

## Los Santos and the Sinners

Leah Stoogenke

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There's something about the water in Los Santos. At least, that's the excuse anyone living in the city will give whenever some new-to-town, bright-eyed, high-hopes fly-in asks about it. It's an answer so ingrained in the minds of residents that no one questions it or even questions whether they should question it anymore. Los Santos is just *like* that, as is the whole state of San Andreas.

The island is small, driving from the North coast to the South will only take an hour if you're following traffic laws. In a place like San Andreas though, even the civs with the most spotless of records won't take longer than twenty minutes.

Something about the water. The only time anyone actually drives the speed limit is when they're avoiding the cops 'cause they've done something that could land them up in Bolingbroke Penitentiary for life. It's more suspicious to be caught driving thirty-five, stopped at a red light in khakis and a polo than it is to get clocked at one-fifty in a car with the hood-cover lost somewhere on the freeway and the passenger door ripped clean off, wearing all black and a balaclava. No one questions why, it's just something in the water.

The city of Los Santos itself is situated at the bottom of the island, taking up about the southern third of the state. It's got everything you need in a city: docks, airport, plenty of apartments and shops, police department, town hall, hospital, and never more than an hour without screams or gunshots or sirens.

North of the inner city is Vinewood Hills, where all the wealthy businessmen, mob bosses, and gang leaders have mansions and penthouses, and its winding roads make Vinewood a prime spot criminals go to rest for a minute after they've lost the cops.

At the center of the island lies the Alamo Sea, more of a lake than anything else, and bordered by a wasteland of trailer parks and oil fields, quarries in the Grand Senora Desert and some small suburban communities in Blaine County and Sandy Shores. Even the police aren't ignorant to the fact that the only time folks go up there is to cook meth or hide dirty money in padlocked warehouses, but they're generally too busy with the gangsters of the Los Santos South Side to really pay much mind. The only time LSPD really reaches the Alamo with force is when Lost MC are getting out of hand. The motorcycle club that has claimed the south coast of the lake as their turf have reached the tail-end of a pyrrhic war with the PD after they attempted to completely secede from the state. No one really knows or cares exactly how the conflict went down—some will even adamantly claim there was no war at all—as long as the Lost are still acting as weapons-connects for all the city gangs, which they are.

The top half of the island is taken up by the scenic mountains of San Andreas State Park, where civs from the city come to hunt and fish, sometimes legally, sometimes not. The State Rangers have jurisdiction over that whole area, and despite being the smallest law enforcement department, they're generally respected, even appreciated, by cops, civs, and crims, a claim that very few groups can make.

The only thing North of the parks is Paleto Bay, a little enclave of Los Santos on the opposite end of the island, with not much to offer beyond a bank, a car dealership, and a lot of one-story houses, most of which are empty.

The whole state is surrounded by ocean, although it's hard to tell exactly which ocean. One of the many layers of the shroud that surrounds San Andreas in a fog of unknowns. No one who lives in Los Santos was born there, and every resident has the same story, of falling asleep on the plane, arriving in Los Santos International Airport and catching a cab to Alta Street Apartments, where everyone either lives or used to live. People come to Los Santos for different reasons, most to escape some sort of troubled past, whether it be a trouble they brought upon themselves or one over which they had no control.

Los Santos is a place of new beginnings, of starting fresh in a city where no one knows who anyone is, including themselves. It doesn't matter who you were before, only what you become, and even that can change on a dime. Ask anyone you meet: when was the last time you saw death firsthand? They'll tell you it was last week, yesterday, this morning, or they'll put a knife to your throat and tell you it's right now. But ask someone: when was the last time someone *died* in this city? They'll think for a while, maybe trying to remember what day it is, what *month* it is, and the truest answer you can get is that no one has died since the last time someone *wanted* to die. In Los Santos, you can take a man to the water but you can't make him drink. The only way to flatline in this city is to give up, and that's a rare occurrence in a place where it's so easy to start fresh: to kill off just the aspect of yourself that's holding you back.

You never really notice just how much of your life, your beliefs, your fears and nature, are dependent on mortality. Without the comfort of imminent death, things change. You start acting reckless, stop caring about consequences. People in Los Santos are starving for the thrill of something new, would often *rather* get chased and caught by the cops than commit a crime to no response. Betrayal is more heinous than violence, because it sticks around. It's tough to keep track of who you want dead and who wants you dead, when no one ever gets dead. Sooner or later you'll end up needing help from someone who tried to kill you, or an impulsive decision you made will come back to bite you when it turns out the guy you stabbed has some powerful connections.

Living in San Andreas means putting everything you know to be true behind you, not just the laws that guide your morality but natural laws, of physics, of chemistry. It sounds metaphysical, and it is. If you see something that you're sure should be impossible, don't be so arrogant as to believe the city should abide by whatever scientific facts rule the rest of the world. Just learn to say that it's something about the water in Los Santos, the unknown ocean that hides San Andreas from the reach of outside forces, the vapor in the air that renders all inhabitants sterile, that gives every resident the ability to withstand a bullet to the head, and the drinking water that makes grudges harder to hold than to let go, and makes memories as slippery as trust. Even an attempted murder will be wiped from a victim's mind so long as his assailant knows to lay him to rest in the gentle waters lapping at the edges of San Andreas' beaches.

It's nothing but the water, and you learn quickly to be grateful for it, and to do so silently.