

Chapter 1 ~

Abigail watched slack-jawed as a large group of motorcycle riders drove down her quiet street toward the cul-de-sac at the end. She quickly recovered from her shock, however, as she saw the group pull into the driveway of one of the few empty homes on the street. So, quickly pulling out her cell phone, she called 911 to report a motorcycle gang in the area that looked like they might be breaking into an empty home on the end of her street.

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Mercedes and Jasmine watched from Mercedes' front porch as the motorcycle riders drove past, paying particular attention to a boy who appeared to be around their age.

Raven glanced over at the girls and smiled a half smile or perhaps smirked--the girls weren't sure which.

Jasmine looked over at her friend. "Okay, he's hot. But I can't help but ask. Is it legal for a little kid to ride a motorcycle on the street? Don't you need a license for that? That little redhead can't be more than nine--if that."

"Oh no!" Jasmine suddenly exclaimed, interrupting any answer Mercedes might have been about to give. "Abigail's taking her cell phone out. I bet you a hundred bucks she's calling the cops."

Mercedes pulled her eyes from the cute boy to across the street where her nosy neighbor lived, sighing. "Of course, she is. And I was wondering the same thing about that little kid on the tiny motorcycle. I mean it was kind of cute, but it's dangerous. The cops aren't going to be happy about that when they show up. I wonder who they are?"

Jasmine suggested, "They must just be turning around or something. This is a cul-de-sac after all."

Mercedes shook her head in disagreement. "No, look. They're actually pulling into the driveway of the home at the end. They can't be moving in though, there's no moving van. Maybe they're meeting the realtor."

It was Jasmine turn to shake her head. "There's been no For Sale signs on that property or the one to the right. I think they're already sold but no one's moved in yet."

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Craven looked over at Raziel once they pulled into the driveway of the house at the end of the cul-de-sac. "If I see that asshole Adrian, he's a dead vampire. I can't believe he sold half our land to a developer."

Raziel nodded in agreement as he looked at the five-bedroom home in front of him. "At least Jarrel was able to salvage some of it. We got three furnished houses out of it, and then all the back acreage where Aberly's staying in a cabin. It could have been worse."

Raziel pointed to the house on the left. "That one is Jarrel's and his new boyfriend Jamal, with Jamal's younger sister, Jasmine, living with them, and the one over there the twins can have. Pandemonia can stay with them, and you, me and the boys can take this one.

Pandemonia walked over to Craven and put a hand on his chest. "What's the matter Raziel, afraid to have me in the same house as Craven? Afraid, I might take your lover away... again?"

Pandemonia then glanced over at her two sons--Raven who was seventeen, and Hooligan who was sixteen, except Hooligan looked more like an eight or nine-year-old. Raven was tall, but not as tall as his father, and he was lean but well-toned, and Pandemonia gave him an extra-long look while licking her lips, as he was getting old enough to be drawing her interest."

"Bitch, you better stop looking at our son that way," Craven said with an annoyed growl.

Pandemonia laughed and walked over to Raven, putting a hand on his chest as she had just done with Craven. "Why not? He's good looking and coming of age for sexual training."

Pandemonia's hand started sliding down Raven's chest to his stomach and she had intended on going further but suddenly pulled away when she heard sirens and saw cops pulling onto the street.

"Seriously? We just got here and someone called the cops on us? Where is Jarrel, dammit? He's the one with the keys and deeds to prove we live here," Pandemonia said in an irritated tone.

Craven shrugged. "He said he'd meet us here. We're a little early."

Pandemonia stared down the street. "I wonder which one of these assholes called the police because when I find out they're going to regret it."

Raziel laughed, but Craven shook his head, scowling in response to Pandemonia's threat. "Don't start any trouble, Pan."

Pandemonia laughed. "Why not? Trouble is so much fun, and it's what I'm best at, you know. We, maenads, do need to have our fun. Besides, whoever called the cops deserves whatever is coming to them. We didn't do anything wrong but ride down the street to our homes. We live here. Remember?"

Craven nodded. "I know, and I'm pissed too, but I just don't feel like sitting in a jail cell over it."

Pandemonia rolled her eyes. "You used to be a lot more fun, Craven. Now you're almost human." Pandemonia said the word with contempt in her voice.

"Yeah, well now I have two sons who need their father around, not sitting in prison. That kind of responsibility matures you pretty quickly, or at least most parents. You certainly haven't changed any."

Pandemonia laughed again. "I did my part. I carried them to term and breastfed them until they were old enough to eat on their own. Though I wouldn't mind if Raven wanted to reminisce a bit," Pandemonia said in a teasing tone as she jiggled one of her breasts at her son, uncaring if the police noticed.

Raven walked over to his mother and acted like he was going to suckle her right there, making Pandemonia push him roughly away as the cops were pulling into the driveway now. It was one thing jiggling one of her breasts in front of the police, and quite

another to have them see her son mouthing her breast.

Raven laughed and walked back over by his father who was laughing as well. "I see you're still a tease, Pan."

Pandemonia tossed her hair. "I would have let him if not for the cops. I don't think they'd find any humor in it."

Craven feigned ignorance. "What? A mother breastfeeding her seventeen-year-old son? You mean that's not normal?"

Pandemonia laughed. "Not for humans, it isn't. Now shh. The humans are here dear. Time to play a human." Pandemonia put a finger to her lips before turning around and smiling at the cops.

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Two cruisers had shown up with a total of four officers, and all their eyes went straight to Pandemonia who was dressed more than just a little provocatively. And Pandemonia, noticing their lustful stares walked up the officers, swinging her hips with her breasts purposefully pushed out. "Did you officers come to welcome us to our new homes? How kind of you."

One of the officers spoke, forcing his gaze away from her ample cleavage. "Actually no. We received a report of a motorcycle gang on the street and breaking into one of the homes at the end of the cul-de-sac."

Pandemonia laughed. "Motorcycle gang? Oh... because we were riding motorcycles. I guess that makes us a gang. I didn't realize that anyone riding a motorcycle was automatically in a motorcycle gang. Did any of you know that?" Pandemonia turned and asked of the others who all shook their heads.

"As for breaking into a home..." Pandemonia said turning back to the officers. "Do you see us inside a home, or even near a door? I'd say it's a little difficult to break into a home from the driveway, and also quite a bit more difficult to break into a home that you own. Though I do think that is legal, for a homeowner to break into their own home. Is that legal, Craven?"

Craven was scowling, though more at Pandemonia than the police. "I believe it is."

"Do you have proof of residency?" The officer asked, not appreciating the woman's sarcasm.

"Not yet. We're waiting for our lawyer to arrive with all the paperwork," Craven responded in an irritated tone. "We're a little early. We were supposed to meet him at two." Craven then looked at his watch. "He should be here shortly. He lives in that home over there. His name is Jarrel Llewelien. His boyfriend Jamal might be home."

Raven shook his head, countering his father. "No, Jarrel said Jamal works at one of the high schools as a dance teacher and during the summer on weekdays he teaches a class in town. It's Friday and summer vacation. So, he isn't likely home."

The officer who had been speaking turned his eyes toward Raven and then he looked at the little redhead standing next to the miniature motorcycle. "You do realize that it's illegal to ride any motorcycle, even a mini, without a legal motorcycle license."

Raziel laughed. "Yeah. I guess that's why we all have one." The officer pointed to the small boy. "You need to be sixteen."

Craven spoke in a gruff tone, "That is my son, Hooligan, and he *is* sixteen, and he

has a damn motorcycle license. You got a problem with him being short for his age? Is that also against the law here? Apparently, people trying to move into their new homes is, so I figure I better ask.”

The officer went over to Hooligan. “I'd like to see that license, young man.”

He then spoke to Craven in a stern tone. “There's no need to be sarcastic. What we see here is a boy who looks to be eight or nine years old. It's our job to make sure that he is properly licensed.”

Raziel crossed his arms. “Seems a bit like discrimination to me; just because someone's short. I wonder if he's going to check Jarrel's license when he shows up. He's not much taller than Hooligan is. Maybe by a couple inches.”

“If you continue to insist on causing trouble. We can just bring you all down to the station and work this out down there.” The officer said in a warning tone.

Pandemonia laughed. “Causing trouble? What have we done to cause you any trouble? We've answered your questions. We've told you that we live here and are waiting on our lawyer. We told you that Hooligan is sixteen and has a license to drive a motorcycle. You are the ones causing the trouble. We really don't appreciate being called liars.”

“No one has called you a liar, ma'am.” Another officer said as the other checked Hooligan's license.

“Oh, but you have multiple times by your actions.” Pandemonia retorted.

The officer, ignoring Pandemonia's response, held the license out to the others to check out. One of the other officers took it from the first and brought it over to the car to check with motor vehicles to make sure it was legit.

“And again...” Pandemonia added. Now you're checking out Hooligan's license because you don't believe he's sixteen. That, Sir Piggie, is the same as outright calling us liars.”

The officer scowled at Pandemonia for calling him a Pig. “We're just doing our job, ma'am.”

A moment or two later after a long uncomfortable few moments of silence the officer returned the license to Hooligan. “It appears to be legitimate. He's registered at the local motor vehicle department as being sixteen years old. So, we'll just wait a few minutes for that lawyer of yours to show up.”

Pandemonia just laughed and shook her head. “Well, I hope it's soon because I really have to pee.”

Pandemonia then wiggled her body in a suggestive fashion while holding her hands over her crotch, showing a bit more of her cleavage in the process, making the twins laugh, and one of them asked, “Can I watch if you go behind the bushes?”

Pandemonia laughed in return. “Naughty boy.”

One of the officers suggested, “Why don't we just check everyone's IDs while we're waiting.”

Pandemonia laughed yet again, finding quite a bit of amusement with the situation, aside from being pissed off that the police were there at all. But as she could do nothing about that, she figured she might as well have some fun. “Hoping to find a warrant or two, Officer? Are you going to strip search us next? I might have something illegal up my woman parts. Craven keeps his illegal contraband up his ass, but I find that a little uncomfortable.”

Craven glared at Pandemonia but didn't otherwise comment. He just took his license out and tossed it at the officer, making the officer bend down to pick it up.

"Can we at least *try* to be civil?" The officer asked in exasperated tone after picking up the license. "I understand that if this is your home that you're a little annoyed, but a little courtesy can go a long way. As my partner said earlier, "We're just doing our job."

"Yes, harassing citizens. That's what you cops do best," Raven said in a jovial tone. "It's a good thing none of us are black, or we'd be getting our asses kicked right now, or shot even. Though come to think of it Riggan and Raggan might have a (*mouth*ing the N-word) or two hiding in the woodpile. They're just a little bit too tan if you get my drift."

Riggan and Raggan both burst into laughter at Raven's joke. Though both of them did have darker skin due to their being minotaurs and had thick manes of hair, they weren't actually African American. Though they could probably pose as African American if they wanted to.

Pandemonia walked over to the twins, putting a hand on each of their chests. "My two Nubian princes."

The cops all glared at Raven for suggesting that they were racist. "We treat everyone the same, young man."

Raven laughed; "Now that's a lie. If I were a well-known politician, would you be keeping me out here in the heat after telling you that I owned this home and was just waiting for my lawyer to bring the keys and paperwork?"

No. You would have instantly taken my word for it and left me to my business. But because we ride motorcycles and aren't wearing business suits, that automatically makes us suspicious in your eyes--potential criminals. Which is why you're checking our IDs to see if we have warrants out on us. You wouldn't be doing that to a Senator or the Governor, would you?

So, all this bull-crap of 'you just doing your job' is just that--bull. You could have just patiently waited for our lawyer to show up to verify our story, without all the checking of IDs that you're doing."

"Here he comes now," Raziel said as he saw a black town car coming up the road and then pulling into the driveway.

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Jarrel got out of his car and hurried over, looking at his watch. "Am I late? I thought you said two? Why are the police here?" He asked as he approached.

Craven responded, "Someone called the cops on us because apparently, people who ride motorcycles don't own homes like this. I guess we're all clear on the warrants since they just returned our IDs to us. We told them that we own this home and that one over there and that we were waiting for you to arrive with the keys and paperwork, but our word wasn't good enough. We obvious appear to be the criminal types."

Jarrel frowned at the officers. "I can assure you, Officers, that these people do own these homes. My name is Jarrel Ll'ewelian and I am their lawyer, and I do have the paperwork to prove these are their homes and the keys as well. I didn't realize that moving into a new home required the attention of the local police where a homeowner can't arrive a few minutes early and wait in their own driveway for their lawyer to arrive."

One of the officers responded, "We had no way of knowing if these people lived

here or not, other than their word against the word of a neighbor who called 911 claiming they do not belong here.”

“And why is that neighbor's word worth more than ours?” Craven asked. “Just because she lives on the street doesn't mean she knows everything happening on the street.”

One of the officers shook his head. “Trust me. Abigail Mathers knows *everything* happening on her street.”

Jarrel's frown deepened and he looked at his friends; “She lives in the yellow house down on the right, and she's the nosiest woman you will ever meet. I'm surprised she's not already up here trying to find out what she can about you.

Oh, by the gods! I spoke too soon. Here she comes now.”

“She called the police on Aberly, saying a homeless man was wandering the street,” Jarrel explained.

Craven and the others all laughed at that, knowing that Aberly looked like a homeless man and that he lived in a small cabin back in the woods; preferring the life of a hermit.

As the group laughed, Jarrel pulled some paperwork out of his briefcase to show the officers; “Here you go, Officers. The deeds, and as you can see, myself and this group of people, including the man living in the woods actually at one point owned all of this property where these houses are until someone scammed the County Clerk into selling the land. I, fortunately, was able to stop the clearing in time to procure three of the homes for our own use and save half of the wooded acreage.

Now we were kind enough not to take away these people's homes, though we do reserve the legal right to reclaim the property when and if the owners vacate due to moving or passing on. Until then, we are allowing them to stay, because it wasn't their fault that someone conned the City Clerk and sold land to a developer that wasn't available for sale.

So, we do not take kindly to being the ones accused of not belonging here, when none of those other people technically belong here, except out of the kindness of our hearts.”

One of the officers checked out the paperwork and saw that what the lawyer was telling was true. “I'm very sorry for the misunderstanding and inconvenience. All we had was the word of someone who we do know legally lives on this street against people we don't know, and until now had no proof otherwise.”

“We shouldn't have to show proof that we live here. If that's the case, then you walk to each of these homes and demand to see proof that the people living there truly have the right to do so, and all the other streets as well. Because the truth is you don't know that someone is a homeowner except by their word, which you would normally take. But because you decided we were a motorcycle gang, you believed it was okay to bully us and demand we show proof that we live here. So, go on. Check out the rest of the potential criminals on this street, see if they really own those homes they're in,” Craven said with heavy sarcasm and anger.

“I think we're done here,” the officer said.

“Yeah, because you know my father's right, Pigs. Get off our property. We haven't done anything wrong,” Raven added, just as annoyed as his father.

Jarrel sighed; “Let's not get worked up now. I understand you're all hot and upset,

and you have every right to be. But taking your anger out on the police isn't going to change anything. What's done is done. Now they know the truth, and they'll leave you alone.

Let's go inside where there's air conditioning and allow these officers to be on their way," Jarrel added, hoping to hurry everyone inside before Abigail got to the house, as she was rapidly approaching now.

Jarrel handed Craven the garage door opener which he used and began to wheel his bike inside, with the others following suit. He then handed one to Riggan, though the minotaur didn't immediately go over to the home next door. They were all planning on going inside this house and hanging out for a bit, before he, his brother, and Pandemonia settled in the other.

Jarrel then passed out keys and grabbed his briefcase which had all the paperwork so they could head inside.

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Meanwhile, the police were getting back into their cars, shaking their heads. They knew that the homeowners had a right to be a little upset, but they also felt that they had really gotten carried away and had made more of the issue than it was.

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"Wait!" Abigail shouted as the officers were getting back into their vehicles, and she ran up to the closest one. "Why aren't you arresting these hooligans?"

Hooligan in hearing his name being called out shouted indignantly, "Hey! I'm the only Hooligan here. Are you the one who called the cops on us? Maybe we should have the cops kick you out of your home. We own all of this land, bitch."

Craven quickly cuffed his youngest son in the head, however, speaking in a chastising tone, not wanting any more trouble from the police. "Enough of that! Get your ass inside, boy."

Abigail gasped at the young boy's language. "You see? What civilized parent allows their child to speak like that, and what about him riding that little motorcycle? That's against the law--a boy his age."

The officer spoke in a stern tone, "His age is sixteen. We checked his license. He's just short for his age, and these people live here Mrs. Mathers. In fact, they own all the land that these houses are on. So, go home and be happy that they agreed to allow you and the other neighbors to keep your homes for as long as you live, or vacate them."

Abigail's mouth dropped open in surprise; "Well, how was I supposed to know that? They all come in here dressed like... like rogues and riding motorcycles. I thought they were squatters, breaking into an empty home.

Mr. L'ewelian never said that there were other people moving in, people who co-owned this land. We all thought that just Mr. L'ewelian and that crazy hermit owned it."

The officer shook his head. "Well they're not rogues or a motorcycle gang, they are co-owners of this land, and these three homes on the cul-de-sac belong to them. Now you know. So, let's let these people get on with the business of moving into their homes. We've kept them long enough."

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The group let the police deal with Abigail at that point as they all quickly went inside, being ushered in by Jarrel who whispered, "Trust me. It's safer inside. She'll ask questions all day."

Everyone laughed at Jarrel after he got everyone inside and then peeked out the window to see if the woman was still there. Jarrel then turned to them. "Go ahead and laugh now. Just wait until she corners you one day."

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A knock suddenly came at the door.

"It's her," Jarrel whispered.

Everyone continued to laugh and Craven offered to get it.

"I've never seen the elf so scared in my life," he said chuckling as he opened the door to the troublesome neighbor.

"Hello, my name is Abigail Mathers, and I live down the street. I couldn't help but notice that you all drive motorcycles..."

Craven just started at the woman a moment before interrupting her; "And we couldn't help but notice that you called the police on us for no reason at all. So, I guess there's a lot of things that couldn't be helped noticed going on today.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm trying to get moved into my house." Craven then just shut the door in the woman's face, not even having bothered introducing himself.

Abigail stared a moment in surprise at the closed door and then with a harrumph of annoyance she turned and headed back to her own house.

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"I've never met a ruder bunch of people in my life," Abigail complained to her husband the moment she walked through the door to her own home. One of them shut the door right in my face. He didn't even bother introducing himself after I introduced myself.

Stanley stared over his glasses at his wife; "I'm sure you must have said more than 'Hi, my name is Abigail', if you got a door slammed in your face, despite the fact that you embarrassed yourself by calling the police on the people who own the land our house is built on.

You need to stop calling the police at every little thing that happens around here, Abigail. So, unless you were apologizing to those people, I can't blame them for shutting the door in your face. The police had them standing outside for nearly a half hour in this heat, interrogating them, and treating them like criminals.

In fact, the police stopped by here on the way back to ask that you stop calling them unless there really is a crime in progress. They said that the group moving in there was not happy at all with their treatment. I sure as hell know I wouldn't have been either in their situation. The officers were embarrassed in assuming that the group were squatters and up to no good based on your report."



"They were riding motorcycles and dressed like rogues, and I thought they *were* squatters," Abigail said in her defense. "How was I to know they actually lived there?"

Stanley shrugged. "I don't know. Go up and introduce yourself and wait to see what they say, maybe? If you had acted in a friendly manner, you probably would have gotten an introduction back and found out that they lived there."

Abigail shook her head. "I didn't know if they were dangerous or not. I wasn't going to just walk up there and be stabbed or raped, or both."

Stanley sighed and rolled his eyes. "Enough already, Abigail. You made a mistake. You embarrassed us, not only with the police but with our new neighbors. Leave them alone. They obviously don't want anything to do with you, and I can't blame them."

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Craven returned to the group. "There now, she has something to gossip about--how rude I am. She's gone."

He then glanced over at Jarrel and laughed. "You look positively pale Jarrel. What did the woman do to you?"

Jarrel shook his head. "My interrogation during the Spanish Inquisition was less painful than the one that woman inflicted upon me."

Raziel offered some advice. "Try rude next time, it apparently worked for Craven."

Craven nodded in agreement. "That woman is never going to accept or like us. So, I saw no point in trying to be friendly with her."

Jarrel protested. "Oh, that won't stop her. She's persistent. You only got a temporary reprieve."

Craven shrugged. "I'll deal with it when it happens. So, let's take a look at this place. You did a good job decorating as usual Jarrel."

Jarrel smiled. "Thank you. I know your tastes."