**CROW KID**

**S. P. Hurlsmith**

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***S.P. Hurlsmith, 2022.***

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**PROLOGUE:**

I first want to preface this book by saying that while it is not a perfect book, it is not the worst book to ever be written. This is my first try at writing a complete story, and so a number of flaws may appear in reading this book. I am human after all. Please read at your own caution and make sure to have as much fun as you can, as I have worked so hard for this book to be a real thing.

I first would like to thank my very good friend Iyed for editing and proofreading this book. I am very thankful for his help in this project, as it took a whole one year and a half. Credit goes to Iyed for helping out.

Visit my website to get more info about me; I am a new writer after all:

<https://stephenhurlsmith.netlify.app/index.html>

I post blogs on the website and you can always know what I’m writing next! My contact information is on the email [sphurlsmith@gmail.com](mailto:sphurlsmith@gmail.com) if you would like to talk to me personally or if you have a comment about my book. More contact info on the website.

I highly suggest you send critiques or your own opinion on the book, all help accepted.

Without further ado, please feel free to enjoy your reading of Crow Kid.

**I: Goodbye, for One Last Time.**

P

aull sat just as still as the air, hunched in the place he was most usual with, the library. The place around him was not as quiet as usual. It was pretty late into this school day, and the bell of recess would end pretty soon. Paull heard distant footsteps muffled in the carpet. Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulder from behind him.

"Earth to Paull. Are you there?" said Nick, chuckling.

"Yeah, yeah, talk about it. I'm sorry, I was zoning out, Nicko." he replied, turning with a sheepish smile, “I do that when thinking about something dumb, but this is an exception.”

“That’s what you always say, but I know something else is going on in that ham-brain of yours; Do you go autopilot or what?”

Paull leaned in and whispered, “I have been meaning to say this. I have a plan now."

"What plan? What do you even mean?" said Nick in a loud voice.

Paull said, "Tone down already! Listen, do you remember how I told you that I can turn into a crow?"

"Yeah?" said Nick.

"Well, I think I've got to live with the rest of the crows. I have to live with them in harmony, if you get the sense of what I mean." explained Paull, stood up, book in hand. "What? That's completely dumb as an idea. Who will feed you? Why would you think of that?" asked Nick.

"Well, I've been thinking about it for a long time. Ever since I began to acknowledge my power I've been thinking about it. I decided a while back that I'd be feeding off any source of food that wouldn't get me sick. If it sounds dumb, then you could have left me to be alone by myself at that point. But you don't, so that's why I trust you with these types of things. It's something I know I can talk to you about. Plus, you saw me turn into a bird with your bare eyes, Nicko!" explained Paull as he stood up.

They both paused for a few minutes before the bell rang, sending them right back to class.

Paull said, "Well, if you see news about a kid who can turn into a crow, acknowledge I made it into the news. If that actually happened, it would be crazy!" Nick chuckled, "Breaking News: Crazy crow shapeshifter homeless child on the loose!"

...

The sky faded. The two students sniffed the cold out of the air.

"You know, I planned early on that winter would come, thus why I have a jacket." replied Paull, chuckling at Nick for doing such a thing.

"I wish I had a jacket now." added Nick.

As they neared their homes, they discussed many things before Nick brought up something.

"So, what do I do when you go missing?" asked Nick.

Paull replied, "I don't really know what to do if I actually go missing. Because as you said, it would be a bit dumb to abandon my privileges. But if I do, I'll reach out to you when I get the chance to."

Nick said, "So when you go, you promise you'll try to contact me, right?"

"I promise you, Nick." said Paull.

They intertwined their pinky fingers. The two walked across the now darkening road in awkward silence.

"So, how's the weather?" said Paull jokingly, trying not to be boring.

"Oh, the weather, It's heaven with a side of slightly freezing cold air and a sprinkle of fog because it is not my lucky day." answered Nick.

The two stopped to look at each other, and then burst in hysterical laughter. This, along with other of their inside jokes were unintelligible to the average person.

"It definitely is not your lucky day." added Paull.

This continued the laughter even further. By then, the house was wide and clear in front of Paull and he waved goodbye to Nick.

Paull opened the door to his home and felt a sting of warmth. He had been exhausted up until then anyway.

The door was shut and Paull was finally back at home.

"Welcome back, Paull. How was your day?" said Mrs. Geraldson from across the living room.

Paull tore the tired look off of his face and answered, "It was okay. Plus, it's the last few days of school anyway so I'm kind of relieved; finally, nothing more to do but to autopilot my way through the remaining days that I have."

A bowl of soup was hot and ready, waiting for him. Paull drank the bowl by hand, chugging down the whole thing in a matter of seconds.

"Whoa, don't go drinking soup like a caveman, Paull!" exclaimed Mr. Geraldson from across the living room. He was seated, reading a newspaper with a little smile. His phone rang near him; it was a call from the company. He stood up and said to the rest, "Sorry y'all. I've got an important call."

"Aren't you supposed to have a vacation by now, dad?" asked Paull, irritated at the very hum of his dad's phone.

"It's an important call, they said they chose me for something they call extra work, son." answered Mr. Geraldson before walking out of the house.

"Don't worry about him, he's the reason we live and eat, so you should be thankful anyway." said Mrs. Geraldson, consoling Paull.

Paull replied, "I know, he just always leaves."

The two glared at the main door. Paull abruptly walked from the kitchen into the left hallway that turned back on a one-way road down to his room.

The stacks of paper in the basket under his table rustled at his arrival. It smelled a lot like oranges in here, even though there were no oranges there. Paull headed past the charcoal shoebox and the wooden closet, and right to his bed and collapsed. Finally, he was ready to fall asleep.

The lights were off, went through the usual end of day motions, but no matter how hard he had squinted, his eyes never budged. He was left awake thinking about the plan he would make.

Hours and hours passed until he finally decided that today was the perfect day.

**II: The Runaway**

H

e stood up, and looked through his room under dim moonlight. He reached towards his table, scrambling through the drawers of his table and picked up a flashlight from one of the drawers and grabbed it off like he would do with a dollar.

Paull tip toed his way towards the kitchen. The dark hallways, only illuminated by his barely charged flashlight, made the cold floors he knew inside out alien once again. He turned at a hallway, and heard the loud fan from his parents’ room.

“How does anybody even get to sleep in there with a fan like that?” he thought.

Once reaching the kitchen, the faint smell of rust slid through his nose. He searched across cupboards, with creaks getting louder by the second. The smell came from the lower left cupboard under the sink.

His hand reached across, slowly moving through the spray bottles, cardboard boxes, and tools. He caught a cold object in the cupboard. It jingled metallically, and it felt sharp on some edges and smooth on the others.

Paull slowly dragged it with the tips of his fingers, his arm reaching closer. The keys scratched against the floor of the cupboard. His veins pumped with adrenaline.

Upon reaching the basement with the greeting sound of a creaking old door, Paull was greeted by a long staircase. In the basement, Paull looked for the backpack he previously put in the basement, using his hands and memory to find the backpack he filled with clothes, toothpaste, soap, water, a mini radio, and some books. The squeaks of roaches in the basement led a disgusted Paull to the backpack.

After leaving the basement, he opened the fridge and grabbed a plastic bag lying right beside the fridge, packing every single one of the foods inside. Expired mayonnaise accidentally spread through the house slowly, indicating that Paull needed to close the fridge, and leave the mayo behind.

The plan is now finally complete! Paull opened the kitchen window and flew out.

...

Dear Mom and Dad:

I've escaped from home. It will be a bit of time between me and you two (hopefully it's only 4 ***years*** or something like that, I assume). Don't worry about me, I've almost robbed you of all the things I need. Also, screw you!!

You and your "busy work schedules" and "extremely important meetings I have to attend because GOD KNOWS WHY!" If all you talk about is your job then you should probably live with it.

Don't even talk about your other things, okay? Bye!

Sincerely,

Paull.

...

A large whiff of wind chirped across the air as Paull flew through the silent night, tired, regretful, and sleepy as he searched the city from above.

Across him was a big stretch of land surrounded by rusted, black, iron fences. There were green pale, trees and blades of grass across; Ponds scattered across, as if god had spilled his cup of water all over the place.

His wings stumbled in the wind as if they belonged to a drunken bird.

*“Keep steady, keep steady.”* he thought. Paull found himself heading directly into the water. A whip of wind sent him spinning down as fast as a military jet on maximum speed. His ears could only hear the strong and painful screeching of the wind.

He spewed into the water with a splash. Bubbles surrounded him, scrambling to get to the top of the pond within the green and dirty water. It wasn’t usual to find a bird at the bottom of a pond, yet here he was.

His eyes barely adjusted to the constant burn of water trying to get in. His nose was burning to the point the water could be considered fire, so were his ears.

Paull tried to flap his way to the top, but the water was as heavy as a lead car. Drowning, unlike other methods of death is a way worse pain than you would think; not only are you constantly suffocating, but you can’t struggle against water or cry for help.

He shifted back to human form, and his bag was still stuck to him. “Wait, if I take off the bag, then shift back to crow, then I’ll be out of the water!” he realized. He scrambled to unfasten the bags, and as expected, they flew up to the surface.

Then, he shifted back to the crow form and joined the bag on the surface. Paddling out into the ground took some time, but at the end he was out of the water along with his bag.

Paull took out the paper books he wished to read, the ink spilling on his palms. He pulled out the radio and a few sparks lit from the back of the machine.

He pressed the little button with the “on/off” phrase in big letters. The radio returned to a radio station that spoke a little too much.

“Welcome back to 12:21 FM! It’s a perfect cloudy night for some rock! We play only the best songs for the best listeners. Next up is the new hit song by Bones Malones and The Funk Lizard: Joey Garcia Tap Water Influx from the famous album, 14 Galizardillion Halloween Lizard Puns.”

Zips, scratches, and sparks lit from behind the machine. Suddenly, it burst and exploded. Smoke belched from the radio as fire lighted it and the grass. Paull fell back to the tree and passed out.

**III: Encountering something new.**

T

he cold wind whispered in his ear, telling him to wake up, though it could have been coincidence. "Can't this day get better? I have just another reason to screw myself over and go to sleep. I'm already going crazy." he said.

He got up from his sleep, picked up his bag, and began exploring towards where the wind sent him. Paull snapped off and flew through, looking for the source of the whistling. In front of him, a group of hand-sized shadows ran past him.

"What's that? I better see for myself." he said before flying past, now following the dark shadows as their silhouettes started revealing themselves.

As he descended, the area around him began to look darker than ever, and the buildings blocked most of the moonlight.

As he descended, he flew a little away from the area, which was in an alley that led to the street where the shadows went, and pecked himself back to his human form before approaching the area where the shadows flew into.

There, on the other side of the street, he saw a man sitting down on a bench, feeding breadcrumbs to the crows which had led Paull there in the first place.

"Who would be up at this time of night?" thought Paull as he raised his eyebrow.

The man looked at him before asking, "Oh hello, where did you come from?"

Paull joked, "The shadows, of course." This was out of character, Paull usually would chicken out of talking to anybody he didn’t like. Unlike the others, this man seemed interesting.

"So, are you one of the shadows?" asked the man, now taller in posture.

Paull tiptoed away from the man, hoping to be able to leave.

"Wait! Kid, get back here for a sec," continuing, he said,” I saw you turn shape."

"That is my ticket to leave. I've got to go rob another grandma for food, so bye bye creepy man."

The man interrupted him, "Don't worry, I can do that as well."

Paull's feet slowly returned to their place as he stood tall, "Well then, prove it, crazy man. Whichever one it is you’re taking about."

The man snapped his fingers, leaving a long echo across the sky. Then, in the blink of an eye, in the place of the man, was a little crow.

"Whoa! So I'm not the only one with this power!" said Paull as he gazed at the black bird, while also quickly looking behind himself. The man pecked his wings and turned back.

"See? Don’t tell your parents now." he said.

"Oh don't worry, I ran away." said Paull.

The man replied, "Well then, if you got the time to, meet me right here again tomorrow morning. I'll teach you everything."

They both glared.

"So, can I go back to, you know?" asked Paull as he pointed his thumb to his back.

"Yes, you can most certainly go back to robbing old women of their food." chuckled the man.

Then, a quick yet loud snap echoed. The flapping of wings and the smell of feathers spread out. This could have been useful for him at that time.

**IV: Learning (Rewritten.)**

I

n the grey morning sky two crows flew. Under them, a busy morning had started. Cars were driving, traffic was growing, at this time of day, people would be going to their work.

"I'm curious to know, what's your name?" asked Paull as they flew across the sky.

He answered, "John, you?" Paull replied, "My name is Paull."

The two darted forward to the roof of a building, the air whipping across them. Once they descended they both sat down on the edge of the roof.

John took a breath and started explaining to Paull, "See Paull, you are what's called a crowshifter."

…

Crowshifters are people who can turn from man to crow, people just like you. Believe it or not, there are others all around just like you, hiding from society. We don't speak openly, because others may make up some fake stories about us. Even worse, they might just kill us, and then we'd be dead people. What good are dead people, just legends that misinformed people in the future can use as a reason to prove why aliens exist or whatever dumb people do? Not a chance, and that's why we stay silent.

A problem that emerges from that is we have to do much more than regular people to ensure a living. We have to eat from a dumpster at the worst case, and rob the rich ***and*** poor at best.

Since you decided to leave, you can never come back again. When you come back, your parents are going to ask you why you did it, and you'll have to explain yourself. The curse isn't hereditary, so it's very likely they'll think you're crazy. That's what happened to me, and then I had to stay 8 months in that darn psych ward. I escaped and the rest is history.

Soon enough, something might happen to the crowshifters. Either we become dead, or something else happens. It's not that hard to predict.

...

Paull sat, amazed and terrified at the nature of such a thing.

"Well, that's interesting. What happened for us crowshifters to exist? Why do we still exist as of now?" he asked.

So many questions he had to ask, but for then he'd have to wait until he could learn it.

John sat there, silent before standing up. He looked at Paull and said, "Come on, I'll teach you how to live for yourself."

Paull stood up and followed John. The two shifted and flew away.

"So, how do I take care of myself? Where do I find food, John?" asked Paull.

"See, you look over the town and find fresh food out in the open. It can go from an old pizza, to a rat." replied John.

He pointed to a brown, dead rat on the sidewalk.

"Let's go there!" said John.

"In normal conditions, I wouldn't eat a dead rat, but I'm the polar opposite of a normal situation." thought Paull.

Once they reached the bottom, Paull looked at the rat in disgust. "Come on, eat it!" exclaimed Red. Paull slowly reached his beak out towards the rat. He poked the tail of the rat and bit it off, slowly ripping it off of the rat. He let it down his throat.

"Mmm, nice; A taste of chicken, or rabbits." commented Paull, swallowing down the rat like a caveman while realizing he didn’t even have time to critique its taste correctly.

"See? You're getting the hang of it." said John.

"What about water?" asked Paull.

"There are millions of rivers out there. I think you can figure it out for yourself." said John, before flying right away from sight.

"Well, that's surely a rude way to leave a kid out in the middle of nowhere, now, isn't it." thought Paull.

Paull’s tongue started to feel dry, and he flew away.

As he flew across the city up in the sky, the clouds started to separate each other, revealing the sun above them. The shine of the sun was rarely ever seen around here.

He saw the cars beeping and horning at each other violently.

Then, he saw a building. He descended down onto its roof. After shifting to human form, he took down his backpack and took out the water from his bag. While gulping down the water, a crow flew to him.

"Hey. How is it in your forests?" asked Paull.

The crow was silent, but its eyes were focused on him. It sat closer beside him.

"You know, I'm like one of you. Not completely, but partly. Maybe one day I get to meet you, and that's why I'm out here in the wilderness. My name’s Paull, by the way" he said, "Not the complete wilderness, but it's similar in almost all the aspects, you know. Just this one is predicted instead of the sudden nature of your home."

"You and me, we're gonna be friends." said Paull.

They glared at each other for a moment before the crow flew away. Paull thought, "Well, it's time to go now."

**V: Questionable Relations (In Progress.)**

“H

oney, I’m home.” said William, putting his coat on the rack and walking slowly to the living room.

Mary was pacing back and forth.

“I’m so worried about Paull, has anything happened about him, anything new? Please tell me anything.” she pleaded, a quick tone in her voice that spoke concern.

“I know Paull has left, but surely they’ll find him, right?” said Mr. Geraldson, hesitantly.

“William, it’s been half a month since we’ve seen or heard about Paull. He’s not going to just come back!” she replied.

William sighed and sat down, “Mary, I’m doing all I can to find him. I’m willing to do anything to get our son back, but there’s only so much I can do past report it. I’ve already put up posters. What do you want me to do?”

“William! I read the note he left behind, Paull is tired of not being able to see you. He packed his bags and left!”

“Mary, I have no choice but to work! He understands what I have to do to keep this family together!”

William stopped in the middle of his tracks, “I’m sorry for that. I know you’re worried sick about him, I am too. I can’t dwell on the mistakes of the past, although I know I may have done wrong. I’ll do all I can, I swear. You have to have faith in me.”

“Okay then, William. I trust you.”

***MISSING CHILD NOTICE:***

**Have you seen this child? A young, 11 year old boy by the name of Paull William Geraldson has gone missing on November 7th. It has been a week since the last whereabouts of this child have been found.**

**(Image reserved for creative liberties of the reader)**

**If you know anything about the last time you saw an 11 year old Paull Geraldson anywhere around, do notify us immediately.**

**0-77-0-4372-5376-6677-12**

Nick looked at one of the dried out, taped down poster in worry and sorrow.

“I wonder where Paull is, he can't just be out there safe and sound. Something must have happened." he thought, looking at the crimson red sky.

Nick ripped the paper off of the pole, folded it and shoved it in his pocket. His footsteps echoed and echoed across the street in a set and slow pattern, and it slowly became quieter.

His coat reminded him of that day that was already gone; Paull snickering at him, their loud laughter together, their jokes with each other.

Life just wasn't complete without his friend Paull.

"As I would say, the fact that Paull is gone." chuckled Nick sadly, "That’s crazy."

…

A tingling of the metallic keys binding into the lock and twisting on the pins could be heard. Paull unlocked the door and walked back into the entrance. He walked across the silent living room and put down his keys on the stand near the front door. He put down his coat on the rack and looked across the whole room.

“Hello? Mom? Dad? Is anybody there?” asked Paull, but the only response was the faint ringing in his ear.

He walked from the living room to the kitchen, passing the chair Dad always sat on. At the ceiling was a spider crawling from left to right, scrambling to find something. Paull stepped back calmly, his arms shivering. A cold and quiet slithering ran from the hallway into the living room. Paull darted his eyes to the dark red snake, who eyed him down with its sharp, yellow eyes. The spider crawled slowly from the ceiling to the left wall, approaching the snake and slowly walking along its back. The two slithered in harmony, forth and back.

A ringing noise fell to hearing, and he slowly lost sense of what was around him. Paull felt a sharp thing peck his cheek.

“Hello?” muttered Paull, his eyes droopy and his face long.

He saw the black bird standing in place, glaring into him confusingly.

“Oh, right. Well, I have to say, you recognized me sleeping here out of nowhere. You must probably have something to say.”

The bird stepped aback and front again. “If only it could talk.” thought Paull.

**VI: The Complications Arise**

T

he night was quiet and vulnerable; anything could happen at this time. The cold snowflakes flew and dances across the air without care. The weak, yellow streetlights shined on the endless pool of snow that covered the ground like wet mud. The cars all around were frozen in place.

Most shops at this intersection were closed, but one corner store was still open. This is an opportunity to catch up on food.

A man in a dark leather coat shifted his heavy feet between the boot-shaped holes in the snow, which crunched like cold leaves. The breeze whispered and whistled soothingly.

The glass door shifted, and John dropped his right foot on the floor. The half-asleep store clerk from behind the table had his feet kicked onto it.

“\*Sigh\* Why are you even here, it’s like 11:43 PM.”

John turned towards him with a stern frown. “Why aren’t you tucked in bed, young man?” he said.

The clerk put his feet down and watched John walk around the aisles. John eyed the canned corn. The label read, “Fine-tuned: MOCKERFARM CORN!”

He circled the aisle twice and approached the can. John snatched the corn. He stuffed it within his jacket and began quickly pacing out of the store. The door slammed open and swung shut.

“Hey, sir, you cannot steal that can!” said the worker. He sprang and ran out of the door, pulling it behind him.

“Sir, come back here please, return the can.” stuttered the guy.

John paced faster.

“***Get back here, right now, or else I’ll have to call the police!***” he shouted.

John sprinted as fast as he can.

The clerk locked the store door hastily before chasing the man in the leather jacket. John’s heavy breath interfered with his speed. He felt the bottom of his boots slide across the ice beneath the snow, and a strong thunder like noise emerged in the back of his head.

The clerk began catching up. He stopped in his tracks, panting while his hands rested on his elbows. “Just in time” thought John, as he began to place his gloved hands on the ice floor and shakily rise.

The clerk caught up with John and began pulling him up by the collar of his jacket, grunting loudly. John turned towards the store clerk, picked up the lying can of corn, and threw it at him full force. The tin can punched his face, and the clerk shouted in pain, not realizing he just let go of John, who rose up speedily and ran away. The guy fell to the ground on his head, as John look a left turn.

John, with heavy breath, checked his hand, which indeed was holding corn.

Across the sidewalk was an opening with stairs that entered beneath. He paced into the underground train station.

It was tunnel like, with yellow-white lights that were buzzing at the top. At one side was the part where the train would land, the other side was lined with a large, illuminated map on the wall and some half-torn benches.

The time has come.

…

The Churning subway fastened its breaks and halted at the gateway. John rose from the brown bench and wiped his face.

He paced to the door mindlessly, and walked in as the doors slid open. The place smelled clean and new, though the floor proved otherwise.

John sat down on one of the seats, the place looked empty. He bumped into something; A leather case. There was a hunched down man, looking down on the ground in sorrow.

The silent churning ran in between the silent moment, as the two stayed perched on their seats.

“Why the long face?” he said.

The man turned to him, revealing his blue checkered tie over his white shirt, the jacket sliding away from his chest. He said, in a somber tone, “My son’s been gone for about 15 days, and they still haven’t found him.”

“Well, what’s your name?”

“William.”

“Do you think your son’s coming back?”

“Well, I know he’s coming back home at some point, at least I hope so.”

“I tried to run away one time when I was a kid.”

“And they got you?”

“Well, yeah, but look at me, I’m still a hobo after all. I starve most days and live off of stolen foods.” said John, handing the can of corn.

William inspected the cold can, wiping it with his arm. “You stole this?”

“I did.”

“It must be hard to live like that.”

“It must be hard for you to live as if you were dead. Don’t you know that you get a break anyway?”

“I know, but I still want to go.” sighed William.

“Either way, the end is still the same, you have to choose to die free or live caged. Where has your spirit gone, my friend?”

“It has gone wherever my son has.” said William, as he handed a paper to him.

“I’ll try to find you your son. I’ll do what I can to get him back to you, since you seem too sad without him, but you need to learn to keep your spirit where you are, not where your son is; You need to learn to keep yourself with you, not him.”

“Okay.”

The train halted down, and the announcer spoke, “We have now reached station seven. Anybody on board for station 7 can exit now.”

William picked up his suitcase and calmly walked out of the train door. John stayed in his seat.

**VII: Where Do You Think I Am?**

T

he faint noise of muffled hurried footsteps echoed across the air. Paull sat on the edge of a building of low height. He felt shivers slide throughout the many jackets worn on him.

The mysterious dark night sky had so many questions beneath the surface, but only so much could have been answered. He looked around. Beyond the barrage of buildings, shops, hotels and the whatnot were a few silhouettes stood at the sides of a mountain. Caws could be heard from afar.

The moon illuminated the snow around him with its grey light, and his dangling legs ran from side to side on the edge. He opened his bag, and ripped out a paper from his notebook.

“November 19th:

Today I do not know why, but I have a sense there is something at my back, somebody watching me from the sky, like a guardian angel of sorts. I never had felt like this before, but I think it’s become one of the weird things I cannot comprehend past my visions; I feel it’s warning me of something that’s about to happen.

I have lost most of my supplies and the winter has forced me to choke my body within the stacked layers of clothing. I have begun to smell of old fish and onions, and I am starting to forget my own name.

I think am reaching my rebirth as a person, and to think that I once thought that was the best life I could live. This may be the limbo between the changes, but I will see the world from the creeks of nature.

I recently met a man named John; He could turn into a crow just like me. I heard a run from the distant air, maybe it’s him, or maybe it’s my parents. I feel bad for Nick; His best friend turned on him and waded into the forest without him. Did I betray him? Did I do something wrong, should I return, or should I keep on going.

I’ll have to face a big choice very soon, and I won’t be able to run away from it like I always have run from my troubles. This will be the moment of confrontation, the moment that will trap me or set me free to suffer on my own. They will find me, and I will have to choose who I will be.”

He threw his pen into the floor, and it cascaded into shards on the alleyway floor. The wings flapped and halted at the floor.

“Oh, hello, I didn’t see you there. What’s this in between your beak?”

The bird had a clear sandwich bag in its mouth full of peanuts. Paull took it and joked, “Did you take these from these from the squirrel? I hope you treated yourself as well.”

“I have to talk to Nick, to give him a goodbye of sorts. I don’t know what to do but it might help the situation. I need all the help I can.”

Paull shoved the bag of peanuts inside his already packed backpack and flew away.

…

He hit the buttons in a precise concatenation, by alternating from the two bottom corner buttons at the same time and then hitting zero twice before returning to the two buttons and hanging up the phone.

Two quarters fell down from the coin slot, and Paull slid them back in, picked up and dialed a familiar number.

The receiver sighed, his irritation travelling through the cord, “What do you want, it’s like ***5 o’clock*** in the morning.”

Paull replied hesitantly, “Hey Nick, it’s me!”

The receiver gasped. “Paull?” he shrieked, “I thought you were gone! Where are you? How did you call me?”

Paull muffled the speaker and looked behind him. The street was empty, its edges lined with melting snow. The sun was higher than before and the light was stronger than before. It was as silent as the night, but he swore he heard something.

“It doesn’t matter where I am. I hacked the payphone to call you.”

“It’s not too late to go back home, Paull.”

“I can’t, I need to do what I set on to do from the beginning.”

“Do you know how many ***deadly*** diseases there are in the woods? Are you crazy, have you gone crazy, Paull?”

“I’d rather die free than live caged. If it weren’t for this, I’d just be in the same place. I live the same day, every day, on repeat, over and over again.”

“Just because school is monotonous and repetitive doesn’t mean you can just run and wade into the woods like that. You’re irresponsible, Paull.”

“It’s not just school, it continues like that. The routine continues into work, and then I’ll work every single day, over and over again till the day I fall. I’ve seen my dad, and he doesn’t look happy with his work.”

“You’ll die there! You won’t be free, you’ll just be dead.”

“You don’t understand me.”

“No, ***you*** don’t understand. You’re crazy, Paull. You delude yourself into thinking that living away from civilization like a monk will solve all of your problems. Do you know how the story of the three kids? They ran and nobody found them again!”

“First of all, is having bird powers not good enough? Second of all, I’m not planning to return any time soon, ***you idiot***.”

Paull immediately silenced himself. Nobody spoke.

“I see how it is.” said Nick, vexed at .he rude words Paull just spoke.

The telephone fell off of Paull’s hand and hanged from the cord. How could ***he,*** of all people, say such a thing? His hands shook, and the distant siren got louder. He could smell the oil of the police car from nearby.

“Oh no, they’re going to get me; I better get out of here.” said Paull under his breath.

He dashed past the stall door and jumped. He tried to snap his fingers, but they were too sweaty. The police car beeped loudly from behind his back. Paull wiped his fingers on his coat hastily and snapped again. The blue light flashed and the crow in between the beams began flapping afloat and above. He was quickly rising, and a swift turn into an alleyway, which revealed him to the crow dashing towards him.

“Knock, Knock, Paull. Game’s over, go back home now.”

Paull ducked down and spun quickly. John turned swiftly back to him.

“You’re just a liar; you don’t actually want me to go do you?”

“You don’t understand the meaning behind what I say? Go back home, you would be a bad son if you just went out there without reason.” said John.

“It’s on him, after all. He’s the one who got a kid and then proceeded to live his life as if I didn’t exist.” cried Paull while rising to the sky.

“You’re always disobedient, like all children.”

“You don’t know what obedience even is, you don’t know who I am!”

“I know who you are, I was you before, and that grave mistake led me to be me now.”

“You’re not me, you’re you. I’m me, so I can’t be anything but me. Stop confusing yourself with a person you don’t know!”

John turned on his side and from below him, he shouted with a stern voice, “Just do as I say, and we’ll be done with this.”

“I’ve been doing what people have ordered me to do for years, look how that turned out! Do you really think I’ll just give up for no reason to let you have what you said be done?”

John bit Paull’s talon with his beak and began flying down to the floor. Paull struggled with his talon. John began slipping away from the talon; it’s scratching becoming louder towards the end.

The two fell sideways into an old roof. They rolled back into human form, and Paull crawled away.

John caught him by the leg and pulled. Paull struggled to get up, he tried to kick and kick. Paull got up. John pulled with both hands. Paull fell back to the ground, and the kicking continued.

He kicked with all his might and John let go. Paull crawled slowly towards the edge. The coarse concrete with its rough and jagged edges penetrated into his palm. Paull stood up and brushed off the dust.

“This was my destiny, my fate from the beginning. I do not care for anything else, because I have reached my final goal.”

Paull snapped his fingers, and flew off of into the distance, his wings dancing in the sky. John stood up and gazed, speechless, at the shrinking silhouette. This was the end of Paull’s story, for he was now only known as the crow kid; Goodbye, Crow Kid.

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