

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 lead 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 quiet. There was no danger.

Blake's words made little sense.

Proofread with track changes

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

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