

The Girl and the Raven



Jane MEADOW

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Alice loved the quiet corner of the schoolyard where the old oak tree stood. Every morning before the bell rang, she would sit on a bench and watch the world wake up. She carried a spiral-bound nature journal and a pencil in her green canvas satchel. Her yellow raincoat rustled as she turned the pages, ready to write down anything interesting she saw.



One drizzly Tuesday, a glossy black bird landed on the grass near the oak. It was a raven, bigger than a crow, with feathers that shone purple-blue in the grey light. Alice noticed a small silver band on its left leg. The raven held a twig in its beak and cocked its head, as if thinking. Alice's hazel-green eyes widened, and she quickly opened her journal.



The raven hopped to a crack in the pavement where someone had dropped a piece of bread. It poked the bread with its beak, but the bread was too deep. Then the raven dropped the twig into the crack and fished the bread out. Alice gasped. 'You clever bird!' she whispered. She wrote every detail in her journal, her pencil flying across the page.



The next day, Alice brought her journal again. This time the raven was trying to reach a beetle under a small stone. It picked up a pebble and used it to pry the stone loose. Alice drew a quick sketch of the raven with the pebble in its beak. She wrote: 'Raven uses tools. Very smart.' She couldn't wait to tell someone.



At lunch, Alice told her best friend Maya about the raven. Maya's dark brown eyes went wide. 'A bird that uses tools? No way!' she said, her puffy buns bouncing as she laughed. 'Can I see it?' Alice promised to show her the next morning. Maya grabbed her colourful backpack and promised to bring her own notebook.



The next morning, both girls waited quietly on the bench. The raven arrived and landed near a puddle. It dropped a stone into the puddle, then another, watching the water splash. Maya whispered, 'It's playing!' Alice nodded and wrote: 'Raven plays with stones. Curious and bold.' The raven seemed to notice them, but it didn't fly away.



Days turned into weeks, and Alice filled page after page with raven notes. She drew the silver band on its leg and wrote how it carried twigs and pebbles. She noticed the raven always came at the same time, just after the first bell. Her patience grew, and so did her collection of careful observations.



One afternoon, Mr. Okafor, her science teacher, spotted Alice's journal on her desk. He adjusted his glasses on their cord and smiled. 'May I take a look?' he asked. As he flipped through the pages, his warm brown eyes lit up. 'Alice, this is wonderful work,' he said. 'Would you like to share it with the class?' Alice's freckled nose crinkled with a nervous smile.



Alice spent the evening preparing her presentation. She chose her best sketches: the raven with a twig, the raven with a pebble, the raven dropping stones in a puddle. She wrote simple notes on each page. Maya helped her practise, asking questions like 'How do you know it's the same raven?' Alice pointed to the silver band.



The day of the presentation arrived. Alice stood in front of the class, her yellow raincoat hung on her chair. She held her journal open and spoke clearly. 'This is a raven,' she began. 'It visits our schoolyard every morning. I have watched it solve puzzles using sticks and stones.' Her classmates leaned forward, curious.



Alice showed her sketches and told the story of the bread in the crack and the beetle under the stone. She explained how the raven used a twig to fish out the bread and a pebble to pry the stone. 'Ravens are among the smartest birds,' she said. 'They can even plan ahead.' Maya grinned and gave her a thumbs-up.



When Alice finished, the room was silent for a moment. Then Maya raised her hand. 'How did you first notice the raven?' she asked. Alice smiled. 'I was patient and watched carefully,' she said. 'Anyone can do it. You just have to pay attention.' Mr. Okafor nodded, his friendly smile wide.



The class burst into excited questions. 'Does it have a name?' 'What else can it do?' Alice answered as best she could, and Mr. Okafor helped. He said, 'Alice has shown us something important: observation leads to respect. When we watch wildlife closely, we learn to appreciate it.' The class clapped, and Alice felt warm inside.



After that day, Alice kept watching the raven, but now she had company. Maya often joined her, and sometimes other classmates came too. They learned to sit quietly and respect the raven's space. The raven seemed to trust them more, sometimes hopping closer. Alice added new pages to her journal, full of wonder.



Mr. Okafor hung one of Alice's sketches on the classroom wall. It showed the raven with a twig in its beak. Underneath, Alice had written: 'Even a common bird can surprise you.' The class voted to start a nature journal club, and Alice was chosen as the leader. She felt proud and happy.



Alice learned that day that every creature has a story worth telling, if only we take the time to look. She still carries her green canvas satchel and her journal everywhere she goes. And whenever she sees a glossy black raven, she smiles and remembers the clever bird who taught her to observe, to respect, and to wonder.