

The Tale of a Wise Raven

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A long long time ago there was a man living at Point Hope who was a very poor hunter. No one could say that he didn't try hard, but the results were pitiful. He didn't get any animals in any season of the year.

Although they had no children, the man was very embarrassed that he and his wife had to be supported by their generous neighbors. He tried hunting every day but got no animals.

One day, when he felt particularly ashamed, this man decided he would kill himself by starvation so that he would have no descendants. He got up very early in the morning, walked about seven miles east past a rise called Beacon Hill, and laid down in the snow to die. He threw away his weapons, a bow and arrow, and closed his eyes looking very much like the dead man he wanted to be.

Several hours after he had lain down, a flock of ravens happened upon the "body." They chattered among themselves about this curious thing and circled the man. The man in the meantime just laid there with his eyes half-closed listening to the ravens talking to one another.

"When shall we cut his eyes out? I can't wait!"

"We'd better not. Our king will be coming around soon I think, so maybe we should wait for him."

"Yes, that sounds like a good idea."

After a short time, the man heard, "Look, here he comes now. King, our king. Let us cut this man's eyes out!"

The raven king arrived, looked over the situation, and replied, "Yes, but I will be the one to cut his eyes out."

The raven king jumped on the man's chest and drew a fine, long dagger. Just as he was about to start the action, the man, who thought that he had heard enough about what they were going to do to him, sat up and yelled. The birds were all scared away except for the king who dropped his dagger as he jumped to the ground.

The man examined the dagger and said, "Hmmm. This could be of use to me. I think I'll keep it."

"Give me back my knife," ordered the raven king.

"No, I won't."

"What use could it have for you?"

"It could help me to kill animals when I go hunting."

"You don't fool me. I know you. You are a poor hunter and cannot catch ANY game. No caribou, no seal, no oogruck, no nothing. Now give me my knife!"

"I'll keep it as long as I live!"

The two argued vehemently over the dagger for quite some time. Suddenly the man grabbed the knife and stood up. The raven king, not frightened by this, pushed the man over backwards.

"Look behind you," the raven said.

The man looked over his shoulder and saw a long straight piece of driftwood.

"When you went hunting, that went with you and scared your game away. Use this wood inside your house for a tuuruk (a long piece of wood attached to a wall for a head rest). Each time when you return from hunting, rest against it. Now stand up again."

The amazed man obeyed the bird. As soon as he was on his feet, the raven knocked him down again. This time the man heard a metallic clang when he

hit the ground. He looked around and found a bucket with a water dipper in it.

"When you went hunting, that was with you and the noise scared your game away. From

now on when you return from hunting, drink water from this bucket with the dipper. Stand up now!"

Again the man obeyed. The
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raven pushed him back to the ground and said, "Look how dirty the snow is where you have fallen. It is because your wife does not keep your floor clean. She must sweep it. See in your hand. It is your wife's bosom. When you sleep you should always keep your hand on that. Now you must go home to get ready for hunting. You may take my knife. Tomorrow you should go hunting on the ice."

The man went home remembering all the things that the raven king had advised him. When he arrived home he did those things. In the morning he woke up early and went out onto the ice. Within a short time he came upon a small spot of open water—a seal breathing hole. Sitting down on his stool, he waited and, sure enough, a seal came along. This time he successfully harpooned the seal and caught it.

The following day he tried hunting on the land. He found a herd of caribou close by. Some of the caribou ran toward him when they saw him enabling him to catch them easily.

From that day on, the man hunted and caught an animal every single day. He grew richer and richer and became a happy man with a good hunting knife.