

Chapter Thirty-Four

In the morning, as I hurried down the stairs, I tried to bypass the unsettling sight of the repaired window, focusing instead on my immediate surroundings. However, my gaze was drawn to the coffee table, where the vase had been placed back in the center, provoking a mix of emotions. I grabbed the vase and headed outside to dispose of it in the garbage bins, rain drenching me as I buried it deep within the bag holding its shattered pieces from the night before.

A crow cawed in the tree in our front yard, prompting me to look up. The tree was oddly full of black birds, reminiscent of the first day of school when excitement thrived among the leaves that had since fallen. Approaching the tree, I noticed Joe perched on a low branch, clutching a slip of paper that bore Juniper's handwriting. The message, "Dear Joe, please help us," sent a chill down my spine, and I instinctively backed away, tears welling in my eyes.

Joe fluttered down beside me, but I was transfixed by Juniper's note. He then hopped to the ground, nudging something in the grass. As I leaned closer, I saw him lift a shiny object with his beak and drop it at my feet. It was our dad's wedding band, something he typically tucked into his wallet while working. The memory of his lost wallet surfaced, along with the realization that Juniper hadn't been searching the truck; she had been looking for gifts instead. She had returned with the wallet.

Holding the ring, I reflected on my recent exchanges with the ornithologist I interviewed, learning that crows are intelligent creatures capable of understanding reciprocity and retribution. They could engage in gift-giving or hold grudges. This raised questions about what the crows might comprehend regarding our household dynamics. Could they have found the wallet where it was lost, or had they stolen it initially? The enigma of Joe and the other crows lingered in my mind, leaving a sense of wonder about their connection to our lives .