

## Corvus Covax By Fatty Lumps

You are cunning. You are wise. You are eating the most delectable piece of garbage that you have ever eaten. The humans call you disgusting for doing so, a notion that infuriates you immensely as they are the ones who make the mess. You just clean it up. You have been using the human's carelessness and stupidity as a means of survival since they first started settling the North.

You are loading up on carbs for a journey across the mountainous Yukon territory to find your mate. Luckily for you, your powerful black wings make travelling over mountains quite easy. You have been honing and evolving your incredible eyesight for over two million years and tracking the human strewn garbage in the snow should easily lead you to the hairless primates that kidnapped your mate.

You are a Raven. Corvus Corax. You are the North's ultimate survivor.

It is winter but you could care less. You are nature's natural furnace. You fly miles above the mountains, scouring the snow for clues that could lead to your mate.

You spot an orange dot slinking through the snow and tree covered mountains. A fox. You respect the foxes ingenuity but you acknowledge that she is not as highly evolved as you are. You dive down to meet her.

"The humans have kidnapped my mate." You inform the fox. "Have you seen any humans on your travels my friend?"

The fox grins her foxy grin. "I have. They tried to trap me for my luscious and warm fur. I hardly blame them. I am beautiful after all. Naturally, I outsmarted them. They got on one of those things they make from dead trees that the poor dogs pull. They took it down river."

You thank the fox and resume your place on the turbulent throne of your aerial kingdom. Funny, you think, the humans believe they are masters of survival yet they need year round shelter, clothing, vessels for crossing water and ice and they are useless in the sky. Perhaps, that is why they kidnapped your mate. To take advantage of the skills you have that they can never possess. The humans could never survive without you and the other animals of the North and yet they have no respect for you.

You follow the river, as the fox suggested, and then you smell it. The odious odour of death that only a human can produce. A black smoke rises from the river ice where humans have started a fire. The smoke from burning spruce and birch trees is burglarizing the air and hurting your lungs.

You land in the trees where you won't be seen.

"Blew up a whole herd of caribou last year with a stick of dynamite!" You hear one of the humans proclaim with putrid pride. "Should have seen it spew about in all directions. What a sight it was!"

The humans all laugh. You stop yourself from retching.

You caw loudly and patiently wait for the caw to be returned. Surely, if your mate is here, she will hear it and respond. You wait. Your caw is not returned.

You are about to resume your flight when the whimpering of one of the human's dogs locks your talons in place.

"Get away from our food you mutt!" A human yells as he backhands one of the dogs across the face.

This time you can't stop yourself from retching. The dogs are tied up. The ropes around their necks resemble nooses not collars. They have been beaten and abused. A far cry from the wolves they descended from.

The humans are engrossed in their food and that strange stuff they drink that turns their allegedly high functioning brains into something resembling that of a trout's. Trout juice, you call it. Since it makes them about as smart as a fish.

You've got a razor sharp beak and the ropes that imprison the dogs are no match for it. You creep out on the river toward the dogs. They sniff you as you approach but seem thrilled that you're there. They lick you and cover you in gregarious slobber.

Dogs, you think, they certainly aren't the brightest animals out there but when they work as a pack, as one brain, they sure can be impressive. Human society could learn a thing or twenty from a dog pack. You easily slice through the ropes that bind them to human cruelty. You tell them not to move until you give them the signal.

Silence.

Then you caw. The dogs make a break for it but wisely stick together as they run into the trees. The humans begin to stir and run after them. You swoop into their faces and somehow your little body frightens the much larger humans into submission.

They retreat to their fire and trout juice cursing both dogs and ravens.

The aurora borealis waves you in like an old friend as you climb back into the icy night sky.

Your keen eyes spot the newly freed dog pack standing proudly on a riverside cliff. Their keen canine noses smell you flying proudly by. They thank you with a shrill howl of freedom and retreat to the forests where they've always longed to be.

You continue on.

Human trash coats the river ice like a fresh snowfall. You follow it for miles. Your wings are on the verge of giving out. You're about to give up. Then you see it. Nestled in the woods is a human made shelter. Smoke emanates from the cube of lifeless spruce. You land on a window sill. You caw as loudly as you can. You wait. Your caw is returned! Your mate is here.

You see her through the window. She is in a cage. Feathers ruffled and hungry but she survived. Of course she survived, she's a raven.

For reasons you've never quite understood, the humans fear you. Strange, considering the size difference. You decide to use this to your advantage. You use your beak to knock at the window then you hide in the shadows. The humans peer through the window but see nothing and continue on with the consumption of their trout juice. You knock again and recede back into the shadows. Now, slightly more agitated, the humans open the window to investigate the sound. This is it. You charge.

The humans seem to be more clumsy than usual. You attribute this to the trout juice. You embrace their clumsiness. You peck, you flap and you caw bravely at the humans. They scream, stumble and fall. They grab the fur of the wolves they murdered on their way out the door. Humans can't survive the winter without it. Pathetic.

"That's one angry raven Skookum!" You hear one of the humans say.

"Run, George run!" The other says as they flee.

You fly to your mates cage and open the latch with your beak. You both know there is no time to embrace as the humans may return with those loud metal sticks they use for murdering bears, wolves and caribou.

You both frantically fly to the window. In doing so, you knock over one of the flaming sticks of beeswax the humans use to see in the dark. As you fly into the snow suffocated spruces of your northern home, the human abode turns as orange as a fox, hotter than a midnight sun and emits the noxious smell of smoke you thought only a human could produce.

You know without the abode the humans will be powerless to the forces of a northern winter.

You fly on anyway.

In the safe and soft caress of the virgin snow you take your mate's beak in yours and she returns the gesture of affection.

"Why did they take you?" you ask your beloved.

"To send messages to other humans." She says signalling to a piece of parchment attached to her talon. "Humans have yet to find a way to master the sky so they use our skills of flight."

You use your beak to delicately remove the parchment from her talon and it unravels in the snow. The symbols on it don't mean anything to you but you commit them to your incredible memory.

You and your mate fly back to your nest, nourishing yourselves on the mess the humans left as you do.

Your nest is near a human settlement. It's wise to stay close by to take advantage of them.

One day, shortly after you've returned home, you're out scavenging when you hear two humans talking.

"I'm happy nothing came of it." Says one of the humans. "If a bunch of people came stampeding through here it could harm nature. Us Northerners need nature to survive. We need dogs for transport and friendship, we need foxes and wolves for warmth and we need trees for fire. Maybe we should be more respectful. Even ravens help with the mess!"

"Well," the other sighed. "Perhaps you're right. I am disappointed though. I wouldn't have hated being rich. Guess it was nothing more than fool's gold."

You aren't sure why, but for some reason the symbols on the parchment the humans attached to your mate's talon flash before your eyes. The symbols looked something like this:

*"Gold found on the klondike. Telegraph for men, gear and dynamite."*