

## Raven's Crossing

by Myra Phua Le Yi (Primary 2, 8 years old)

In a dense lush forest, lived a group of happy animals. A sneaky fox family, a bunch of cute squirrels, and a super active racoon family. Located at the south side of the woods were several different species of moss and towards the north flowed a peaceful river with cooling crystal clear water. You could see beautiful deer running around, a cardinal family always singing among the green canopies, and grey geese and frisky otters playing up and down the river bank. On some dark nights, silhouetted against the pale moonlight, a lone wolf hunted its prey like a chilling ghost...All the animals loved this forest, enjoying their carefree, idyllic life.

Raven, a young little raccoon, lived happily with her father, mother, younger sister and aunt. Her beloved grandma who lived on the other side of the forest would always come over to visit Raven's family every weekend with acorns and delicious fish caught fresh from the river. The whole family spent uncountable happy times together. Raven especially loved the times when grandma taught her how to fish and scrounge for fresh berries.

One sunny morning, Raven stepped out of the family burrow to wait for her grandma when she heard a loud hammering, followed by other strange sounds like pumping and drilling.

Curious to find out what was going on, Raven followed the sounds. Hiding behind an old log, she cautiously lifted her head and was stricken by what she saw! There were many strange machines parked in the middle of the woods, while some trucks drove around. The worst thing she saw was... humans! A small number of people who were engaged in their tasks like driving, calling and walking. Raven was terrified. She had never seen so many people in the woods before.

“What is happening? Will they hurt us? Will they destroy our homes?” She ran as fast as she could back home with all these questions in her mind.

Several months passed, and Raven continued to worry. Her family and others took turns to check on the site, hoping that these people would leave the woods together with their machines and vehicles. However, all they saw were more and more vehicles and machines with even louder annoying sounds.

By the time the animals had figured out what was going on, the construction was almost completed. A wide and modern road made of concrete and iron wound through and around their green kingdom like a deadly snake. Stanson, a wise and majestic stag told Raven that it was called a `highway`.

Raven had not seen her beloved grandma since the beginning of the highway's construction. She missed her grandma so much. Raven couldn't help but wonder whether her grandma was safe and what her grandma's life was like on the other side of the terrible highway. She was filled with sadness.

Another week passed by, and now different kinds of vehicles like cars, trucks and buses drove along the highway at breakneck speed. All the animals were suffering deeply, filled with fear and hopelessness. Not only were they prevented from meeting their friends and families on the other side of the forest, they also didn't have enough water. The crystal clear cooling water from the peaceful river had been a great source of water for most of the animals in this woodland. And now, it had disappeared.

Raven's heart ached for her grandma. In tears, she made a decision to find a way to visit her grandma. Raven sneaked out of her burrow and left quietly when the sun was just peeping above the horizon. She was going to cross the highway to find her grandma! When Raven reached the south bank of the highway, the sun was already high up in the sky. She sat in front of the strange and scary highway, it seemed so daunting. Raven took a deep breath, jumped on the highway and began her journey. She loped rapidly across the road. Luckily, there were not many vehicles passing by.

“It is not as difficult as I thought,” Raven was thinking.

“Honk, honk!” a shining red car was dashing right at her. Raven's legs felt like heavy pillars and she almost tripped over her feet. She was in a panic, shaking but urging herself to get out of there. Raven summoned all her energy to sprint away at the last moment.

“Swoosh!” the red car zoomed past and disappeared from sight.

“Arrhhh!” Raven screamed loudly as she wiped away the sweat from her brow with a trembling paw. Many thoughts appeared at once. She recalled warm hearted memories with her family and grandma. She also thought about a recent tragedy that happened three days ago when a deer was killed by a truck when he tried to cross this highway. Stanson said the humans referred to the tragedy as ‘roadkill’. Without any further delay, Raven continued to run with great vigilance.

At last, Raven reached the north side of the road bank. She was thrilled. She felt like her heart was jumping out of her chest. “I am going to see my grandma!” She muttered to herself determinedly. Raven tried very hard to climb up the high and thick road bank wall, her muscles were aching and she was out of breath.

When she finally managed to heave herself up the wall, she felt completely defeated by what she saw. Most of the enchanted forest and peaceful river no longer existed! Instead of that, more than hundreds of steel beams had been hammered into the land. All those giant trees that had been around for centuries were no longer there. Instead Raven found more heavy trucks and busy people all intent on completing a big building project.

“Where is our forest? Where is the crystal clear river? And most importantly, where is my grandma?” Raven cried out in great anger and sorrow! She loped over the wall and went in search for her beloved grandparent. Raven looked for hours, careful to keep out of sight of the busy humans and cautiously avoiding the wheels of heavy vehicles. Sadly, her search was in vain.

The last glimmer of sunlight had set, and Raven was still sobbing in deep loss. She wiped away her tears, gathering her courage to turn back. The frightening



highway loomed ahead of her again. Traffic was less than in the daytime but still terrifying.

Raven was thinking about her parents, younger sister and aunt. “How do I get back to my family now?” A cold breeze rushed past Raven.

Facing the south, the direction of home, she began her adventure again...

Note:

**Roadkill** refers to an animal or animals that have been struck and killed by motor vehicles on highways. In Malaysia alone, up to 2130 wild animals – most of them members of endangered species – were killed in traffic accidents over the past five years.

(Data date: November 2017)

Source from Wikipedia.