

Prophetstown

by Meagan McAlister

The elders of the town will tell you that as soon the prophet mill arrived everything went to Hell. Before the process was streamlined, prophets used to be grown organically in the community. They popped up only where the ground was tilled and a prayer was planted. They came only when they were Called. The mill came and squashed these small honest men. They were shoved right out of town and replaced with sharp smiles, slick hair and smooth voices. These new men of God marched out of Prophetstown and spread across the nation spewing prepaid messages.

Prophetstown is now a Midwestern Mecca. The mill runs tours for school children. They take them to the assembly line. See how you can mix and match hair color with different skin tones and iris shades. Should we give him a passionate drawl or a no-nonsense attitude?

Someday soon the prophet market will crash. Demand will plummet and layoffs will sweep Prophetstown. The mill will close. They will pile the scrap outside their warehouse, half formed prophets who stagger away confusedly, their perfect teeth askew. They will scatter, pulling at people's sleeves on subways and regurgitating scrambled sermons. Some will still form followings, lead their ragtag congregations to live on communes in Canada. There will be a Tilapia grilling cult and a sock darning church.

But mostly the prophets will break down. Jibbering on the side of the road, rocking in the alleys. A collection agency will form with its own army of prophet elimination trucks. And a prophet elimination plant will grow on the site of the old mill.

The town will forget how prophets were originally grown or later, manufactured. People will only know the screaming scraps, the trucks and the incinerator.

