

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

New Orleans is my soul, my muse, my inspiration. The Crescent City is a city of magical thinking and serendipity. Secrecy, murky enchantment and menace lurk, close by. Here's to the people, places and stories of New Orleans untold, past and present and future.

Like a flambeau, a beacon, a torchlight in time, she threads and unites yesterday, today and tomorrow. Warm and drowsy, framed by bowing oaks. She appears at rest, beneath a soft sun and shooting stars burnt out. While wild roses bloom, iron fencing keeps guard. Flecks of shadows and time. Universal. Shining golden light. Inviting devotions, weathered footsteps, layered with remembrances, timeless riches and blessings, griefs and sorrows. Beautiful and picturesque, and dark. But forever quaint and beautiful, as of old, and deceptive. Never to be forgotten. Broken-glass portraits that whisper.

Stepping back in memory. The head, heart and soul shall endlessly remember, not forget. Backlit skies aglow, legacies unclaimed, Bourbon nights, angel trumpet fragrances, sunrise dewdrops, dreamy languors, perfumed vapors, haunting mists and mysterious shadows.

Time gone, passed by, cannot erase what survivors know. Masked identities, quaint cottages of old, sentinel saints and slumbering Cities of the Dead. Lingering memories remain. The dusk and dawn of memory. Fragments. All hidden in the mind's eye. Forever glitters of twilight echoes of what was, what is, what will never be again. Forever and a day, yesterday shimmering, the past reawakened.

St. Louis Cathedral steeple spires and cathedral bells, clouded by Lake Pontchartrain mud in the eye, smeared like bayou mascara. All disappearing. Blown down. Washed away. Melting. Reappearing. Come back. Snow cones, high-water marks, invisible doorsteps, missing rooftops, masquerade balls, crumbled bricks, silent coteries, ancestral tapestries, bands that play on, Mardi Gras, timelessness, prayers at the edge of purgatory and dancing atop the cracks of doom. Three hundred years of memories. Layered labyrinth.

Hurricane Katrina defined the bonds that cannot be explained or broken. You can take the people out of the city — but not the soul — that remains here.