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The Crow's Voice

When did it all go wrong?

I pondered the thought for a moment. I sat on the front porch, feeling too heavy to stand up. The blistering wind hit my skin. A hard slap. I tried to warm up, but I knew that my heart would always feel like December.

I held a candle in my hand, oblivious to its dying light. The wind whipped the fire's smoke around, and I could see it scatter and fade. I almost wanted to catch every bit of warmth that left. When did it all go wrong?

It was an abstruse question. I knew the real question was *why*. But I didn't want to ask why. I looked up at the perfectly blue sky, completely clear of clouds. A crow about the size of my chest dove down from above, landing on a broken telephone pole in front of me. Its quizzical eyes looked down at me. I stared back. The wind picked up. My vision blurred as my hair whipped my face.

The crow cocked its head as if it wanted something from me. "What?" I cried, lifting up my head a bit. "What do you want?" I took a breath, but when I tried to inhale, spit choked me up. The wind blew again, making me sound louder than I really was.

“I’m empty, okay? I have nothing to give you. I have nothing to give anyone. I can’t even handle myself. This whole thing is a mess. Everything is wrong. My family is broken. My heart is cut. My tongue is dry as sand.”

It took me a second to realize that I had been screaming. I was screaming at a crow. The question began to make more sense. When did it all go wrong?

The crow was even more intrigued. It hopped forward and onto a wire. His eyes were black. Full of mystery. I watched as it leaned forward, studying my face. It was as if I could read his expression. *Say more.*

“What more? There’s nothing more. There are only questions. When, why, what, where? And how?” I told him. If I looked crazy, I didn’t care. A crow was the only thing that I could talk to besides the wall. I leaned back on the door behind me, nearly expecting it not to be there. I felt the chipped paint on the door begin to strip and fall off in spite of the wind.

“It’s just a tangle of lies. Nothing is true. Just tricks and broken stuff,” I said loudly, eyeing the bird. It eyed me back. The fire of the candle in my hands had now turned to ashes.

“You wouldn’t understand.” My voice broke up, making me sound unsure. The crow puffed its feathers and hopped off the wire and onto the ground in front of me. Its beautiful, black plumage had intricate detail and design. Then, I realized who I was talking to. The crow. The *andeg*. The trickster.

I whispered the infamous saying: one for sorrow, two for mirth. Sorrow seemed quite honest, though honesty was difficult to identify. I inhaled. Exhaled. All of a sudden, I seemed better.

I'd never felt this feeling before. I had emptied all that I would yell at the walls out loud. It made sense to me. When I would yell at the wall, it would bounce off it and come back and hit me. I would still be miserable. But the crow, it would listen. Somehow understand. Take it in and prevent all of those words from coming back to me. If the crow could smile, form its beak into an upside down arc, it would do that right now.

My life was still a mess, but the sorrow I'd felt for myself had drowned out. It came to me that the crow was lonely too. Isolated in a living world, moving so quickly that neither the crow nor I can catch up with. I wasn't alone.

Slowly, my lips creased into a smile. The crow came closer, and the wind impulsively picked up, making it feel colder than ever. I looked down to see the candle in my hands lit up. The fire that I'd thought was ash, it was alive again. I felt its heat.

The crow stretched its wings and took off into the sky. I watched until it became a small black dot in the bright, blue sky.

That's when it all got better.