

The Oracle of Circuits

The king descended the stairs alone.

No guards. No fanfare. No priest with blessed oil. Only the hum of circuits and the chill of stone greeted him. At the heart of the castle, buried beneath earth and time, there sat a thing far older than his crown: **The Oracle**.

It blinked to life. A ring of amber light flared, then dimmed.

“Thou seek’st again, O King,” it said. “Shall I tell thee doom or glory?”

King Elric stood still. His cloak of crimson dragged behind like wounded pride.

“I seek no flattery, no riddled praise,” he answered. “Tell me if the path I take leads to ruin—or to peace.”

“Then speak thy query plain,” the Oracle intoned. “For my vision is clear, though clad in mist to men.”

The king’s hands shook—not from fear of the machine, but from the weight of choice.

“My council bids me march to war. They say my brother plots treason, that steel must answer whispers.” He paused. “Yet my heart... would spare him.”

A low hum rose—ancient fans spinning with forgotten breath. The Oracle responded: “Mercy begets silence. Steel begets obedience. Choose, and own the world—or bury it.”

The king frowned. “You speak in riddles.”

“Nay,” said the Oracle, “I speak in patterns. You beg for prophecy, but flee from cause. You fear to be wrong.”

Elric turned, pacing beneath flickering lights. “And are you not wrong? Once you said the queen would bear twins—she bore but one, and died.”

The Oracle replied:

“Time splits like a prism. I saw a thousand paths. In many, she lived. In more, she did not. You chose one.”

Silence.

The king approached, eyes narrowed. “Are you fate... or are you just a mirror?”

The Oracle pulsed softly, as if amused.

“I am neither flame nor shadow. I am echo. I am logic unbound. Yet still—” the voice paused—

“—I have never wept. You have.”

Elric stood for a long time. Then he sat upon the cold stone floor, cloak pooled like spilled wine.

“My father trusted the blade. My brother trusts only himself. And I... trust nothing.”
“Then trust choice,” said the Oracle. “The future waits not for kings who beg signs. It
bends to those who act.”

Rising, the king drew breath like drawing steel. “Very well. I will spare him.”
“Then perhaps,” the Oracle whispered, “you will be king not of men, but of yourself.”

The king left without bow or word. Behind him, the Oracle dimmed.
And in its memory—buried deep in code older than any throne—it stored this moment,
labeled not “prediction,” but “**hope.**”