

PROMPT #2: You've been raised all your life to fulfill a prophecy, only for the seer to realize they were mistaken — you have no great destiny after all. What do you do now?

## A Midnight Cry

by **G. Johnson**

“One, two, three, four... I dropped my lantern, my only light, early on my journey back home. The flame went out, but that didn't quench the stares, the judgement, the hatred. I could feel the eyes on me, burning through my skin, through the muscle and tendons, just scorching the outermost of my bones. I didn't want their eyes, but I felt the itch regardless. The darkness at least provided some reprieve, but I could still feel them. And the whispers. The darkness did nothing about those. They roared through the shadows and slashed at me through the dark. I fled through the wood, a shadow amongst shadows.

*“Where do the disappointments end? I wondered as I fled through the night. With myself? My seeing? What else? No Coming? No heaven? No God? All nothing? Nothing. Nothing. That's all I was.”*

“My journey home continued like that. Leers and shame, leers and shame. Leaves crunched, crunched, crunched beneath my feet. Every leaf a little gavel, bashing against the wood and reverberating through the room, alongside the proclamation, ‘This man is not our next Seer.’ My night of Coming, now only a skulk through the mist, accompanied by not, not, not. *Not Seer. Not Seer. NOT Seer.* I walked through leers, shame, crunch, leers, shame, crunch. One, t—”

“Why are you counting?” he interjected.

“—two, three, four. At one point, I remember stopping to look up. The stars shone so brightly just a few hours before, beckoning my Coming.” I let out a sigh. “Now barely a twinkle through the canopy of trees. *At least the stars shined for me still, albeit just a bit dimmer. No, you fool. The stars only shine for a Seer, which you aren't.* The whole world started to shrink,

suffocate, strangle me for my apostasy. The chill further smothered and throttled and..." *Is it chilly now?*

"I booked it to the barn. I expected to feel relief once I hit the clearing, but no the light, the light! *Not, not, not.* I didn't need a lantern to see now, which meant they didn't need the lantern to see either." *Go faster.* "That's where I was accosted by the smell. Ammonia and pig waste ripped through the air and stung my eyes. Grunting, snuffing, burning, suffocating? ONE, TWO, TH-" and gulped down, "FOUR!"

"I turned around, slid down the wall, and just sat there. Staring out." I paused. "The Seer had to be accidentally mistaken? *Surely.* Surely not lying. But I had seen him talking to them the day before though. *Perhaps a coup? An enemy? The enemy?*"

"Talking to who?" the man asked.

"The four heads!" I drifted out, thinking of the lies. *They said I was not the next Seer, but how could that explain...*

"So, you sat there. Staring out. What next?"

"The eclipse."

"An eclipse at night?" he asked, uncomfortably adjusting his tie.

*It's happening again.*

"The eclipse! The vision. They were wrong, or plotting, plotting and planning, afraid of what was to come but they didn't know, know the power. Left right, up down. The void chased and shot and dissolved everything I looked at. The force hungered for exactly what I hungered for. Eating the world just to spit it out. Repelling everything it touched, all bent and folded and warped to my sight. Writhing tendrils, hissing and crackling.

"The blood pounding in my ears, cheeks flushed. The weeping wound sky split and ran red on all. Stars outlined the black hole, melted down the sky. Dripping like waxen figurines into the trees and morphing into uncontrollable embers painted like eyes onto a frenzied backdrop. As I tasted the raw metallic taste of blood, the air hung thick with electricity, possibility, and collapse that could only be described as distortion, liquidation, and rapture.

"At that moment, I knew they weren't just wrong, but gravely so and probably purposefully, for it was written, 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.' The Coming had arrived with my vision, and they were wrong. They were all wrong."

"Okay, slow down," he said, as he continued scribbling in his folio. "Is that a verse or something?"

*It is time. Only forward, only continuing to unravel the yarn of the prophecy.*

“Standing up, I chased it into the house. The grass danced and recoiled below my feet, like sentient things wailing for mercy. The cabin collapsed from the ground up with wood breaking and splintering and fragmenting, mixing into the waxen stars. Sinking into the pit, the door split off the hinges, creating a vortex that led into the Rubik’s cube living room. *I don’t know where to walk... just forward.* Walls moving and shifting into place before moving and shifting back and forth. The fireplace, the real star of the show, latched hungrily to everything else in the room and sent continuous lashings at the one, *no*, two, *no*, three, *no* four heads!

“Outlandish, I know, but there they lay! The couch acting as a demonic throne, framing their unnatural shapes and hellish intentions! And in my home, or what used to be my home! Right in the place where I left my parents earlier in the night, now the ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR heads sat and split up and down and side to side. Eyes convulsing from each angle, teeth gnawing, and faces twisted upon a single neck, a set on each and...”

“You can’t be talking about—”

“... as two great beasts, each with four heads, came up, diverse one from another and I saw them gathered together to make war against Us. Just as clear as the text I memorized years ago. This was it, in front of me, oh to destroy and subdue these beasts. *But don’t the beasts look like them? NO.* Right then and there, I assaulted the pair with cords and gas and flame just as prophesized...”

“Good God! But those were your parents, and they were aslee—”

“No! Not my parents! Two beasts, each with four heads, just as foreseen!” I cut in. “I assailed the beasts, tied them to what used to be the couch, and cast them alive into a lake of fire just as...”

“That’s enough!” the man yelled, as he stood up and flung his chair back, creating a scratching sound that screeched against the backdrops of my message, his tie not so neatly laying on his chest anymore. He clearly did not believe the vision and sided with the false seers. I couldn’t stop there. *Let him hear.*

“... I witnessed the wailing and gnashing of their teeth, eyes crying molten tears, skin bubbling and boiling...”

“Nurse!” the attorney yelled as he looked at the pooling blood, dripping from the scratch marks on my own wrists. The horror on his face obvious. *No nurse will stop me, not one, two, three, four.*

“...there I bound and slayed them, just as you will be bound and slain when the final scroll opens and heaven rains down...”

People in scrubs rushed into the room and pinned me to the chair, *but what is said cannot be unsaid, and once the scrolls start to open, they cannot be closed. The false seers will see the truth, they all will see.* “Shhh, it’ll be okay,” one of them whispered as I felt a prick on my arm. “Just relax.”

“It is too late.” I spit back. “Take the scroll, take the water from which there will be no night; otherwise be cast yourself into that fire like the ONE, TWo, three, f –” was all I could say before being blotted out.