

A Raven Arrives

by [Armando Simón](#) (August 2024)



Tar Papering (Crows) (Andrew Wyeth, 1963)

Being a nice day, the door was open to Madam Bujiwuji's Fortune Telling's disheveled establishment. A raven flew inside and scared the bejesus out of the frumpy Madam Bujiwuji.

She had not foreseen that.

"Get out! Shoo! Shoo!" she said, waving her arms.

The raven landed on her crystal ball tried to perch but slipped and fell on its tail feathers with a <plop!> feet up. It then flew up and perched on a bust of a woman's head, the

base of which had the words Athena carved in there.

“Go’wan! Shoo!”

“Hey, cool it!” quoth the raven. “I wanna to talk to you!” It had a feminine voice.

She halted in mid-shoo! and stared at the bird. She came closer to it. “You ... talk?”

“Yeah. I talk. Listen, Madam Bujiwuji, I need your help.”

“How do you know my name?”

“Well, duh. You have a sign on the window. I can read, you know.”

“You can read, too,” she said in a hushed tone. “Wow .. you’re one smart bird.”

“No big deal. I graduated from high school,” it said matter of factly.

“High school? There’s a high school for birds?”

“No, silly. I’m human. I was turned into a raven. He did this to me cause I wouldn’t put out. I don’t like men with beards.”

“You expect me to believe there are sorcerers in this day and age?”

“And you have a crystal ball to tell fortunes—in this day and age?”

“Good point.”

“Anyway, I was flying by, and I saw your sign and I thought maybe you could tell me my future and tell me how to get back to normal. I don’t want to miss Spring Break in Florida. It’s in three weeks.”

“That’s easy! You just have to be kissed by a handsome fella.”

"Oh, yeah? Hey, I like that idea!"

"Sure! It's in all the enchantment stories: Sleeping Beauty, Snowflake, the frog."

"Well, that shouldn't be too difficult. I'm gorgeous! I'm hot stuff! Men tell me that all the time." She shook her tails feathers and puffed out her chest.

"You're a bird."

"Oh, right."

"But I have an idea. Let me pick you up." Bujiwuji picked up the raven and went into an adjoining room. Before the bird knew it, the fortune teller thrust the bird through a very large opening into a very large, empty cage that had been gathering dust. It was big enough to put a dog in it, though it had probably housed a couple of macaws in the past. The cage was as tall as a person.

"Hey, whachoo doing? What's the big idea?"

"Let me tell you your fortune, sweetie. You're going to make my fortune."

"But I gotta find me a handsome fella to kiss me! I gotta go to Spring Break! I've been looking forward to it. Besides, there's always a bunch of handsome fellas there for me to kiss."

"All in good time, my fine feathered friend, all in good time. Just be patient."

If Madam Bujiwuji was good at one thing, it was marketing, considering her very limited resources.

Actually, she just put up a cardboard sign at the window. It stated she had a bird that could engage in conversation.

Very soon, little by little, people began to slowly show up to

check out the phenomenon. The cage remained in the room adjacent to the front desk, where Madam Bujiwuji took in the money. The customers' reactions varied.

"What's your name, bird?" asked a man the day after the bird was caged.

"Elizabeth. What's yours, fella?"

"Clark. My word, you're amazing!"

"Thanks. I get that all the time. As a matter of fact, I've always been told that." She fluffed her feathers.

A young woman showed up later. The first words out of her mouth were, "Hey, it's a crow!"

"I'm not a crow. I'm a raven! Get it straight."

"Oh, sorry. What's the difference between them, anyway? A crow and a raven, I mean. I don't know."

"To be honest..." confessed Elizabeth, "neither do I. But I know I'm a raven."

On the second day, another woman, middle aged, showed up and committed the same *faux pas* : "Oh, it's a crow!"

"Raven!! I'm a raven! You're being racist! That's racism!"

"Well, ex-cuse me-e-e. I was expecting a parrot."

"And I was expecting someone with class."

"You're rude!"

"And you're ugly! Put some makeup on that face."

A man with a goatee followed the woman an hour later, intelligent looking, well dressed, and conversed with her with concern and respect. Elizabeth told him in great detail what had occurred to her.

“He listed one of his interests as being ‘magic’ and I thought he did tricks like David Copperfield and Penn and Teller, but now I see he really did mean ‘magic.’ The joke’s on me, I suppose. But, you know, looking back, I guess what upset me most—I mean before he turned me into a raven—was that his profile picture on Tinder didn’t have a beard. It was bait and switch.”

“Oh, dear,” he said as he rubbed his goatee. “I know it sounds silly of me, but I feel guilty.”

“Oh, no, don’t be! It wasn’t you. And you’re a nice man. And he had a full beard. Don’t feel bad.”

“I’m so sorry that happened to you. I’ll bet you were an intelligent and beautiful girl.”

“Right on both counts. I was, indeed.”

“I wish I knew some way to help you,” he said with such sad sincerity that if a raven could cry she would have at the kindness of this man. He left shaking his head.

For some reason, women tended to be catty towards Elizabeth in every conceivable way. Maybe it was because she was a bird. Or it could have been because she was the center of attention, and every woman wants to be the center of attention and resents the woman who is. Regardless, she took no guff from them.

“Wow, you are a fat bird, aren’t you?” remarked a chubby cheeked woman wearing ripped, cutoff shorts that were too tight.

“And you’re a fat slob, aren’t you?”

“Well! I never!”

“Never went on a diet? I can believe that.”

Another woman decided to tease the bird. "Ooo, I could take you home and cook you. I'll bet you taste like chicken."

"Come closer ... I want to peck your eyeballs. I'll bet they taste like Jello."

The woman departed in fright.

Madam Bujiwuji came in, right afterwards. "Hey, bird, stop being mean to my customers. They're complaining!"

"You don't say. Well, they're being mean to me. If they're nice to me, I'll be nice to them. It's that simple. I hope that last one parked under a tree and there were birds in it. By the way, how about some music? You got any Lynyrd Skynyrd? I'd like to hear Free Bird."

Soon after, a man came in and looked her over. "So, you used to be a woman, is that right?"

"Yes, I was."

"You have a big chest. Say ... I'll bet you had a big pair when you were a woman," and saying that he prodded the raven's breast with his finger.

"Hey!! Watch it buster!" Elizabeth flapped her wings in alarm.

"What? You're in a cage" he mocked her again. "I can touch you as much as I want," and he stuck his finger in the cage only to be pecked by the raven's sharp beak. He yelled in pain; his finger was bleeding.

"Nevermore," quoth the raven.

He left, nursing his finger. Looking back at the raven, he could have sworn the beast had a malicious look.

The next day, another man came in. This one was a very handsome man, tall, brunette, with a great physique.

"Oooooo, ni-i-ice," the words escaped her.

"Hello, there. Can you really speak?" He smiled while he spoke.

"Honey, for you, I will do anything."

He chuckled. "What's your name?"

"Elizabeth. And what's yours?"

"Armando."

"That's a nice name, but can I call you instead ... the love of my life?"

He chuckled again. "You're cheeky, aren't you?"

"Oh, darling, you have no idea."

"Say, this Madam Bujiwuji, she claims to see the future. I'm curious. Tell me the truth, here between the two of us. I've always wondered about fortune tellers. Is this one any good?"

"Well, let me put it this way: she didn't foresee my flying into her joint. That should tell you everything."

"Yeah. OK."

"In fact, the weatherman is better at predicting the weather than she can. And that's saying something."

"I see ... Say, mind if I take your picture?" he asked her as he took out his cellphone.

"Sure! Take as many as you like." And she proceeded to pose for him in several ways: wings outstretched. Wings above her. She posed sideways with her head turned towards him. She posed backward with her head looking—somehow—coyly back at him.

"Hey, how about one with the two of us?" she suggested. "Come closer." He chuckled again and brought his cheek close,

touching the bars while she pressed her head against his face, trying to snuggle against him as he snapped the picture.

“Whoa! I just realized something! Quick, kiss me!”

“What??”

“Kiss me! Bujiwuji thinks that a kiss from a handsome prince will restore me.”

“But I’m not a prince.”

“No, but you’re handsome and that’s good enough for me! Pucker up, handsome!”

“No, I can’t. I’m married.”

“ And I’m a raven! It’ll be a first for both of us! Something to tell all our friends! If you kiss me and I turn back to the way I was I’ll be so grateful. I’ll reward you in ways you can’t imagine. Trust me! And it won’t be a Thank You card from Hallmark. Now, kiss me, you fool!”

“Sorry. It’s just that I know you’re really a woman and I’m very faithful to my wife.”

“But ... she doesn’t have to know. *I* won’t tell her. And I know *you* won’t. So, you see ... what she doesn’t know won’t hurt her.”

“It’s tempting, but no. Sorry. Goodbye, Elizabeth,” he waved. “And good luck.”

“Goodbye, Armando. I’ll never forget you. We’ll always have Madam Bujiwuji’s Fortune Telling establishment.” He walked away as she looked at him with hunger.

Right after him came a boy in his very early teens, around twelve or so. He walked up to the cage. “Can you really talk?”

“Yes, kiddo, I sure can.”

“Wow. What happened to you?” She once again related her tragedy, which helped quench her previous disappointment.

“How about you? What are you going to be when you grow up?”

“I’m going to be a doctor. Just like my dad.”

“A doctor. Cool. I’m sure you’ll be good at curing people. And, hey, you’ll be dating a lot of pretty nurses.”

“I’ve never seen a raven before. You’re a pretty bird.”

“Thank you. And you’re a handsome boy. I’ll bet—wait! Kiss me!”

“What?”

“You’re not married, are you?”

“No!!”

“Then, come over here and kiss me! Maybe you can restore me to my real self. It’s just like Sleeping Beauty.”

“You’re not going to bite me, are you?”

“No, silly,” she said while restraining herself from adding, “though your lips look like two juicy worms.”

“The young boy scratched the side of his head with a finger and brought his lips to the bars of the cage and kissed the beak she offered. Instantly, she felt a tingling all over her body.

“It worked! Look! I’m changing! I’m changing! I’m going back to normal!” It was true. Her talons were now toes. The beak had disappeared. And she was growing. “Get me out! Get me out of here! Quick! Help me!”

“How? The cage has a lock!”

“The key’s over there, on that table! Hurry! Hurry!!”

The boy swiftly opened the door to the cage. She struggled to get out and the boy pulled her. Fortunately, he had gotten her arms and head out first, and she was able to quickly pull herself out along with his help, just in time, with barely a scratch.

Before him now stood a beautiful redheaded girl. Truly breathtaking. And joyful. She looked down at herself and ran her hands along her body and head. Then, she gave a squeal of joy, grabbed the boy, and twirled him around while showering him with kisses before finally putting the dazed boy down.

“Wow ... Thank you!” the boy said with a big smile on his face.

“No. Thank *you!*”

Without another word, she practically flew out of that place, completely ignoring a crestfallen Madam Bujiwuji, or any of her customers. But on her way out, she did smack the fortune teller’s crystal ball, which fell on the floor in a dozen pieces.

“Bet you didn’t see that coming!”

Elizabeth would make it to Florida in time for Spring Break.

But first, she would try to find that Armando fellow.

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