

Original text

His eyes boared into hers, desperate, wild, pleading - at once demanding that she leave and then begging she stay.

‘You shouldn’t be here Bethany’ the words were whispered. They were barely audible above the rustling of the leaves in the great oak above them but she heard them all the same and he knew that.

‘I had to come’, she carefully said, reaching out her hand to take his. If she could just touch him, just let him feel her warmth, he would surely let her in.

‘I cannot,’ he said, taking a step backward, imploring her with his story eyes to understand, to forgive. ‘I’m sorry. I’m bound. I’m not free to.....’

A movement above them in the trees startling the pair.

A huge, sleek and black rook had settled on a bough. It was over their heads and it was regarding them with sharp eyes.

‘I am sorry but I have to go’ Blake’s tone was urgent, hard, all tenderness lost. ‘Go quickly now. Take the hill path.’

‘Oh, um... and hurry! Don’t go near the river.’

And before she could reach out to him again, to reassure him, he was gone.

She closed her eyes and breathed in the cool night air, catching a hint of his cool familiar musky scent on the breeze. But then a soft shriek shattered the moment and she looked up to see it, unnaturally still, glaring at her with eyes that seemed to reflect so many more colours than were contained in the wan moonlight. The crow opened its wings to their full span and began to rhythmically beat them as she watched,. A gust of wind wiped her hair in her face, then another, then another, until the night was a kaleidoscope of icy, swirling guests and the sound of beating wings coming closer closer and closer. She turned and fled away across the field.

Her was heart pounded in her chest. The long grasses seemed to be a thousand claws clawing at her. The wet earth was a quagmire of quicksand eager to consume.

She stumbled in a snake hole and went down heavily on her knees, but she quickly scrambled up and was way again. Her breathe coming in sobs. Her chest burning from the exertion.

Only when she reached the gate, breathless and giddy; did he stop and look back. The beech was jet black against the night sky, a sedenty, still silhouette. There was no sign of the rook.

Taking a moment to catch her breathe and brush the mud from her hands onto her sodden

jeans, she surveyed each of the paths before her.

The hill rose before her, treacherous and steep. The path was no more than a meandering animal track through the woods a route she had been happy to take that summer's afternoon they had gone hiking, but not one she would like to negotiate beneath a waxing moon, and the other path was flat and wide and would only led her to her car in minutes; it ran alongside the river, but from here she could see, sure, that the water's where calm and quite. There was no danger.

Blake's words made little sense.

Hands-on, intensive development edit with track changes

~~His eyes boared into hers, desperate, wild, pleading – at once demanding that she leave and then begging she stay.~~

~~'You shouldn't be here, Bethany.'~~ ~~The words were whispered. – They were~~ barely audible above the rustling of the leaves in the great oak above them, but she heard them all the same, and he knew that. ~~His eyes bored into hers, desperate, wild, pleading – at once demanding that she leave and begging that she stay.~~

'I had to come,' she ~~carefully~~ said ~~carefully~~, reaching out her hand to take his. If she could just touch him, just let him feel her warmth, he would surely let her in.

'I can't ~~not~~,' he said, taking a step backwards ~~and~~, imploring her with his ~~stormy~~ eyes to understand, to forgive. 'I'm sorry. I'm bound. I'm not free to...:....?'

A movement above them in the trees start~~ed~~~~ing~~ the pair.

A ~~huge, sleek and black~~ rook, ~~huge, sleek and black,~~ had settled on a bough. ~~It was~~ over their heads and ~~it~~ was regarding them with sharp eyes.

~~'I am sorry but I have to go.'~~ Blake's tone was urgent, hard, all tenderness lost. 'Go quickly now. Take the hill path: :-?'

~~'Oh, um... and hurry! Dd~~on't go near the river. ~~Hurry!~~'

And before she could reach out to him again, to reassure him, he was gone.

She closed her eyes and breathed in the cool night air, ~~catching a hint of his eool~~ familiar, musky scent on the breeze. But then a ~~soft~~ piercing shriek shattered the moment and she looked up to see ~~the rook~~, unnaturally still, glaring at her with eyes that seemed to reflect so many more colours than were contained in the wan moonlight. ~~As she watched, t~~The bird ~~erow~~ opened its wings to their full span and began to ~~rhythmically~~ beat them ~~rhythmically~~ ~~as she watched.~~ A gust of wind wh~~ipped~~ her hair in her face, then another, then another, until

Comment [C1]: Let's go straight into the crux of the matter – grabs attention more, I think, to start on the dialogue.

Comment [C P2]: He calls her Beth throughout the rest of the book. Is the formality deliberate here? Or should this be 'Beth' for consistency?

Comment [C3]: Watch over-using this adjective when describing Blake's eyes – I've noticed it a few times already in the book. I've left it here because I think it adds to the atmosphere you're creating, but I've changed it in the next chapter to avoid repetition.

Comment [C P4]: Earlier in the book a crow follows Beth. Do you mean a crow here? Is this the same bird?

Comment [C P5]: If he's speaking urgently, there's no time for hesitation, and phrases like 'I'm sorry but' slow the pace.

Comment [C6]: Nice; calls to mind the scene in Chapter 1 where she smells him before she sees him.

the night was a kaleidoscope of icy, swirling ~~guests~~ and the sound of beating wings coming ever closer. ~~closer and closer.~~

She turned and fled away across the field.

~~h~~Her was-heart pound~~ing~~ed in her chest. The long grasses seemed to be a thousand ~~claws~~ ~~fingers~~ clawing at her. ~~t-~~The wet earth ~~was~~ a quagmire of quicksand eager to consume ~~her~~.

She stumbled in a ~~snake-rabbit~~ hole and went down heavily on her knees, but she quickly scrambled up and was away again. ~~h-~~Her breathe coming in sobs. ~~h-~~Her chest burning from the exertion.

Only when she reached the gate, breathless and giddy, ~~;~~ did ~~s~~he stop and look back. The ~~beech-oak~~ was jet black against the ~~indigo~~ night sky, a sedentary, still silhouette. There was no sign of the rook.

Taking a moment to catch her breathe and brush the mud from her hands onto her sodden jeans, she surveyed each of the paths before her. ~~Blake's words made little sense.~~

The hill rose before her, treacherous and steep. The path was no more than a meandering animal ~~t~~rack through the woods; a route she had been happy to take that summer's afternoon they had gone hiking, but not one she would like to negotiate beneath a waxing moon. ~~T,~~ and the ~~other~~-path ~~around the hill, on the other hand – the one by which she had arrived at the~~ ~~field –~~ was flat and wide and would ~~only~~ lead her to her car in minutes ~~only~~. ~~S;~~ ~~ure,~~ it ran alongside the river, but from here she could see. ~~;~~ ~~sure,~~ that the water's ~~w~~here calm and quiete.

There was no danger.

~~Blake's words made little sense.~~

Comment [C P7]: I think remove the repetitive structuring here otherwise it weakens the effect of the 'then another, then another' repetition earlier in this sentence.

Comment [C8]: Good alliteration.

Comment [C P9]: I think this works better here, to lead into the description of the paths; leaving a good, strong sentence to close the chapter on: 'There was no danger.'

Comment [C P10]: I felt this needed more explanation.

Final hands-on, intensive development edit version

'You shouldn't be here, Bethany.' The words were whispered, barely audible above the rustling of the leaves in the great oak above them, but she heard them all the same, and he knew that. His eyes bored into hers, desperate, wild, pleading – at once demanding that she leave and begging that she stay.

'I had to come,' she said carefully, reaching out her hand to take his. If she could just touch him, just let him feel her warmth, he would surely let her in.

'I can't,' he said, taking a step backwards and imploring her with his stormy eyes to understand, to forgive. 'I'm sorry. I'm bound. I'm not free to...'

A movement above them in the trees startled the pair. A rook, huge, sleek and black, had

settled on a bough over their heads and was regarding them with sharp eyes.

‘I have to go.’ Blake’s tone was urgent, hard, all tenderness lost. ‘Go quickly now. Take the hill path; don’t go near the river. Hurry!’

And before she could reach out to him again, to reassure him, he was gone.

She closed her eyes and breathed in the cool night air, catching a hint of his familiar, musky scent on the breeze. But then a piercing shriek shattered the moment and she looked up to see the rook, unnaturally still, glaring at her with eyes that seemed to reflect so many more colours than were contained in the wan moonlight. As she watched, the bird opened its wings to their full span and began to beat them rhythmically. A gust of wind whipped her hair in her face, then another, then another, until the night was a kaleidoscope of icy, swirling gusts and the sound of beating wings coming ever closer.

She turned and fled across the field, her heart pounding in her chest. The long grasses seemed to be a thousand fingers clawing at her; the wet earth a quagmire of quicksand eager to consume her. She stumbled in a rabbit hole and went down heavily on her knees, but she quickly scrambled up and was away again, her breath coming in sobs, her chest burning from the exertion.

Only when she reached the gate, breathless and giddy, did she stop and look back. The oak was jet black against the indigo night sky, a sedentary, still silhouette. There was no sign of the rook.

Taking a moment to catch her breath and brush the mud from her hands onto her sodden jeans, she surveyed each of the paths before her. Blake’s words made little sense. The hill rose before her, treacherous and steep. The path was no more than a meandering animal track through the woods: a route she had been happy to take that summer’s afternoon they had gone hiking, but not one she would like to negotiate beneath a waxing moon. The path around the hill, on the other hand – the one by which she had arrived at the field – was flat and wide and would lead her to her car in minutes only. Sure, it ran alongside the river, but from here she could see that the waters were calm and quiet.

There was no danger.