

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?

## The Prophecy Untold

by **Aschyr Conley**

I slowly opened my eyes breathing in the cool morning air. The sunlight danced across my room sparkling as if they had been placed there for me. A smile slowly came across my face as I whispered, “today is the day...today I finally get told my destiny.” I leapt from my bed and felt the cool earth beneath my feet. I paused for a minute to connect to Mother Earth, “thank you for the nourishment, the life, and the wisdom you give us.” I took a deep breath and closed my eyes before exhaling slowly; everything was right in the world.

I quickly sprinted downstairs to find my siblings already at the breakfast table. “Morning Zoey, morning Hayley, morning Finnegan!” I could hardly contain my excitement as I tripped and fell into my seat. They all laughed and shook their heads.

“Good morning, Ollie, how did you sleep?” Zoey queried before taking a sip of her dragon fruit juice.

“Sleep? He doesn’t even know what sleep is,” Finnegan laughed.

“I slept great actually. Thank you, Finn,” I rolled my eyes and smiled. He loved to give me a hard time about everything and anything. Secretly, I think he was excited to not be the baby of the family anymore. Just three short years ago he had joined our older sisters as a prophet of our village. The seer had told foretold our births and told our parents we would be the four prophets of the new century.

I glanced over to my other sister as she hadn’t even told me good morning yet, “you okay Hayley?”

Staring out the window, she took a drink of her coffee. She acted just like our mom, and it was terrifying. Zoey and Finnegan were mellow and a mix of our parents while I, allegedly, acted just like Dad. Hayley though...she was Mom all over again. It made it so hard to know what was going on in that brilliant mind of hers.

“Just lost in thought I suppose. I was reading a good book last night,” she cryptically mused. This was never really a good sign when Hayley got distant. Something was on her mind that she didn’t want to talk about, but I had no intention of letting this go.

“Oh, come on Hayley. What’s really going on?” I pressed while taking a bite of my elderberry toast.

Finnegan and Zoey looked at each other exchanging concern without saying a word.

With a mouthful, I pushed further, “I don’t know why you don’t talk to me anymore. We used to share stories all the time.”

Hayley’s head spun around, and I knew I had hit a nerve, “You don’t know everything Oliver.”

I pushed back defensively, “I mean I think I know a lot. You’re not the only prophet in this family you know. We all have the same parents.”

I saw Finnegan slip out of the kitchen through the corner of my eye, but I couldn’t be bothered to break my sister’s stare.

Zoey opened her mouth to say something, but Hayley held her hand up as if telling her not to say a word. That was Mom’s attitude shining through. That presence that could command a room. “Not everything revolves around being a prophet, Oliver. Today is supposedly your day, but you’re still so naïve. You shouldn’t have built your entire life around this event and some perception of greatness. What if you’re not a prophet?”

The color drained from my face. Hayley didn’t just say things for no reason. I tried to speak, but I couldn’t find the words. Hayley went back to staring out the window as Zoey stared at the floor. I searched the room for Finnegan as tears welled up in my eyes.

“What’s going on in here?” Mom’s voice cut through the room like a knife. She had the kind of presence that could command a room, and may the ancestors help you if you hurt her kids. For as strong as she was, she loved us four more than anything in the world. I think she even loved us more than Dad, but he wouldn’t have had it any other way.

I quickly dried my eyes before turning around, “N-nothing Mom. We were just practicing a play we are doing with a group of friends.” I don’t know why I lied. Mom knew every time. “Hayley was helping me work on my part because I’ve been struggling with some of the lines.” I turned to gesture to Hayley, and I saw Finnegan was now standing next to Zoey.

Mom didn't buy it, "Hayley what have I told you about your attitude?" I tried to interject, but Mom beat me to it, "Oliver I'm talking to your sister."

Hayley locked eyes with Mom as Zoey, Finnegan and I exchanged unspoken words. The tension was palpable. "I think it's almost time for Ollie to go see the seer," Hayley began, "where's Dad?"

Mom smiled. She admired the strong will Hayley had and knew she got it honest. "I'm not sure where your father is. He left in the middle of the night to attend business. He promised he would be there today." Mom poured a cup of coffee before turning to me. "Oliver, why don't you head down to the seer and get ready."

I didn't need to be told twice. I jumped up and ran out of the house smiling ear to ear. This was it, I got to join my siblings as a prophet. I was so excited to make my parents proud. I slowed to a walk as I arrived at the seer's hut. My excitement turned to confusion when there was no one to be found. It was as if everyone had forgotten my big day, "what is going on...." I muttered quietly to myself. I saw a faint glow coming from the clearing in the woods with the soft sound of singing echoing through the trees. I decided to investigate, and as I stepped into the clearing, the voice carrying the melody became clear.

"Dad?" I asked into the trees more confused than I had ever been.

"Hey Ollie," he replied without turning around. I had never known Dad to sing, but his voice always brought me comfort as he read me stories of our ancestors and times long ago. He was the only philosopher in our village, and he always ensured my siblings and I had some philosophical and ethical understanding. He said it was important that our lives were rich with knowledge.

I walked over and sat down next to the fire, "what's going on? Aren't I supposed to get my prophecy today?"

Dad came and sat next to me as he put his hand on my knee, "Son, there has been a mistake..."

I started to panic as Hayley's words echoed through my ears, "what do you m-m-mean a m-m-mistake? I'm a p-p-prophet like my siblings. I-I-I just know it." Tears started to run down my face as my body trembled.

"Hey, Ollie. Ollie, listen to me," Dad gently grabbed my face to stop me from spiraling further out of control. "Just because you're not a prophet, doesn't mean you're not important."

Those words cut through me like knives as hysteria took over, "Dad I've been raised for this my whole life! This is what I'm meant to do! How could it be wrong?? This is my entire purpose in this life...if I don't do this then my life means nothing..."

An irritation I had never seen before crept across my dad's face. Normally a docile man, I had never heard him raise his voice or get remotely angry. Normally our mom handled the conflicts while Dad took a more pacifist route.

"Your mother and I were against this prophecy from the day you were born," he raised his voice as a fire started to fill his eyes. "Your mother told the seer they were wrong, and you were destined for other things. The elders deemed us wrong and went with the alleged vision of the seer," Dad said as he took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

"Dad, I don't understand...Zoey, Hayley, and Finnegan..." I trailed off in confusion.

"Ollie, the why doesn't matter," his soft demeanor had returned as he put his arm around my shoulder. Do you remember your favorite two words when you were younger?"

"No—wait...yeah! Philosophizing and defenestrate! And you told me philosophizing wasn't a word and that I wasn't allowed to throw people out of windows," I laughed remembering the time I threw my toy out the window screaming 'you've been defenestrated'.

Dad laughed, "yes and do you remember your favorite bedtime story?"

I rolled my eyes, "Plato's Republic. Zoey, Hayley, and Finnegan never let me pick a story again."

"And I made special time to read it just for you every day," Dad smiled. "And we studied other great philosophers, went on special trips, and I even took you to a counsel meeting of the elders."

"Yeah, that was so much more fun than classes about the proph...e...cy..." I trailed off as my eyes got wide.

"I knew from the moment I held you in my arms for the very first time you weren't going to be a prophet Ollie," Dad said as I locked eyes with him. "You're too much like me with your head in the clouds and a heart that knows no bounds."

"So you're telling me that instead of being an important prophet with my siblings and protecting this village from the evil in the world through divine power...I'm going to be a philosopher...?" I stared at the ground.

I could feel my dad's heart break for me as he pulled me in for a hug. Everything I ever thought I knew wasn't wrong as much as it wasn't put together correctly. Dad had just broken my puzzle and handed me back all the pieces. Suddenly everything started to make sense.

I looked up and saw the pain in his eyes, "Does this mean I'm going to be just like you?"

His pain turned to confusion, "...I suppose it does."

I gave him the biggest hug my little arms could muster and said, “Then I’m going to be the greatest dad ever.” I felt the emotion wash over him as his tears landed on top of my head.

“I love you Ollie,” his voice wrapped me in a blanket of love and support.

“I love you too Dad. Thanks for making this the best day of my life,” I smiled as I hugged him again before I ran home to tell everyone I got the greatest prophecy of all.

I got to be just like my hero.