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VICKI Byrne lunged for the crib and swung a board at the hovering locust. She missed, but the beast veered away, screaming, "Apollyon!"

"More are trying to get in!" Darrion yelled.

"Stay there," Vicki said. "I'll get this one!"

The locust dove at the baby again. Vicki's stomach turned at the hideous face of the creature. She swung again and connected. The locust bounced off the wall and fell into the crib.

"Don't let it hurt my baby!" Lenore yelled from above.

"Shut the door!" Vicki said, peeking over the edge of the crib. The baby cried and kicked at his cover as the locust lay a few inches from his feet.

"It's OK, Tolan," Vicki said. "I'm going to get this bad thing away from you."

Tolan smiled. Vicki picked up the locust by one of its

legs and held it upside down. The body was shaped like a miniature horse armed for war, but where a mane should have been was long, flowing hair. On its back were wings. Vicki flipped the locust over and saw a human face, but the front teeth were like a lion's.

Lenore trembled. "Don't let it hurt my baby."

"Keep the door closed," Vicki said through clenched teeth. "If this thing gets upstairs it'll sting all of you."

"Put it under the door before it comes to," Shelly said.

Vicki dropped the locust, and Shelly kicked it against the wooden door, then mashed its body into the mud.

"Another one's getting in!" Darrion shouted.

Before Vicki could react, a locust skittered by and flew toward the crib. Its wings twitched furiously with a metallic clicking as it rose toward Tolan. The child reached for it and laughed.

"Apollyon," the locust wailed.

Vicki raced for the crib, but the locust disappeared over the edge. Tolan squealed. The locust flew at the child's face, its teeth bared. But it stopped each time, unable to get closer than a few inches from Tolan. The locust darted up, turned to attack, but stopped in midair. Venom sloshed in its tail as it screamed in its high-pitched voice, "Apollyon!"

Tolan stared at the locust, then looked at Vicki.

Lenore shrieked, eyeing the door above. "Don't let it get my baby!"

Vicki swung at the locust, but the beast darted behind the crib.

"Get back upstairs, Lenore!" Vicki said.

"We're not letting her back up here!" Melinda shouted. "She won't keep the door closed."

Shelly and Darrion tromped on the floor to keep other locusts out. Vicki helped Lenore up, but the woman fell back, horror on her face.

Vicki turned and saw the locust, its mouth dripping with venom, heading straight for them.

Judd Thompson Jr. was somehow calm in the middle of so much chaos. Their plane sat on the runway in Jerusalem, trapped by thousands of swarming demons.

The pilot scowled at Judd. "Why aren't you afraid?"

"They won't attack a believer in Christ," Judd said.

"You're crazy."

"I am not," Judd said. "Let me help."

"I can't let you go out there."

Judd put a hand on the pilot's arm. "Anyone else goes out, they'll get stung. Open the door and those things will swarm in. If I can get the gate attached, there's a chance these people can get inside the terminal."

The pilot looked out and studied the locusts. "This section of the terminal is isolated."

"Please," Judd said.

The pilot turned to the flight attendant. "Get the crash ax. We'll cut a hole in the baggage compartment."

"Wait," Judd said. "Those things will get through the hole you make."

Something skittered above them. A high-pitched sound followed. "Abbadon!" a locust proclaimed.

"How are they getting in?" the flight attendant said.

The pilot picked up a phone. "Jim, close the manual override to the outflow valve. Now!"

Judd heard locusts scampering overhead. "How thick is that tubing?"

"It's plastic and thick enough," the pilot said. "They can't chew through." He clicked on the intercom. "Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated. There's no way the bugs can get into the cabin. Please stay calm as we work on getting you out of here safely. A young man has offered to help, so clear the aisles and stay in your seats."

Applause greeted Judd as he stepped into the aisle and followed the pilot. The man lifted the edge of the carpet and pulled a yellow tab. The carpet tore along a seam, revealing a small door.

"This leads to a compartment under the plane," he said, grabbing a ring in the floor. "It's tight, but you'll fit."

"The locusts will come in when you open it," Judd said.

The pilot twisted the ring and turned a bolt on the hatch door. "Not if you do it right. It's an access bay. You get inside and we seal the top. Open another door at the bottom and you're outside. No way they can get in."

The pilot showed Judd how to move the jetway into position once he was outside the plane, then opened the hatch. "I hope you're right about them not attacking you."

Judd wriggled to the bottom and found a latch with a weird handle and a button. He pressed and turned it, bracing himself as the hatch opened. Locusts flew into

the hole, but Judd kicked at them. Finally, he let go and dropped to the ground.

Judd felt both relief and horror. The fresh air felt good, but the locusts sickened him. The plane's wings were full of the horrid creatures scratching and biting at the fuselage. Some hovered near the windows, shrieking as they tried to get at the passengers.

White fluid dripped from a burned-out engine. Somehow, the locusts had shattered a rotor and had flown right through the engine. If those locusts had survived, there was no way to kill the beasts.

Lionel Washington stood at a window in the terminal. He had lived through an earthquake and the other judgments sent by God, but nothing compared to this.

Sam Goldberg stood beside him, looking equally shocked. Lionel, Sam, and Judd had planned to return to Illinois, but now the world had turned upside down.

"My father," Sam said. "What happens when he is stung?"

Lionel pointed to an airline worker writhing in pain on the runway. "He'll hurt so bad he'll want to kill himself. But he won't be able to."

Sam groaned. "If only he'd listened."

A woman ran screaming through the waiting area and beat on the glass doors. A security guard ran toward her. "You can't go through there, ma'am! It's for your own safety."

"My daughter's in there!"

Lionel saw locusts were on the other side of the glass swooping and attacking as people ran from side to side. Some people cowered in corners. A few tried to hide near pay phones. Others ran for rest rooms and locked themselves inside.

Lionel felt helpless. The only hope for these people was the truth, but they were too frightened to listen.

Sam tugged on Lionel's arm and pointed toward the runway. "Look at that!"

Lionel gasped when Judd crawled out from under the plane and moved toward the terminal. He disappeared beneath the jetway in a swirl of angry locusts.

"We have to help!" Lionel said.

Mark was elated that his new friend, Carl Meninger, had believed the message and was now a follower of Christ. The locusts seemed to know he had stolen a victim.

Mark fired up the motorcycle and the two rode away. He slowed to a crawl because of all the locusts buzzing around them. "We get hit with one of those and we're dead."

After a few miles Mark pulled to the side of the road. "I can't drive in this. We'll have to wait until they thin out."

He pushed the motorcycle through a grove of trees and into a clearing. The locusts buzzed through the trees looking for more victims. Mark found a spot in the shade and took out food and drinks from his knapsack.

"You saved my life," Carl said. "That's twice somebody from your family has done that."

Mark smiled. "Getting stung hurts, but you wouldn't have died."

Carl took a drink and sat back against the tree. "I have a confession. I said I wanted to meet because of your cousin John. But that's only one reason I came up here. I don't think you're going to like the second."

Vicki had dropped her wood plank when she helped Lenore up. Now, with a locust bearing down on them, she swung and smacked it with her hand. Vicki recoiled in pain, like she had hit a metal baseball. Her hand throbbed and swelled.

The locust hurtled backward and hit the wall. It shook its head, sputtered, then resumed the attack.

"Another one's getting through!" Darrion yelled.

Tolan sat up in his crib and cried for his mother. Vicki joined hands with Shelly and Darrion and they surrounded Lenore, huddling close as three locusts circled menacingly.

"Pray!" Vicki said. "Hurry!"

"God, protect Tolan's mom from these things. Don't let her get stung."

A locust swooped in, brushing Vicki's hair. "In the name of Jesus," Vicki said, "keep them away. God, protect her like you protected your friends in the boat."

"Apollyon!" a demon hissed.

The girls moved closer together, arms linked, heads touching as they stood against the locusts.

"Jesus is King and Lord," Darrion shouted.

"Apollyon!" the demons called out.

"Jesus!" Darrion screamed back. "Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Lamb of God! Get out of here!"

Two locusts hovered over Tolan's crib but moved no closer to him. They clicked their wings and joined the other in midair.

"Let's face them," Vicki said, arms still clasped with Shelly and Darrion.

The hovering locusts looked straight at Vicki. She summoned her courage and looked into their ugly faces, tongues sticking out of gnashing teeth.

"Leave this woman and her baby alone," Vicki said, her teeth clenched. "In the name of Jesus, I command you!"

Over and over the locusts repeated the name of the chief demon, "Apollyon!"

"Jesus has authority!" Shelly said.

"Jesus is the Mighty God," Darrion said.

The locusts seemed to look at each other while Lenore whimpered, her hands covering her head.

Suddenly, Charlie opened the door above and peeked into the room. Vicki yelled, but before the boy could close the door, the three locusts darted up and through the crack. Melinda and Charlie screamed.

Vicki locked the door from the inside. Darrion snatched Tolan from the crib and brought him to Lenore. The woman grabbed for him, and he hugged her neck tight.

"I've never seen anything like that," Lenore said. "They were awful."

"And more are trying to get in," Shelly said.

Panting, Lenore scanned the room.

"Settle down," Vicki said, kneeling before her. "This ought to show you what we're saying is true."

Lenore tried to catch her breath. "I know . . . you kids are religious . . . but I don't know what to do. . . ."

"Jesus is God," Vicki said, pulling Lenore's face toward her. "Do you want to know him?"

Lenore nodded.

"Tell him."

Lenore trembled and bowed her head, her face in her hands. "God, I need you. I know I've done bad things and I'm sorry. Forgive me. I know you're real, and you mean what you say in the Bible. I believe you died for me and that you're coming back after all this is over. So come into my life and make me a new person."

Shelly and Darrion knelt beside Vicki and the woman. When Lenore took her hands away from her face, Vicki saw, forming on Lenore's forehead, the mark of the believer.