

THE SOOKIE STACKHOUSE COMPANION

Also by Charlaine Harris from Gollancz:

SOOKIE STACKHOUSE

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Death's Excellent Vacation (co-edited with Toni L.P. Kelner)

THE SOOKIE STACKHOUSE COMPANION

EDITED BY
CHARLAINE HARRIS

GOLLANCZ
LONDON

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Charlaine Harris, Paula Woldan, Danna Woldan, and Lauren Dodson.
'Sookie's Family Tree' created by Tiffany Estreicher, based on a
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P R E F A C E

The World of Sookie Stackhouse

Sookie and I go back a long way. We're practically sisters. Many years ago, when my mystery career was languishing, I thought it might be a good idea to shake up my writing style by trying something new. It might be fun to write a book that contained all the elements I loved: mystery, the supernatural, bloody adventure, and a dash of romance. And since people had told me for years that I had a great sense of humor, I thought it would be interesting to try to include that in the book, too.

Without a contract, without a soul being at all interested, I began to establish the character of my protagonist. My grandmother's best friend's name was Sookie, and since it was a fine old Southern nickname, I thought it would do well for my heroine. And "Stackhouse" just flowed right after it. I wanted to write from the point of view of a human, not a vampire or other "supe," and since I have to live with Sookie, I wanted to make her as interesting as I possibly could. I decided she would date a vampire, as the entrée into a completely different world, and I had to establish a reason for sensible Sookie to do such a crazy thing. After a long thinking session, I came up with telepathy, which I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

Up until then, most vampires in fiction had exotic, sexy names. My vampire, I decided, would be named Bill. Instead of setting my books in the picturesque, touristy part of Louisiana, I'd make do with the distinctly

unromantic northern part. Instead of being angsty brooders, my vampires would be trying their hardest to be in the forefront of business; they'd be hard workers, and they'd have their own internal system of checks and balances.

I finished *Dead Until Dark* and turned it in to my agent, the great Joshua Bilmes. It took Joshua a long time to warm up to the Sookieverse, but he dutifully did his best to sell my favorite book. After two years of rejections, *Dead Until Dark* seemed likely to live up to its acronym. Then a young editor at Ace, John Morgan (now at DC Comics), decided to take a chance, and his boss, Ginjer Buchanan (my present editor), okayed the deal.

We've never looked back.

Readers seemed to want more details of the Sookieverse, and the website (www.charlaineharris.com) has always bubbled and seethed with questions. How *do* you make Caroline Bellefleur's chocolate cake? What about that pesky fairy genealogy? What book contains the famous shower scene? (I'm just kidding on that last one; everyone knows the shower scene.) How do the short stories fit into the chronology of the books?

We've assembled *The Sookie Stackhouse Companion* to answer all of these questions and hopefully a few more, to give readers a thorough look at the world of Bon Temps, and to provide extra snippets of interesting information about Sookie's world and the people who live and die in it. Though this book is about the books, we also give a nod to our favorite television show, *True Blood*, by including an interview with one of my favorite people, Alan Ball.

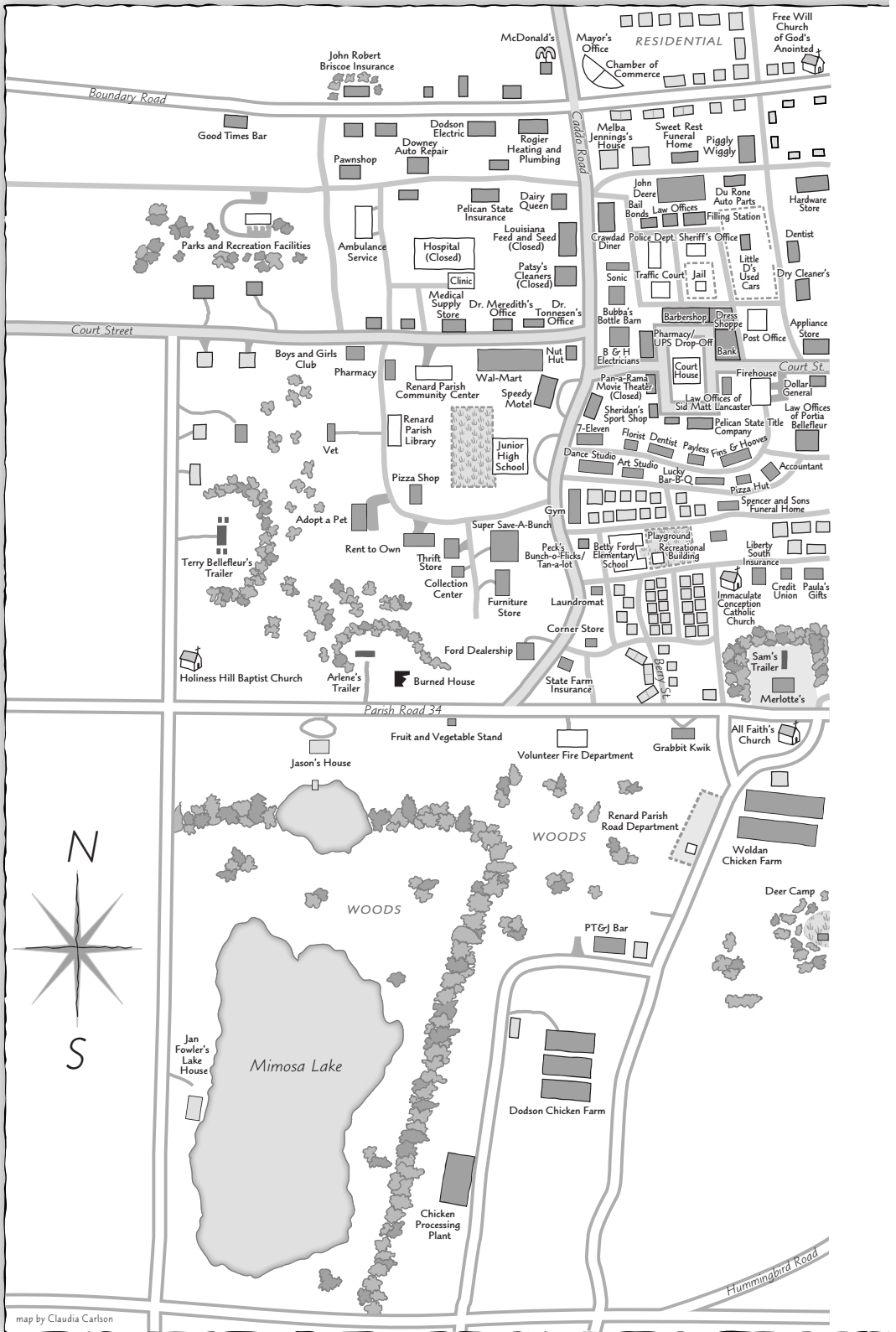
Lots of people helped me assemble this companion, and I tried to thank all of them in the acknowledgments. But let me just say here that without the help of my assistant and best buddy, Paula Woldan, I would have torn out my hair and cast myself upon the floor in despair at a few points. So thanks, Paula, and I think I had some of the most fun ever drawing the map with you.

I'm sure the second *The Sookie Stackhouse Companion* is on the shelves, I'll think of something I should have included, but it's time to let this project go. I hope you all find something in the book to entertain, enlighten, and engross you.

See you in Bon Temps.

—Charlaine Harris

THE SOOKIE STACKHOUSE COMPANION



map by Claudia Carlson

Bon Temps and Its Environs

