

Locusts; or A Tale of Monstrous Foolishness

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One day in a land far away and a time long gone a Priest came to where the Many were tending their crops and livestock and said...

“There are locusts coming and we must prepare!”

“But locusts come every year and all the years gone by”, the Many replied, “It is always so, why must we prepare?”

“These are not the locusts of all the years gone by,” the Priest said, “these are *new* and *terrible* locusts that I call by a New Name. We must prepare.”

“What do these *new* and *terrible* locusts with the New Name do?” the Many asked in great fear.

“Why,” said the Priest, “they consume a portion of our crops and then move on.”

The Many trembled in dread.

“But this is what locusts always do”, one man of the Many said, “why must we prepare this year when we never have before?”

The Priest regarded the one man of the Many.

“Did you not hear me?” he said. “These are not the old locusts of years gone by, these are *new* and *terrible* locusts and they

have a New Name. We MUST PREPARE.”

“But what do the new and terrible locusts with the New Name do that is worse than the old locusts of years gone by?” the one man said.

“Why, are you a fool?” the priest cried. “Did I not tell you they consume our crops and then move on. We MUST PREPARE!”

“Yes, we must prepare!” cried the many in unison, though they did not know what this required.

“I do not understand”, the one man of the Many persisted, “do these new and terrible locusts look different from the old locusts of years gone by?”

“I have not said that,” the Priest replied.

“Do they consume more of our crops than did the old locusts of years gone by?”

“I have made no such claim,” the Priest replied.

“Then if the new and terrible locusts do not look different from the old locusts of years gone by and do not consume any more of our crops than the old locusts of years gone by, how are they new and terrible?”

At this the Priest grew wrathful with a priestly wrath.

“Who are you little man to put others at risk with these questions? Have I not told you these are *new and terrible* locusts and HAVE A NEW NAME?”



And the Many turned to the one man and said “Yes, fool, do not put others at risk with these questions. The Priest has told you – the *new* and *terrible* locusts HAVE A NEW NAME! Be silent in your foolishness and let the Priest tell us how we should prepare.”

And then they turned as one to the Priest and knelt before him and begged: “Oh wise one, tell us how we must prepare against the new and terrible locusts.”

So the Priest stood before them and said...

“I have spoken with great minds and with the gods, and they have told me the only way to prepare against the *new* and *terrible* locusts is to wear these hats of Monstrous Foolishness...”

...and he held a hat aloft of such exceeding monstrous foolishness that the Many were dismayed...

“Oh great one, how will the wearing of these hats of Monstrous Foolishness save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts?” they cried.

“The great minds and the gods have studied the question and that is sufficient”, the Priest replied. “All those who have care for others will wear these hats and together we will save ourselves from the *new* and *terrible* locusts.”

The Many looked at one another and saw the wisdom of the Priest’s words, and willingly placed the hats of Monstrous Foolishness upon their heads and went back to tending their crops and their livestock, happy that they had been saved.

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he next day the Priest came back to where the Many were tending their crops and livestock and wearing their hats of Monstrous Foolishness and said..

“Alas, I have spoken further with great minds and with the gods and they tell me the wearing of the hats of Monstrous Foolishness is not enough to save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts. More is needed”.

The Many turned to the Priest in great alarm and cried, “oh wise one, tell us what we must do! to save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts”

“It is this”, the Priest said, “to save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts you must burn your crops to the ground before they can be eaten!”

“Thank you oh wise one!” the Many cried.

“Wait”, the one man of the Many said, “how will burning our crops to the ground before they can be eaten save them from the *new* and *terrible* locusts?”

“Foolish one,” the Priest answered, “ do you not understand the *new* and *terrible* locusts will pass us by if our crops are all gone?”

“But”, said the man, “you said to me that the *new* and *terrible*

locusts will eat no more than the old locusts of years gone by.”

“That is true”, said the Priest.

“So, if we let the new and terrible locusts eat their fill and move on we will still have most of our crops as in years gone by, but if we burn them to the ground we will have none”.

The Priest sighed and the Many sighed also, following his example.

“Do you care nothing for those whose crops will be eaten if we do nothing?” the Priest asked in indignation.

“Do you care NOTHING for the crops that will be eaten?” echoed the Many, in great indignation for the callousness of the man.

And they went into their fields and burned all their crops to the ground so that a portion would not be eaten by the new and terrible locusts.

“But what will we do for bread,” asked the man, “now all our crops are burned to the ground?”

The Many looked troubled at this, for truly that question had not occurred to them. They turned to the Priest for answer.

“Sacrifices must be made, in times of need”, the Priest said.

“Yes”, the Many agreed, finding he spoke the very words they had in their own minds, “sacrifices must be made – and at least we are now safe from the *new and terrible* locusts!”

“I see the Priest has not burned HIS crops to the ground,” said the one man of the Many, “why is this?”

The Many turned to him at this and said “be silent, fool, enough of your nonsense, the Priest has spoken with great minds and with the gods and he knows best how to save us from the *new and terrible* locusts. All praise to our Priest and his

wisdom.”

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ext day the Priest came back to where the people were wearing their hats of Monstrous Foolishness standing in their burned fields and tending their livestock and said...

“Alas, I have spoken further with the gods and great minds and they tell me wearing the hats of Monstrous Foolishness and burning the crops to the ground is not enough to save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts! We must also slaughter all our livestock and let their blood water the earth”.

“How will slaughtering livestock and letting their blood water the earth save us from locusts?” the one man of the Many asked.

The Many were indeed somewhat troubled by this new question and they turned to the Priest for answer.

“Do you not hear me say these are *new* and *terrible* locusts?”, the Priest said in his kindly voice. “Do you not understand that new ways must be found to save us from them?”

The Many looked relieved at this and found, once again, the Priest had spoken the very thoughts in their own minds. And so they willingly slaughtered their livestock and let the blood water the earth and rejoiced that they were now finally saved from the *new* and *terrible* locusts.

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The Priest came a fourth time to where the people were sitting in their burned fields newly watered with the blood of their livestock, wearing their hats of Monstrous Foolishness, and he saw some were dead or dying.

“Alas,” he said, “because of the incursions of the *new* and *terrible* locusts, we now have no bread and no meat and no milk, and even the wearing of the hats of Monstrous Foolishness, the burning of the crops and the slaying of the livestock has not been enough to save us, for see how many are dying.”

At this there was great fear and despair among the Many.

“Oh woe,” they cried, “truly these *new* and *terrible* locusts are a deadly scourge for look how many people are now dying despite all that we have done!”

And they turned to the Priest and begged “tell us oh wise one what must be done to save us from the *new* and *terrible* locusts that are killing us despite all we have done!”

“Truly”, said the Priest in great sadness, “this land is so scorched and devoured by the *new* and *terrible* locusts that nothing remains to be done but to leave our old lives behind and begin again in a new state of equity. You must come to my compound where I will protect you. I have a little food in my own storehouses, which you may have a portion of if you work for the common good by cleaning my house and tending my crops and livestock”.

“Thank you oh wise one!” the Many cried, and prepared to follow the Priest to the safety of his compound.

“Wait”, cried the one man of the Many, “it was not the new and terrible locusts that took away our food, it was us at your command, and now you want to make us your slaves?”

The Priest shook his head in pity, and the Many followed his example.

“What must be done with such persistent ignorance?” he demanded.

“Terrible persistent ignorance”, agreed the Many in unison.

And the Priest said:

“Do you not understand, that if we had NOT worn the hats of Monstrous Foolishness and burned down our crops and killed our livestock the *new* and *terrible* locusts would have made things far, far worse than they are now?”

“How?” asked the one man of the Many.

The priest chuckled and the Many followed his example.

“Why, simple fool, because the *new* and *terrible* locusts are new and terrible and have a NEW NAME!”

“A new name!” the Many echoed looking in disbelief at the one man who did not understand what this meant.

And then they turned and filed into the Priest's compound in their hats of Monstrous Foolishness, to work for the common good by tending the Priest's crops and livestock and cleaning the Priest's house and singing songs of hope for their new beginning that the Priest's scribes had written for them to sing.

Meanwhile, the one man left alone in the barren and bloody fields set out alone to find another path and sing his own songs.

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