

Prologue

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CAPE HAITIAN, HAITI

Jesus, help. It was the most eloquent prayer I could manage.

“Jen!” Jarod whispered. “I’m going to wake Sarah!”

Fear had been no stranger the past four years in Haiti, but this . . . this was terror. A gang of criminals had scaled the wall and dropped into our backyard. A thousand desperate thoughts flooded into my head. I’d professed faith for over two decades, but this night moved trust past theory, past churchy conversations.

I changed out of my pajamas while Jarod raced down the tiled stairs to our intern’s apartment. Moments later, Sarah scrambled up the stairs, followed by Jarod, who toted a five-gallon jug of gasoline he’d snatched from the porch.

Jarod padlocked and dead-bolted the metal door between the stairs and our entryway.

“What about the kids? Should I bring them to our room?” I was trembling, longing to gather and protect my brood—the five munchkins I’d been exasperated with only a few hours before.

“I don’t think we should.” Jarod kept his voice low. His steadiness surprised me. “Better for them to sleep and know nothing.”

Know what? I wondered. *How will this end?*

Sarah and I followed Jarod back into the shadows of the bedroom. His voice, directed through the open window slats, startled me: “What do you want?”

“We want your money,” came the bold reply from below. No doubt the man’s confidence came from the cover of darkness and, more significantly, the protective blessing of a voodoo priest.

Other members of the gang fanned out, looking for points of entry.

“We keep our money at the bank.” Jarod kept the Creole conversation going to buy time. “Do you think we’re crazy enough to keep money on hand for thieves?”

Either they were counting on such foolishness or they had other things in mind. Stories of their violence—stories I couldn’t stomach—circled the neighborhood. *Jesus, we need you. We have nothing—no emergency responders, no weapons, nothing.*

The three of us jumped at the sound of a rattling balcony door only a few feet away, and my heart leapt for my baby on the other side of that wall, my five-month-old boy, asleep under his mosquito net. *Protect him, Jesus, I cried silently. Let him sleep.*

Jarod flew into action. He grabbed a box of matches and the jug of gas and whispered instructions. “Lock yourselves in the bathroom and call for help. Call the Froeses. Call anyone. We need someone to scare these guys away or help us catch them.” Clinging to each other, Sarah and I complied, and Jarod crept to the doorway. Maneuvering the jug’s spigot, he managed to pour a stream of gas under the balcony door.

Again his voice broke the silence: “Do you want to burn?” He

held a match, ready to light the oily puddle if necessary. The door stopped shaking and the man jumped down.

From the safety of the ground, the thief gave full vent to his anger. “Ma fize-w!” *I’ll shoot you!*

“Go ahead.” Jarod fought to keep his voice calm. “Your feet are already soaked in gasoline. Pull the trigger and you’ll catch fire.”

There was no shot. Just another threat: “We’ll kill you when we get in!”

I rejoined Jarod in the hall as glass crashed beneath us.

“Sarah’s windows,” he muttered. “That means they’re inside.”

We could hear them pillaging through her things, and I couldn’t help but wonder what would’ve happened if she was still there.

“Is anyone coming to help?” Jarod asked.

“Tom is on his way. He’s bringing spotlights.” I paused to listen to the voices downstairs. “Sarah’s door is locked, right?”

“It’s padlocked, but I couldn’t find the key for the dead-bolt.” He didn’t sound as confident as I wanted him to be.

“How bad is that?”

“We’ve only got a few more seconds.”

I felt the blood drain from my face.

Jarod pressed his ear against the metal door at the top of our stairway—the final barrier between us and the gang. *Was our safety really resting on a sheet of metal an eighth of an inch thick?*

He listened, and I studied the door’s ventilation shafts, twelve inches tall, right about head level, with space enough for a gun-wielding hand to reach through.

The door below rattled. Jarod, dripping with sweat, positioned

himself with the gas can again. His readiness did nothing to ease my panic. There was no plan B. No time for instructions if plan A failed. We'd fight, yes, but we were unarmed and outnumbered.

Trust.

The concept felt so risky. There was no control in trust. Could I? Would I?

I'd thought myself so daring to embark on this journey into international adoption and cross-cultural ministry. I'd begun to trust three decades earlier as a child, and I thought I'd long ago passed the course. But tonight proved otherwise. And with this new test thrust upon me, there'd been no time to review my notes. I had front-row seating to a David-versus-Goliath fight, with my family as the plunder.

How was I to trust, when my own hands were empty, even of a sling and stone?

I heard the clank of metal. "Jarod! Did they break through?"

The footsteps on the stairs answered my question.