

As the Crows Fly

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When the shelf of medical books toppled downwards, he thought his life was over. The horrible crashing sound of expensive, hard-covered books echoed through the large library as they hit the wide marble floor. As the crimson and navy blue journals tumbled across the floor, he could only stand there, face hiding behind his hands and face flushed a red color.

Crow heard the scuttling of the ancient librarian behind him. He froze as the old man started racing for the precious books on the floor. Dozens of the students snickered as the librarian walked in circles, staring mortified at the books. He ran a hand over his bald, wrinkled head as he bent down to pick them up. With shriveled hands, he ran them over *Transmissible diseases, Vol II*, and cradled it gently, as if he were about to cry at the sight of Crow's mess.

"Whose mess is this?" He asked. His voice was incredibly soft.

"Mine, sir," said Crow, voice cracking.

The librarian whipped around. Crow, that poor boy, was afraid that he was about to throw a book at him. But instead, the old man looked sympathetic and merely sighed.

"Well, don't just stand there. Help me pick up this mess."

Crow crouched down as he started to pick up the books he had scattered across the floor. He hadn't done it on purpose, of course, and normally he'd be in order, but he had just received the horrible and terrifying news that he would be going to boarding school. Eleven years, at that. All of highschool and college.

"Crow Albert Morgenstine," persisted the librarian once more. Crow flinched at the sound of his full name. "Yes sir?"

"Surely you wouldn't have made such a disruption as of knocking over a whole shelf of expensive books? You are from none but a noble family and have had the most training extreme of us all, and yet you are still as clumsy as an infant trying to walk for the first time."

Crow wasn't sure whether the librarian had just insulted him or asked for an explanation, but either way, Crow answered, "Apologies, sir. I'm not feeling my best today and was spacing out. As I was walking I bumped into the bookshelf and knocked it over. It was entirely my fault, sir." Crow gulped. In truth, he was terrified of the old man in front of him. He had seen him flip a table at the sight of a student folding the page of a book. But the librarian surveyed him until he was satisfied with his answer, stood up and grumbled, "Hurry and finish cleaning this mess."

"I'm not in trouble?" Blurted Crow.

"In trouble?" Asked the librarian, frowning. "Morgenstine, dare I be mad at you and I'd be shortened a head in order of your family. Now, if you were any other kid, I would've made sure that your karma caught up to you." And with that, the librarian stalked away to his large and circular marble desk.

Crow, wasting no time, grabbed up the books by the arm-full and put them in alphabetical order of the author's names. Crow Morgenstine treasured the library with all of his heart and spent almost all of his free time there. He wanted to be a medical professional when he was older, a medic, something that was a relative to the physical wellness of human beings. Crow had checked out every book of the *Transmissible diseases* series and read them all three times, which the librarian thought was completely absurd and unnecessary and almost wouldn't let him.

Crow's parents were well known throughout Haos, a large city in the country of Laiydan. They were nobles. They were rich. They were powerful. Crow never wanted to be rich or powerful. He just wanted to live the life of a normal person and go to normal school, wear normal clothes. But no, he had to wear the clothing of a young nobleman. A crimson vest with pointed shoulders. A curved, long sleeve shirt. His pants were black denim and were buttoned just above his belly button. His black and wavy hair was tied back into a short ponytail and permed at the very bottom.

Crow would never know what it was like to live a normal life. Not when he was rich. Not when he had to leave his hometown, his country, to

go to some ancient boarding school throughout highschool and college. And since he was going to become a doctor, he had to be gone for an extra seven years. So in simpler words- Crow was being sent to study abroad and was *not* going to be welcomed back into his family until he was gone for eleven years.

As Crow finished off the last of the books he had dropped, he heaved a sigh. He used to think that his family loved him, that they used to think that he was perfect. But after his younger brother, Afton, was born six years ago, Crow was proven wrong. Afton, as his parents had quoted, was gifted with the most wonderful thing in the world. Beauty. Afton was one of the most attractive ten year olds in all of the countries, and was smart, as well. Apparently, Crow was only smart. Infact, he was just a commoner to them. Though he had fancy clothes, fancy hair, money, his parents would always treasure Afton more than anything. This resulted in

Crow shoved his hand in his satchel in search of the one book he had been looking for today. *Transmissible diseases, Vol II*. His eyes widened as he realized he didn't have it. He glanced at the floor but not a book was left. Only then did he remember what had happened. The librarian hadn't approved of his reading the *Transmissible diseases* even a second time, but a fourth time was definitely going overboard. Crow stomped over to the old librarians desk and said, "I'll check out *Transmissible diseases, Vol II*, please." His face was burning red with anger and frustration.

The librarian's face was grim. "Short tempered, as usual," he said as he reached his hand under the counter and pulled out Crow's book, stamping the inside checkout card. Crow stood on his toes and reached across the counter for his book. He snatched it and shoved it in his bag dismissively. "Thank you, sir," he said as he strolled out of the large library. His forehead wrinkled and rolls of skin recoiled together against his cheeks. As the librarian turned, he showed one of his rare and warm smiles that could melt even the coldest man's heart.

Crow pushed open the doors of the large library and raced away. His face became red as he ran down the block and past a lamp post and across

the road. A car missed him by a hair and slammed on their brakes. Crow chuckled and tugged his satchel to his side, running faster. He wasn't going home today. No, today he would be changing his routine.

Tobias stretched upward, then bent over to the ground, covering it with his hands. He pulled his feet apart shoulder length and placed his elbows opposite his chest, looking like a chicken. He twisted right, then left, and right again. Tobias was a gymnast, and most had thought he was crazy, with his fluffy hair pink, wearing a red and white striped leotard that he had made himself, (which was quite impressive of a gymnast) along with black pants and a long sleeve shirt underneath. He raised his hands and focused his gaze on the black tumbling mat that was in front of him. He took a deep breath then exhaled dramatically. Now running, he bent over and slapped his hands to the mat. Automatically, his hands started moving, making him walk on them hastily. He looked luminous even though he felt nothing close to it. He then arched his back and did multiple front walk-overs. Once he was almost to the end of the mat, he stood up straightly and finished his act off with a back flip. From his left he heard single clapping and turned his head almost instantly.

Sitting on the stair-like benches was a young boy. He had coffee black hair that was in a ponytail, permed at the very bottom. He wore a satchel and an odd crimson uniform. Tobias squinted and hunched his back. "Oi, sod off. I told you already didn't I?" He said in his strong accent.

"You didn't tell me *never* to come back though, did you?" Said the boy boldly. Tobias scoffed. How could such a scrawny boy like him speak against someone like? He thought, though it was a silly thought since gymnasts were most often frowned upon.

"Listen," said the boy, frustration and determination lucid on his face. "You can help me. I can help you. We can leave this country together. All I need is an acrobat, as you are."

"Firstly, I'm no *acrobat*" as you put it. I'm a gymnast. Secondly, when will you realize that I don't *bloody* care about this expedition you want me

in? You've got the wrong guy, so I suggest, once again, that you would get lost." He said, gritting his teeth. The boy frowned and stood up. Slowly, he started walking towards Tobias. Tobias gulped and walked backwards hesitantly. The boy's face was grave and showed no trace of emotion like it had before. He reached inside of his satchel. Tobias gulped and turned his head, squinting his eyes closed. "Fool, I'm giving you a sweatshirt." Scoffed the boy. Tobias looked back at him and to his surprise he was holding out a warm and fluffy looking sweatshirt. Only then did he realize how cold he was and snatched it out of the boy's hand.

"Thanks," he mumbled as he prodded it over his shoulders over his torso. The sweatshirt was surprisingly long for such a small boy to be carrying, thought Tobias, so he must've planned this visit. Ever since a few weeks ago, this boy had been nagging him to join some expedition, and to no one's surprise, Tobias had said no. But ever since then, he had kept coming, kept nagging, and kept getting the same answer. "No."

The boy's eyes flashed in fascination and glared at Tobias' shin. Tobias peered down at his foot, wondering what the boy was looking at, and when he did, a hard blow to his shin knocked him to his knees.

"Thank me properly," said the boy. Tobias looked up at him confused. "Say my name and address me as sir," he said. Tobias realized only then that he had no idea what the boy's name was.

He sighed. "What's your name?"

The boy smirked down at him. "Crow. My name is Crow."

"Why in the bloody nether regions would you want a gymnast to join your expedition? Just so you can be happy with yourself?"

"Because if you don't I'll have to leave this town- country for eleven years, and I'll drag you along with me, no matter how hard it is. I am the son of a nobleman and I am not to be disrespected."

Tobias rubbed his arms as he shifted his weight, uncomfortable. A *nobleman*? He thought, picturing all of the things that this boy could do to him. This ten-year-old kid could have him executed in front of the whole city. Tobias thought this over for a moment even though it was clear what he was going to choose.

“Well?” Asked the boy. Tobias hesitated, still. He had so many questions swirling around his head. Where was he agreeing to go? How old was this boy? Was his name really a bird’s name?

“Is this really such a hard thing to decide? What do I need to do to convince you to come with me?”

“Well, for starters, how old are you? And where are we even going? And how in the nether regions are we ever going to get to wherever we’re going?”

Crow narrowed his eyes, smirking once again. “Curious, I see,” he mumbles. “If I give you all of my reasons, every single one of them, will you agree to join me?”

Tobias thought this over for a moment. “Yeah,” he said, grimacing. Crow smiled brightly. Tobias mumbled something under his breath. Little did he know what this life changing adventure would bring on.