



A Murder of Crows

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Fable

Down, down, down they came, three crows settling on the alder tree. All three, they looked and watched as the old man readied his tools. As he leant on a wooden handle he eyed them with a curious smile.

– What brings you here? Do you bring me good luck or ill?

The crows paused and looked from one to the other. The largest crow spoke up.

– We come for food. We are hungry. And you are short of breath. It is nearly your time and we will feast on you.

The crow's honesty did not take the old man aback. He merely nodded his head. The old man felt the weight of his years on him and was beginning to be surprised by each new dawn he met. But he was not yet ready to be carrion for these three crows.

– You may be waiting longer than you think. I am hale and hearty. Why would I start tilling this field if I thought I would never plough it?

– We are patient, said the the crow. We will wait here.

The old man nodded again. Then he turned and pointed to the wood in the distance.

– No need to wait. The other side of the wood you will find the farmer's traps. There's sure to be food aplenty for you there.

And without so much as a by-your-leave the crows flew off toward the wood.

Hours passed. The three crows returned. Down, down, down they came and settled on the alder tree. The calls roused the old man who was still breaking the soil in the field. He looked up at them and greeted them with a smile.

– Did you not eat your fill? Had the farmer not set his traps?

– Oh, yes, called the largest crow, oh, yes. There were rabbits there, and foxes too. But we came back for you.

The old man nodded. He took the chance to lean against his plough and catch his breath. The crows watched his every breath.

– It's good to see you, but I'm afraid you may be waiting longer than you think. I mean to plant this field.

– We are patient, said the crow.

– Well, over there on the other side of town is the butcher's yard. There's sure to be food aplenty for you there. And without so much as a by-your-leave the crows flew off toward the town.

Days passed and the crows returned. Down, down, down they came and settled on the branches of the alder tree. This time their calls woke the old man, who was sat sleeping against the bole of the tree.

– How was the butcher's yard? Did you not eat your fill?

– Oh, yes, called the largest crow, oh, yes. There were pigs there, and sheep too. But we came back for you.

The old man nodded his head and reached for his pipe. He knew the crows watched his every move. His body ached and he was tired. But he had planted his crop and he would watch it grow.

– It's good to see you once more, but I'm afraid you may be waiting longer than you think. I have planted my crop and would see it grow tall. And I know you are patient and do not want to grow lean. Over beyond the hills there is a battlefield where two armies have recently met.

The largest of the crows nodded to the old man and said,

– You know much of death, old man.

– Ahh, where there's men, there'll always be food for crows, he replied.

And with that and without so much as a by-your-leave the crows flew off towards the distant hills.

Weeks passed and the crows returned. Down, down, down they came and this time were pleased to see there was a high stone carved, with two outstretched arms for them to rest on, planted in the field just where the old man would work. But the old man himself was nowhere to be seen.

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