

## "Cups of Wrath"

Characters:

The Prophet  
The Young Pharaoh  
The Little Shepherd of Fatima  
The Forgotten  
The Officer

### THE PROPHECIES

#### THE PROPHET

The instant the Star of Bethlehem burst forth again it had to be me. . . . now's the right time. I have to extract from my remotest coffers what was confided in me. Now's the time for me to announce what was said, what has already been seen, but which you don't know how to spell. They've sent so many emissaries, it's been announced so often, that the sea no longer knows what it should do for you mortals to be able to see the signs. My affection for triangles isn't the reason I built pyramids; my addiction to cylinders isn't the reason I raised towers. Now that we're having a birthday I've decided to open a present for you, not one that was hidden, but the one you've been sitting on, permit me to ask you to stand, so that I can untie the ribbons and start to open it.

I adore bundles that presage a good gift. Don't think my labor is delirious and that my powers cause me to babble constantly. On the contrary, I'm accustomed to them. Those who don't understand seem to think I don't realize what I have. If all this won't be easy, it won't be very difficult either. I will try to be as pedagogical as I can be, so that you don't reach potentially catastrophic erroneous interpretations. . . or badly understand the signs, which could bring us to collective suicide. Or have us running through the parks in the nude. That would truly be a good sign.

It happened once before at the Spanish court, around 1500, they called me to delight a young princess with a reading of the stars. The poor thing that would become known to history as Juana la Loca. I hope the same thing doesn't happen today. Ah, the times when you could relax in palaces and languish before fields of wheat, observe the slaves pulling the wagons and the passing swallows . . . and the sound of the streams carried on the ululation of the wind. Bucolic countrysides that didn't last long, the cardinals' assault was bloody.

Unable to stand the honors showered upon us at court, nor the wisdom of our words, they accused us of being the devil's angels. That didn't bother me; we're not going to fixate on the branch of angels. Since the kings depended upon the cardinals' blessing to keep the throne, at least they didn't order us burnt, just pierced by horrible nails--this thick--introduced through the optic

hemisphere striking the brain, generating chilling screams and an appallingly unpleasant spectacle.

I have so many stories; we could spend the whole afternoon talking. The Syrians were very agreeable people, cultured, refined, all that's so lacking nowadays. Even I feel a bit frivolous, banal, superfluous, empty inside, as if phrases to make temples shake no longer emerge from my mouth. I feel the need to connect with the profound, with the essential. To be purified. But the conditions aren't right now; it's so difficult to fight against society . . . But this isn't the reason for our meeting, I'm not a comedian, I've never been one, it's too easy to be one.

I've come to deliver the gift of prophecies . . . which always total seven. The first: . . . "The beginning", during the reign of Hakim II, in Luxor.

THE YOUNG PHARAOH

Nubian, pour more oil over my back, the desert wind dries out my skin. I am the son of the son of God, nevertheless, there are signs hidden from me. My father's funeral is tomorrow, and at nightfall I will be able to read the book of the dead . . . the same one I will see when I begin my voyage through the darkness and have to cross the river Horus. But that's not what torments me, it's the bearded man's curses, they say that my father's tomb will be buried by water. That this palace will be empty more moons than it will shine with lamps. I've never feared those who come from across the sea, but there are signs that we've buried.

You remember Koroxor, the one who was buried alive in my grandfather's tomb? Bring me his papyri. In the procession to the cold crypt, he said to me: "Prince . . . read the omens" . . . I fear the sand, it's an ocean that could rise up and there will be nothing to stop it. I fear my brother, he doesn't stop roaming the terraces and disguising himself as a slave to be owned in the alleys of Luxor. I see my great great granddaughter "Cleopatra" handing the secrets of Isis over to bearded men . . . have you noticed, Nubian, that a beard always hides uncouthness? In beards nest all the evils that pursue us . . . Shave my head again . . . and bring the papyri. Don't open them like that; the secrets could all go up in smoke . . . leave them on the ground so they recover their strength and so the moonlight illuminates them . . . Prepare for disgrace, since we already know heavenly bliss and it hasn't weakened our soul. Who's afraid of happiness?

But evils cause us pain and fear . . . and in spite of my being God . . . sometimes the blood in my veins bursts into flame.

Dissemble . . . (*takes the papyri*) the princesses cortege approaches, the smell of the branches they burn precedes them, it makes me nauseous. They must be going to the temple to deliver their secrets to the statues. Nubian, they know more than God's son. Oh, my God, their song surge, dissimulate, make the kingdom mine . . .

(*The procession passes.*)

Health, daughters of Tebas . . . proceed, yes, twenty sphinxes of pink stone and two obelisks . . . But what horror, they never tire of sacrificing lambs, leaving all the palace halls covered in blood and that can only attract more blood. *(He goes towards the palace window.)*

Look at the sun, bathing the waters of the Nile orange, and the wind doesn't ruffle the ships sails . . . it's time for the God of Gods to rest and for everything to stop so as not to disturb his sleep. Listen, Nubian, to the silence of the birds. Tremble before the coming darkness.

It's the shifting of the stars, the time when the priests clamber over their towers looking to the heavens for curses on my reign or praises for this land. Tomorrow they will come, tormented . . . begging me to change where I place my throne, that I procreate at a precise hour or that I go down to bathe beneath the constellations with my retinue. I'll do what they say . . . but I'll keep these predictions to myself.

*(Reading the hieroglyphs.)*

Two eagles, an ellipse, a scribe, a scepter, you don't know how to read?

The force of the infinite will fall upon the kingdom, and the seed will rot in your minds. The hand will cut off the hand that gives you something to drink, the son will stain his sister's sex, feet will crush their friend's heads and exhibit them on spikes across the sands, the time will come when the slave shall be free and will recreate the evils of his masters, there won't be any place on earth that isn't threatened. The man will be afraid of the child; the woman of the elderly and everyone will carry venom in their robes, dagger and fire. Thus will they poison the innocent, nail steel in the heart of any who show signs of clemency, burn villages and from their mounts their flaming lances will destroy the harvests. You will flee looking for an oasis where the water runs clean, you will beg for the shade of a palm tree and the quietude of the horizon. You won't find any of it.

I was afraid that man is no more than the Gods' excrement. . . . Nubian, make sure that these prophecies are written on the walls of my tomb in the Valley of Kings . . . And whoever profanes my sepulcher, on him and his people fall Kororor's predictions.

From me, people of the Nile, expect nothing, my childhood has been disturbed by my father's fantasies, I am deeply bored and now I must cross the river . . . My tomb is ready, my golden sarcophagus, bring me the asp that will sink its teeth into my arm and let the sand cover forever the iniquitous monuments of my predecessors. Good-bye, Nubian, I'm sorry you'll have to come with me . . .

## THE PROPHET

During that time . . . I was the Nubian, details, well. It's been seventy years since the German archeologists profaned Hakmir II's tomb, enough looking around us, let's wield a smile, perhaps the young pharaoh's? Let's see how the signs are being fulfilled . . . No? Someone doubts? Maybe you've never

vacationed in Auschwitz. There's another feverous period in my life, when I was a little peasant boy. The Portuguese shepherd from Fatima. . . .

#### THE LITTLE SHEPHERD

Little sister, you're sobbing again, you know how mother doesn't like tear-stained cheeks . . . Look, look how the bull calves are running, come here, I'm going to call this little one Nicolás, like our cousin, but stop crying.

It isn't easy being a shepherd boy in the hills of Portugal. We get up at dawn and have to content ourselves with nothing more than a bowl of milk. If it's a lucky day, the bread crust will come with cheese from the Pyrenees . . . we're a poor family.

Enough, stop these big tears you'll never get a young man that way, and comb your hair . . . When do you say she'll visit us?

Yes, Father. We've brought the flock to the top, gathered wood for the fire, milled the wheat for bread, fed the pigs, brought water from the well, picked the walnuts, gathered the geese and cleaned our bodies like you've shown us . . . Yes, father, I'm a happy child and thank you once again for having brought me into the world, with the help of the Holy Spirit, of course.

So pass the days of a shepherd boy in Portugal, far away from the turbulences shaking the rest of the world. What about Chile? We never knew. Why should we worry about what happens beyond the river? If the rain doesn't fall on our land that doesn't mean that it falls on other households . . .

Tell me Lucía, how can she be so white and not stain her feet with mud when she walks? What do you mean you see her on a cloud? You're not listening, you're very little, don't do anything foolish that will anger the lady, perhaps that lady is lost and you're so dumb that you haven't marked the path well for her. And she wears jewels like those from the city? A generous diamond hanging from her hand, you say, large precious stones.

And she's the one who tells you she's the mother of God? Poor lady, what great misfortune will she have suffered to think such a thing . . . I'll bring a rope in case we need to trap her. Stop crying, I won't hurt her. Tomorrow, I told you, and be sure, since if she's the mother of God she'll probably want to talk with the priest or the bishop. I, a child like I am, can't tell the mother of the baby Jesus anything. Ah . . . She's the one who wants to give us messages, well tell her that we don't know how to write . . . or better that she repeats it and you, since you've got a good head on your shoulders, you remember it, because I no sooner finish counting the sheep than I've forgotten how many there were . . . you can't demand much from a little Portuguese shepherd boy.

Good night, loving parents, we are very grateful for the dinner you have given us and we will try to repay you with love and work . . . my sister, the poor thing no longer does anything but repeat the same thing, she told my deaf father that the Virgin personally sent her blessing . . . it seems that he didn't hear well because he replied that he, too, sent her many greetings and wondered if she'd gotten the oxen yet . . . and my sister sobbed between the sheets.

Stop crying, I want to rest, tomorrow I'll go with you, calm down . . . There the three of us were, the littlest one out of sorts doing nothing but asking

when we'd get there and what were we going to ask for . . . I made her shut up. You're vile; we're waiting for God's Mother, not Saint Nick.

Well, that's what was going on when my little sisters clasped their hands like this and fell to their knees, and when I turned around, there she was, white like my sister said, on a little cloud with a bracelet all her own that reached to the ground.

I was dazzled, but I saw how her little blue eyes shined . . . and then without moving . . . she told us . . . that the world was beside itself, that contortionists, I mean communists, would arrive in other lands. That they were very bad people and if we didn't pray every day with that bracelet she wore that she called the same name as our aunt who kneads bread . . . Rosario . . . we're going to see more suffering . . . and that all of us should expect worse days, that people didn't have souls, and that prayer was the only salvation. That's what she told us we should communicate to the world . . . and that we should come back because she had a second message for us. I'm sure that she realized our memory's bad, that's why she didn't tell us everything at once.

It seems that the Holy Mother left us with light in our eyes, because this time, yes . . . not only our parents believed us, but the entire village and they told it all to those from other towns. The day before she came again they were already walking with all the crosses, praying, and the Ave Marias wouldn't let us sleep . . . Lucía, but why are you still crying? . . . Ah, from happiness. Child, with you there's no end to your tears . . . Well, the second time, our parents bathed and combed us . . . our skin turned so white, they even sprinkled us with perfumes. There we were, several hours in front of the bush and the little one already wanted to leave, how embarrassing! As if the Lady isn't going to appear with all these people waiting, Lucía . . . that was when, on the same cloud as the last time, she reappeared . . . people shouted and others called for silence . . . this time she was angry, she said she was tired of humanity, that they didn't pay her any attention, but that man, dominated by the demon that had already taken possession of many souls, would create evil instruments so powerful that cities would cease to exist in a second, that there wouldn't be time to say good-bye to parents or brothers, that others would suffer terrible torments, millions would be left without limbs, wandering the countryside, the fire would burn fields and towns but man wouldn't realize the evil that invaded, and instead of making peace, would produce more torments . . . Then she told us that she would return a third time . . . I was already a little tired of climbing up and down the mountain, but well, it isn't every day that the Mother of God comes asking you for favors . . .

The third time there were more people there than for San Juan's celebration . . . the hilltops were so crowded that you couldn't tell what was a bush or a head, or a lamb's body from an overcoat . . .

Lucía didn't talk to me because everyone was touching her and the poor little thing, who couldn't stand it, did the same old thing . . . Stop crying, they'll leave us alone soon . . . so that, that time, escorted by the guards . . . followed by the bishops . . . we climbed the mountain. While we were climbing she was already there waiting, I don't know if we made a mistake about the time

or if she was early . . . everyone else only saw a light in the sky, but we saw her from head to toe. "Is it her, is it her?" The priests asked, hiding themselves behind their capes.

This time she remained silent for a long time . . . "Children," she said, "what I tell you now is for you and the saints of my church." And she spoke . . . and I was struck dumb . . . and my feet trembled. Now Lucía really did cry . . . "what's she saying, what's she saying," everyone asked. "Quiet, they can't hear" . . . "Silence," people shouted . . . and the universe stopped there . . . the earth stopped turning, the animals stopped moving, and no bird cut through the skies . . . for the first time she opened her arms and cried for us . . . saddened that way she told us . . . I can't tell you because you're near . . . But, happy me, the mother took me to heaven the following year, happy not to have children or grandchildren or others who are going to suffer . . . that which you are suffering today . . . the prophecy begins this year. You won't be able to tell from one day to the next, since it will be incubating . . . you will even accustom yourselves to the misfortunes that will start to surround you . . . And, of course, because man is such an egotist, nothing will bother you until your home, your children, or you yourself will be touched, and by the time you will want to react it will be, well, because you are already possessed and there is nothing you can do . . . I see it already in the color of your skin, I feel it in your smiles, you won't talk to your neighbors, you'll walk alongside millions and you won't see anything happening to anyone, this is the beginning . . . What the Holy Mother announced . . . I can't tell you, I'm no longer here . . . maybe today you believe the poor little Portuguese shepherd more than the very Virgin from Fátima, my town. Start getting rid of everything because nothing you have will help you, only when you are naked can you begin to feel full . . . Return to the earth and the water; go back to the beginning if you don't want such a frightening end to come.

I'll leave you now; I must go tell this to others.

## THE FORGOTTEN

I did pure evil; we even carried out black masses with San Joaquin's goats. Killed a bunch of dogs and drank their blood. We made a circle, invoked the worst possible angel, which was good for me, it's when you no longer have anything that you start believing in stupidities. Who cares about cell phone roaming fees? When you're born on the other side of the river, it's another story. Besides, crazy people do what they like and who's going to stop them. I knifed an old lady and came out the loser, the other maniacs can grab you because they wear a uniform, they can pull out your teeth, cut off your dick-- put rats up your ass -- and then they'll burn you with paraffin or throw you in the ocean in jars filled with cement, and these madmen are now senators. How many did they throw out? And how are they doing now? An expensive little car-- a condominium on the coast-- they even own the beaches-- the bastards-- and someone born without possibilities-- because I'd have liked to have come from the other side . . . being able to throw punches and pull out fingernails-- for that you don't need to study. It's cool-- and on top of that they pay you and you walk

around like a king-- a friend's father did it . . . now he's got a huge, cool house, the guy doesn't have to work . . . So who are you supposed to believe--the madmen or TV? . . . To the madman, you're an ass if you do nothing but keep calm--but I've got them all on a list . . . a good ATM and I'm on the other side . . . three bullets in the paunch of the fat slobs--I'll steal your jewels--rape your girl--drink your booze . . . the joint's luxurious my friend in comparison--a luxury hotel. Know where I live? How could you know? . . . You're familiar with all the cities of Europe but you don't know where you live--let's see . . . How do you get to Santa Ana? . . . To the alley of the dead? Palmilla Cuatro? Renca Oriente? Do you know how to get there? If Santa María de la Renca's there as well? . . . I assure you I live in the best parts of town . . . I'll sell you twenty grams and be set for a month--if they're giving it out . . . I'm saving up right now--I've got to fill the piggy bank and the lovely 38 automatic pistol with silencer--what more do you want-- calm down, man . . . If the assholes haven't been worried about me, what do I have to worry about? . . . spoiling the lady's hairdo--frightening the little bastard. . . I don't see any kids . . . if I put my finger on the trigger, it's more for the pleasure of seeing the fear on their faces that makes me angry, than to shoot them. I got rid of the knife--everything gets dirty--they keep screaming--acoustic contamination. And what are they going to do to me that they haven't done before? . . . Know where I'm going now? Look--I'm carrying a backpack . . . To Lo Vásquez--crazy, man--to Lo Vásquez, walking--on nothing more than these little feet--one two one two . . . She never fails me and I never fail her . . . Round-trip this year--clean--without even one--pure charity . . . That's how I roll. . . I've promised her that if the attack goes off clean I'll drag myself the last two kilometers on my belly. I owe it to her . . . Might as well throw me to the devil--on this side, between men, the promises are different . . . Chicks are chicks even when they're hanging above the altar and you have to treat them like chicks. I'm not going to tell her everything--she'll just worry later . . . Yeah, I'm right, this shithole is worse than Sodom and Gomorrah--crazy people worrying about nothing but material things--the glitter--the little shoe--the little shirt. If the question wasn't for this side--if I'm the sanest of them all--I'll take care of what I've got inside . . . When this is all over who are they going to reward? Me, of course, you maniac. No one understands, I'm cleaning everything up . . . little by little, putting a tiny grain of sand next to another you make a beach. Yes, I'm clairvoyant I do it by telepathy. Before I enter a house, I see it all: the servant cutting her nails in the bathroom--the woman sitting on her bed plucking out hairs with tweezers--the chick on the phone-- I make a quick survey--I see what they got in the drawer--yes--I'm a seer, man, I collect all the facts, then I tell myself who I'm going to scare first.

And I see it all ahead of time; I know the old lady's going to scream, the servant's going to cry and the nerd go mute . . . that's how I operate . . . when the police dicks come I see where they enter--I am inexpugnable--they tell me I'm invisible. It's a gift-- crazy man-- a gift they gave me--if you're going to amount to anything, it's got to be worth something. Now I see you're watching me. The gentleman over there's going to grab his chin. . . look . . . the madman over there--evil awaits you--they're robbing your car right now--they'll

make you spend the night at the police station . . . You, ah . . . you're going to have to eat the cazuelita you left behind at lunch. And this is because I don't want to ruin the year . . . I'm watching that one until the wake. . . if there's one thing certain it's that every one of us will get a farewell mass . . . but I know what's going to happen to me already . . . it's clear that I am a reincarnation . . . go on—laugh—I swear pharaoh's friend—I swear Nubian—you're not going to believe this-- I lived in . . . Now they've sent me here . . . As it is written: you will see him and not recognize him . . .

#### THE PROPHET

Smoke started going up my nose, it was frightening . . . then they put a crucifix on my mouth and I was smothered even more. That's when I said to myself "I'll suffocate before they burn me" . . . Idiots, if it wasn't for asphyxia they'd have the whole story (*breath*) everything went cloudy . . . I failed to see the humor, especially since I no longer looked at those insulting me. "Spit on me, you idiots, let's see if you can put out the fire!" I shouted at them . . . But since everything was on my side, a breeze came and I could make out the bishops and slaves that were crowding together . . . The rhythm of the drums gave it all a pretty solemn character . . . I relaxed for a bit until the tickling began at my feet . . . At first it was pleasant . . . Suddenly *whoosh* a flame sprang up and it was like standing on top of a brazier . . . That's when I started to scream. "I recant . . . I recant" . . . A little late . . . I just managed to ask for reincarnation as someone simpler, normal. This business of challenging earthlings . . . I've lived them all . . .

#### THE OFFICER

The revolver's silhouette shone on top of my table, how many times had I rested it against other people's heads? How many times have I felt the resistance of a hard skull against its barrel? One movement and that person disappeared . . . No more than that, a game . . . Now I'm waiting to rest it against my temple . . . This time it's only good for a trip to the destination that so many warned me about. Their confessions are on these pages, not the absurd ones about where those they hid, lived, nor beneath whose bed they hid the explosives . . . or all the lies, because under threat of death human beings become all seeing, they don't confess because they know anything . . . As my superior González explained so well, the principle of torture is to bring them to the point where the mind turns telepathic . . . To save the body . . . It didn't always happen, some of them died before reaching this perfect state for us, we who worked for the intelligence services . . . That's why we had to liquidate them, they were no longer fit . . . Besides, they would have remembered everything. They would have discovered where we'd hidden them since they would have been able to visualize the exterior . . . reconstructing from the feeling of their bare foot on the cement and from there constructing the building from the sounds, knowing how tall it is . . . where the next wall is . . . their sense of smell developed as soon as they felt the exhaust from the passing

busses . . . their hearing from the laughter of schoolchildren . . . They'd recognize the distorted voices of we who interrogated them . . . That's why, once they'd had the treatment, they couldn't see the light again, we had to make them disappear. I started it all just for the uniform . . . I saw how women were attracted to the strength it reflected . . . I was shy, not particularly dashing as you can see, I didn't have money or was physically anything that would make me stand out on the street, I was lonely as well . . . and here there was companionship . . . together every day, doing the same useless things every day . . . but we shared our laughter and healthy competition . . . it was all attractive to those of us who didn't want to be unknown . . . for me the army was a refuge . . . I felt like those below me admired me the same way that I admired those above me. They envied the stars on my shoulder; they envied me for eating with the officers . . . They envied me because I was their superior, but envy is the foundation for admiration . . . They were going to close the center and we had to get rid of two women and a man who were left in the cells . . . they weren't worth much anymore . . . but their absence would maintain the terror for those outside these walls . . .

The first one was a typical mulatta, short, thin, with black eyes that still challenged. Perhaps it was the only way to go calmly . . . She was covered with marks from the electric shocks and knowing as we opened the door that today was different the sergeant whispered in my ear, "Do we take care of her quickly, lieutenant, or should we enjoy ourselves a bit?" . . . And he tied her feet with wire, threw her head back, light fell on her hook and the whole cell lit up and she said . . . "On your children and your land will fall as many misfortunes as you abhor right now, you will never feel love again, hate will destroy your homes, your children will spit on their parents' tombs, and women will be disgusted by your skin . . . The land will dry up and you will beg for bread . . . Those who saw and kept silent will see how their work bears no fruit and how their minds can't perceive the earth's landscapes . . . Because he who raises the knife against his brother . . . these people who allow their children to be sacrificed and continue taking pleasure from sex, will engender nothing but armies for evil . . . Drugs will destroy your cities and lies and hypocrisy will fall again over your governments . . . The judges who signed these invisible sentences rocking in their chairs . . . will feel paralysis invade their limbs, they will feel the disdain of everyone and will have to recuse themselves in their poor homes . . . Your names will be erased to appease the fire's torments. . . The angels will refuse to be your guardians and you will live unsheltered" . . . She didn't wail or look away, but her words resound in my mind, I'll only be able to silence her murmuring by pulling the trigger. Not on my temple but on the demons inhabiting my mind and who I have the right to destroy . . .

## THE PROPHET

But don't worry. There's a time for everything, nothing ends suddenly and when it's ending we don't realize it . . . As a friend of mine who preached in the valleys of Babylonia once said: There is a time for every event under heaven . . . A time to be born and a time to die, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to

cry and a time to laugh, a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones together, a time to search and a time to lose, a time to speak and a time to refrain from speaking, a time to love and a time to hate, a time to keep and a time to throw away. So he said, as we desecrated the hanging gardens. I thought it was fantastic; I didn't have to urge him on. Enough, but we made something . . . to him everything had its time and place . . . Josué, I said in the fifth year, I agree with you but nothing happens even so, and to him everything had its time and place . . . he was more macro, he spoke for the Universe . . . but concretely, one is the spectator of all the times that others live . . . Or not . . . I don't know . . . I fulfill the destiny that the gods have given me . . . Receive their signals through their prophecies and transmit them to those on this ambiguous planet . . . I don't expect to be heard, I haven't been in the last few centuries, and I'll be heard even less today . . . Now I wait and imagine where I'll spend 3009 . . . I'm sorry that none of you will be there with me. At least I've learned something: do what you say you will and the foreseen will come to pass . . . Please, the signs, don't ignore them, it costs too much to send them for them to be wasted . . . It's the end of the play I've been tapped to perform. Oh, I forgot to tell you what my last reincarnation is, it's this, to be an actor.