

CHICAGO BY NIGHT

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Introduction

If rumors are true, you've done more to rehabilitate your city in the eyes of the Camarilla than perhaps any other American Prince. You have enforced a strict Masquerade, keeping your Kindred safe from the Inquisition. You have somehow forged a truce with the Lupines, promising peace on your streets. You have curtailed the numbers of Anarchs and Sabbat without losing the humanity to which we cleave. What's more, you uphold the role of Clan Ventrue ascendant, even in these trying times. On one hand I am inclined to praise you as some kind of wonder Prince. On the other I must question: How long before the flimsy barricade around Chicago frays, its contained fires spilling to incinerate us all?

— Justicar Lucinde, from a letter to Kevin Jackson, February 14, 2019

Chicago is more than a simple city with a few vampires lurking in alleys and nightclubs. It is a pulsing, electric domain containing a multitude of Kindred with hundreds of plots, secrets, and fears. It is the Camarilla's North American crown jewel. Chicago is a symbol of hope for Kindred in this age of fear. It serves to show that when the Traditions are enforced, when forgiveness is provided in exchange for future favors, and when all Kindred are given a hope of admittance to the elite ranks of the Ivory Tower, a domain might function effectively, no matter the disparate elements making up its vampiric population.

Chicago is a hallowed ground, wracked by a bloody history but standing tall despite infernos and fallen Princes threatening to reduce it to rubble. It is also a lie built on the ashes of Kindred who have outlived their uses or posed too great a threat to the Camarilla's precious Masquerade.

Chicago has all the promise of a modern domain for young vampires. It holds a youthful Prince aloft,

and proclaims "if we can do it, so can you," "no Kindred is too insignificant to be denied a role in the Camarilla," and "all you have to do is work hard for the sect and we will take you into our protective grip." All the while, fledglings burn for petty fuck-ups, Anarchs find their numbers culled, and the Ventrue sink their fingers deeper into the city's heart, ensuring nobody will wrest power from the Clan of Kings.

Any Kindred can stake a claim in Chicago, claim a haven and territory, and try to make the best of it. It is, after all, one of the wealthiest domains in the United States. But a few nights into that Kindred's stay — even as they're feeling secure with their influence — another vampire, or that vampire's ghouls, or even their mortal subjects, will show up at the new Kindred's door. They might make offers. They might promise deals. They probably smile as they threaten.

There's a cost to being a Kindred in Chicago and your debts will stack up, all as the hierarchy of vampires above you count the sacrifices you've made for an honored place under their control.



Jewels Have Many Facets

Chicago by Night is a campaign setting for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, providing you all the tools you need for running chronicles in Chicago or indeed any other domain, as the content within this book is simple to extract and use for your cities elsewhere around the world. Change characters, location names, character clans, and political affiliations: This book encourages you to use it as your world for **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

- **Introduction** — You're reading it right now.
- **Four Trips to the Second City** — Fiction throughout this book illustrates the activities of several of the Prince's Hounds; upcoming political shifts, gains, and losses; and one potential introduction of the Lasombra to the city.
- **Red No° 5** — Fiction regarding the newest night-spot in Chicago, popular among Kindred and exclu-

sive in its admittance of clientele. Discover, from a mortal's perspective, the hottest bar in the city.

- **Chapter One: The World of Chicago** — Learn about the history of this domain, the challenges facing it in modern nights, and the secrets of multiple Kindred, all in the form of in-world artifacts that can be used as handouts and treasure items for players wanting to know more about the domain.
- **Chapter Two: Welcome to the Night** — Clan Lasombra has long clung to the Sabbat sect, but these nights see them flock in increasing number to the ranks of the Camarilla. Welcome to the Night outlines the array of reasons for their migration, details what might make a mighty clan into refugees seeking sanctuary among ancient enemies, and illustrates the Lasombra attitude toward their new home.
- **Chapter Three: The City** — Discover the districts and key locations of Chicago, the new Homestead system for playing chronicles restricted to select areas of the domain, and an assortment of encounter tables for Storytellers looking at presenting players

with fresh and horrifying character and territory developments.

- **Chapter Four: Kindred of Chicago** — Over 50 Kindred are provided with biographies, stats, ambitions, secrets, relationships, and ways to play a role in any chronicle set in an urban environment such as Chicago. While Chicago undoubtedly houses more Kindred than exist within these pages, these SPCs are more than enough to build any chronicle in Chicago or elsewhere.
- **Chapter Five: Coteries** — Chicago's Kindred don't all exist in isolation. Quite the contrary, they form coteries, just like the PCs. This chapter outlines several of those coteries, their agendas, their rivalries, and uneasy alliances. Additionally, Coteries provides multiple new coterie types for PCs to use in their stories.
- **Chapter Six: Clan Lasombra** — This chapter provides the information necessary to make Clan Lasombra playable vampires. As well as detailing sample character archetypes, the clan's bane and compulsions, along with the kinds of mortals the Magisters are drawn to Embrace, it provides the Clan of Night's Discipline of Oblivion.
- **Chapter Seven: Loresheds** — A city as rich in history as Chicago contains a multitude of loresheds connecting characters, events, regions, cults, and philosophical alignments. A character may purchase a loresheet from this chapter to more deeply embed their past and future in this domain.
- **Chapter Eight: Chicago Chronicles** — Here we provide dozens of chronicle hooks encompassing the core themes of Kindred existence in Chicago: The Beast, Frenzy, Hierarchy, Humanity, Hunger, and You Are What You Eat. For a Storyteller looking for a chronicle idea in a pinch, or the Storyteller who wishes to build something grand from a small seed, this chapter contains plentiful ideas.
- **Chapter Nine: The Sacrifice** — The full story in which Lasombra delegates make their bid to join the Camarilla of Chicago. Most groups will need approximately three game sessions to complete this chronicle. In this story, PCs engage in social intrigue, solve mysteries, and get involved in combat situations — some of their choosing, others less so — all to eventually decide the fate of Clan Lasombra.

Four Trips to the Second City

I

Three dead men cruised through Chicago. Their motorcycles roared as they sped through its busy streets. Ramrod and his ghouls took the rear, keeping any cars behind them at a wide distance. Dread rode in the middle. Tyrus rode in front, leading his gang to one of the city's union halls, where the Anarchs were meeting.

For Tyrus, meeting in respectable places like this was a bad sign. In the old days, the movement kept itself to squatted buildings or crumbling warehouses. Those were better times. Now, so many of the old faces had died or left for the deserts. In their absence, the Anarchs were getting bolder. Tonight Maldavis, one of their greatest shames, called them together for a "discussion on our future."

So, the Wolf Pack went on the hunt. As agents of the Camarilla, they were duty-bound to put the fear of God into them. Kicking their skulls in was just for fun.

Tyrus pulled a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from his jacket. He glanced at the ghouls. "You two got your shit together?"

He didn't remember their names. He didn't care. Ramrod mentioned something about them being siblings, the latest in a line of people desperate enough to drink his blood. Tyrus never asked where he got his ghouls, or why they vanished every couple of years. As long as he wasn't embarrassing the Pack, what he did was his own business.

"Yeah, yeah," the brother said. Like his sister, he was fresh from feeding, eyes open and wild. He whipped out a switchblade.

"You'd better be," Tyrus said. "The Anarchs are wusses, but you get enough of them in one room and they think they can take on anyone."

He lit his cigarette. Dread and Ramrod flinched in the presence of his lighter's flame.

Tyrus took a puff and grinned. Thirty years and it still spooked them. "Let's dance!"

He kicked the thick wooden door open, heralding his presence with a cloud of dust and splinters. The other four rushed ahead of him. One of the Anarchs leaped for them, only to get pinned down by the ghouls. Dread held off any other wannabe heroes with a sawed-off shotgun. Maldavis stood at the front of the hall, glaring at Tyrus.

She growled. "Did Jackson send you?"

Tyrus shook his head. "We were in the neighborhood, and thought we'd pay a house call. Make sure no one's got any big ideas."

"Bullshit." Maldavis stormed down the steps in front of the stage. "Who else could you answer to?"

Tyrus strolled up to meet her halfway down the aisle. "Just us." He blew smoke in her face.

Maldavis didn't blink. "You could have walked away, like the rest of your clan. Then you could fight for something that *really* matters."

He pulled the cigarette from his mouth. "You think I care about what my 'clan' does?"

He held the cigarette up to her face, close to her cheek. Maldavis grimaced.

"I'm a member of the Wolf Pack. That's all."

He crushed the still-lit cigarette into his arm, not breaking eye contact. "I know where my

loyalties lie. But what about you? See, I heard—"

A shot rang out from above. Tyrus turned to see one of Ramrod's ghouls hit the floor twitching. His head was blown open.

"Ray!" Ramrod ran toward the ghouls.

Dread aimed his shotgun upward but the other gunman hit first. The blast tore through his throat. The shotgun flew from his hand.

Tyrus looked up to see a figure in the shadowy rafters above.

"Hey!" He shoved Maldavis to the ground and ran onto the

wall. He crawled up to the rafters to see a man in combat fatigues halfway towards the exit. The man examined him with gray, bloodshot eyes.

Tyrus rushed towards him. "Got something to say for yourself?"

He didn't know where the man pulled the pistol from. All he knew was that it was a point-blank shot between his eyes. By the time he wiped the blood and bits of brain from his eyes, the gunman was gone.

II

The four of them came in from the rain, following the signs into the psychic parlor. The waiting room was small, dimly lit, and smelled of sage incense.

The visit was Nadine's idea. Tyrus knew her name now. It was hard to forget it after hearing Ramrod say it hundreds of times in all kinds of tones over the past

few weeks. After she helped them bury her brother somewhere off of I-80, she wanted to talk to his ghost.

At first, Tyrus was against it. He knew vampires who could talk to ghosts. They were not good people. Still, there was something in the way that Ramrod talked to her lately.

He made awkward attempts at gentle assurance and dime-store platitudes about "being in a better place." It felt wrong. So he brought them to Max's parlor.

Tyrus didn't know what to make of it. Maybe Ramrod was just getting soft. Maybe he was too, for even taking them here. He shuffled on the sofa, his damp



clothes slipping on the upholstery's protective plastic.

Max parted the curtain between his studio and the waiting room and stepped through.

"Careful there, big guy. The Galura Water Slide's for paying customers only." He smiled.

Tyrus didn't smile back. He grabbed a wad of damp bills from his pocket. He was halfway to handing them over when Nadine spoke up.

"Do you speak with the dead?" She looked at Max with hopeful eyes.

After a moment, he said, "No. That's not really what I do."

Nadine's face fell. "Oh."

Tyrus smashed the money into Max's palm. "Nadine, it's either him or the warlocks."

Max counted the cash. "And good luck with getting them to do anything."

"There you go," Tyrus said to Nadine. He whispered to Max, "Her brother died. Just...make her feel better."

The young man beckoned the group into his studio. "I'll try."

He asked Nadine to shuffle a deck of tarot cards and drew enough of them to make a full half circle. While she did so, Max sat back in his chair, eyes shut tight.

Tyrus frowned as Nadine revealed the cards. It wasn't like anything in the movies. The deck was filled with images of flying dragons, iron forges, and celebrating skeletons. Max caressed each card as it came on the table, as if he read them with his fingers.

"I see a soul at peace," he said. "It has moved on and forgiven."

Nadine let out a happy sob. Ramrod patted her shoulder. Dread and Tyrus looked at each other, the former wearing a bemused smile.

Max continued down the spread. He frowned. "I see wolves."

Tyrus raised an eyebrow.

The seer continued. "They've been running for years. They don't know how tired they are."

They don't see the eagle watching them."

Tyrus stood up. "What are you talking about?"

"The pack leader thinks he can hide in the forests. They follow but the eagle hops from tree to tree." Max moved through the cards faster, tapping each one. "They think they're all alone, and the pack leader takes a moment to lick his scars but the eagle comes down. And the last thing the leader sees before it tears out its throat is these big, gray eyes..."

Tyrus slammed his hands on the table. "Shut up!"

Max came out of his trance. "You're all in danger."

"Uh-huh. Nothing new there." Tyrus stepped through the curtain. "Let's go, Pack. We got what we wanted."

"Don't leave the city!" Max yelled. "The eagle's going to finish the job if you do. You don't know what that'll start!"

"Let it," Tyrus said. "I could go for a rematch."

III

When Sierra Van Burrace accepted the Wolf Pack's demand to see her, she requested that they obey the Asako Penthouse dress code of tasteful, modern formal-wear. When they finally arrived at the hotel, only Nadine and Ramrod fit the criteria. She still had some good clothes that she hadn't sold off yet, and let her sire use her brother's dress shirt and pants. The plaid, Civil-War-era getup Dread wore fit the spirit of the

law, if not the letter. Tyrus didn't bother, wearing the same leather, chains, and boots he always wore.

Sierra looked him over with a sneer. "You can't even follow simple directions."

"Directions are for chumps," Tyrus said.

"Just what I wanted to hear from an Archon." She motioned to an attendant. "Bring us the drinks."

She sat them at a table. They heard a chorus of screaming from the room next door. The screaming faded to whimpers of pain. The attendant returned with glasses of warm, fresh blood. She placed one of the glasses before Nadine, who gulped it down in one go.

Sierra smirked. "Is she new?"

"Not that new," she answered, still taking in the flavors of terror the blood had. "A couple of nights."

For all his fear of going soft, taking the Pack on their first hunt with a newly Embraced Nadine was a smashing success. It was serendipity: A whole family's car broke down on a private road. They even trusted the Pack, right up until they unleashed her on them. Naivety was a rare thing nowadays, Tyrus thought. Something to treasure.

Sierra slid a manila folder over the dining table. Tyrus caught it and pulled it toward him, marking it with an oily handprint.

"That," she said, "is Clan Lasombra's petition."

Dread rose from the table,

hand on his shotgun. "Lasombra!?"

Shadows snaked up the walls and ceiling around Sierra. Tyrus grabbed his friend and threw him back on his seat.

"Easy, easy!" He hated to admit it, but this was a fight he couldn't afford to start.

The room returned to normal. "He didn't know?" Sierra asked.

"I kept him in the dark," Tyrus said. "No pun intended."

Dread glared at her. "I've had bad experiences with shadows."

After a moment to regain her composure, she continued. "The petition describes what we hope to bring to the Camarilla,

and what we have done to earn our place. I trust that you will bring it to the Prince as soon as possible, so we can begin negotiations."

"Yeah, he'll get it." Tyrus sniffed the blood in the glass. It was human enough. After taking a sip, he said, "You know, it's funny."

"What?"

"The Lasombra had everything in the Sabbat. If these negotiations screw up, you get nothing. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were rushing it to this. I'd say it looks like you're all running from something."

Sierra gripped her empty glass. "You might be right."

TV

Two dead men talked on a pier. After Tyrus finished his report, Prince Kevin Jackson kept quiet for a long time. They listened to the sound of water lapping against the beach.

Then, the Prince said, "Do you know what your problem is, Tyrus?"

Tyrus stretched his back. "I'm just too handsome."

"You start shit," Jackson said. "You act like nothing's changed, and it's putting us all in danger."

"Hey," Tyrus said, "You want to keep the peace, sometimes you gotta bust some heads."

"That's what I mean. You still think your gang's the only thing keeping the peace. So you bust an Anarch meeting, where I already had people in place, and then

you go around and antagonize the person I asked you to speak with."

Tyrus scoffed. "We're just asking the questions that need to be asked."

"You don't think I was already asking?" Prince Jackson grabbed Tyrus' shoulder and pulled him close. "It's the 21st century, Tyrus. We keep order, but we keep everyone safe while we do it. Do you think you're keeping everyone safe?"

"Well." Tyrus stood up. "I'd better get back to the Pack then. Wouldn't want us to start some shit, huh? Make things unsafe?"

Jackson motioned for him to sit. "I wasn't finished. I have a job for you."

"Oh?"

The Prince handed him a picture of a smiling young black man. "He's one of ours, but he's looking to move to Seattle. Now, he hasn't traveled before, and that's a bigger trip than just going to Milwaukee. He'll need protection, and you live on the road."

Tyrus turned the picture over in his hand. "Always wanted to see the forests."

Jackson raised an eyebrow.

Tyrus grinned. "Don't worry about it. Just thought of something I heard a while back. I'll tell the Pack to gear up."

Jackson nodded. The Prince walked from the pier, escorted by his guards. Tyrus stayed. He smoked a cigarette and watched Lake Michigan gleam in the moonlight.



Red No° 5

A Night to Remember That You'll Probably Forget

Oh, my god! What a fantastic night!

Okay, so my girlfriend Krissie and I are from Milwaukee. We came to Chicago for a girls' weekend and were having a little pre-game wine drinking session at Zed451 when Jason invited us out to meet a couple of his buddies at this place called Red No° 5. We were like "sure!" We were two girls out, looking cute, ready to mingle and, perhaps, get into a little trouble. Besides, Go-Lo was supposed to be playing and I love his sets because I'm a big house music fan, right? I mean, don't let my Becky-ish looks fool you. I love getting my groove on and getting down with the brothers, if you know what I mean.

We got to the club, which is a couple of doors south right past the six corners of Milwaukee, Grand, and Halsted around 10:30. Now, you wouldn't think a place like this would really start jumping until, like, midnight. But, there was already a line at the door filled with people wanting to get in. It was crazy! It felt like that movie about that club in New York that was real big during the disco era. Anyway, the bouncers looked really rough. I mean they looked professional, all clean-shaven and wearing black suits, the kind of doormen you'd probably see at any classy spot. But, it was clear that they were definitely not to be fucked with. They just had that vibe about them, y'know?

There was this one group of girls who looked like the just stepped off of an episode of *Real Housewives of Chicago* who looked like they were almost about to start a scene because the bouncers wouldn't let them in. I don't know why they wouldn't. They definitely looked like the kind of ladies guys would want in the club. They were looking like those ghetto models with their weaves, all squeezed into their tight dresses, which barely covered their asses or their tits, and shivering in the cold because they left their coats in the car and didn't want to pay a coat-check fee. I mean, it's the frickin' middle of March! You know Chicago doesn't decide to get warm until, maybe, late May!

Anyway, just as they were about to really turn up and act ratchet for not being able to get in the club, one of the bouncers (a big, pale white guy about 6'3", 350 pounds with a spiderweb tattoo that began on the top of his head and trailed

down to his neck with a spider at the end of it) lowered his head, tipped his sunglasses down to the bridge of his nose (so pretentious with the sunglasses at night, right?) and stared right into the lead chick's eyes. Then, he says real calm and cool, "I'm sorry, but you ladies are not allowed in Red No^o 5 this evening."

I don't know, but it looked like the lead girl almost wet her pants. She was so scared, she quickly went to her girlfriends and announced they were leaving that very second. The other girls were so shaken up by the look on their friend's face they left the line without hesitation. I looked at the group I came here with and got extremely nervous.

Don't get me wrong. I mean, Krissie and I are, like, super-cute girls. We're both blonde and we both work out. Krissie is a little thinner and, like, two inches taller than me, but I've got the bigger rack and a little junk in my trunk, which the brothers like. I totally get called a snow bunny all of the time. But we definitely weren't model-chick, hoochie-fabulous like those girls who were kicked out of line. On top of that, we had three guys with us, in untucked shirts, blue jeans, and regular shoes. If those girls couldn't get in, what chance would our grubby little crew have getting past the velvet rope?

I was kind of shocked when the spiderweb bouncer let us into the club with a smile and a friendly "Enjoy your evening."

Now, what I *didn't* mention earlier was that Krissie and I

were ready to party. By that I mean, we were smoking a little reefer in the car, which accentuated a really lovely merlot buzz. Then, Jason's buddy Trevor surprises us with a couple of capsules of pure MDMA, not that corny ecstasy shit. Obviously, Trevor was hoping a couple of happy pills would get him some lovin' from either Krissie or me... A blowjob at the very least. It was obvious he wasn't picky. But what he didn't know was that Krissie and I were old pros in this game and, we were in full TLC mode that night, AKA no scrubs.

We paid our entry fee and got our hands stamped. That's when the pills started kicking in a little hard, but manageable, as we started walking down this black corridor into the club. The red lights made it feel a little mysterious, like *Eyes Wide Shut*, but less cheesy. It was kinda sexy.

We enter the main room and it was pretty big, but not crowded. It wasn't empty. I mean, there were plenty of people there, but it was easy to walk around without bumping into anybody unless they were really sloppy. It wasn't your usual Friday-night crowd. Sure, there were a couple of people in suits and fancy dresses in the club who looked like they were playing it up, but this didn't feel like the usual "Let's go out because it's Friday" type of crowd. They were dressed nice, but there was a casual vibe, like they all knew each other or something.

The red lights hit the mahogany walls and chrome railings real nice (I'm studying interior

design so I pay attention to these things). The DJ had his own platform above the dance floor. It was a small, circular perch that was large enough to fit the turntables, a small couch and a circular table to set your drinks down. The DJ was playing some old-school hip hop from the 90s. The initial rush eased into the smooth groove of some really good shit. We walked past the first bar through a doorway that didn't have a bouncer with a rope in front...free access!

There was another bar behind the main floor! So cool! There were these black leather couches with mahogany tables. People were hanging out and having drinks, so I thought we should continue with another drink before heading downstairs to hear Go-Lo's set. Those couches were so soft and buttery, I felt like we were in the coolest music video ever!

So here I was, feeling good and rubbing this leather couch. Trevor thinks that this is a sign that he should make his move. Krissie, being the baddest bitch ever, slides between me and Jason like a good cock blocker should. Unfortunately, Trevor doesn't get the hint and starts trying to push up on the both of us... the creep! It's about this close to getting ugly and harshing my roll when the waitress comes to our table for our drink order.

Oh, what I forgot to say is that all of the waitresses are hot. I mean, "Off the cover of Vogue and what the hell are you doing working here?" hot. Our waitress was this tall, light-skinned black girl with

green eyes and a close-cropped haircut dyed blonde. She was wearing a tight, black, scoop-neck cocktail dress. I don't know if it was the mix of weed, Molly, and alcohol, but I was seriously questioning my orientation with this girl.

So, she gives me a menu. And I'm looking at the specials and I say out loud, "Excuse me, what's in a Winter Rosebud?" Her eyes get a little big and she quickly snatches the menu from my hand and gives me another one. "I'm so, so sorry! I gave you the wrong menu! That was...um...last night's specials. Here's tonight's menu."

I thought that her reaction was a little over the top. I mean, so what if it was last night's menu? What's the big deal? I didn't know alcohol went bad a day later. Whatever. I'm rolling and it's not even that deep. So I kept my thoughts to myself and order my drink.

Then, I saw *him*.

Now, remember when I said that this felt like the coolest music video ever? Okay, imagine you're moving in slow motion. The music is thumping 96 beats per minute in sync with your heartbeat. The lights dissolve from red to purple to blue and back again. People from all races and backgrounds are around you looking cool and ethnic and different and sexy...

And then, the crowd of beautiful dancing people parts, revealing the sexiest man God Almighty ever made.

He walked into the room talking to a waitress, who was

giving him some receipts to look over. There was some corporate-looking douchebag in a suit walking on his other side. He was about six feet tall with milk-chocolate skin. His hair was cut real low, he had a goatee, and he wore simple metal loops in his ears. He was chill, but had a little swagger you know what I'm saying? He wore a tight pair of blue jeans, black shell-toe sneakers, and a black t-shirt that hugged his muscular shoulders and arms but hung loose untucked over his jeans. I mean, his outfit shouldn't have stood out like that. On anyone else, especially the guys Krissie and I were stuck with, you wouldn't give that guy a second look. But this guy...his look was super crisp and he wore it with such confidence. He totally owned it. Like I said, mama likes a little hot chocolate in her milk and this guy was looking very yummy.

I was thinking about the butterscotch babies Special Dark (my name for Mr. Yummy) and I were gonna have and being totally comfortable with my parents disowning me when Krissie bumped my shoulder and said we should go downstairs to hear Go-Lo's set and to get away from Trevor's clammy mitts. I totally was down for that since Special Dark looked like he was heading that way, too. We told the boys we were heading downstairs and that they should hold down the table until we got back because we weren't gonna be down there long (total lies). They were busy making plans to try and mack on some of the girls they'd been seeing in the club, since it was

obvious that they were getting nowhere with us. Krissie managed to get a pill from Trevor, ecstasy this time. We split it, popped the respective halves into our mouths, washing the bitter taste down with our extremely well-made cocktails and made our way to the basement.

The basement. Oh. My. God. It was amazing. It had a similar layout to the top floor, but didn't have the second bar in the back. The black leather couches and tables were on an upper landing that flanked the dance floor. Go-Lo was in full effect. He was laying down some super-funky Afro House. It felt like we were at an Afropunk festival. It was all natural hair and face paint. Some people had nose piercings and tattoos, but some people dressed... older? I mean, I saw some people our age dressed like the 70s fashions from Soul Train were new. But it didn't matter because Go-Lo got them all into the same groove and everybody was dancing like it was some tribal ceremony invoking the ancestors.

And, before you ask how do I know about that tribal ancestor stuff, I've taken some Pan-African studies classes, too. I'm, like, totally woke.

Now, the second half of the roll is kicking right when Go-Lo drops my favorite new track. Krissie and I get on the dance floor and just start getting into the whole groove. So, we're dancing, and I see Special Dark at the left corner table sitting with this tall, lanky, super-dark bald black guy in a wine-colored suit with a yellow tie. He was kind of creepy looking.

And, no! It's not because he was really dark that I thought he was creepy! I'm not a racist! I'm just saying that he just sat there like some sort of statue, barely nodding his head to the music while Special Dark was trying to say something to him, which seemed kind of important.

I get really focused on details when I roll. It's kinda my thing.

Next to the statue was this Latina woman with big, curly hair wearing a yellow, flapper-style dress. She was gorgeous and she had her arm wrapped in the statue's while they sat. They were obviously a couple. They almost looked like they could be Special Dark's parents based on the vibes they gave off from their body language. I saw Special Dark get up from the table and start making his way to the dance floor. I started dancing as seductively as possible to get his attention. Unfortunately, the only attention I attracted was some greasy drunk guy trying to grind up on my booty. He was grabbing my waist, trying to pull me close, and I could smell a mixture of menthol cigarettes and Jack Daniel's on his breath. Ugh! He was gross! Even worse, I could see Special Dark dancing with Krissie...that bitch! While she was getting swept off her feet by my future baby daddy, I was stuck under the bridge with this troll who could not take a fucking hint!

Krissie whispered something in Special Dark's ear. I think she wanted to check on Jason and Trevor (since they were our ride) and left Special Dark on the dance floor as she headed

upstairs. There he was, my dark prince, alone while I was stuck with this basic bro trying to publicly get in my pants.

Then Special Dark turned his head and our eyes locked. He studied the situation for a moment and obviously saw a damsel in distress. What happened next is probably the sexiest thing that ever happened to anyone. He smiled and held out his hand, which I took immediately, and pulled me away from the asshole. I wrapped my arms around his neck and we started dancing as if we'd known each other for years. I barely noticed the bro attempt to make me the ham in his freak-down sandwich. He must've finally gotten the hint, because he finally left me and Special Dark alone so we could get to know each other a little better.

As we danced, Special Dark told me his name was Bennett and he was the host for tonight's party. I also think he said he was a co-owner of Red No° 5. All I could pay attention to was rubbing his strong, milk-chocolate arms as he held me close while we swayed to the beat. I looked into his light brown eyes and couldn't take it anymore. I wanted this man and it wasn't the drugs that prompted my next course of action. I mashed my face against his, feeling his soft, pillowy lips against mine. Man, could he kiss. He took my breath away! This was it. In my mind, we were gonna run away together, get married, and have a couple of beautiful mop-haired café au lait children. I was so lost in the moment, I didn't notice Krissie

coming back downstairs until she broke up my potential romantic love scene with Bennett.

Now, here's where the story gets *really* crazy.

Krissie joins us, wraps her arms around the both of us and we all start dancing together. Bennett is in the middle of these two white girls like a reverse cookie sandwich. I know that rando bro would have been extra-pissed if he saw this happening. Krissie and I were rolling really hard now. It got really hot as our hands were sliding up and down Bennett's waist, arms, and all over each other. Then, Krissie slides from behind Bennett to come in between us. She turns and plants a long, soft wet kiss on his pillow lips. Normally, this would have pissed me off, but I was feeling so good I didn't care. In fact, it was a huge turn on. Then, Krissie turned to me with a look that I never saw before. I was like a deer in headlights as she started to kiss me! Next thing I know, we were all kissing each other and becoming this sweaty, sexy heap of passion.

Oh, man. We needed to find a room and handle this before we really became "those people" at the club. Krissie and I were definitely letting our inner hoes out that night. But, I guess we had nothing to worry about since Bennett was the club owner, right?

The next few moments were a blur. Bennett's strong hands are gripping my ass just right while Krissie is kissing and licking Bennett's neck before returning to his lips. We're still all moving to the

beat of the music when Bennett breaks away and starts kissing my neck as Krissie licks his ear... Ow! Did Bennett just bite me on my neck? That was kind of hard, but hot at the same time. Oh, now Krissie is licking my neck where Bennett just gave me a hickey. She pulls away with her tongue sticking out before shoving it down Bennett's throat. Wait. Was that blood on her tongue? Wait. Was that my blood on her tongue?

Jason and Trevor ruined our love fest by coming downstairs and ripping Krissie and I away from our new favorite candy bar. They pushed Bennett toward the bar. The boys were really pissed and tried to start a fight with Bennett, probably because he got farther with us than they ever could, or ever will. They got all up in his face while Bennett stood there cool as a cucumber. I don't know why the bouncers didn't get involved, but Bennett just shot them an "I got this" look and these three big, scary guys, including the tattooed bouncer from earlier in the night backed away.

Now, during this whole time, the music was going and the people kept dancing. It's like it was no big deal. Even the statue and The flapper just sat there like this was nothing, just another Friday night at Red No⁵...

Until Trevor broke a beer bottle on the edge of the bar and lunged at Bennett. What came next happened so fast, and I was so fucked up, I know I'm making this up. But, I thought Bennett grabbed Trevor, spun him around

into a chokehold and sunk his teeth into Trevor's neck. He threw Trevor down like a used napkin, grabbed Jason by the neck and body slammed him to the ground.

With one hand.

The last thing I remember was Bennett's light brown eyes staring at me while his mouth was stained with Trevor's blood. Then, everything got very hazy...

I woke up the next morning in my hotel room. Krissie was lying next to me in the bed; we were still fully clothed. She woke up about five minutes after me. We tried to clear our heads from the fog because we were both groggy as shit. The Molly we took last night was clean, but still. The after-roll leaves you in this half-floating state that could last the whole next day. We both were wondering what happened last night. It was a dream, right? Jason and Trevor were fine, right? Krissie went to get us some coffee while I tried to call Jason and see if he and Trevor were okay from the night before. The call went straight to voicemail. I tried calling again, same thing. I must have called at least 10 times before finally giving up.

Jason never called back.

A couple of months later, Krissie and I were back in Chicago for another night on the town. We decided to head back to Red No⁵ since we had such a great time there before the weirdness. As we got to the front of the line,

we saw that my favorite spidery bouncer was working the front door. However, he wasn't so warm to us this time.

"I'm sorry, ladies, but I can't let you in tonight," he said.

"Why not?" I asked in my best little-girl voice.

"Last time you were here, you caused problems. We can't afford problems here."

"That wasn't us!" I pleaded. "We didn't cause the problem, it was those two guys we came here with! You can't blame us for something someone else..."

Before I could get the next words out, Mr. Bouncer lowered his head and tipped his sunglasses to the bridge of his nose. I looked into his eyes and, at that moment, saw what happened to Jason and Trevor. They brought us into an environment we knew nothing about and they proceeded to shit all over the place and break the rules. They paid the price and it wasn't pretty. It was only because of the rules that Krissie and I were able to walk out of the club. Now I know how those hoochie mamas felt a couple of months past.

Krissie and I got out of the line and left. We never stepped foot into Red No⁵ again.

We don't know what happened to Jason and Trevor and we don't wanna know.

We just knew that we didn't belong there.