

CHAPTER THREE WHITE CROW

The Inn's Library is filled with flowers for an upcoming wedding, every table, chair and ladder step alive with fragrance and color.

Three legged Snug is fast asleep on a cushion in the far corner. Sleeping on his left side, his right leg points straight to the sky. Hearing something, he suddenly stands up, frozen in position.

As Julian and Asha sit on the floor working on a jigsaw puzzle, Emilie and Shilli talk nearby. Emilie, hearing something, jerks her head as Samuel walks over. "Where were you two last night?" Shilli - "Talking about papers for school."

Hearing a tapping, everyone looks at the Library door. The noise continues. Samuel shouts - "Come in." When the tapping gets louder, Julian gets up to open the door. A large white Crow steps inside, taking flight to the mantle above the fireplace. Everyone is transfixed at his three foot wing span and fan shaped tail. As the Crow looks at the portrait of his great grandfather hanging over the fireplace, Youri rushes, barking, through the Library's open door, followed by the Admiral who quietly closes the door. The Crow nods to the Admiral, who goes to clear the largest table. The White Crow flies over. "Will you all come closer?"

Julian, Emilie, Shilli, Asha and Samuel don't move. The Admiral - "It's okay," pointing to the stacks of folding chairs for tomorrow's wedding.

The children sit around the table. "I am White Crow. When you get home, we'd like to ask for your help again. You'll have to be aware, pay attention and listen. The natural world will be there to guide you." Youri jumps up on the table, sitting down next to White Crow.

Asha asks "Why did you choose us?" White Crow bows his head forward for three or four seconds before answering. "The mind is rational and intuitive. We understand the young of your species believe imagination can triumph over cruelty."

Emilie - "Do you want us to tell any one about this?" "Not now." Asha looks at Emilie, who zips her mouth shut with her hand.

Samuel asks “Will we ever see each other again?” “You’ll be together again, sooner than you think. Something will happen and the world will take notice. Afterward, you’ll work as a team. You were raised in different places, see things differently, have different beliefs and customs. For some of you, images are important, for others, it is words or sounds. Just like the natural world, a snake doesn’t see the same things as a butterfly.”

White Crow continues. “We each have strengths and weaknesses. We all make mistakes. Never be afraid to admit your mistakes. When you deny them, things gets worse. Do you remember a mistake you made?” Everyone looks anxiously at one another. The Admiral is the first - “I fell asleep at the front desk.” One after another. “I’m always late.” “I lied to cover up something I did.” “I cheated on a test.” “I saw someone hurt one of my friends and didn’t speak up.” “I told a lie about someone to someone else.”

White Crow raises then lowers his wings, looking around the Library. “When you meet again, you might disagree with each other. It takes practice to learn how to work together, to understand different points of view, to listen, compromise and try new things. You can help each other through whatever comes along.”

White Crow turns to look again at the portrait over the mantle. “Do you know what the word “prejudice” means?” Shilli answers - “It means you don’t like someone.” White Crow - “Prejudice always starts somewhere, distrust and suspicion have roots. You may have to relearn some things. That’s not always easy.”

Julian stands up. “We all had the same dream. Can we learn how to do that?” White Crow - “Yes, Youri and Snug will teach you.”

White Crow looks at the Admiral who gets up and opens the Library door. Looking into each of their eyes, White Crow nods to Samuel, Emilie, Asha, Julian and Shilli. With silent wingbeats, he flies away.