

# The Precarious Nature of Prophecy

Steven Carlton

Baal, Lord of Flies, Prince of Hell, stepped triumphantly from the transportation portal and pressed his cloven hooves into the moist soil of Earth. He roared with malevolent glee, barely noticing the portal closing behind him. With a pop, it winked out of existence.

He stretched his long arms and legs, flexed his claws and shook his horned head. It had been an eon since he had been placed into captivity. The heady sensation of total freedom filled him with demonic joy.

“The prophecy is fulfilled,” he growled loudly. “I am come!” He paused in sudden uncertainty. There were no humans nearby, nor anywhere in sight. The landscape was wrong, too. Instead of a city, Baal found himself surrounded by the thick growth of a luxuriant jungle.

He was turning in circles, trying to get his bearings, when the foliage parted and a machine rolled into the small clearing. Baal flexed his taloned hands, sending blue sparks arching between his fingertips. The machine had four balloon tires attached to a thin chassis. Struts rose from it vertically supporting a large, glass faced cube.

The glass flickered and the image of a human appeared. “Hello, Baal,” the man said.

Power leaped from Baal’s toes, churning up the ground at his feet. “What?” he roared, more in surprise than anger. With a roar he raised his arms, and lightning burst from his palms. The machine exploded into small fragments, leaving behind nothing more than a pair of smoldering tires.

Almost instantly, the foliage parted again. A machine identical to the first rolled into view.

“Please,” said the image of the man in the cube, “wait a moment before destroying this robot too. We have something to discuss.”

“There is nothing to discuss,” Baal roared. “You are all doomed. Judgement has come, and you are all at my mercy. I, the most magnificent Baal, shall...”

“Uh, that’s not entirely accurate,” the man interrupted.

“You dare?” Baal roared. Power sparked from his hands once more.

“Wait!” the human pleaded. “Just listen for a moment. Okay? Listen, technically it’s not Judgement Day yet. You’re just the precursor. Remember? We mortals know the prophecy too.”

Baal growled in annoyance. True, he had misspoke himself. Still, it was infuriating to be unable to put his hands on the arrogant human and rip him apart.

“You see,” the human went on, “we knew you were coming. We even knew the exact time and place you’d appear.”

“Impossible!”

“Not really,” the man went on, seemingly unawed by the giant demon. “You see, beginning in the early twenty-first century, mankind increasingly began to attach its fate to alternative forms of spirituality. You know, astrologers, psychics, things like that. Slowly, we rediscovered all the lost sciences, the ones your kind was happy we had forgotten in the first place.”

Baal stomped his cloven feet impatiently. He hated talking. He hated this world, and he burned with a lust for destruction.

“Necromancy, for one,” the man said, ignoring the demon’s ire. “Demonology for another. Only this time we didn’t plunge in with ignorant superstition. We used science to analyze the process, refine it.”

“No earthly magic can contain me,” Baal snarled.

“I imagine you’re right,” the man said, nodding in agreement. “That’s not really my area of expertise. I’m a biologist, you see. Anyway, we learned pretty quickly that all that doomsday stuff from the Bible was real, and we poured all our effort into finding a solution.”

“I am Baal, Prince of Demons,” Baal roared. “I am not a problem to be solved. I am a primal force of the universe.”

“Exactly my point,” the man said, smiling as though at a bright pupil. “We’ve been able to harness some pretty titanic forces of our own, and despite what you believe we’d probably be able to bring you down. Now, now, let’s not start another argument.”

Baal exhaled forcefully, sending spurts of flame from his nostrils.

“To make a long story short,” the man continued, “we convinced the demons we’d conjured to work for us, and while we can never be sure we know it all, we do know enough. For instance, we know the secret of the portal.”

“What nonsense is this?” Baal demanded, his face drawing into a tight scowl. “What secret?”

The man smiled. “The portal you used to get here,” he explained. “It connects the physical world with the metaphysical. To be here in your true form, you had to become physical. You know, flesh and blood.”

Baal suddenly felt uneasy. This was nothing like he had expected. Jungle instead of city, humans on television screens.

“Once we knew the demons had physical existence,” the human continued blithely, “we took genetic samples. Believe me, demon DNA is some nasty stuff.”

The jungle was swaying around the clearing, though Baal felt no wind. He searched for the presence of magic and found none. Confused, he focused his attention on what the human was saying.

“...and so by recombining the modified DNA of the terrestrial species with the demonic genetic material, we were able to create the perfect hybrid.” The man paused, smiling happily. Baal shifted his weight uncomfortably. There was something moving through the jungle, stalking him. He flexed his claws and readied a burst of power.

“And so, Baal,” the man said dramatically, “we created a little welcome party for you. It was only fitting. After all, you are the Lord of Flies.”

A creature leaped from the thick jungle foliage. It was twice Baal’s size, and the ground shook when it landed. It was green, covered with thick patches of fluffy yellow fur. It had short, stubby arms and legs, but the head was huge. Like a monstrous clam, the head opened, dividing in half to reveal a gaping maw filled with thick fangs. There were no eyes, but the creature zeroed in on Baal and charged.

The demon blasted the monster into smoking ruin. The jungle came alive as dozens more of the creatures leaped into the clearing. Baal destroyed five before one got to him, closing its huge mouth around the demon from behind.

Baal clawed his way free, but he was weaker now. He bled freely from hundreds of wounds. He fought his way free once more, then fell as two of the monsters landed on him together.

He roared with frustration and unleashed a torrent of energy. He rose unsteadily to his feet in the center of an inferno. And still, more creatures crashed through the jungle to get at him.

The human machine lay on its side, the man's face still smiling from the television screen. "They aren't animals," he said. "Not really plants either, though that's what we started with. Before the demon juice they were just inches high. Amazing what modern science can do, eh?"

Baal grappled with two more of the half-demon monsters. He screamed as he felt one of his arms ripped from his body.

"I am Baal!" he shouted. "I am a Prince..." His voice cut off abruptly as he was engulfed once again. He was too weak to free himself. For the first time in all the eons of his existence, Baal felt fear.

He could hear the human's voice, muffled by the monster's flesh. A liquid began to trickle over him, excreted by some hidden gland, and it burned the demon's flesh where it landed.

"An exotic little plant," the man was saying. "Carnivores, in fact. It has a long, scientific name. But we just call it the Venus Flytrap."

The demon tried to roar again, and the liquid splashed into his mouth. He thrashed in agony. Baal, Prince of Hell, Lord of Flies, lay still as the plant began to digest him.