

Colton's Chronicle: Night of the Gathering

Somewhere beneath Atlanta. Date: October 11th 2025. Memory: Burned into bone.

They hadn't called a Conclave in over a year. Not a proper one. Too many dead, too many gone silent in the soil. But someone finally stitched up enough nerve to summon us, and wouldn't you know it, they picked the damn Aquarium.

A strange place for Kindred politics — fish behind glass and predators pacing the floor.

I wasn't planning on speaking. Wasn't even planning on *attending*, not at first. But when I realized I was one of the oldest Nosferatu left — still standing, still thinking, still watching — well... someone had to speak for the family. Someone had to make sure the fledglings didn't get sold like meat at the back of a butcher's truck.

So I went. Kept to the shadows. Observed. Listened. The way we do.

The Prince opened with formalities, calling each clan and coterie forward. Most ignored us — expected, as ever. But the other Sewer Rats? We drifted to one another like spilled oil. Quiet, cautious greetings became a kind of warmth. Not friendship, exactly. Family. The kind you get forged with, not born from.

Then something strange.

Out the corner of my eye, I caught a movement — a small rat-ghoul. Pale eyes. Warped skin. Clearly ours, or at least *once* ours. It beckoned me. No words. Just a look that said "*follow.*" Out the exit. Into the night. Down, toward an open manhole.

Could've been a trap. Probably was. But when one of *our own* calls, you answer. I signaled the others. Called them to arms. Just in case.

But before we could slip into the tunnels, the Prince's hounds stopped us. "*Return. State your name. Be seen.*"

I didn't want to kneel. Gods know I didn't *want* to. But order matters more than pride — especially to the young. So I returned. Named myself. Stood tall, or as tall as I could manage.

Then the chaos bloomed.

The Praxis was declared. Just like that. The old Prince stepped down, like bones giving way in wet earth. And the new one — hungry, green, and smiling like a cutthroat merchant — took the throne. There was no grace in the transfer. No order. Only whispers, sidelong glares, and hungry little schemes unfolding behind glass tanks of blue-lit jellyfish.

I felt the tension rise immediately. Change makes Kindred stupid.

A fight broke out. And another. Someone tried to stage an assassination — sloppy work, if you ask me.

I did what I always do: kept to the edges and guarded mine. Promised the other Nosferatu I'd protect them. Promised Atlanta I wouldn't let it become another necropolis.

But even as I stood guard, my mind was elsewhere — back to that rat-ghoul. When I finally slipped away to check, I found its body crumpled in a runoff tunnel. Slain. Torn. Left as a message, I suspect. *Stay out of it.* I didn't listen.

The night wasn't done.

It didn't take long before another **Praxis** followed, the details are fuzzy and seemed to go by too quick, I did what I could for the family. Somewhere in that madness, I found **Bashir**—old friend, Anarch, stubborn bastard. We spoke briefly amid the confusion, two soldiers sharing a glance in a room of politicians. He was the first to sense the tide turning ugly.

Then my phone buzzed—one of my MARTA contacts. “Southern lines going dark,” he said. “Full shutdown. No explanation.”

That was all I needed to hear.

I looked to Bashir, and he saw it in my eyes. We gathered the Nosferatu and the Anarchs alike and went down into the veins of the city. Southbound, toward the noise.

That's where we found them.

The Sabbat.

Filthy things. Wild-eyed. Doomsday preachers with claws. They were trying to claim the rail lines — cut the city's veins before we even knew we were bleeding. But they weren't expecting us. Not so many. Not so united.

They died screaming.

When I returned — bloodied, but intact — I gave my report to the new Prince. He listened. Nodded. Tried to hide his emotions behind a politician's grin. Then he named me **Sheriff**, for “services rendered.” Said I'd proven myself capable of bringing order to chaos.

Maybe so.

Or maybe he just didn't want me on the other side of the line.

While he spoke of politics and Anarch treaties, I reached out to the clan. Sent a scouting party east, toward Decatur. Watched through one of their minds as they crawled deeper than they should've.

The Sabbat weren't done. Just beginning.

This city will bleed again before the year's out.

But I'm watching now.

And I don't blink.