

## One For Sorrow

Adam sits on the floor in his house, piles upon piles of stuff surrounding him like an impenetrable fortress. He always makes sure to keep everything organized, down to the last pen—except today. Attempting to scrub his daughter’s room of memories, he’s taken everything of hers out into the living room. Once everything has been moved, however, he finds that something’s stopping him from proceeding.

All the garbage bags are ready to take away the last of her memories. So why? Why does he hesitate? She doesn’t live here anymore. She won’t care. She’ll understand. He begins to dump stacks of papers into the garbage. On the floor behind him sits dozens of books, stylish clothes, and glass bottles full of colorful liquids; “potions” she had called them.

Halfway through, he glances at his comfortable sofa where bottle caps, coins, and sea glass make a lovely mosaic painting out of the cushions. Why did she hold on to all of this? A small black book with her handwriting inside rests gently on one of the decorative pillows, the thoughts of his daughter’s unconscious mind bleeding onto its pages. Just as he goes to throw it away, he hears someone knocking.

“Come in,” he says instinctively. He pauses, expecting the front door to open.

*Wait a minute.*

No one else lives here. Who could that be...? Just then, the corner of his eye catches a tiny shadow in the closest window. He turns toward it and spots a lone crow staring at him, its glass eyes peering into his very soul.

**What are you doing?**

“Nothing.” His eyes dart to the items around him. “Cleaning.”

**May I come in?**

“Sure.”

*Why am I talking to a bird?*

He opens the window and allows the crow to come inside. Sunlight from outside illuminates the mosaic, creating a sparkling kaleidoscope of colors. Cocking its head, the crow hops down into the center of everything and stares into Adam’s green eyes.

**You’ve made quite a mess.**

“Yes. I have, haven’t I?” Awkward silence. He reaches out a hand to pet the crow, and it quietly obliges. “Can I… offer you something to eat or drink?” Somehow the presence of this crow puts him at ease, if only a little.

**Water. And berries. If you have them.**

“Sure. One moment.” Leaving the room, he enters the kitchen and fills one small dish with water and another small dish with freshly-washed blueberries. When he returns, the crow is waiting for him. He sets the dishes down, watching the crow immediately pick up a blueberry with its beak and eat it. Such a fascinating little creature. Bits of purple syrup drip onto the carpet, but he doesn’t mind.

**I thank you. What is your name?**

“Adam Graves. And yours?”

**I am Aurelius.**

“Latin for The Golden One, am I correct?”

**Indeed.**

Adam continues sorting and discarding items: sketches, dead flowers, photos. So many little collections of things that captured her curiosity. Aurelius watches him closely, eventually fluttering over to the colorful couch kaleidoscope. Crows do love shiny things.

**Might I interject?**

“Sure. What is it?” Adam stops in his tracks, looking at the crow. His pale white glass eyes have the omniscience of an ancient god. Comforting, yet unnerving.

**Who is she?**

“...Her name was Juno.”

**Queen of the Heavens.**

“Yes. She was a bright young woman; kind and calm and lovely. Her eyes held entire galaxies in them and her smile radiated light. She was ever curious about the universe.”

**You speak as though she died.**

“No. She’s not dead. She’s just... elsewhere. I don’t expect you to understand.

**Why not?**

“She’s not human, Aurelius. She’s a shapeshifter belonging to the Crierce. You’ve never ventured out into space, so you cannot understand how I’d feel watching her leave me behind.”

**You’d be surprised by what I’ve seen.**

“Oh yeah? And why’s that?” Adam’s retort has a hint of venom, but he doesn’t intend to come across as angry. Grief is a funny little thing. He continues his ritual, casting her belongings into the metaphorical fire of burned bridges. His crow companion continues eating berries and drinking water, then flies around the room, silently studying his every move like a neuroscientist conducting research on an experimental treatment for brain cancer. Once Aurelius finds himself a comfortable perch, he caws loudly.

Adam freezes. Crows are a symbol of death, and now having one watching him inside his own house suddenly feels like an omen. Yet...

**Juno loves you, Adam.**

“...what?”

*Okay, that is not what I thought I'd hear today. Or ever.*

**I belong to her. She sent me here to deliver a message.**

“And that is?” Holding her diary, Adam’s gaze is unblinking, a single, sticky white thread of hope branching from his heart to this small black bird. Aurelius lunges forward, wings spread wide, and caws. Adam flinches from the perceived attack, only to find that Aurelias has landed on the book in his hands. His crow companion twists his head down, gesturing to the mysterious tome in Adam’s hands.

**Open the book. And read it. You’ll understand everything. I promise.**

With that, Aurelius caws one last time and, silently thanking Adam for the berries and water once more, escapes through the window. Now alone in the house, Adam breathes in and out, then cracks open the book at its spine, the scent of paper and ink wafting into his nose. He begins reading. As he does, tears drip from his green eyes and onto the pristine pages. Every single entry mentions his name in some capacity, and every single thing Juno ever wrote about him in her neat, pretty handwriting, is spoken in love. Most often, through a single phrase:

*I love my father.*