

TRACY FOBES

**HARD CHARGER**  
REBEL GUARDIANS MC SERIES  
BOOK 1



# *Hard Charger*

*Book 1 in the Rebel Guardians Motorcycle Club Series*

*A Contemporary Romance*

*Tracy Fobes*

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Hard Charger

Book 1 in the Rebel Guardians Motorcycle Club Series

A Contemporary Romance

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Ebook Edition

Published Baudrons Books, Inc.

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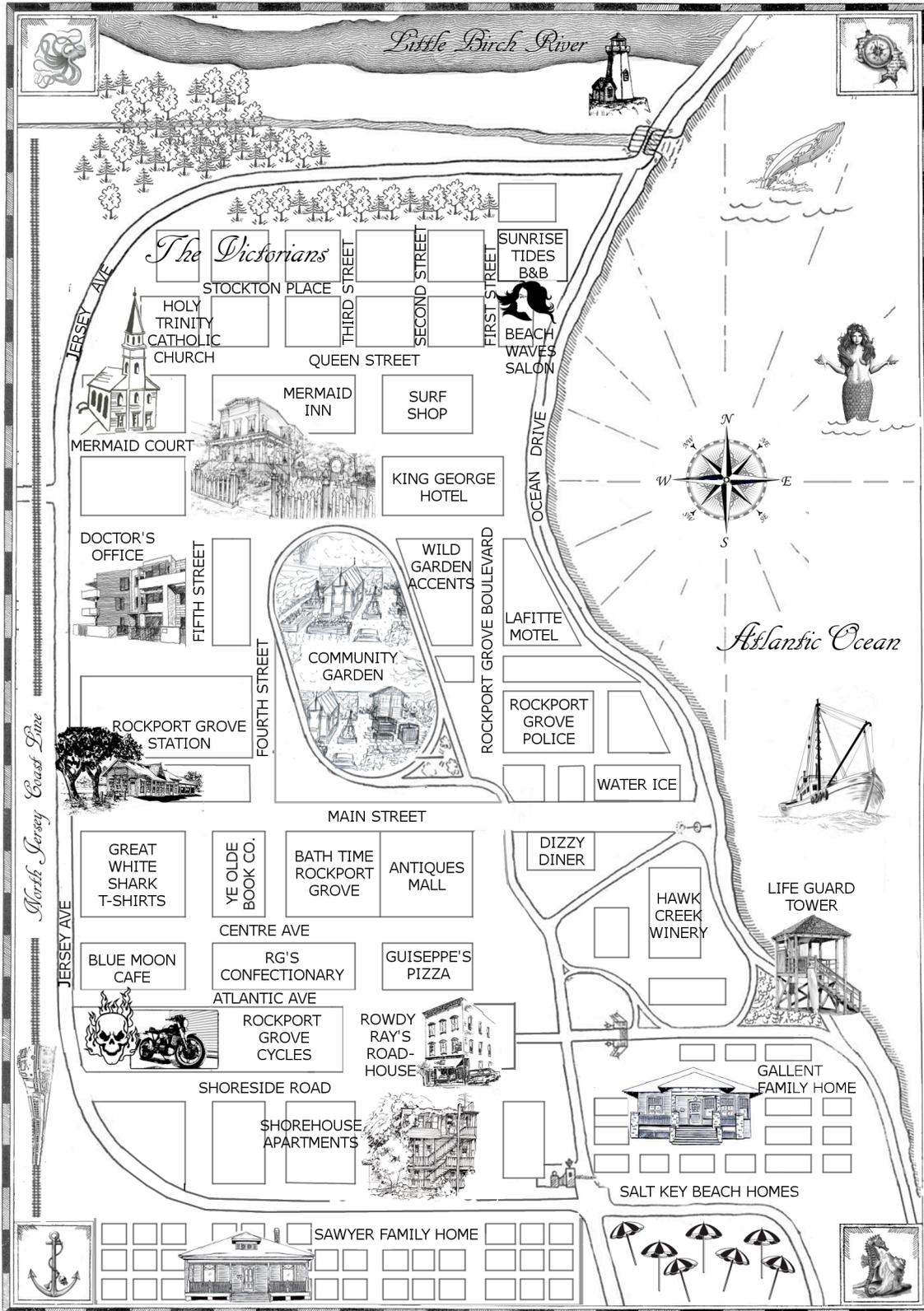
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*We all carry these things inside  
that no one else can see.  
They hold us down like anchors.  
They drown us out at sea.*

# Rockport Grove, NJ



# Prologue

*Rockport Grove, NJ, 1990*

The moon rose high and full in a starry sky that night. It had a pinkish cast that some people called a harvest moon, and others thought of as a blood moon. They say that nothing good can come from a moon like that—it drives people to madness, crime, suicide, and major crisis. On this night, it threw enough light onto the Gallent family front yard for Jake to see every detail of the worst—and last—fight his parents would ever have.

Just as the ocean responded to the moon's pull, each wave creeping farther up the shoreline than it ever had before and ripping the dune grass from its tentative moorings, Jake's father also rolled into new territory when he rode his motorcycle up the driveway of the family home that evening. Laurie Gallent had been wearing a hole in the rug pacing back and forth in front of the bay window. She'd been waiting for Kurt and, now that he'd finally shown up, she let out all of the steam that had been building up inside of her in one giant explosion.

"Goddamnit, Kurt, where the hell have you been?"

Jake dropped the controller he'd been using to play Super Mario Bros. on his Nintendo and ran to the window. His mom, he saw, stood on the porch with her hands on her hips.

He turned to look toward the driveway, his gaze sweeping across a crabgrass lawn and cracked cement walkway. His father had just dismounted from his Harley, a shiny silver and brown motorcycle he'd bought a month back, and was walking toward the porch. The porch light seemed to shine upon the motorcycle like a benediction.

"Shut the fuck up, Laurie," Kurt said as he started across the lawn. "I'm not ready for this. I don't want to fight. I just want a goddamn beer, all right?"

"That's too bad, Kurt," she jeered, "because tonight, you don't get a beer, and you don't get to go hide in the living room with the television."

Kurt scowled. "You good for anything but whining?"

Jake thought he heard his dad's voice slurring. He was drunk. All of a sudden, he saw that he'd left the bike his parents had given him for Christmas laying in the grass. He felt a chill gather in the pit of his stomach.

*Please oh please God make sure my dad doesn't see that bike...*

Seconds later, his father came across it too, and gave the tire a kick. "Can't that damn kid pick up his toys? Where is he?"

Jake winced. He silently said goodbye to his Nintendo.

"Never mind Jake and his toys," Laurie said. She stood square in her husband's path, blocking his way into the house. "What about your toys? That's all you care about—your

goddamn club and your goddamn motorcycle. Look at this place, Kurt. It's falling apart. But not your Harley. It's all gold and shiny like a wedding ring. Why don't you marry the thing?"

"I can't marry *it*. I'm married to *you*," Kurt sneered, as he reached the porch. "Get the fuck out of my way."

"No." Laurie stood her ground. "I'm not moving until you tell me you're going to be the father and husband you promised to be."

Jake could see that neither of his parents were going to budge an inch. He tensed.

Kurt clenched his hands into fists. "I'm so sick of your bitching."

"And I'm sick of living in this dump." She jabbed her finger angrily toward the wall, which Jake noticed was covered with peeling white paint. "I want to fix it up but all we got are bills. We don't have money for anything. *None*. It all goes to your motorcycle."

"I don't owe you explanations for how I spend my own goddamn money."

Jake saw his neighbor's outside lights flick on and knew a moment of deep shame, that everyone who lived around them now knew the details of their troubles. He also figured he'd never heard quite so many *goddamns* in the space of one minute as he had on this night.

Laurie clenched her fists. "Why don't you take a second to think about your son, then? Jake needs his dad, for Christ's sake. But you're never around. Always riding out somewhere, doing some job for some fucking 'club brother' who doesn't give a shit about us."

"For every job I do, someone does something for us," Kurt replied, his voice lower. "You know that. That's how it works."

"What the hell have they ever done for us?" Laurie hissed. "Look around, will you?"

A long pause ensued. Jake saw that his parents were staring at each other. Assessing each other for weaknesses, maybe. Kurt looked away first, and Jake figured his dad knew on some level that his mom was right.

Laurie smiled, but Jake didn't see any humor in it. "I don't want *their* help. You gotta get a normal job and start being a real father, for Jake's sake."

"Watch your mouth, woman. I've had just about enough of it."

Jake heard the warning tone in his dad's voice and knew it should stop there. He didn't particularly like his father, but he did respect his anger, and he had a good sense of just how far you could push Kurt Gallent.

His mother, however, had no common sense.

"You've had enough of *my* mouth?" Laurie's voice was rising higher with each word. "What about that slut across town? You tired of her mouth?"

Kurt drew in a sharp breath, then muttered a slow, disbelieving curse.

A few more lights went on in the houses around theirs. “Hey, shut the hell up, or I’m calling the cops,” one of their neighbors yelled. Jake felt his face flush with humiliation. In that moment, he hated both of his parents.

“Oh yeah, that’s right,” Laurie sneered. “I know all about her. What’s her name...Kristin?”

“I forget,” Kurt replied nastily.

Without warning, Laurie drew back her arm and slapped Kurt across the face, hard. Jake saw his dad’s head snap back. Then Kurt straightened and stared at his mom with something close to hatred.

His mom put her hands to her face and started crying noisily, with great gulping sobs.

Jake turned and raced for his bedroom door. His parents had a habit of fighting, but this was way worse than anything he’d ever seen. He had to stop them somehow.

He took the steps two at a time and made it to the front door, then yanked the door open, only to see his mom grasp his dad’s jacket and try to pull him in.

“I’m sorry, Kurt,” Laurie sobbed, her crying coming close to hysterics.

Kurt tightened his lips, and ripped her hands off his jacket, pushing her away in the process. She sprawled backward onto the grass.

Then he turned on his motorcycle boot heel and stomped down off the porch. Jake saw the emblem on the back of his jacket—the deer skull with the words *Rockport Grove Rebel Guardians* beneath it—and the moonlight glinted brightly on the skull. It flickered as if it was alive, reminding him of the grim reaper coming to collect his due...

He felt wetness on his cheeks and realized he was crying. “Daddy, wait!”

Kurt paid him no attention. Rather, he stalked over to his Harley and slung himself onto the seat.

As Kurt mounted his motorcycle and pressed the starter, Jake saw the skull on the back of his dad’s jacket winking and glittering at him.

“Daddy...don’t leave!” he shouted, the tears coming faster.

His father slanted a look toward him, and for a moment, their gazes connected. And Jake saw that his father didn’t care. Not anymore. Maybe never again. He raced over to his mom and did his best to help her up. He was only eight years old, but suddenly, he felt like the parent. In the distance, he heard the wail of a police car siren.

Kurt rolled the throttle, making the bike roar angrily. He pushed the bike into a tight U-turn, slammed it into gear and took off into the night, leaving Jake and his mom crying helplessly on the front lawn.

It was the last time anyone saw Kurt Gallent alive.

# Chapter One

*Rockport Grove, NJ, Present Day*

**Jake Gallent loved to** ride at night.

Nearly every evening between nine and ten o'clock, he pulled on his old leather motorcycle jacket with the racing stripes down the sleeves, shoved a three-quarter helmet down over his head, jammed his feet into motorcycle boots, put on gloves and went for a ride.

Friday night, September 20, he left home at around 9:30 PM. He made a sharp left onto Jersey Avenue and cruised past the Shorehouse Apartments, then followed along the railroad tracks. The few shops lining the avenue were closed, and the only glow other than the moonlight came from old-fashioned streetlamps that the town had erected in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, in an effort to reclaim its historical ambiance.

He rode his motorcycle during the day, too, of course. But those rides were strictly a matter of getting from one place to another. During the day, he had to pay very close attention to hazards: parked cars pulling away from the curb unexpectedly, other cars not noticing him on the road and cutting him off, pedestrians stepping into the roadway, even dogs chasing after him. Usually at night, there were fewer cars, no pedestrians, and no dogs.

Still, the lack of hazards wasn't the real reason for his nighttime preference. He rode after the sun had set simply because he loved the night. He loved the moonlight, the sound of crickets, the fog that blanketed the lower-lying areas in mystery. Even as a boy, he'd loved the night, setting up blanket tents on the clothesline and huddling in his sleeping bag. He'd looked for the big dipper, then pointed his flashlight at the trees, in search of a hooting owl or a particularly noisy bug.

Tonight, he saw no other cars on the road and passed not a single person—as was usually the case, everyone was either in bed or headed that way. Rockport Grove, he mused, was a quaint little seaside town, more along the lines of Cape May than Asbury Park, even though Asbury Park was a mere ten miles north. Without a single tourist trap within its city limits, Rockport Grove felt genuine, and Jake liked that, even though on some nights the streets were so quiet that he wondered if its citizens had either suddenly died or disappeared into thin air.

He kept his bike in check until he reached the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, which had its front lights on and was open twenty-four hours a day. After giving a silent nod to the church and Father Al, its pastor, he turned onto a county route that led down toward Fort Dix and the Pine Barrens. He let it out on the county route, taking it close to 150 MPH as the thick, misty smell of night pressed in on him from all sides. With the moon shining on the asphalt and lighting his way, he flew through the darkness. He felt free, and for a little while, he thought of nothing but the machine beneath him eating up the miles.

After five minutes or so, a convenience store, a garage, and a few other rundown-looking shops began to pop up along the route. Jake knew he was coming close to Route 73, a highway

which had a decent amount of traffic and sometimes a few cops, too. Soon, the light at the intersection with the highway came into view. It was green.

A bus had stopped not too far from the light and was letting passengers off. Maybe because of the late night and the bus driver's expectation that he wouldn't encounter any traffic, he'd blocked a good portion of the county route with his bus. An old white van was lumbering toward him in the opposite lane. Jake had no way to pass, or even to squeeze through—he was going to have to stop.

The light turned yellow. A big triangular sign announced *Road Construction Ahead*. Jake also saw a sign depicting a motorcycle going over an uneven road. He cut his gaze to the left. A flatbed trailer with its gate down sat near a construction zone on the corner of the county route and the highway—someone was putting up a new gas station. Calling upon the same kinds of skills he'd used when flying helicopters in Afghanistan, he sized up the slope of the trailer's ramp, its location next to the county route and highway, the trajectory and speed of the van, and the number of passengers left to board the bus.

He *had* an opening, after all.

He screamed toward the intersection. A few of the passengers waiting to board the bus turned to look at him with open mouths and wide eyes. He ignored them and, at the last moment, steered his bike toward the flatbed trailer. Using it as an impromptu ramp, he slowed only as much as he absolutely had to, took the ramp, and felt his motorcycle leave the ground with a whoosh.

He was sailing through the air. He felt weightless.

He was flying again.

But the ground was coming up fast, too. He lifted himself off his seat so he could use his legs as shock absorbers. His bike hit the road and wobbled, then went into a rear-wheel skid. He held the handlebars in an iron grip. His heart pounding, he felt the motorcycle fishtail wildly beneath him. Just as he thought he'd be getting an up-close and personal look at the asphalt, it steadied. He was through the intersection.

He pressed the brakes and stopped. Looked back. The bus driver was just stomping down out of the bus. His cap askew, the driver stared at him with his hands on his hips, then raised his hand and gave Jake the middle finger.

"Jackass!" the bus driver shouted.

Jake smiled, then rolled on the throttle, and pulled away with a squeal.

He always felt it on his bike.

The road. The power. The freedom.

He was in control.

Coming Soon

The Rebel Guardians Motorcycle Series Book 2: Defiance

Featuring Alex and Cyn's story, with "guest appearances" from Sofia and Jake

Keep an eye out for it!

## Other Titles by Tracy Fobes

### **Touch Not The Cat**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: 1998  
Format: Print and ebook

### **Heart of the Dove**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: 1999  
Format: Print

### **Forbidden Garden**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: 2000  
Format: Print

### **Daughter of Destiny**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: 2000  
Format: Print

### **To Tame A Wild Heart**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: Aug. 2001  
Format: Print and ebook

### **My Enchanted Enemy**

Publisher: Simon & Schuster  
Orig. Release: May 2011  
Format: Print and ebook

### **Portrait of a Bride**

Publisher: Dorchester (Leisure Lovespell)  
Orig. Release: Jan. 2005  
Format: Print and ebook

### **Portrait of a Man**

Publisher: Dorchester  
(Leisure Lovespell)  
Orig. Release: April 2006  
Format: Print

## About the Author...

Tracy Fobes: writer, screenplays and books. Loves blood and guts. Looking to buy a café racer. Way too many shoes in closet. Still listens to vinyl on a record player.

### **Screenplays:**

With several screenplays written, more underway and ideas lined up behind those, she's working to create a psychological and existential universe that feels so hostile, and threatens to reveal so much of the true nature of life, that viewers will feel scared, soul-sick and educated against their will. In other words: a horror classic.

### **Books:**

She started reading romance and horror novels as a kid, and hasn't stopped since. Now she writes them, too, combining the two genres together in as many different ways as she can think of.

As Tracy Fobes, she's published eight award-winning paranormal romances about love complicated by grimalkins, witches, druids, mermaids, and even mad scientists. Her publishers include Simon & Schuster and Leisure LoveSpell.

As Georgina Sand, she goes in a different direction and pens hot erotic romances that often have a paranormal twist, too.

Clyde Edwards is her horror alter ego...he's the guy who writes blood and guts, and is determined to raise a few goosebumps on your arms.

For more from Tracy Fobes:

<http://tracyfobes.com>