant's decentralized nature than anything else, and the fact that many of the "leaders" of the Circle don't have (individually) the power or the will to steer the entire organization. Even so, the Acolytes of Los Angeles do possess a degree of unity that is not common. Certainly they are disorganized in comparison to their fellow Kindred, but compared to other chapters of the Circle, they are positively regimented. This is because the Acolytes were rather expertly manipulated into position to act as a buffer between the Invictus and the deposed Lancea Sanctum. The ploy worked, and these sects of religious vampires have been in conflict almost constantly. This outside threat has forced a degree of unity uncommon for the chaotic covenant.

All the Acolytes of Los Angeles are nominally ruled by Lilya Nordstran, the Circle's Hierophant. She leads the city's Cult of Kali, the official dogma of the Circle that centers on the vampiric Hindu death goddess. Just over half of the city's Acolytes follow this creed, but others factions and cults devoted to Selene, Isis, Nyx, Morrigan, Lilith, and even Mithras both exist and vie for power. Each of these factions has their own leaders (usually referred to as Priests or Priestesses), but most will cooperate in the face of outside aggression. But as to interior policy or the Circle's political goals... well, things become a little hazier. Recently a universalist movement has emerged that hopes to develop an all-inclusive theology that might serve as a basis for political solidification. Relatively few have been attracted to this philosophy so far, but if successful it could unify the covenant in significant ways.

Politically, the Circle would very much like to ally itself with the new Court, but various factors make this difficult. It does enjoy the unofficial support of Prince Marsh, having been granted some minor offices, but the dangers of aggravating the Sanctified keep the Carthians from being too cordial, the fear being that openly favoring one of the Lance's most hated enemies might be enough to force the Sanctified to accept an alliance with the Invictus. Such a power bloc might be powerful enough to sweep aside even the combined might of the Carthians, Dragons, and Acolytes.



The Unbound

It is, of course, virtually impossible to categorize the unbound, simply because they are not a unified group in any sense of the word. The only thing these vampires have in common is the fact that they have rejected all five covenants and choose to live (unlive) independently. This does not mean that they reject all order and organization, however. From individual coteries to unofficial regents, many of the unbound do owe allegiance to some sort of leader or network, formal or informal though it may be. This is truer of the unbound of Los Angeles than virtually anywhere else. Because of the somewhat looser geo-political alignment of vampires in L.A., the Fringe is considered unaligned territory. In practice, this means the unbound of Los Angeles can be roughly divided into three groups.

The first group is those that operate within the city center itself. These are not casual unbound vampires; none of the covenants really tolerate such individuals. Most of them belong to an organization that operates out of Chinatown known as the Red Lanterns, under the auspices of Zhuo Huifeng, a Chinese vampire of Nosferatu blood who established himself nearly a century ago. He successfully built his own pocket empire by drawing upon the ranks of a few other foreign Kindred and their children. Eventually this group grew beyond Chinatown, but his title as Lord of Chinatown remains. Technically these Kindred are considered unbound, but they would not necessarily think

of themselves this way. Most suspect that the Red Lanterns are some faction of a foreign covenant in China, but no one really knows for sure. However, Zhuo's grip is not absolute within his domain. Regional lines fracture it as well and some vampires, particularly those of Japanese or Korean descent, are particularly incensed to be under his rule. Not so much that they would dare eschew his protection, though. Well, not yet, anyway.

The second group is those vampires who have only recently become unbound, or who are trying to shake that distinction. Most of these Kindred dwell and operate within the Regents' Ring or in the parts of the Fringe that border it. Some of these vampires swear their services to a regent, others promise services to up-and-coming vampires trying to become regents in exchange for territory and feeding rights. Further out, some unaligned vampires form networks of allied coterie that stake out their own turf and defend it vigorously. These are generally prime areas where ambitious regents

try to expand their territory. Those who prove themselves useful to their regents may, in time, be allowed to join a covenant as more than just whipping boys and girls, but this usually takes many years if it happens at all.

The third group to fall under the category of unbound is composed of those that most vampires would think of as stereotypical unaligned. These are the outcasts, loners, nomads, and fugitives that reject all authority save their own. Individuals like this dominate most of the Fringe, though most simply want to pass their Requiems in peace. A few are more aggressive, or foolish, but such individuals rarely last long. Out here bloodlines and clout mean nothing and, as the kine say, no matter how tough you are there's always someone tougher. A handful manage to gain enough personal power to claim domains, and even become unofficial regents in their own right, but this is exceedingly rare and almost never lasts long. The few exceptions are among the most terrifying vampires in the land.





Kindred Factions

*“Los Angeles seems endlessly held between these extremes:
of light and dark - of surface and depth.
Of the promise, in brief, of a meaning always hovering on the edge of significance.”*

– Graham Clarke

The Old Guard

Although some might consider it an oxymoron, the current Carthian faction that holds power is known as the Old Guard. In truth this title was given to it by its enemies, and is supposed to be derisive. Many Carthians, particularly new recruits, instinctively mistrust elders of any stripe. In the long run this probably does more harm than good to the covenant, but the prejudice isn't likely to change soon. Of course, the Carthian Old Guard aren't really elders either; by most standards they are mere ancillae. But they are the oldest members still in the Movement, and thus the closest thing the Carthians have. Jocelyn Marsh and her coterie are considered the leaders of the Old Guard, but this is mainly by dint of the fact they are the senior officers of Court.

It is said that the revolution devours its children, and that may well be true for the Carthians. It was the Old Guard who spent decades, in some cases over a century, resisting Invictus rule and carrying on the fight. They were the ones who threw the elders down, who killed Prince Vistante, who stormed the Court and made the Carthian dream a reality. And now that they hold power, they are becoming the new Satan for young Carthians. For now things are holding, but for how long no one can say. These Kindred are dedicated to their cause, and are using everything in their power to stabilize the situation. But at the same time, many are but a hair's breadth away from throwing their hands up in disgust and leaving their covenant mates to rot.

The New Guard

Some consider it sad, but in truth it was inevitable that the split between young and old has come to dominate the Carthian Movement. The rising faction known as the New Guard is the primary symptom of this in L.A. These are young and passionate vampires new to their Requiems, usually no more than forty years old at most. Most don't even have memory of a time before Carthian rule. And it is these passionate firebrands and reformers who are trying to drive the debate. Given Carthian ideals this is not surprising. While few of these vampires would disagree that the Old Guard has done wonderful things for the Movement and the city, they feel that it is time for them to step aside and let fresh faces share in the power.

To them this doesn't seem an unreasonable demand, and in many ways it isn't. The problem is, the Carthians are all over the board politically. From radical anarchists to semi-conservative parliamentarians, the Movement welcomes all kinds. This was just as true in the nights of the Old Guard, but they had an overriding concern: survival in the face of the Invictus. After dealing with the First Estate for so long, the Old Guard was willing to set aside a lot of internal differences in order to construct a working Court. The New Guard, having lived under the umbrella of Carthian rule their entire Requiems, haven't the same caution. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but if the Movement is pulled in too many directions at once it could easily shatter. What many of these neonates

have failed to realize is that only the work of a few dedicated ancillae is holding it all together. The very ancillae they have been attacking.

The Ivory Tower

Los Angeles has never been a city long on elders. As a young city, most of its older vampires are those ambitious neonates who risked cross-country travel to reach California centuries ago. Ever since 1976, elders have been even rarer still. Most of those who remain are still part of the Invictus (and most of the rest are in the Lancea Sanctum) and in many ways they are very much afraid. They spent centuries building their influence and power, shaping mortals to their whims and building up layers of servants and retainers to protect them from outside threats. And in the course of a few nights, it all ended in a wash of blood and fire.

But ambition is not a trait that many vampires lack, and those in the Invictus have it in spades. The most active and visible elder currently in the Invictus is Jacob Marin. Not

only has he made a great show of the fact that he is not afraid, he has been highly active in Court, accepting a position among the Primogen and making a public show of accepting Prince Marsh and Carthian rule. In truth he finds this embarrassing, as he loathes both the Movement and its Prince, but one learns how to smile around the hate and bend knee before one's enemies in the First Estate. Marin has plans, big plans, to put the First Estate back on top and make himself the Prince of Los Angeles. To this end, his drive and charisma have begun to draw many ancillae and neonates into his orbit. Most spectacularly, he has managed to place Vanessa Pryce, his childe, as the city's Seneschal. But for now he must move carefully. This suits the Lord just fine, as patience is one of his greatest assets.

The Lost Visage

Referring to certain obscure aspects of Sanctified Dogma (relating mostly to the juxtaposition of the Mask of the Man and the Claws of the Beast) as well to the literal loss



of their position as the leaders of the Damned in L.A., this is an old faction within Lancea Sanctum politics. For decades, the Lost Visage served as something of an underground movement within the Lancea Sanctum, a covert means for the covenant to protest and strike back at the usurping Invictus, and as a way for loudmouthed and hotheaded neonates to channel their rage. By the same token, the existence and actions of the faction was officially denied by the leadership of the Sanctified, and harshly prosecuted by the ruling Invictus court. While it was certainly considered an honor to be invited into this group, openly broadcasting that allegiance was virtual suicide.

Since the fall of the Invictus, though, the Lost Visage has been enjoying new focus, new support, and increased breathing room. In some ways, though, the organization hasn't changed at all and is still rabidly opposed to the Invictus. Although at this point it might be more an issue of habit, the First Estate is still a formidable force. Nevertheless, the overall goals of the Visage haven't changed either; the return of Sanctified power is still their *raison d'être*. To achieve this end they have begun to move against the Carthian rabble and the heretic Dragons, but the old feud with the Invictus, and the newer feud with the Circle, refuses to die and a great deal of resources are still channeled into those conflicts.

Cult of Kali

The Cult of Kali is, in many ways, the central and controlling faction of the Circle of the Crone. It is the faith of the city's Hierophant and claims among its followers roughly half of the Acolytes in Los Angeles. The cult has not attempted to enforce its views in the ways that the various Creeds of the Sanctified have, however. Numerous other cults both exist and are openly acknowledged by the Circle. The Cult doesn't even make that many attempts at recruiting members, claiming that the Call of the Crone is an act of individual will, that each vampire must follow his own creed. Of course, that is only the ideal; the fact that most of the city's most influential Acolytes are part of the cult guarantees heavy recruitment.

Now, as always, the Cult of Kali is focused

on making the Circle stronger. The wars of territory and ideology with the Lance threaten to tear it apart, and the restructuring of the Court has already shifted the balance of power radically. Many neonates are clamoring for a larger slice of the pie, bitterly complaining that the Circle deserves a greater say in city politics and that the Carthians are blocking any move in that direction. For its part the Cult and its leaders would prefer not to antagonize the new Court, but they are also concerned about the disunity of the covenant. If the Circle could be unified, it would become the type of power the Court would want as an ally. Moreover, many believe that if they can push back the Sanctified the Carthians would no longer view such an alliance as a burden. But such power can only come with unity, and many wonder if any real unity within the Circle is even possible.

Universalists

Although far from the strongest faction within the Circle of the Crone, the recent rise of an organization known as the Universalists promises to initiate some radical shifts within the Circle. If they can survive. While still small, this faction proposes to unify the covenant spiritually through a new, vastly liberal interpretation of official Circle dogma (or at least as official as any dogma is within the covenant). By proposing a literally universalistic creed, that it does not matter which aspect of the Crone is worshiped for all are the same, they hope to be able to provide a point of spiritual unity for the Acolytes. Such a base, they hope, can serve as a springboard for political unity among them beyond mere survival. It is an ambitious plan, and for now it is one backed mostly by neonates and a few young ancillae. But in a few decades...

The Red Lanterns

Without a doubt, the Red Lanterns are the most mysterious faction that operates within Los Angeles, partly because it is connected to no major covenant and partly because the leaders of this faction are old and powerful Asian vampires whose true aspirations and goals remain unknown. Historians have pointed out that the term "Red Lantern" refers to the more

mystical branch of the Chinese Boxer Movement responsible for the infamous Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the last century. Reputedly these priestesses, the Red Lanterns (who dressed all in red down to their foot bindings) worked the magics that the Boxers believed could make them invincible. Most dismiss such tales (as such “magic” was certainly unable to save the Boxers), but enough stories of strange events and powers surround the uprising to make some wonder if creatures other than the kine were involved.

There is, of course, no actual evidence tying this historical organization to the vampires who operate the Red Lanterns in L.A., but the timing is just too coincidental to be a coincidence. Based out of Chinatown and Little Tokyo, the Red Lanterns answer to a powerful Nosferatu known as Zhuo Huifeng. The Lord of Chinatown is thought to have ties to the local Tongs and Yakuza, and perhaps even more homegrown crime organizations. It is known that he was heavily involved in the smuggling of opium and Chinese laborers in the 1900s. A business that, perhaps, he never left. Beyond this, little is known of the man and his goals. For now his organization stays within its boundaries, protecting its own and keeping the covenants at bay. But it is widely thought that a vast web of spies and informants has been woven throughout Los Angeles for purposes unknown.

Varell's Gang

This faction really isn't a faction at all. In reality this group is composed of about a dozen Kindred who surround Christopher Varell, an unaligned vampire who was given the rather open title, “Voice of the Unbound.” Ostensibly he represents unaligned interests in the city and has a seat on the Primogen Council. This reflects a new policy on the part of the Court, working with the unaligned rather than dismissing them. Given the fact that unbound Kindred control a great deal of the city, this would seem prudent if it is more than just a ploy. Varell's “faction” consists of himself and a number of his allies and childer who serve as unofficial representatives for various districts of the unbound. Theoretically, the



unbound can bring problems and concerns to these Kindred who will, in turn, bring them to Varell who can put each case before the Prince. In practice, few unaligned Kindred care for the Court's interference, and in most places the Court hasn't the power to do much interfering. As such, Varell seems more concerned with just keeping a lid on everything. Not an easy task, but an important first step.

Tunnel Rats

This "faction" is even less a faction than the Kindred who serve Christopher Varell. They have no leader, no organization, no identifiable goal, and no representation in Court. At its most basic, this group is simply a handful of vampires who share one thing: they make their havens underground. Most of them are unaligned, but a few do hail from the other covenants. As stated, Los Angeles as a whole avoids looking underground and most all Kindred are content to maintain this attitude for various reasons. But the Tunnel Rats do not; they readily and eagerly make use of the city's storm drains, sewers, and subways to hunt prey (usually rats and other strays) and to seek shelter from the sun. Not much is known about them by surface vampires, and indeed few want to get to know them. One encounter with these filthy and often insane-looking vampires is more than enough for most. And yet, these strange Kindred may know more about the mysteries of underground L.A. than any other creatures living or dead. To those

who wish to explore the mysteries below the surface, the Tunnel Rats may be the best source of information available.

The Forest Lords

Not much is known about the mysterious group of vampires known only as the Forest Lords. Many dismiss them as myths, little more than the campfire stories bandied about by nomads or fanciful tales told to keep neonates in line. Many Kindred know better, but even they don't know much of this group. The unbound in the Fringe know the most, and that can be boiled down to three facts. 1) The Lords seem to have ties to several local packs of werewolves, and maybe even a cabal of mages. 2) The Angeles National Forest is their domain, and they do not tolerate trespassers. 3) All of these powerful, feral vampires owe allegiance to an even older and more powerful vampire whose true name has been lost.

Thought to number about half a dozen or so, including their undisputed leader Azrael, the Forest Lords do not much participate in goings on in Los Angeles. The forest is their domain, their haven, and their rack and they are loath to leave it, suggesting to some that they might be part of the obscure Annunaku bloodline. But when one of them does venture into the city, the wise simply get out of the way. Only once has Azrael ever attended Court, and then it was only to drag in the brutalized and torpid body of a fugitive who tried to take refuge in her forest.





The Fallen Angels



Jocelyn Marsh
Prince of Los Angeles

Clan: Nosferatu
Embrace: 1902
Covenant: Carthian

In nearly all senses of the word, Jocelyn Marsh is an unconventional Prince for an unconventional city. A native of Los Angeles by birth, and a member of Clan Nosferatu by Blood, her appointment as Prince shocked many. But there is an old saying that goes, "Never underestimate a Nosferatu in power, because she didn't get there through charm." This is certainly the case with Marsh, though she is fortunate enough to bear only minor physical deformities from her Embrace. In any case, there were two reasons, and two reasons alone, that Jocelyn Marsh became Prince. First, she was the only candidate that all factions within the Covenant could agree upon (they were no more unified then than they are now). And second, she truly is a competent

administrator and organizer. Unofficially, she is widely believed to be the one who killed Prince Vistante.

Jocelyn Marsh also enjoys the dubious distinction of being one of the oldest members of her covenant. While not yet an elder at just over 100, she nevertheless commands a significant amount of power and is well versed in the eldritch powers of the Blood. Her enemies within the covenant point to her age as a sign that she is too inflexible to truly effect the needed changes and may grow too comfortable in power to ever surrender it without a fight. Her enemies outside the covenant disparage her "youth" as proof of her inability to rule. For the most part, Marsh is content to ignore these voices while working to undermine their influence and prove just how dangerous she can be when angered. In part, her nonchalance is a result of much larger and more dangerous issues she must deal with.

Embraced early in 1902, Jocelyn Marsh has what some might call an unfortunate past. Born the illegitimate daughter of a prostitute and an unknown father, she grew up on the streets and was forced to weather the violence therein and her own mother's neglect. Beginning as a pickpocket, and later as a prostitute herself, Jocelyn learned the hard way exactly what the dark side of life was all about. Eventually, she was Embraced by a Nosferatu seeking quick sustenance, but who lost control and hastily brought her over. Her feelings on the matter seem largely indifferent, though, and in fact she considers the Embrace to be one of the best things to ever happen to her. It may have its own trials, but she knows Hell and exactly what it means to die by inches. Curiously enough, she began her Requiem among the unbound, but was later inspired to join the Carthians in 1941 by a charismatic young Daeva. There she shone, building a power base and a reputation for reliability and ferocity in equal measure.



Those who first meet the Prince are often shocked by her appearance, especially having learned of her clan. Not because she is ugly, but because she is not. Jocelyn could never be considered beautiful, but with the proper clothing she might manage cute (at a glance, anyway). Usually, though, she prefers to look indifferent, or even creepy, an air that is only enhanced by her skill with the Discipline of Nightmare. Young at the time of her Embrace, Jocelyn can pass herself off as a teenager, a twenty-something, or possibly even a child, although she generally prefers to project the air of a disaffected youth. Regardless, she is Nosferatu and is surrounded by the air of a predator. None can deny that they stand in the presence of a monster, even if the uninitiated cannot tell what kind. This is only enhanced by fangs that will not fully retract, a gaunt appearance, and skin as pale and cold as a bled-dry corpse.

Jocelyn's Devotion: Double Barrel (Majesty • Nightmare ••)

Having learned the basics of the Majesty Discipline from her friend and ally, Matthais Donaldson, Jocelyn Marsh has learned to use the dark, predatory charisma it produces to great, and terrible, effect. However, with this Devotion she has discovered how to combine it with the power of Nightmare into a deadly one-two punch that brings all but the most stout of heart to their knees. Either in admiration, or terror.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Majesty + Nightmare

Action: Instant

To activate, this power requires direct eye contact, and only a single subject can be affected at a time. Compare the number of successes rolled to the subject's Composure and Resolve. If the number of successes exceeds the subject's Composure, he begins to raptly fawn over the user, granting her a bonus on all Persuasion dice pools equal to the number of successes. If the number of successes exceeds the subject's Resolve, he becomes paralyzed by fear, and the character gains a bonus to all Intimidation dice pools equal to the successes rolled. If the number of successes exceeds both, the character chooses which effect is used.



Matthais Donaldson

Herald

Clan: Daeva

Embrace 1919

Covenant: Carthian

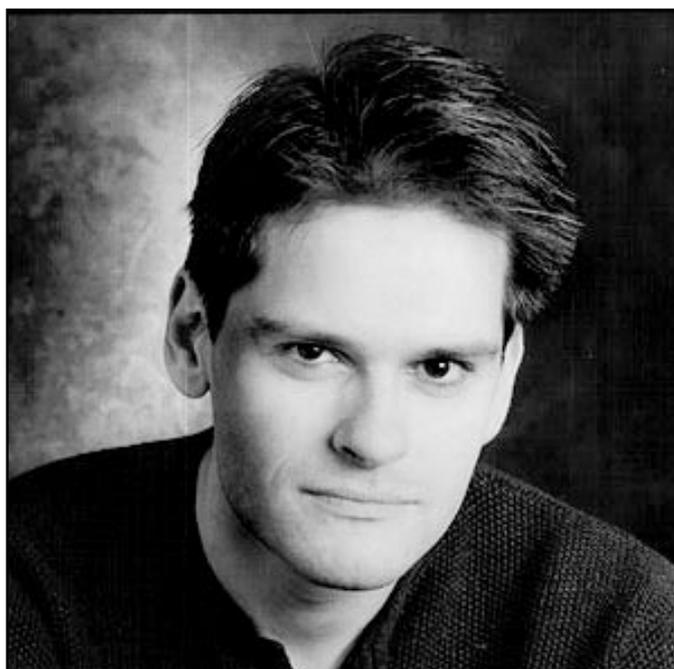
Young, sociable, charismatic, and some would even say beautiful, Matthais Donaldson is just what one would expect of Clan Daeva. He is also the public face of the Court, serving as Prince Marsh's Herald, a role in which he excels. Whereas the Prince is often seen as an aloof, frightening figure, Matthais is a charmer and a skilled speaker. Laid back and almost carefree at times, he has the uncanny knack to make others relax (or at least become less wary) in his presence. This is a skill, enhanced by his own proficiency with Majesty, that has served both the Herald and the Court well. However, this has also led many to prefer the ear of the Herald to that of the Prince. Many proposals and motions are not presented to Prince Marsh, but rather are passed through his hands by those wary of facing the Nosferatu on the throne. This has led more than a few to wonder exactly who controls L.A.

To those in the know, however, Jocelyn Marsh and Matthais Donaldson are in fact good friends (or at least as much as any two Kindred ever are),

and are both part of what the Carthians refer to as the "Old Guard," a sometimes affectionate and sometimes disparaging title given to the covenant's oldest members. The carefully choreographed performances of "carrot" and "stick" that Prince and Herald enact are, in fact, all part of a larger plan. By presenting the image that her Herald has usurped her authority, Jocelyn Marsh has kept her enemies off guard, and few suspect that the knife in their backs was delivered by her hand until too late.

Personally, Matthais is a much different man. Also one of the elder members of his covenant, in his breathing days he was actually of the upper class. It was the Great War, in which he was an eager participant (at first), that changed his views on life forever. Shocked by the carnage, and wounded in battle, Matthais returned home, his world shattered. Desperately seeking something, anything, to believe in, he turned his attention and his wealth to the plight of the common man. In his role as spokesman, and some would say traitor to his class, Matthais at last found an outlet for his passion. Passion that impressed his sire, who brought the young man over in 1919.

In death he sought to continue his work, though in a different arena, joining the Carthian Movement almost immediately, where he quickly became one of its rising stars. Speaking out against the Invictus, pressing for the rights of neonates, and preaching the necessity of change, Matthais both made himself a target and made himself a name. Even more amazingly, Kindred began to listen. In fact, his friendship with Jocelyn Marsh, which began in the twenties, actually inspired the Nosferatu to join the covenant herself. With the realization of his efforts, and his friend upon the throne, Matthais sees a bright future ahead, if the situation in the present can be stabilized. Although a creature of passion, Matthais also possesses a unique wisdom, and knows that as Rome was not built in a day, this city of fallen angels cannot be transformed overnight.



Aaron Weldon
Sheriff

Clan: Gangrel
Embrace: 1936
Covenant: Carthian

A powerful, but largely aloof, figure within the Carthian Movement, Aaron Weldon is something of an anomaly for Clan Gangrel. Largely apolitical, Weldon nevertheless does believe in the Carthian message, or at least in its calls for reform and justice. Though not quite as fanatical in those beliefs as some, Weldon nevertheless agrees that the stagnation and artificial hierarchy that most Kindred are mired within is only a road to destruction. That it is by listening, rather than silencing and subjugating, that progress can be made. Even so, he has not been a politically active figure in the Carthian scene, but rather one of its protectors.

Falling somewhere within the awkward category between the Old and New Guards, Weldon does feel somewhat out of place. While he respects his comrades in arms, he is dismayed by their lack of unity. Much of this changed, however, when Jocelyn Marsh brought him into her orbit. Impressed by her quiet confidence, down-to-earth knowledge,

and her willingness to compromise when necessary and unwillingness to do so when not, he quickly became part of her coterie. When the Coup of '76 removed the First Estate from power, he was more than happy to step up as the city's new Sheriff, a position for which he is eminently qualified. Despite the somewhat Libertarian leaning of both his clan and his own personal philosophy, Weldon does believe in law and order. Unlike many Sheriffs, he is not a bully seeking to impose his will on other Kindred, but truly does seek to better the city, and protect his fellow Kindred from those who violate the law.

As such, Weldon and his Deputies (those who he has recruited to aid him in enforcing the law) are both feared and respected by Kindred society at large. Although Carthian rule might gall many, few can deny that the new Sheriff is both effective and eminently fair in his treatment of all parties. This had lead some of the other covenants to try to seduce the Gangrel away from the Carthians, but his fierce personal loyalty to Jocelyn Marsh has prevented any of these overtures from succeeding. However, the trend among the New Guard to denounce his Prince as a potential tyrant, and call for her removal, may soon lead to a conflict of loyalties for Weldon. Which will win out in the end, his friendship with Marsh or his Carthian leanings, is unknown.

Born in 1898 to farmers on the Great Plains, Aaron Weldon was a stereotypical farmboy in a stereotypical farm family. He learned the ways of the land, eventually ran his own farm, married, and raised a family. All seemed well until the Great Depression tore apart America's finance and the Plains themselves were reduced to a dust bowl. Fleeing to California with his wife and three children, Weldon hoped to find work, but found only tragedy instead. Authorities tried to clamp down on refugees fleeing into the state, and when a riot broke out, shots were fired and pandemonium reigned. His family were among those killed in the fighting. Weldon was crushed, but he did not give in to his depression, and it was this determination that attracted his sire. Soon enough she left her childe to his own devices, however, and Weldon eventually wandered into Los Angeles

and found a place among the city's Unbound. In time, the charisma of Matthais Donaldson and the quiet determination of Jocelyn Marsh drew him into the Carthian Movement. It was this that finally brought the young Gangrel out of his grief and interested him in the world again.

Aaron Weldon is an imposing figure, even to other Gangrel, though he is not known for being particularly violent. A large man, with the appearance of middle age, powerfully built, scarred by the elements and wrinkled by the sun, yet capable of displaying a kindly smile when it suits him. Although few know of his past, those who do believe that the deaths of those he held most dear, and his own perceived failure to protect them, is what motivates him to protect his covenant and enforce the law fairly and evenly. Nothing galls him more than the abuse of power.

Aaron's Devotion Fury of the Beast (Animalism •• Protean •••)

In addition to his "deputies," Aaron Weldon keeps a small pack of ghould German shepherds to aid him in his duties. This devotion was developed in order to let him further empower his dogs with the unnatural strength of his own Beast.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

If successful, this power modifies an animal's natural weapons with a portion of the character's own supernatural strength. In effect, the animal's natural weapons become augmented; allowing them to inflict aggravated damage. This only works on animals with which the character has some sort of blood tie, either through ghouliness or the Vinculum. The effect lasts for one turn per point of Protean the character possesses.



Michael Dawson
Harpy

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 1924

Covenant: Carthian

Michael Dawson is not just a Harpy; he is the Harpy of Los Angeles. In a city so full of tall tales, wild rumors, and truly bizarre happenstances, no one man (or woman) would be able to manage it all. Yet Dawson comes remarkably close. While there are numerous "lesser" Harpies active in Court (some from various covenants), all answer to Dawson. Without his stamp of approval, no piece of gossip can be considered "official." How he does it is not precisely known, but anything that Dawson okays is undeniably true. He does not make up stories (and rejects those that are) and does not create scandals or over-inflate status. If one cannot uncover true scandals (of which there are always plenty), then one has no right to be a Harpy, or so he believes.

The truth of the matter is simply that Michael Dawson is both singularly devoted to his duties and incredibly well connected. In fact he has more contacts, banked favors, and friends in both high and low places that

can possibly be healthy for anyone living or dead. Yet it is this network, coupled with his own natural curiosity, that makes him such an excellent source of information. Those who pass on useful knowledge can find themselves greatly rewarded, and those who attract his eye find that no hole is dark enough to hide in. This has, more than once, nearly brought the man into conflict with powerful Kindred who were willing to risk removing him, but so far Prince Marsh has proven willing to protect her Harpy. That he keeps her well informed as the price for her protection probably has something to do with this.

A child of the Roaring Twenties in every sense of the expression, Michael Dawson might reasonably be termed a hedonist. He loved life fiercely, and everything that went along with it, the good and the bad. So much so that very little slowed him down, even death. Although jaded about what it means to be Kindred, and the true Curse of the Embrace, he is fond of undeath as well. This lust for life (or at least the echoes of it) is tied in with his own curious nature. Dawson knows well the sorts of shady deals and questionable behavior that goes down in the Rack, and from personal experience knows how most go about covering up said behavior.

At first glance Dawson is a remarkably ordinary person, the type that might be lost in the crowd unless he chooses to stand out. He usually does, and especially favors the use of Majesty for this purpose, but when it suits him he can glide through the background, unseen yet all-seeing. Ordinary hair, plain brown eyes, unremarkable features of indeterminate age, and an impeccable, if uninspired, sense of dress. An odd choice, most would think, for a Daeva to choose in his childe. But as the saying goes, it takes all kinds... Yet it is this odd duality of fame and sheer ordinariness that makes him such an effective Harpy. When attending Court, or shredding rivals in Elysium, he prefers to work every trick in the book to make himself stand out, but while prowling the Rack he can slide through the crowds unseen. So effectively, in fact, that some fail to recognize just who he is, and even more secretly wonder if he, in fact, has Mekhet, rather than Daeva, blood.



David McCarthy
Carthian Prefect
Primogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Mekhet

Embrace: 1971

Covenant: Carthian

David McCarthy was elected Prefect of the Carthians two years ago, and to this night he is not exactly sure what to do with it. Born as part of the baby boom, McCarthy was a well-mannered and well-educated young man who seemed to have a bright future ahead of him. Yet when the '60s rolled around, he embraced the Age of Aquarius with a vengeance, wearing tie-dye, growing his hair, "expanding" his mind in various ways, and later protesting the Vietnam War. McCarthy was involved in a big way, in every way he could. More than just a bored young man or a rebellious son, he was truly passionate about his causes, but suffered something of a falling out when he proved willing to use violence to achieve his goals. This made him a valuable, if dangerous, man to many.

This combination of traits attracted the attention of a Carthian agitator who Embraced the young man in 1971. It took some time

before he became comfortable with being Kindred, but when he did McCarthy picked up right where he left off. Identifying the most with the Carthian Movement, he quickly joined the ranks of their agitators and put his various skills (from public speaking to burglary) to work. Here he not only excelled but also found the power and support to back his ideas. Just five years later they succeeded in overthrowing the Invictus; McCarthy himself led one of the squads that stormed the old Court.

His recent election as Prefect of the Movement is representative of a trend in which the New Guard is rising to overshadow the Old. While still respected for carrying on the fight, many older members of the covenant are beginning to seem redundant to the young bloods. As long as they support the Movement, they are generally tolerated, but many feel that change is coming too slowly. As one of their most well known and successful agitators, McCarthy seemed the obvious choice to represent this faction's recent rise in power. For his part, McCarthy agrees that more needs to be done, but he is torn. On the one hand he is loath to divide the covenant any further in the face of its enemies, especially with the Invictus scheming to regain its power (its last attempt having been foiled in 2001). On the other, he is absolutely terrified of Jocelyn Marsh. No one knows exactly why, but the Prince does surround herself with loyal, and dangerous, Kindred. Weldon is a skilled fighter, Donaldson a viper able to strike hard and fast, and Marsh herself packs a brutal strength into her slight frame. Some also suggest that McCarthy witnessed her land the killing blow against Michael Vistante, her predecessor. She doesn't claim credit for this, but neither does anyone else.

Whether this fear will motivate him to support, or oppose, the Prince, none can say, but a change is brewing. Whether Carthian rule can withstand the storm of its own politics is not yet known, but many in the Old Guard have begun to rally around the Prince, fearing that the young bloods themselves might bring about what even the Invictus has not yet achieved: the destruction of the New Court.

Yet McCarthy is an important figure within the Movement, and a respected leader, even

if he doesn't necessarily look the part. But despite being relatively young, McCarthy has had trouble changing with the times. He stubbornly clings to the habits and fashions of his mortal days, which makes him seem dated to most, and a clown to some. This has worked to his advantage in currying favor with certain sects of mortals, but most holders of real power dismiss him instantly. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it has limited him in a number of ways. That old monsters like Marsh have managed to stay current more effectively, and move in the mortal circles that he would like to, is something a sore point for him. One of his greatest fears is that he might one night become as staid and conservative as the forces he has spent his entire life and unlife opposing.

It is also widely believed that McCarthy is addicted to marijuana and other drugs, but no one has bothered to confirm or deny such stories.



Jason Young
Master of Elysium

Clan: Ventrue
Embrace: 1958
Covenant: Carthian

Curiously enough, Jason Young is one of the most neutral Kindred in the entire Carthian camp. Or at least it would appear so. An especially unusual trait for one of the Lords. It is not that he is apathetic, or particularly unambitious (in point of fact he is quite ambitious), but simply that he appreciates the necessity of the middle road, and the dangers that fanatics of any stripe face. Conversely, it is just this neutrality that makes him so valuable as Los Angeles' chief Master of Elysium. Known to be apolitical (or at least a subtle player), he is trusted by most to oversee the neutral ground so necessary for Kindred politics.

In fact, Young has garnered a great deal of respect for his successful administration. He and Sheriff Weldon work well together and have worked to ensure that the rules of non-violence are strictly enforced, and that violators are swiftly punished. Truth be told, his savvy in maintaining the tenuous truce that encompasses all events within Elysium and keeping the décor intact and up-to-date is remarkable in one so young. More than once he has been praised for hosting grand events. The problem is, no one is exactly certain what he wants. The leadership of the covenant knows well that Young has an agenda of his own, but without knowing exactly what that agenda is (or what moves he has made) they cannot predict just how dangerous a Kindred he is, or may become. Should the covenant ever be divided (as it looks increasingly likely to do), no one can be certain exactly where Jason Young's loyalties will fall. Or what they need to offer in order to secure those loyalties.

Born in 1931 to a minor figure in California politics and his Hispanic maid, young Jason learned well the divides that separated society. Disgusted by it, but not willing to risk his neck for others, he ran away from home in 1946 and, after being rejected by the Army (which should tell you something, given the era), tried to reinvent himself, stealing his father's surname in the process. This failed, not unexpectedly, but he did manage to carve a name for himself on Los Angeles' dark streets. Over time, however, he could not deny that strange things were happening in the shadows, things he couldn't explain. It was twelve years later when his

probing of the darkness attracted the attention of a Ventrue elder who hoped to use the man in some scheme or other. Jason dutifully followed his sire for several years, before ambushing the elder and drinking his heartsblood. Needing protection from the Invictus, he fell in with the Carthian Movement.

Young never lost his ties to the streets, and the darker elements that occupy them. Which is probably the reason he was Embraced. While his knowledge and contacts are certainly out of date, Jason is a surprisingly fast learner for a Kindred (at least when it suits him), and he could probably bring himself back up to date quickly if pressed. Moreover, he speaks both English and Spanish fluently without trace of an accent, and with the proper preparations (and an airbrushed tan) he can easily slip back onto the streets and glide among the circles he once did. Dominate doesn't hurt either. Of course, few within the covenant know of these connections, but they could prove an invaluable source of information and less than legal commodities, although the Carthians do not lack for neonates with questionable mortal contacts. But Young doesn't seem to be doing much with them, yet.

Loyal, but never a fanatic, Young established a firm reputation for reliability and honesty, or at least discretion in his dealings. He became the sort of vampire that one wanted around, but never the kind to inspire loyalty in others. Seeking only protection when he joined the Carthians, this lack of apparent ambition actually propelled him farther than he might have thought. He served briefly as the covenant's Myrmidon in the late 60s before accepting an appointment as Master of Elysium after the Coup of '76. His current position suits him much better, for it offers the young vampire the opportunity to rub elbows with power players from all covenants. It seems unlikely that he will ever jump ship, but Young is a survivor first and foremost. If the tides of change alter significantly, he will change with them. Should that require abandoning the Carthians... well, so be it.



Margarett Rhoades

Sworn of the Mysteries,

Primogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 1821

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Margarett Rhoades is the oldest Dragon in Los Angeles, and one of the original Kindred who risked cross-country travel to set up the first Chapter Houses within the city. Although an ancillae at the time, Rhoades nevertheless climbed high within the Dragon's Tongue and has risen to be a leader of her covenant, and its representative on the Prince's Inner Circle. A skilled diplomat, she is one of the Oath Sworn of the Mysteries (Sable Illuminus of the Elysian Curse), and is also one of the Oracles of the Mystery, the parliamentarians that lead the Order. While no one Kindred can claim leadership within the Order in L.A., Rhoades is one of the few with the necessary skill, age, and status to at least represent its interests. While she is willing to let others guide the covenant itself (she has far better things to do), she takes her position as the Order's representative quite seriously.

Rhoades also banked a great deal of credibility and status by brokering the alliance with the Carthians. Even she is tight-lipped about all of the details, and exactly what the Order might be expected to do in the future, but the immediate effects (not to mention the waves of change it has produced) have been greeted with wild enthusiasm among the Dragons. So great, in fact, that Rhoades may be able to make a bid for Grand Wyrms or Kogaion, positions of little official power but tremendous authority. Her newfound fame has also strengthened the Sworn of the Mysteries as a whole. Within Court she is a respected figure, and an important voice among the Primogen Council, always pressing for increased access for the Ordo Dracul. Her appointment to the Inner Circle, Prince Marsh's elite advisory body, was merely another feather in the cap. Her relationship with the Prince is not much different. The two women respect each other, and Marsh's willingness to uphold her end of the bargain impresses the elder Illuminus. However, secretly, Rhoades wonders if the Prince is too young to fully appreciate her position, or her power.

Beyond this, however, relatively little is known about Margarett Rhoades. She has been tied to several influential families on the East Coast, and it is believed that her mortal roots lay among them. Why she was Embraced? Only her sire can say for certain, and Rhoades does not speak of him. Ever. Yet a few of her colleagues among the Order claim to know stories, stories that suggest she was brought into the Requiem in order to provide a hold over her mortal family and their resources. Others believe she had dabbled in spiritualism, or other, darker arts, and drew the attention of a Kindred blood sorcerer who hoped to use this knowledge. Rhoades herself does not seem particularly incensed, or amused, by these tales and has taken no effort against them. Perhaps it is simply that she no longer considers her time among the kine relevant to her Requiem.

Remarkably well preserved even before her Embrace, few would guess that Rhoades was in her forties when she was sired. Save for some faint streaks of gray and a few lines about the eyes and mouth, she appears much younger, a trait that is only enhanced by skillful use of the

Blood and strategic applications of Majesty. In every sense, from her no-nonsense attitude to her appreciable intelligence, Margarette Rhoades presents the image of a scholar or young college professor, a guise she has adopted more than once for various purposes. Within Court she is more of the wise old matriarch, guiding the "children" through dark waters. Many of its members would find this insulting, but as an elder of great personal power and the ranking Dragon in Southern California, Rhoades is given considerable leeway



Lucian Foster-Webb

*Sworn of the Axe
Hound*

Clan: Mekhet

Embrace: 1882

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

A servant of the Ordo Dracul, a Dragon Knight, and Hound of Prince Jocelyn Marsh, Lucian Foster-Webb is an important and dangerous Kindred. Oathsworn of the Axe, Adept of the Order, and a true master of the shadows, Webb is not a man to be crossed. That he also happens to be the Court's chief enforcer does not hurt either. Although technically he

owes this position to the deal brokered with the Carthians, he is more than qualified and it suits him well. He also seems to enjoy the trust of the Prince, though Sheriff Weldon keeps a very close eye on Webb and his coterie of Hounds.

Within the Order itself, Webb is a respected, but not well known, figure. He is a ranking member of the Sworn of the Axe and is skilled with the Coils; moreover he fought in the now infamous Coup of '76, but was not a major figure. Yet no one can deny that Lucian Foster-Webb is a skilled fighter and a skilled commander. While he might never again lead an army into battle, his position as a defender of the Order and enforcer of the Prince's will is a perfect fit for his talents. And while he is far from responsible for all of the unusual disappearances or deaths among the old power cliques, Webb is behind at least some of them (he is far too professional to be caught easily; those that were found he intended to be found). Whether or not this infamy will translate into higher status among the Axe Sworn is not known, but he will most certainly try.

In life, Lucian Foster-Webb was born into a moderately wealthy and well-known East Coast family, one of the rising upper middle class families that had ambitions of entering the highest echelons of society. From an early age he was trained to excel in business, but as a youth he found his attention drawn increasingly to military ambitions. These ambitions found an outlet with the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. Serving as a lieutenant, he made a name for himself among his men and was wounded in battle before returning again to participate in Sherman's infamous March to the Sea. Yet, despite the glory he had won, the experience also damaged the young man. No longer enamored by war, and disgusted by the way business fell upon what was left of the South like vultures, he decided that he needed a change of scenery.

By 1873 he had set himself up in Los Angeles; by 1876 he had found a niche among the local railroad concerns and managed to make a small fortune in the shipping industry. Ultimately, this success would prove to be his downfall. The railroad was just another pawn in the shadow war between the Invictus and the Lancea

Sanctum. In punishment for his inadvertent role in the secret war he was Embraced by a Sanctified Mekhet in 1882. Perhaps his sire hoped to draw the businessman into the Lance, but if that was his goal, it failed. An intellectual at heart, and agnostic since the war, Webb drifted for a number of years before joining the newly arrived Ordo Dracul. The covenant was a perfect fit for him, and his mortal connections and military experience proved invaluable in those early years, earning him an Oath at an almost unbelievably young age.

Lucian is a regular figure in court, though a largely silent one. His role is more one of intimidation. This is somewhat impaired by his rather non-threatening appearance. Of slight build and bland features, Webb simply does not appear dangerous at a glance. Moreover, his preference for semi-formal business attire, and the cane he carried in his mortal days (a result of battle wounds), seems far too bland for a Hound, especially one as dangerous as he is reputed to be. Not that this confuses people for long. Webb prefers stealth to overt action, and his Mekhet blood only aids in this. A quick and silent killer, Webb is widely feared. A visit from this man or one of his underlings means the Prince no longer cares what you have to say.

Strangely enough, despite this reputation, Webb is one of the more moderate of the Axe Sworn, rarely calling for conflict or an expansion of their role within the covenant. It would seem that, even after nearly one hundred and twenty years, the Civil War has left its scar upon this Kindred, and while not unwilling to fight (as events have proven) he is not a hawk. This is perhaps his only black mark among his fellow Axe Sworn, and one of the few things that might stymie further advancement.



Mariko Saito
Mistress of Elysium

Clan: Ventrue

Embrace: 1944

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Although a young member with a questionable lineage and only a limited education within the Coils (Scholar of the Untamed Void), Mariko Saito is nevertheless one of its rising stars and a notable figure in Court. One of the rare Ventrue of the Dragolescu bloodline (Ordo Dracul pg. 150), Saito has one skill that makes her highly valued by the Order in Los Angeles: extensive knowledge of and experience with wraiths and other ghostly spirits. In a city in which the ley lines are in constant flux, and many of its most reliable and stable Wyrms' Nests are haunted, this is perhaps not a surprise. Saito is also the student of none other than Margarete Rhoades.

There are also more practical reasons for Saito's role as the second of three Masters of Elysium within the city. As part of their agreement, the Carthians ceded control of a number of Wyrms' Nests to the Order and promised access to many more. In order to ensure this, Prince Marsh declared several of these sites Elysium and agreed to appoint a

Dragon as their overseer. Because several of these nests were haunted, a Dragolescu was sought for the position, and Mariko's youth meant her politics were fairly simple and her ambitions fairly small, or at least more easily predictable. Moreover, she was not entangled with the scandals that often mar older Kindred. Making her a safe choice, in other words. She accepted this position with grace, and has managed to maintain and protect the sites under her watch ever since. Of course, since few Kindred wish to meddle with these mystic nexuses (save perhaps certain Acolytes or Sanctified), this is not as difficult as one might imagine.

Born in Los Angeles in 1919, a second generation American in an immigrant family, Mariko Saito was a well behaved, inquisitive, and generally content child. She was moderately well educated by the standards of the day and grew up in her native culture. In all likelihood she would have had a quiet and uneventful life, had fate not intervened. Executive Order 9066, issued in 1942, required citizens of Japanese descent to be interred during the Second World War. Mariko herself spent two years in the camps before a Dragon, studying the phenomenon much as others were studying the more infamous camps of Europe, happened upon the girl. Her fearlessness and natural curiosity impressed the vampire. Moreover, her knowledge of Eastern religion and its practices (particularly its spirit magic) was enough to earn the young woman the Embrace on the spot. Mariko dutifully joined the Order and found it a good fit, rising slowly, but steadily, within its ranks.

Mariko has ambitions far beyond simply being the caretaker of the city's Wyrms' Nests (important though that position is), however. Although only a handful know it, Mariko has been trained in a fourth Coil, the apocryphal, secretive, and highly illegal Way of the Locust (Ordo Dracul pg. 176). In addition to her insightful study of ghosts, Mariko is also obsessed with still-corporeal souls, and the Locust Knights' obsession with diablerie is a perfect fit for her desires. But she is not a fool. Despite her brethren's addiction to the power of Amaranth, Mariko has never consumed the

soul of a fellow Kindred. She would like to, but has no means of hiding the stains it would leave upon her aura. For now, she is content to simply use the Way of the Locust to diablerize the occasional mortal the Order requires her to kill, or she accidentally drains dry while feeding. But while content to drink lightly from this poisoned well for now, she eventually hopes to use her position and famous mentor to gain entry to the Sworn of the Dying Light. There she may be given the opportunity to perform sanctioned Amaranth (the stains of which would hide any further, extracurricular diablerie), and can sell out the other Locust Knights to hide her own allegiances.

Mariko's Devotion

Blood of the Wraith

(Essentiaphagia •• Way of the Locust •)

The Dragolescu have always been fascinated with the power of ghosts and other spirits. And despite the reputation of their founder that they have been trying to shake for decades, many are also darkly curious about the power of diablerie. Mariko Saito has found a blasphemous way to blend these twin obsessions. In essence, she has learned how to diablerize ghosts.

Cost: 1 Willpower

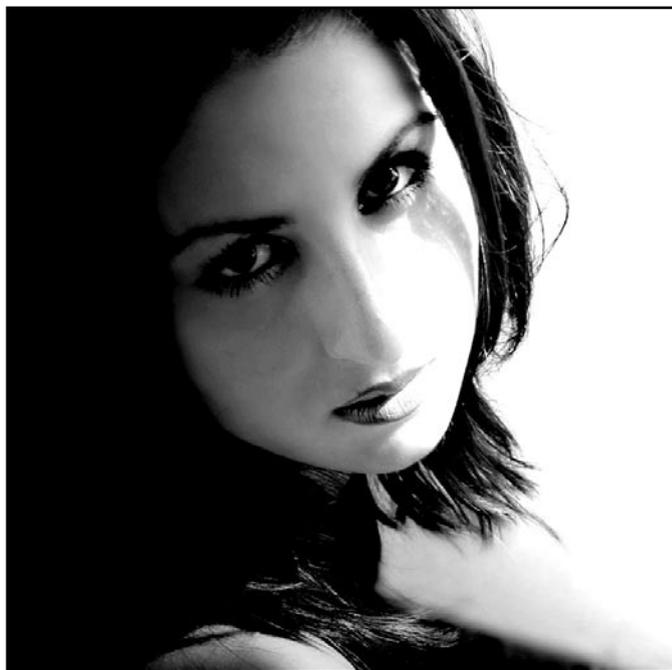
Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Essentiaphagia vs. Power + Resistance

Action: Extended and Contested

Once a ghost or other suitable creature is located, as per the normal rules of the Essentiaphagia Discipline, the character may spend a point of Willpower and attempt to draw Ectoplasm from the ghost. If the character wins the contested roll, she draws a single point of Ectoplasm per success. She can continue this process for several turns, but must win a new contested roll each turn to do so. If any of these rolls fail, the ghost is released and no further Ectoplasm is drawn. For each point of Ectoplasm taken, the ghost loses one Essence.

Once the last point of Essence is drawn in this fashion, the character must make a Resolve + Stamina (plus any bonuses provided by the Way of the Locust) vs. Resolve + Composure. If successful, the character successfully

consumes the spirit. As with the diablerie of humans, the soul can only be held for a number of nights equal to the character's Willpower dots and her aura is stained as normal while the soul is held. However, she may enjoy all benefits of the Way of the Locust while the spirit is trapped within her body.



Lady Vanessa Pryce
Seneschal

Clan: Ventrue
Embrace: 1953
Covenant: Invictus

Young, talented, well educated, and ruthlessly ambitious, Vanessa Pryce is one of the rising stars of the Invictus. And, despite being a member of an opposition covenant, she is (on paper) the second most powerful Kindred in Court. A situation that pleases, confuses, and infuriates her. While never one to turn down power when offered, Pryce despises the new Prince and wonders exactly what game Jocelyn Marsh is playing. This is something that many other Kindred, especially the Carthians, wonder as well. Most suspect that the Prince is simply following the old axiom, "keep your friends close and your enemies closer," but some believe that Pryce may be a decoy of sorts, an obvious and visible rallying point for opposition.

In life, Vanessa Pryce possessed all of

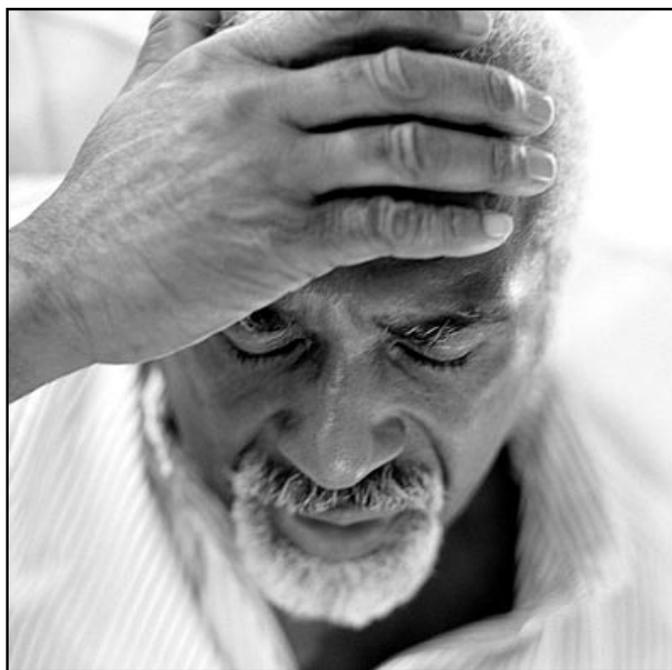
the attributes that both the Ventrue and the Invictus prize. She also possessed enough drive and sheer, ruthless ambition to make her goals a reality, despite social pressures. She broke stereotypes and expectations of her era by both attending university and majoring in business. All of these factors attracted the attention of an ambitious Invictus elder, who wanted a child more capable of maneuvering within the radically changing business world of the 1950s. For her part Pryce took well to the Embrace (as well as anyone does, anyway), and threw her energies into the Invictus. It was somewhat annoying to have to bow and scrape to the fossils above her, but she had learned how to deal with such individuals in life. And besides, the covenant offered her access to levels of wealth, power, and prestige impossible to obtain in the mortal world. It might take a number of decades, but she had time.

Then it all changed. The Invictus fell, and the Old Court collapsed. This proved a double-edged sword for Pryce. With so many positions left open by the Coup, an ambitious and capable vampire such as herself could easily acquire new power and prestige within the covenant. And she did. But shockingly, Jocelyn Marsh, the Carthian Prince of Los Angeles, offered her the office of Seneschal. She accepted – she would have been a fool not to – but at the same time wondered exactly what was going on. At first she suspected that her sire, Jacob Marin, was responsible in some fashion, and indeed he does claim responsibility for this. But as the years wear on, Pryce is coming to understand just how capable, and crafty, Jocelyn Marsh truly is. If nothing else can be said of the new Prince, she is no one's fool. Deeper factors must be at work, but for the death of her Vanessa Pryce can't determine what they are.

The truth of the matter is, she became Seneschal in order to provide a visible focus for the Invictus faction known as the Ivory Tower. As long as they focus their energies on influencing the Court and its policy through the Seneschal, the Carthians will know where to look and who to watch. Secretly, Marsh hopes that Lady Pryce will act in ways that blatantly favor the Invictus, or at least undercut its traditional enemies. By controlling the rest of

Court, the Carthians and the Ordo Dracul can easily work around her while at the same time providing a focus for the anger of the Acolytes and Sanctified. It hasn't worked out quite that way – Pryce is more than skilled herself – but it has succeeded in providing a focus and distraction for the attentions and aspirations of the Invictus.

Pryce isn't oblivious to this herself, though her picture of events is far from complete. As time passes, this young Ventrue is becoming increasingly bitter over the fact that she must serve a Carthian Prince, on top of which she suspects her power is being checked in some fashion. As this frustration grows, it cannot be predicted exactly what actions she might take or how hard she might push. Lord Marin certainly hopes his childe will be in a position to act soon, theorizing that an Invictus Seneschal is the first step toward the revitalization of an Invictus Court. But, by the same token, such a push may be exactly what Marsh needs to reunite her covenant and further break the First Estate. Perhaps that was the plan all along.



Lord Jacob Marin
Prinogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Ventrue
Embrace: 1832
Covenant: Invictus

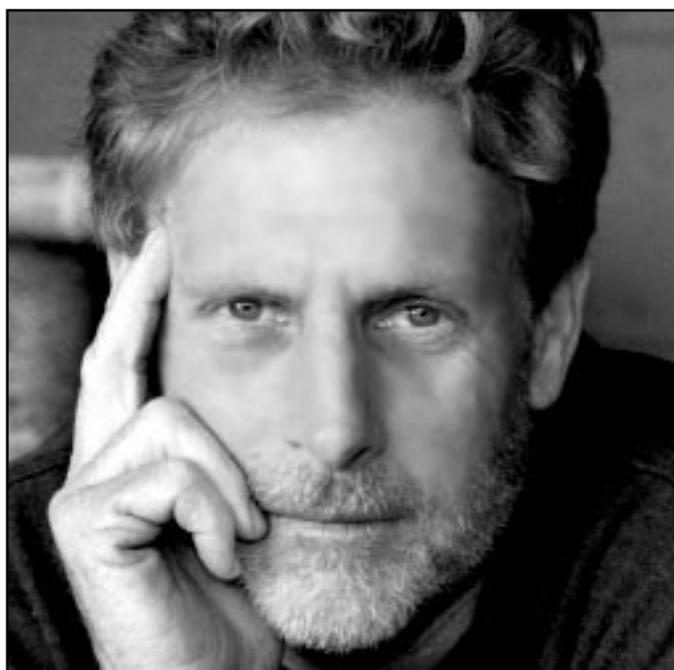
In a city short on elders, Jacob Marin is in a very good position. He is an elder of the Invictus, one of the powerful regents of the business district, and a member of the Prince's Inner Circle. Although a force to be reckoned with in Invictus politics for the last several decades, it was the Coup that actually pushed him up the ladder. He is a skilled and subtle player of the game, making a large public show of his acceptance of Carthian rule and cordial attitude towards the new Prince. Privately, though, he holds the Carthians in the same disdain the rest of his covenant does; he is simply convinced that he has more to gain by hiding this fact than by advertising it. This attitude has allowed him to gain a considerable following among young Invictus members. He is convinced that the best method for reestablishing his covenant as the supreme power in Los Angeles is to bring the Carthians down from within. The first step, he believes, was his success in placing his childe in the position of Seneschal. He has yet to fully realize that the Prince and her Court are more than aware of his hidden ambitions.

In many ways, Jacob Marin is a man who would like to forget his past. Even better, he would like to erase his past. To a degree, he has succeeded. Few who meet this dapper and intellectual businessman (Kindred or kine) would suspect he comes from a poor background. None at all would ever believe that he had once been a slave. The records no longer exist, and the story is not told, but somehow, decades ago, Jacob obtained his freedom and made a life for himself in Los Angeles. He was not the first African-American to do so, but he climbed the highest. And while some might expect him to be proud of this, as proof of his own worthiness to hold the power he does, he is secretly ashamed of his past and is worried that it will be discovered and used against him in some fashion. The truth of the matter is that he destroyed all records that might reveal it and no one else even remembers. Yet this does not assuage his fears.

But those fears might be justified. Jacob suspects that were it not for the Coup he never would have climbed this high. While, in theory, the Invictus is a meritocracy (though it is questionable whether even they believe

this), and generally is not one to throw aside talent, the prejudices of mortal days do not fade easily. It was through sheer ability and naked ambition that he managed to carve out a regency for himself in the nights of Prince Hunt, but he found himself unable to rise much higher. Denied access to the circles he wished, he stewed and planned. In the wake of '76 the glass ceiling shattered. The Invictus needed all the elders it could get; there was no room left for petty prejudices. This and this alone, Marin fears, is the reason for his current status. As such, part of him feels that he must move to consolidate his power now, lest it be taken from him.

At this point, however, such a fear is probably moot. Marin is the oldest vampire still active in the Invictus and its Primogen; moreover, he possesses great wealth, business acumen, a childe in a highly visible and important position, and an ever-growing number of young vampires as clients and supporters. Even other elders, elders who once snubbed him, have begun to approach with requests for alliance and patronage. But it might not matter. In all likelihood Jacob will always crave more power, more wealth, and more assurances, more layers between himself and the legacy he cannot escape. This drive might well place him on the throne one night, or it could just as easily destroy him.



Nicholas Palmer
Lord of San Pedro Harbor

Clan: Ventrue

Embrace 1899

Covenant: Invictus

In a dark and unused corner of San Pedro Harbor is the rusting hulk of an old cargo ship that has been moored there as long as anyone can remember. No one ever enters, no one ever leaves, and the longshoremen refuse to go near it. Even the harbormaster has no real records of the ship, save its name: Prince Edward. When it arrived and what cargo it might have carried are both unanswered questions, as is the mystery of what happened to its crew. Many locals believe the ship to be haunted, and it seems to be a common test of courage among youths to test themselves against it. Most return with only the fright of their lives and some minor injuries; some wander back with no memory at all of even entering the ship; and a significant minority never return at all. The authorities seem convinced that such disappearances are simply accidents, but no one ever goes looking for the bodies.

In reality, the ancient ship is actually the haven of a powerful, if bedraggled, and extremely mysterious Invictus elder named Nicholas Palmer. As far as anyone can tell he never leaves the ship, though his ghouls and blood-bound retainers control the harbor absolutely. Nothing enters or leaves the city by sea without his express permission, and rarely without a significant tithe of cash, blood, or both. Despite the fact that the surrounding districts of the city have long been Carthian and Crone strongholds, Palmer still holds the bay in the name of the First Estate. Numerous attempts have been made to dislodge him, most notably during the Coup when the attacking ghouls who set fire to a tanker also attacked the Prince Edward. The attempt, like all others before or since, failed miserably. But, strangely enough, Palmer is willing to work with other Kindred if the price is right. In fact, he is thought to have a long-standing agreement with Lord Zhuo

Huifeng which the Chinese elder has used to smuggle in (and out) everything from opium to migrant laborers and even weapons. Zhuo has plenty of cash and blood to spare, and is willing to spend it to ensure his operations are a success.

Those in the know understand that Nicholas Palmer is so powerful within San Pedro (and specifically within his haven) because he is a member of the rare Malocusian bloodline (Invictus pg. 168) and, as such, has dominion over the territory he has claimed as his own. More than that, he has gained absolute control of the harbor by blood-bonding key figures among the harbormasters, longshoremen, security, inspectors, and even the unions. Rumors suggest that he has sired several children who have claimed other parts of the harbor, but this is only a rumor. In any case, Palmer's mortal and ghoulish agents are more than enough to ensure his control.

Because of Palmer's unique position, claiming an important if out of the way part of Los Angeles as his own, he is actually somewhat outside of the normal political squabbles of the city. He is a loyal member of the Invictus, but only because it is the covenant he disagrees with the least. In truth he is something of an opportunist and, as such, is willing to work with most anyone should the venture promise to be profitable. Those who approach him with a suitable gift (always gift, never bribe) should have no trouble. Those who approach in hostility will quickly learn why it is ill advised to challenge a spider in its own web.



Marcus Puente
Archbishop of Los Angeles
Primogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 1904

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

The current Archbishop of Los Angeles (though that title is somewhat inappropriate, as the Sanctified haven't controlled L.A. in decades) is a passionate and fiery vampire who has clawed his way to the top. A darkly handsome man just this side of middle age in appearance, Marcus Puente is in many ways exactly what the Sanctified of Los Angeles need. He is passionate about his cause, a respected preacher and a fiery speaker: exactly the sort of person that others choose to follow. Since his rise to power some twenty years ago, Puente has proven himself to be an effective leader as well. While his passion inspires, he maintains a cool enough head to understand that passion alone is not enough.

In many ways, the rise of Marcus Puente is indicative of a subtle but important shift in the way the Lancea Sanctum operates in L.A. For years it was a covenant divided against itself, torn between different Creeds and different

enemies. Internally, at least, Puente has managed to quell those fires. Through canny policy, and the subtle elimination of his enemies, he has managed to put many doctrinal differences to rest. Although this means that in some cases certain Creeds were pushed from the domain, the Sanctified don't seem to mind. Well, they don't complain publicly anyway. However, the new internal unity this has granted the covenant has given them a great deal more power. The covenant is still torn between its enemies, but if Marcus could be convinced to accept an alliance (any alliance), and persuade his covenant to follow suit, this could easily change.

It's an old story, but one far too common in this world. One could blame society, racism, or any one of a dozen factors, but as a boy Puente fell in with a bad crowd. Far from the worst that L.A. had to offer, but enough. Even as a youth he was passionate, though that passion was directed less at religious endeavors than toward his vices. It was this that attracted the attention of his sire. The Requiem was hard on young Marcus, as he struggled with his own dark side and the Beast, but eventually he did find a balance, building on the base of his mortal faith. He found the Lancea Sanctum in the 1930s and for the first time the world seemed to make sense. He was a sinner who had been punished by God, but through that punishment he had been shown the Light. He had damned himself in life, and for that was cursed beyond it, but through that Curse he had become one of God's Arrows, a creature refined by death, meant to test Man and punish the wicked.

It is said that often the converted are the most zealous of any sect, and in this case it proved to be true. Marcus fell in with the Lost Visage early in his career, a group of the most passionate and fanatical members of the Lance that railed against the Invictus and the presence of heretics (the Circle and the Order) within the sacred ground of Los Angeles. Thankfully, for his sake, that passion cooled and he began to learn exactly what was needed to rise within the ranks of his covenant. And rise he did. His piety earned praise, his zealousness attracted followers, and his passion won converts. But it was his willingness to compromise between varying groups and develop support among

various theological factions that assured his ascendancy. By the 1970s he was Archbishop in all but name, and by 1983 that title was his.

So far he has been willing to work slowly and carefully, not pushing his power too far, but testing the limits of Sanctified authority and that of his own office. But few have any doubts that he will eventually push to regain the throne of Los Angeles for the Second Estate.



Violeta Cartwright
Bishop of San Gabriel

Clan: Ventrue

Embrace: 1927

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

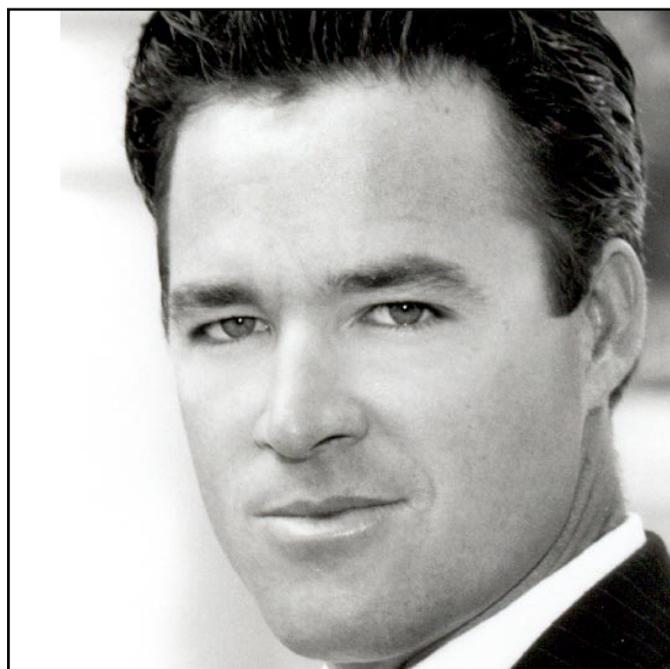
To the Sanctified, Violeta Cartwright is one of the most highly respected and influential members of the covenant. She is the Bishop of San Gabriel, the holiest site in the entire city. She is also a respected master of Theban Sorcery and often sought out by young members hoping to learn the secrets of the Lance's Dark Miracles. But reality, as is so often the case, is somewhat different. Cartwright is indeed a powerful and respected member of the Lancea Sanctum, but she does not owe her position in San Gabriel to that. She has locked horns with Archbishop

Puente more than once over various issues of theology and politics. The truth of the matter is that she was one of the first Kindred who was willing to ally with the Archbishop in his bid for power, and supported his drive to the top. Her own appointment as Bishop was a reward for that support.

Now that the political structure of the Lance has stabilized, differences are starting to come to the forefront again. While, thankfully, the old theological conflicts have remained buried (memories of Puente's subtle purges are all too fresh), new political differences have begun to emerge. Some groups, of which Cartwright is a notable and surprising supporter, believe that the Lancea Sanctum is taking on too many enemies at once. Rather than stand alone, as they have done for years, Cartwright has proposed that the Lance enter a temporary alliance with one group or another (she favors the Carthians, as she feels they can more easily be crushed afterwards) in order to level the playing field. Needless to say, this is an opinion not shared by the Archbishop, who feels that the Sanctified must stand alone in order to prove their strength and worthiness. He has not gone so far as to say God is on their side, but some have. While this has not created any real internal conflicts to date, it has the potential to re-ignite conflict, although in all likelihood neither Cartwright nor Puente will allow it to come to that in the near future.

In many ways, Violeta Cartwright is a more reactionary and conservative force within Sanctified politics than the man who leads it, even though she is some sixty years younger. In life she was deeply religious, and for a time gave thought to renouncing the world and becoming a nun. Such dreams were shattered one night in 1927 when she was Embraced. Even she doesn't know the identity of the one who Damned her. And while that is unusual in and of itself, there are enough unbound in the city to explain away such rogue Embraces. Cartwright was shattered by the experience and very nearly chose to face the sun rather than live the cursed existence that had been forced upon her. A young member of the Lancea Sanctum found this distraught fledgling and proved to be a light in the darkness.

The Sanctified gave her a new focus to her faith, and proof in her eyes that it was all part of God's plan, His test for her. This deep-seated belief is what motivated her to master Theban Sorcery and what has pushed her conservatism and zealotry. After all, every Kindred is Damned, but by fulfilling God's will on Earth they can be saved. Compared to this calling all else is nothing. Or so goes the theory...



Robert Erinson
Inquisitor General

Clan: Gangrel

Embrace: 1967

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Faith is the central concept of the Lancea Sanctum, but it is also so much more than that. Faith is the covenant's reason for being, the glue that binds it together, and the very source of its power. But every so often fiery speeches, acts of faith, and force of personality are just not enough. Every so often you have to throw that aside and bust a few skulls. That is something that Archbishop Puente understands very, very well, and when those times arise he calls upon Robert Erinson. It would be somewhat unfair to say that Erinson is the Archbishop's

dumb muscle, or that he is a simple enforcer. There is a certain degree of that in what he does, but in many other ways Erinson's duties require the greatest faith or all, for he is charged with protecting the Lance from all that might threaten it.

When Marcus Puente was gathering both power and followers in his bid to take control of Lancea Sanctum in L.A. he happened across a young but powerful Gangrel who was eager to belong and ready to believe. In life Robert Erinson had not been particularly Godless or particularly devout, but as with so many people the Embrace proved to him once and for all that there is far more than meets the eye in the world. Perhaps it was Puente's charisma, perhaps it was simply that a good Christian boy couldn't think of giving up his faith after having fought the Nazis and Godless communists, or perhaps it was just luck of the draw. In any case, Erinson joined the Sanctified and pledged himself to Puente's bid for power.

Over the course of the next few years, as the in-fighting between the factions and Creeds of the Lance began to intensify Erinson proved himself. As the future Archbishop cemented his political alliances and built up his credibility through personal faith and the conversion of non-believers, Robert Erinson acted in a more physical manner. It would be unfair to call him an assassin, but more than once he acted to remove "dangerous influences" and "blasphemers" from the ranks of the Sanctified. That these particular enemies of the faith happened to be enemies and rivals of Puente was certainly just a coincidence, or so Erinson proclaimed. He also acted against outside agents, destroying spies or particularly meddlesome Acolytes. He also found cause to battle against Invictus agents, which granted him a certain degree of leeway. By the early '80s the potent combination of Puente's charisma, Violeta's faith and Erinson's strength had secured control of their faction of the Sanctified. After he received the Mask of Archbishop, Puente immediately set about rewarding his followers. Robert Erinson, in light of his more martial service, was given control of the Lance's Templars and Inquisitors, taking the title of Inquisitor General.

To this night Erinson remains one of the

Archbishop's most loyal and faithful supporters, standing by him through thick and thin, and that is unlikely to change anytime soon. Although rare among the Damned, loyalty simply seems to be an integral part of his makeup. He served as a soldier in life, fighting in both World War II and Korea, and has continued to be a soldier in death. Faith and duty make a dangerous combination, and few doubt that Erinson is a dangerous vampire. Even if he is not the fanatic that many of fellows are, his loyalty to Puente seems unshakable.



Lilya Nordstran
Hierophant
Primogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Gangrel

Embrace: 1911

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Lilya Nordstran is the unquestioned leader of the Circle of the Crone in Los Angeles. She is the Dark Mother of the faith; the covenant's Hierophant and its representative on the Primogen Council. A true master of Crúac, not to mention a powerful member of Clan Gangrel, she is the head of the city's Cult of Kali and a force both respected and feared by her



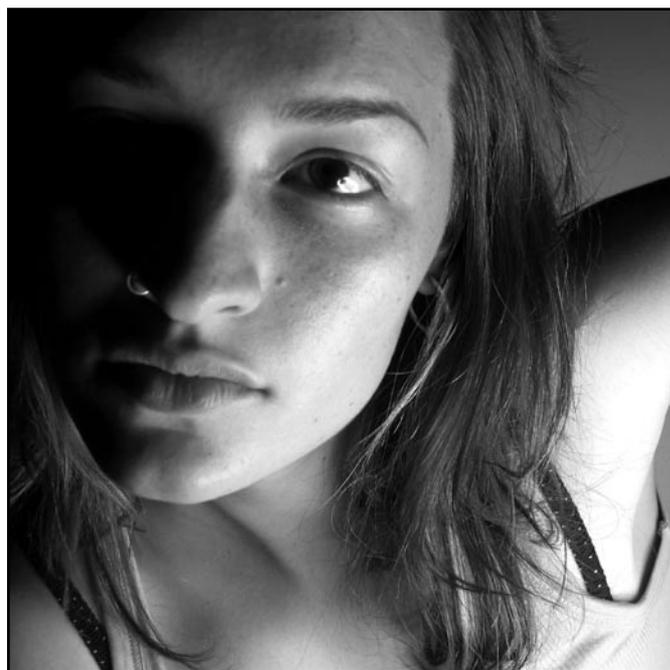
followers. She has actually led the covenant since the '40s, when the previous Dark Mother went into torpor, having elected her to take over as Priestess of Kali. It is a position she has grown into and become comfortable with, and managed to strengthen, over the years. And while she is not above using force to bring recalcitrant Acolytes into line, by the same token she has been able to gain the support of a majority of the covenant through her obvious spiritual prowess and leadership abilities.

Of course, even a strong-willing woman like Nordstran could not bring a great deal of unity to the Circle. Under her leadership the Acolytes have solidified (slightly), and even regained some lost territory from the Sanctified, but even so the Circle remains divided spiritually and only minimally united politically. Certainly the Circle has managed a degree of unity in the face of its enemies, but this has less to do with Nordstran than with necessity. The real problem is that Nordstran is not an overtly political individual. She is not unaware of the necessity, nor ignorant of the process, but she is mostly content to let matters lie, unwilling to push if it is not necessary. Theologically, Nordstran is more willing to take a stand, but that stand is more on the side of openness. Despite the fact that it might be in her best interest to do so, she is often unwilling to crush some of her rivals.

In appearance, Lilya is a woman proud and unbent yet scarred by the elements and by hard living, though many of these marks have faded since her Embrace. She was born in Czarist Russia, the daughter of serfs, but also among the first to abandon the land to enter the cities. She, along with her parents, husband, and children, toiled in Russia's factories, but after Czarist officials killed her husband during a strike, she took her children and fled. Eventually they settled in Los Angeles, but life was no easier in America than it had been anywhere else. To make ends meet she became a midwife and a medicine woman, peddling folk remedies and peasant magic like a hedge witch. Most of it was worthless, but some of it wasn't, and this drew the attention of an Acolyte. Apparently he felt Lilya worthy of the Embrace. The Russian refused; her sire didn't take no for an answer.

Shattered by the Curse and cut off from her

family (one of the few comforts she had left in the world) Lilya drifted, joining the Circle of the Crone on her sire's order. It was there that the previous Dark Mother took a specific interest in the young Kindred, helped to shape and rebuild the woman and initiated her into the Rites of Kali. Tonight, it seems Lilya had the last laugh; the covenant she joined on little else than her sire's order is now hers to command. And as to the fate of the sire... no one really knows. Despite giving herself over almost completely to the Circle and its teachings, many suspect that Nordstran still keeps an eye on her mortal descendants who live in L.A. Stories also suggest that her oldest and most loyal ghouls may have been drawn from her own mortal children and grandchildren. Whether or not this is true is uncertain, but it is the fodder for many rumors.



Lilya's Devotion: Razors of Kali (Cruac ••• Protean •••)

The power to grow feral claws is terrible indeed, but through her own devotion to Kali, Lilya Nordstran has learned how to enhance this already deadly ability. By channeling the supernatural strength of her goddess into her claws, she can manifest even more vicious talons that are capable of drinking in her victim's essence as well as parting stone, and even steel, as easily as flesh and bone.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

When activated, this power allows the character to manifest the Claws of the Wild. These claws, however, are vicious instruments dark as night, hard as steel, jagged and pitted. In terms of attack the claws function as the Claws of the Wild, granting a +1 attack bonus and inflicting Aggravated damage. But on a successful attack a contested roll (Manipulation + Occult + Cruac vs. Composure + Blood Potency) is made. If the character succeeds she may claim a number of points of vitae from the target equal to half of the successes rounded down (minimum of one).

Annette d'Aubisson
The First Fury

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 1947

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Annette d'Aubisson is an intriguing addition to the Kindred of L.A., and certainly a figure of much interest and speculation in Elysium. Attractive, talented, poised, and well mannered she seems the ideal Daeva, and yet there is a certain hardness to her that gives others pause. Like a diamond blade she is pleasing to the eye, but holds a cold, sharp edge at the same time. Her title gives some suggestions to why this is. Few outside of the Circle understand the mystic significance, but any Kindred known as the First Fury is simply bound to be trouble. More than that, Annette is the head of a three vampire coterie (she and her two children, the Second and Third Furies respectively) that serve the Hierophant as bodyguards, enforcers, and inquisitors. In essence they are Nordstran's private Hounds.

Of course, it should also be understood that Nordstran is a powerful vampire in her own right through both her mastery of Protean and her potent Crúac rituals. By necessity, the personal warriors of such a Kindred must be frighteningly powerful indeed. And any event

or individual that requires the intervention of both the Hierophant and the Furies is epic in scope. But the truly interesting things about Annette have nothing to do with her ability, and everything to do with her history. She began her Requiem among the Invictus; indeed, she was Embraced into it and served the covenant for a brief time. However, she had little interest in the politics of the First Estate, and while searching for her calling in unlife she happened upon the philosophies of the Circle of the Crone. Fascinated, she defected from the Invictus and joined those who revered the Mother.

This in and of itself is not so unusual; Kindred jump covenants all the time. What made this unusual was that neither Annette nor her sire were exactly normal Daeva; both were part of the Spina bloodline (Invictus pg. 173). More than that, her sire was a member of the Order of the Thorned Wreath, one of the premiere knightly orders of the Invictus. Annette's defection was seen as a great stain upon her sire's honor and upon the Order that she was being groomed to join. As such, Annette has faced a constant stream of challenges, particularly from her true brothers and sisters of the blood, and has participated in monomancy countless times. In fact, it got so bad at one point that the Prince issued a decree forbidding duels to take place at Elysium. The number of challenges has lessened over the years, even if they have not completely stopped, as her victories began to pile up. Most curiously her sire seems to have forgiven her, after she fought him to a draw in a duel. When questioned he only answered, "It is the raison d'être of the Spina to find a cause we are passionate about and devote ourselves to it fully. I cannot fault my childe that her cause is not my own."

And, indeed, Annette has devoted herself fully to the cause of the Circle and sworn her personal loyalty to the Hierophant, taking a blood oath to this effect. Strangely enough, despite this loyalty, she is not a member of the Cult of Kali, but instead follows the small but powerful Cult of Nyx (the Greek Goddess of the Night). This has produced some conflicts of interest, as the two cults do not see eye to eye on many matters, but one of the Barbed does not go back on her word. Religious devotion may guide her choice

of god, but personal honor binds her to Lilya Nordstran and such loyalty is often the most powerful of all.

To date, Annette and her childe have been placed in charge of the conflict with the Sanctified on the Pasadena border, and this holds most of her attention, although the Furies are also often called upon to act as guards when the Hierophant attends Court, when key Acolytes must meet with powerful vampires or when parlay between Acolytes and other supernatural creatures like werewolves and mages occurs. The Furies, and Annette in particular, also have a place within many of the Circle's bloodier rites and are called upon to serve as unofficial executioners.



Antonio Castillo
Master of Elysium

Clan: Nosferatu

Embrace 1799

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

If Antonio Castillo is not the oldest Kindred in Los Angeles, it is anyone's guess who is. In addition to being one of the oldest active Kindred in L.A., if not the oldest, he also has the distinction of being one of the few elders who was Embraced in L.A. And yet for all of

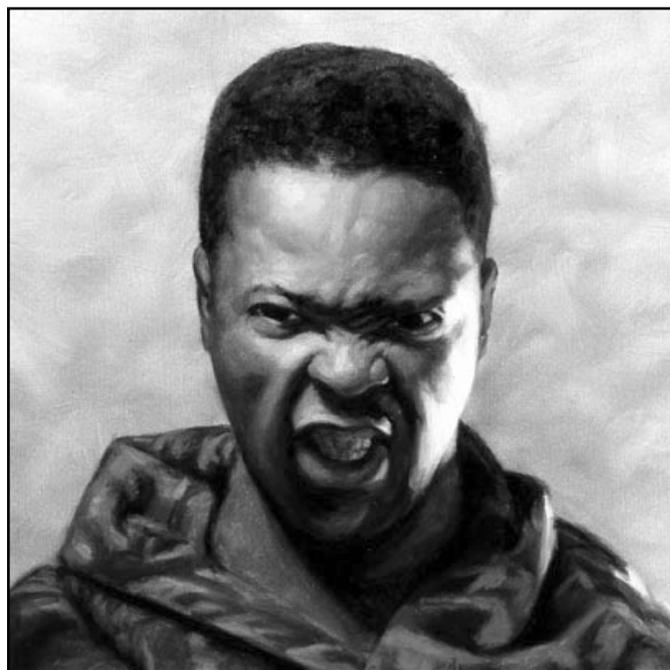
this age and history, Castillo has not climbed all that high in the hierarchy of the city. He is a respected Acolyte, well known for his faith and his understanding of Crúac, but strangely enough he has also rejected most offers to obtain more power within both the city and his covenant. Many suspect he could have easily been the Circle's Hierophant; it is unlikely that anyone would have opposed him if he had tried. But he stepped aside for Lilya Nordstran, just as he stepped aside for her predecessor. In fact, although he is the city's third Master of Elysium, he did not seek that role either. Instead Nordstran gave it to him.

Castillo was born and raised in Los Angeles. His father was a Spanish colonist and rancher, his mother a local Indian woman. His childhood was typical in almost every respect until the day that his family began to enjoy success. By the time he was a young man, his family's ranch had begun to turn vast profits. These were used to buy more land, which in turn generated more wealth. In 1788 Antonio was made into a ghoulish by one of the local Sanctified Kindred who hoped to be able to use the young man to gain leverage over his family and finances. Within ten years, however, the young ghoulish had proven himself in more ways than one, and his regnant choose to offer him the Embrace. However, if his sire hoped that Castillo would join the Sanctified, he was sorely mistaken. While Antonio had been brought up in a Catholic household, he had also been educated in his mother's unique spiritualism. And it was the ideals of his mother that most deeply resonated with him after the Embrace. More than that, he had chafed under the control of his regnant and wanted little to do with him or his covenant. The Vinculum probably wouldn't have given him any choice in the matter, but the arrival of the Invictus "solved" the problem for him.

Almost one hundred years after his Embrace, Castillo at last found an outlet for his energies and his faith. He joined the Circle of the Crone almost as soon as it established itself and quickly became a respected member. Since then he has led a quiet Requiem, refusing to back any one creed or cult over another and doing his best to remove himself from the political

quagmire that is L.A. As such, he is considered a respected and highly sought after spiritual advisor and scholar of blood magic. Recently, however, he has begun to show some interest in the Universalists' creed, as it seems to mirror some of his own thoughts on the matter. So far he has refused to openly support them, but he has given some subtle signs that he may well side with them in the future.

For now, however, this elder seems content to go his own way and care for his own faith, as well as tend to Griffith Park. His participation within Court remains minimal, however. In truth he does not really want the extra authority, or the extra responsibility, that comes with being a Master of Elysium, but he also understands that the position is an important symbol for any future Carthian/Acolyte cooperation and therefore discharges his duties both faithfully and efficiently.



Christopher Varell
Voice of the Unbound
Primogen of the Inner Circle

Clan: Mekhet
Embrace: 1983
Covenant: Unbound

For the last fifteen years or so, Christopher Varell has held a position of some importance in Court. In fact, he is the first vampire ever to hold the title "Voice of the Unbound" in Los Angeles, a fact of which he is incredibly proud. But while some might consider his position as the representative of the unbound an important and influential post, many more do not. Even among the unaligned themselves, many sneer at the very idea that they need representation of any sort. Varell doesn't seem to mind this, though, although perhaps he has yet to realize that he is something of a joke. Still, he takes his duties seriously and has managed to attract a coterie of followers.

The truth of the matter is simply that Christopher Varell is something of a loser, and has been since before his death. He has tried to gain a bit of "street cred" among the unbound by claiming he was raised in Watts and was part of a gang. But though he does look the part, neither is true. He grew up in a fairly affluent middle class neighborhood and didn't have so much as a parking ticket on his record before the Embrace. Even his Embrace is something of an embarrassment. In the early '80s a small group of Belial's Brood decided to use the chaos created by the Coup of '76 to raise a little hell of their own. They grabbed about a dozen people and quickly Embraced them as cannon fodder. Prince Marsh proved the rumors of her weakness false by crushing the Brood almost completely, but a few of their shock troops managed to escape. Christopher Varell was among them.

It was sheer dumb luck that he managed to escape the Hounds and equal blind chance that he made it all the way to the Angeles National Forest. And that is the source of the one piece of infamy that Varell can truthfully claim. He not only met Azrael, he survived the encounter. No one knows why, but for some reason the Forest Lords took pity on the fledgling, and instead of beating him into torpor and delivering him to the Sheriff, they brought him up to speed on what he had become and how to survive. When he left the forest again, rumors flew that he had the backing, perhaps even the protection, of the Lady of the Forest. This isn't true – Azrael couldn't care less about

the fate of the young Mekhet – but it's not like anyone is terribly eager to ask her.

And it was probably this little slice of infamy, and the respect it garnered him (along with his lack of connections to the existing factions), that prompted his appointment to the position of Voice of the Unbound. Varell was certainly pleased by his appointment, for he is a social climber and more than eager to enjoy a slice of the pie for himself. However, he is slowly coming to understand that he is not all that powerful, and despite his infamy (or rather, his infamous benefactor) most of the unaligned want nothing to do with him or the Court. At the same time, his position makes him at least somewhat responsible for the goings on in the Fringe. Not a happy position to be in, suggesting that his appointment was more punishment than reward.



Zhuo Huifeng
Lord of Chinatown

Clan: Nosferatu

Embrace: 1879

Covenant: Unbound

The mysterious Lord of Chinatown, Zhuo Huifeng is something of a dark horse in the political race of Los Angeles. He is, as the title

suggests, the Regent of Chinatown, but over the years he has expanded this territory to include some of the neighboring districts. In addition to this he has gathered a collection of other foreign Kindred and some of the unbound into an organization known as the Red Lanterns. Beyond this, however, little is known. Lord Zhuo attends Court on a semi-regular basis (often sending his majordomo or other representatives when he is unable to attend in person), and has been offered a seat among the Primogen, but he refused that honor. In many ways both he and his Red Lanterns stand aloof from L.A. politics, a situation that leaves many locals ill at ease. Most are convinced that the Lord of Chinatown must have plans, but what they may be none can guess.

Around the turn of the century, Zhuo Huifeng arrived in Los Angeles with a small handful of ghouls and two other Kindred. Almost immediately they established themselves in Chinatown and began to forge ties to local criminal networks. Within a few months they had begun smuggling Chinese laborers into the country for vast profits. This network was apparently built at the behest of Zhuo's sire, who sought to make use of the demand for labor overseas to his advantage. The coterie also began to involve themselves in smuggling of other types, breaking into the opium trade by 1902 and the vastly profitable "Triangle of Trade" that American opium clippers utilized. The money rolled in. But it would seem that Zhuo's sire (as the name of the organization created at his behest suggests) did indeed involve himself in the Boxer Rebellion, and backed the wrong horse. His child could never be certain, but it seemed the elder had likely met Final Death.

However, Zhuo and his coterie continued on as if things had never changed. Only now, the wealth was flowing entirely into their own pockets. Rather than accept a place among any of the local covenants, and abandoning their cultural roots, these vampires chose to form their own faction by drawing upon the handful of other foreign Kindred who called the City of Angels their home. This group succeeded in claiming Chinatown as their own domain, gaining formal recognition from Prince Hunt

in 1927. And when the times changed, the Red Lanterns changed with them, shifting their operations and changing their focus as new trends rose to replace old ones. Primarily they seem to be concerned with protecting their "people" from assimilation by any of the American covenants and preserving their culture and traditions. Many suspect that Zhuo has larger plans to increase his own power, but enough divisions exist in his own domain to capture and hold the elder's attention for now.

Zhuo Huifeng is a member of the Burakumin bloodline native to the Orient. Most of the time he hides his visage behind the cloak of Obfuscate, presenting the image of a healthy young man of unremarkable features, but beneath this cloak he resembles a shriveled and desiccated corpse, a gruesome sight to say the least. He is also a practitioner of the bloodline's grim necromantic Discipline, and much of the information he seems to possess doubtlessly comes from the bodies of his victims and enemies. As such, Zhuo prefers to let others deal with outsiders and visitors when he needs to make a good first impression. He has a seneschal to serve this purpose, and some of his followers (particularly mortal ones) might never even see the man who they serve. But when he must put in an appearance, Zhuo prefers to dress in regal finery in stark contrast to his withered frame. When possible, he wears the silks of a Mandarin with the peacock feather of a civil servant; at other times, hand-tailored suits suffice..



Jiang Xiumei
Bearer of Red Lights

Clan: Daeva
Embrace: 1900
Covenant: Unbound

To those who have ever been forced to deal with him, none can doubt that Zhuo Huifeng is a powerful elder, but personal power is not always enough. Given his Burakumin blood, social graces are not one of the Lord of Chinatown's strong points. The Red Lanterns deal with a great number of mortals by necessity and the weakness of his bloodline makes any contact between himself and the kine a potential Masquerade breach. Therefore, to deal with his mortal contacts and herds, Lord Zhuo has acquired a skilled, dedicated, and extremely loyal seneschal known as Jiang Xiumei, the Bearer of Red Lights.

If Lord Zhuo is the head of the Red Lanterns, Jiang is its mouthpiece. Should they even require contact with the Kindred, any mortals that are part of the Red Lanterns report to her. Indeed many mortal contacts, retainers, smugglers, and gang leaders believe that Jiang is the head of the Red Lanterns and in the community at large she is widely respected and feared as the

head of the local Tongs. Among other vampires she serves as Zhou's herald, dealing with Court and covenants when he cannot or will not and relaying orders to the lower ranking members of the Red Lanterns. Indeed, meeting with Zhou himself is considered a sign of favor and a great honor, though typically only the oldest and most powerful Lanterns are given this chance. Yukiko Nakamura is an important exception to that rule, however.

In truth, Jiang is in many ways Lord Zhou's revenge. The details are sketchy, and known to few beyond Zhou himself and perhaps his childer. When Zhou and his sire began to create the Red Lanterns in Southern China they were forced to battle other local Kindred in Canton and Macao in order to take control of smuggling operations there. Jiang Xiumei was the darling child of the Lord of Canton. The Red Lanterns captured her in hopes of using her as a bargaining chip, but her sire was apparently less attached to his progeny than he claimed. But rather than destroy her, Zhou realized that a pretty face could be useful in his dealings with mortals and other Kindred. Jiang remembers none of this, though. She has been heavily conditioned and quite thoroughly blood bound, ensuring almost total loyalty to the Lord of Chinatown.

It's all probably for the best, though. Although he understands courtly manners and courtesy, Zhuo Huifeng operates better as a hidden hand crushing his rivals and extracting information. Jiang, on the other hand, was trained to operate in social circles as well as the halls of power. Her understanding of social manipulation is probably on par with Zhuo's own knowledge of information management and political control. It would be unfair to claim that the Red Lanterns couldn't exist without her, but Zhuo would need a mouthpiece in any case. Of course, if Zhuo ever suspects that his chains of blood are not enough to ensure her loyalty... the Red Lanterns will quickly find themselves with a new Bearer of Red Lights.



Yukiko Nakamura
The Fox's Tail

Clan: Ventrue
Embrace: 1953
Covenant: Unbound

In truth, only a handful of the Kindred who dwell in Chinatown and Little Tokyo were sired overseas, but each vampire that was represents a deep mystery. And if the Kindred hate anything, it is a mystery. Mysteries represent danger, and one thing every vampire wants to avoid is danger. Yukiko Nakamura is something else entirely, a mystery within the mystery. Currently she makes her lair in Little Tokyo and is, ostensibly, a member of the Red Lanterns, but those who have investigated have discovered a number of strange anomalies. While this "Snow Child" seems to enjoy the protection of Lord Zhuo, she also appears to be an outsider among the outsiders.

When they speak of her at all, the other Red Lanterns refer to Yukiko as the "Fox's Tail," but what this means is unknown. Some also spit upon the ground and refer to her as "nogitsune." This literally means "wild fox" and is the name of a creature in Japan's mythological canon, but in truth this raises more questions than answers.

A member of Clan Ventrue was able to taste her blood, confirming that she is a member of that clan; not too surprising given the Disciplines she has been seen wielding. However, there is some evidence that she might also be part of some obscure Asian bloodline, most notably the references to her as a "wild fox" and reports of a unique Discipline she is said to wield.

The truth of the matter is that Yukiko is a nomad from a line of nomads, though she has traveled far further than most. Embraced in the dark nights following World War II, as Japan was recovering from its crushing defeat, she was selected by her sire for her paradoxical traits: a deep sense of tradition and a mischievous personality she was both willing and able to set loose. Despite her position as a childe of Lords, she chose a nomadic Requiem, wandering the country at will, unbound by duty or responsibility. In all likelihood this was an escape of sorts from the grim reality into which she was born. Why she choose to risk travel across the Pacific before the turn of the millennium is likewise unknown. But Yukiko does seem to be something of a thrill-seeker, perhaps as a way to reconnect with her lost emotions and stave off the ennui of undeath. Or maybe it is just a holdover from mortal days. In any case, she now calls Los Angeles her home, though this could change at any time.

In person, Yukiko does not stand out. She looks young, almost a stereotypical schoolgirl, with pleasantly pale skin and slightly crooked teeth. She speaks English well, though has not been able to completely shed her accent, and other than slightly wild eyes seems most ordinary. Those who have had dealings with her warn that she is an apple with a rotten core. Yukiko is a deceiver of the highest order, reveling in dark deals and taking almost obscene joy in fooling her victims, both Kindred and kine. And yet she has a talent for getting things that a person wants or needs, ensuring that more marks will always drift into her orbit.



Azrael
Kindred Legend

Clan: Unknown
Embrace: Unknown
Covenant: Unbound

The world is full of strange stories of even stranger monsters: the Jersey Devil, Spring-Heeled Jack, Old Scratch, and so on. The Kindred have their own bogeymen as well, but they have the disadvantage of knowing that such tales are not merely urban legends. Los Angeles is unfortunate, or fortunate, enough to have one such monster living in its backyard. Literally.

Azrael is that monster, and beyond the fact that she exists, little else is known of her. And in truth that is all that most other vampires want or need to know. Even her true name has been lost to the sands of time. The Kindred of Los Angeles know more, of course, more than they care to. This powerful vampiress and her coterie claim the Angeles National Forest as their domain, a claim that no one has contested in a very long time. Thankfully she doesn't seem to feed from the veins of Kindred, but even so when Azrael comes to town, the wise run. Most suspect that she is a member of

Clan Gangrel given her mastery of the Protean Discipline, and some go so far as to suggest that she is of the Annunaku bloodline (*Invictus* pg. 159) given how closely bound to the forest she is. But none of that is confirmed; after all, the sheer amount of vitae it would take to claim the Angeles Forest as a demesne is truly staggering. Local Auspex experts have been trying to read her for centuries, but Azrael seems to be able to protect her mind from their probes. Coupled with the fact that she gouged out the eyes of one Mekhet who tried, most don't even bother anymore.

The truth of the matter is that even Azrael does not know much about herself. Her memories of her first night are fuzzy and she barely remembers being a mortal. This is, most likely, due to her policy of keeping her Blood Potency manageable: high enough to be dangerous but low enough to be able to feed from mortals. As such, she has endured repeated bouts in torpor, which have sliced her memories to pieces. This has also led some to suggest that she might be an ancient, a vampire who has endured for over a thousand years. This seems highly, highly unlikely, but none can say for certain. But for all of this Azrael has retained a fair chunk of her Humanity, comparable to that of many other elders, and is far from the feral beast many would portray her as. Of course, those who cross her do so at their own peril.

In appearance Azrael seems to be a young woman of surprisingly small stature (which supports the theory that she is very old) with dark hair and piercing eyes. Her features are distinctly European, but not enough to identify where she might have come from. And while she might not be feral, she certainly looks the part, with matted and tangled hair, skin and clothes stained with dirt from sleeping in the earth and blood from her hunts. Her clothing is equally torn and tattered, and usually taken from her prey. But with a fresh change of clothes and a shower, she could probably blend into the rack as easily as any other vampire. In fact, she is known to have done so once or twice, and it would probably shock the Kindred of L.A. to know that they might have conversed, or even hunted, with the dread Lady of the Forest.

Shelter of Slumbering Sands (Celerity • Protean ••)

Azrael's Devotions: Shift the Dark Heart (Celerity • Protean ••••)

While not instant death, as legends and television suggest, a stake through the heart is indeed a serious threat to most Kindred. While some forms of blood magic do offer protection, the infamous Azrael has developed a way to protect her dark heart by utilizing superhuman speed and her own ability to shapeshift.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Celerity

Action: Reflexive

This power is reflexive, activated the instant the character takes a stake to the chest (or back), even if another action was taken in that turn. If successful, she instantly triggers a minor shift in her internal anatomy, shunting the heart to one side in order to prevent the stake from piercing it. Otherwise, the character suffers damage as normal from the attack.

If taken by surprise, this power cannot be used in the first turn of combat, but can be used in all following turns.

Despite her combat prowess and skill, Azrael recognizes that every so often it is simply impossible to avoid forced torpor, either from a stake through the heart or from excess damage. In such a state, a Kindred is completely at the mercy of her foe. Normally, that is...

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Celerity

Action: Reflexive

This power is reflexive, activated the instant the character is forced into torpor (by whatever means), even if another action was taken in that turn. If successful, the character uses her superhuman speed to take one final action before falling into the dark sleep: melding her form with the ground on which she falls. Provided, of course, that it is a material she is able to merge with.

In this state, the character is completely protected and cannot be dug up. She will remain in this state until her torpor ends, either through natural (such as it is) healing or the removal of the stake. If staked through the heart, the stake itself does not transform, but remains buried in the material the character is merged with. Which means that some fool might just remove it one day, and release a vampire in the grips of Wassail.





Story Hooks

*From Mount Hollywood, Los Angeles looks rather nice, enveloped in a haze of changing colors.
Actually, and in spite of all the healthful sunshine and ocean breezes, it is a bad place.
Full of old, dying people, who were born old of tired pioneer parents, victims of America.
Full of curious wild and poisonous growths, decadent religious cults,
fake science, and wildcat enterprises, which, with their aim for quick profit,
are doomed to collapse and drag down multitudes of people.*

– Louis Adamic

Ring of Fire

The Regency of Lennox has collapsed, the regent and his court have vanished almost completely and various claimants are battling for control of the district. In and of itself this is not unusual – the Ring of Regents is subject to a great deal of upheaval – but this regency straddled the Inglewood/LAX border, a bitterly contested line between the Carthians and the Invictus. More than that, the Regent of Lennox had been firmly neutral in his stance toward this conflict, making the sudden collapse of the regency suspicious to say the least. But, strangely enough, no conqueror has emerged to lay claim to this conquered territory, suggesting that the covenants were not responsible, or at least not directly responsible. This leaves an uncomfortable mystery and a potentially dangerous power struggle brewing on the edge of the City Center.

There is no time to waste; the LAX/Inglewood border is too hot to leave a power vacuum nearby. Both the Carthian Prefect and the Invictus Inner Circle are scrambling to put together coterie of capable and ambitious young Kindred from their ranks to take Lennox and shift the border dispute in favor of one covenant or the other. At the same time the Ordo Dracul, from their strongholds in South

Los Angeles, are also eyeing Lennox as a region to expand their territory (alliance be damned), as are the independent regents of Athens and El Segundo. To muddy the waters even further, Aaron Weldon is concerned by the abrupt and sudden disappearance of the former regent and the Sheriff is looking for a capable coterie who can investigate for him.

With powerful forces from across Los Angeles converging on the Pacific Coast, Lennox threatens to erupt in violence, and that violence has the potential to disrupt alliances and consume the entire city. Not only is the decades-long conflict between the Invictus and Carthians entering yet another phase, the Carthian/Dragon alliance may be sorely tested if both covenants are unable to reach an agreement. Beyond that, what of the unknown threat or group that toppled the old regent? But despite the danger, or perhaps because of it, the potential rewards are equally great. With cunning, guile, and a bit of luck the players may gain the opportunity to claim feeding rights in Lennox, or even become the area's new regents. Not to mention the favors that would be banked with the covenants if they succeed. On top of that, Weldon (and by extension the Prince) wants answers, and their gratitude to those who can provide said answers would be powerful coin indeed.

Red Lights in the Darkness

Zhuo Huifeng, the powerful Lord of Chinatown, is a mystery to most Kindred in Los Angeles, even his own followers. A foreign vampire with no ties to the major covenants who has still managed to claim a formal regency within the City Center, no one really knows what goals he works towards. Most suspect that he has his eye on a greater prize than simply being the Regent of Chinatown, but it is usually safe to assume that any Kindred with power wants more. But perhaps it is the fact that Zhuo is so rarely seen that unnerves his fellow Kindred. After all, an invisible enemy is the most difficult and insidious to fight.

Over the last few months Lord Zhuo's followers, the Red Lanterns, have begun making changes to their ordinary movements and routines. They are venturing further and further from Chinatown and are taking an increased interest in the political situation of the other covenants. Nothing extreme, but noticeable nevertheless. Even more troubling, for the last three months the rarely seen, and even more rarely welcomed, Yukiko Nakamura has begun to attend the Prince's Court and the monthly Rants in Griffith Park. During those meetings she has approached various groups of Kindred, most notably New Guard Carthians, Circle Universalists, and the less formal factions of the Unbound. It could be that she is simply weaving more of her infamous webs, but it seems too much of a coincidence. At one of these gatherings, Yukiko approaches the players and drops several cryptic comments, including references to the "wheel turning" and that "Lord Zhuo always welcomes new talent." Even if the details are sketchy, the intent seems clear; the Red Lanterns are planning something, and Zhuo Huifeng has recruited the Fox's Tail to help gather more followers.

The question is, what should be done? Should the players risk seeking out the Lord of Chinatown and attempt to get in on the ground floor of whatever he has planned, or do they bring it to the attention of the Prince and hope to garner rewards that way? Perhaps they should simply get out of the way and hope to salvage something from the chaos that is sure to follow if the Red Lanterns come into conflict

with the established factions. Or perhaps this is all just another one of Yukiko's games...

Ignorance Really is Bliss

Tragedy strikes the city of Los Angeles when a student at UCLA commits suicide, throwing himself from the roof of his dorm in front of horrified onlookers. With him is a strange suicide note that seems to be scrawled in blood, making references to "it" not letting him go and death being the only way. The university and the police both launch a full investigation. News of the tragedy dominates the airwaves until Hollywood scandals capture the public's attention again. But the Kindred are still paying attention, and are very concerned by what they hear, or rather by what they don't hear.

The night after the suicide, Mariko Saito, the Ordo Dracul's Mistress of Elysium, announces to the Court that UCLA, normally restricted territory for outsiders, has been completely closed to all vampires, even Dragons, without special permission from the Sworn of the Dying Light. In addition, the Sworn of the Axe will enforce this decree, with lethal force if necessary. She claims that the Wurm's Nest on which the campus is built is undergoing a period of unusual changes, changes that might or might not be troublesome. As such, the Order plans to carefully monitor the Nest during these changes and will not brook outside interference. It is a plausible explanation, and perhaps even true, but no vampire believes in coincidences. It seems obvious that something sinister is going on at UCLA and that the student's suicide is part of it. But, with the Carthian/Dragon alliance in effect, the Prince's hands are tied. An eerily similar suicide a week later, however, convinces Jocelyn Marsh that something has to be done, the Order's privacy be damned.

The problem is, the Order is equally in the dark. The Dragons have dispatched an investigation coterie which includes at least one high-ranking member of the Dying Light, and they have managed to obtain the suicide notes, but they are no closer to discovering the truth than anyone else. Saito herself is leading the investigation, but even she is not certain what forces are at work. Concerned that some ritual of



the Dragons may have gotten away from them, Prince Marsh has ordered Weldon to investigate. Because the alliance keeps him from acting directly, Weldon has begun searching for reliable Kindred with experience in investigations of all sorts who cannot be directly linked to him. The alliance is simply too important to jeopardize, even for something like this. So any vampires, ghouls, or mortals dispatched to UCLA for this purpose are essentially on their own, without the protection of Prince or Sheriff should they be caught. But even if the players manage to avoid the Dragon's guards and investigators, the question still remains: what, if anything, is responsible for these odd suicides?

A South Beach Diet

Only a short time ago, as the Damned measure things, the South Bay area, including Long Beach and South Beach, were important centers for the Carthian Movement and the Circle of the Crone. The area is a rich Rack

and was once a major center for the motion picture industry. But times changed, as they always do. The film industry shifted north into Hollywood and the Carthians followed, all but abandoning their Long Beach enclaves. The Circle still maintains a small presence in South Beach, but with the intensity of their boarder disputes with the Lancea Sanctum, they can not afford to spend many resources there. In the years since the attention of the covenants has been drawn away, South Bay has degenerated considerably. Carthian and Circle regents still technically claim the area, but they are absentee landlords, rarely doing more than hunting in their domains, although some Acolyte cults that venerate sea goddesses still congregate here.

In the lack of strong authority various castoffs, criminals, and the unbound have claimed South Bay as their own, hunting, dwelling, and Embracing as they will. For the most part, the covenants can do little about this and, so far, no one has tried to conquer this rich territory. The Carthians and Invictus are locked in a bitter



feud over Downtown and open battle regularly flares up along the LAX/Inglewood boarder. At the same time, the Circle and the Lance are bitter enemies who frequently come into conflict along the Pasadena boarder. The Ordo Dracul might, conceivable, be able to make an attempt to seize South Bay, but the Order has tied its fortunes to the Carthians and must therefore keep a close eye on its own boarders with the Invictus. In short, no one but the unbound or the independent regents have the time or the resources to make a bid for South Bay, and as a more or less open Rack it serves the best interests of these groups to leave things be.

However, Prince Marsh has decided that enough is enough. Continued Carthian success in Los Angeles depends on progress as well as control and to leave any of its territory to rot is a stain upon the covenant's honor, not to mention a powerful weapon in the hands of its various enemies. To that end, the Prince makes a shocking announcement in open Court; the regents of South Bay have repeatedly failed in their duties to maintain their domains and are to be stripped of their titles. She then issues

an open invitation for any suitable vampire who believes that he or she can tame South Bay to make an attempt to clean it up. This is a golden opportunity for the players to establish themselves in the city and cement their status among the Carthians, not to mention secure the favor of the Prince. But while this is no fool's errand, and the prize very rich indeed, it will not be easy. For decades this Rack has been open territory and the unbound who dwell there like it that way. They have little interest in becoming Carthians, or bowing to any regent for that matter.

On top of this, South Bay is isolated from the main Carthian centers of power and many other Kindred, the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum among them, have no intention of letting the Carthians claim it. Little support and powerful enemies, not a happy position for any vampire. And even if the other covenants avoid causing trouble, South Bay is not a safe place and hasn't been one for decades. But, if the players succeed in bringing the unbound to heel and manage to secure control of the Bay they will have become the rulers of one of the richest Racks in the city.

Seven Deadly Sins

Christopher Varell occupies an unusual position in L.A. politics. He is an officer of the Court, the official representative of the unbound, but most unaligned vampires want nothing to do with him. While his position is symbolically important, the unaligned have been managing their own affairs for a long time, and have no intention of letting anyone else get in the way. Besides, in the Fringe the various independent lords have far more power and influence than the Court does. If any of the unbound have a serious problem, it is to these figures that they flee. That is why Varell is shocked when one of the Forest Lords approaches him with information to be presented to the Prince. A coterie of unknown vampires attempted to move through the Angeles Forest. When confronted by Azrael, they responded violently and were obliterated. This in itself would hardly be more than a footnote to the Forest Lords themselves, but they suspect that these strange vampires may have been scouts for the mysterious group known as VII.

Big news, to say the least, but Varell is cautious. Before he brings this to Marsh's attention he sends a few of his own people to investigate. He expects the investigation to be relatively brief, but is shocked when the group stumbles back the next night dragging a wounded fellow with them. Given the nature of the Kindred, little is left of the attackers to study, but the wounded member of the group, a Mekhet with too much power and not enough sense, attempted to read Azrael's mind to gain insight into the encounter. She responded in her usual, violent fashion, gouging out his eyes and shattering both legs. But even so, it seems

he saw enough. Although clouded with pain and fear, he remembers seeing a brief glimpse of her mind, a strange symbol he can't identify and the Roman numeral for seven.

A shocking and dangerous revelation to say the least, and one that puts Varell in an uncomfortable and dangerous position. The Forest Lords, and Azrael in particular, were his benefactors once, and are still powerful allies that he cannot afford to lose. More than that, they are a potent and popular (if feared) force in unbound politics (such as it is). To alienate the Lady of the Forest is unwise; to antagonize her is tantamount to suicide. Varell is bound to report the suspected VII attack to the Court, but the possibility that Azrael is (or once was) also a member of that group is considerably more sensitive. Should he dutifully deliver this information and hope the Prince can protect him from Azrael's wrath, or should he wash his hands of the matter and bury it? Unsure, Varell vows to investigate deeper before sharing that tidbit. To protect himself, and to discover the truth, he is seeking the aid of other Kindred to determine whether or not his subordinate's findings are accurate.

Is Azrael a member of VII, or did she perhaps break away from that group at some point? Was the attack actually aimed at her? It would certainly explain some of the unusual powers and abilities she possesses. Or is it a ploy by VII to rob Los Angeles of its most powerful defender? In any case, the players should be very careful if they choose to investigate the Forest Lords. Azrael may be in command of more of her humanity than most suspect, but she is still far from a gracious host and is an incredibly deadly enemy if provoked.



City of the Damned
LOS ANGELES

What you have to understand
is that Los Angeles is not a city.

It's an illusion, an idea, a dream in many ways.

And with every dream, nightmares follow

Jocelyn Marsh
Prince of Los Angeles

