

The Bird Wars

Introduction

An old Ferruginous Hawk sat by the fire, and said to his children “come, come around me I have something to tell you. Long long ago before you were born when I was a young Ferruginous hawk, in the days of my youth the world was at war. All birds were fighting one another. But me and my friend the Common raven stopped it. Let me tell you the story of how”...

I don't think I'm a very good warrior. I like sleeping better than fighting, even though I am strong, brave and sneaky. My battle trainer, a grumpy old Bald Eagle, is most displeased with me. He says I'm never going to be able to fight in the war we're in if I don't stop sleeping. Whenever we fight each other I'm usually unconscious by the end of the training session. I am strong but not very good at strategy and my mentor is strong and great at strategy, his favorite insult is “cowardly passerine”. We live in a fortress full of non-passerines in the middle of a rainforest in Madagascar, it doesn't have any decorations or anything, it's just cold grey and gloomy in the middle of a cheerful bright rainforest. Welcome to my world.

“Fight!” My attacker yelled. He smashed me against the wall as I struggled to throw him off. Another typical battle training session today. A few minutes later, a bucket of freezing water doused my head, awakening me (I was knocked out).” Alright, get up”, said my hunting trainer, an elegant Brahminy Kite. “Let's go to dinner.”

Have you ever been stuck in a place and never been able to get out? Well I've been stuck in the fortress and even when I've tried to sneak out the guards have always caught me. The guards don't trust warriors-in-training like me to get out of the fortress for fear we might sneak off into the night. I don't really like being kept in like that. So one night I decided to get out. One night I pretended to go to sleep, then I opened my eyes as soon as no one was near my room. All the windows in the fortress were barred with steel bars. But I had a plan for that. I snuck into the kitchen and got a large knife. Then I snuck into the lava pit and stuck the knife in lava for a few moments. Then I snuck back to the room with my heated knife and cut through the bars. I peeked out making sure none of the guards were out watching. Then I had an idea. The knife had cooled down by now so I threw it away from me against a rock and it made a clanging sound which distracted the guards while I snuck out. I was free!

The dirt under my talons felt so soft and warm after a lifetime of walking on cold bare floors. Just after I got outside of the guards vision I flapped around joyfully. My joy lasted a short while though. Just as “ahem” said a voice from behind me. I whirled around, there was my history teacher, a Snowy owl, who had caught me. He led me back to the fortress and they replaced the bars in my room. I sighed. Escaping was a lot harder than I thought it would be.

A few weeks later my battle trainer said to me “apprentice you are ready to go outside of the fortress now”. I was seriously excited. I was given a chain mail vest, a helmet, a sword, and a shield and he said I will teach you the art of using a sword now. After twenty minutes of sword training it was time for my outside hunting training. I got excited and wandered farther away from the rest of my group. Then I heard the sound of a bird sighing. I found footprints but these were not just any footprints. I compared them to mine. They were the footprints of a passerine. All My life I had been told passerines were my enemies. But I've never seen a

passerine before. I was excited so I followed the tracks. That's when I found a Common raven leaning against a tree sighing with a bow and a quiver of arrows. He didn't look all that dangerous or evil, so I decided to approach him. I startled him, and he said "please don't attack me please don't attack me please don't chop off my head with a sword"! "Relax" I said. "I won't". "Nice to meet you, what are you doing here anyway". He answered "I hate this dumb war". "I hated it when I was training so I ran away from my fortress and I got lost". I answered "I hate this dumb war too". "Why don't the two sides just talk it over". "That would be great," he said. "Then I could stop hiding from all the non-passerines there are". Yeah, me too", I said. "Hey, why don't we be friends"? "Yes, let's!" he agreed.

"So, now that we're friends, what should we do"? I asked. "Well," said the Common raven "since we both don't like this war and neither of us know how long it's going to last"... "let's stop the war" I finished. "Well the first thing we need to do is journey to the passerine headquarters", I said. "Well I know it's in Oklahoma so let's go there". "We'll sail through the indian ocean, stopping at every stop we can until we reach Oklahoma," the Common raven said. "Well we can't fly for that far". I said. "Maybe we could steal one of the non-passerine's boats." "Okay let's do it he said. "Meet me at the docks in half an hour."

Half an hour later. The wave crashed against the beach. The sea breeze smelled salty. I saw the common raven waiting there by a tree. The air smelled like adventure. "Ok, understand the plan?" I whispered to him. "Yeah I got it", he said. "Ok ready". Then I flapped off pretending to look big and important to the guards guarding the sailboat. "Did you get the message?" I barked. "No", he shouted. "Red alert at the fortress. Get out of here immediately" I said "they need you". "Ok" he said and flapped off. Then the Common raven threw a rock into the water distracting the other guards as he slipped onto the boat with me. I raised the anchor and raised the sail and set sail. The salty sea breeze caught the sail and it billowed up. "We're off", I shouted.

We sailed for days and days until finally we reached one of our last stops on our planned journey. The Philippines. We stopped at an island in the Philippines and went out to hunt. We managed to work together to catch a monkey for dinner. As we were coming back with the monkey 5 Carrion crows dropped from the trees around and quickly surrounded us with their swords at the ready. I gasped! Realizing the location of my side's hidden base (if they got the map we had that showed our entire journey from the non-passerine base to the passerine base would reveal the location of the non-passerine base) would be vulnerable to attack, and (if they got our map) would erase any record of the passerine base in a non-passerines hands. "Do you have the map?" said one of them to the Common raven. "Yes", he said. "I do". "What do you mean"? I said cautiously. I reached for the map tucked safely under my wing, but it wasn't there. Then I turned and saw the Common raven handing the map to one of the Carrion crows. "You betrayed me", I said, realizing what had happened. "I had to", he said. "I wasn't really a runaway, I was a spy searching for the non-passerine base and trying to get my hands on a map showing where it is, and possibly bringing back a non-passerine who's been inside the non-passerine base to show us how we could sneak in". I gasped.

I was stunned but I knew I had to protect my home. So I lept into action and swung my sword at the crow holding the map. He jumped back, but I wasn't aiming for him. With a swish my sword chopped the map in half. Then I spread my wings and flapped towards the boat as fast as I could. The Common raven flapped after me because we both knew that if we lost the map we had a spare in the boat. I was faster so I got to the map first. Then I put the map in a box, locked the box and tossed the box overboard. Why did I toss the map and the box

overboard, because I tossed it off in a particular place where I knew it would be caught on the anchor so I could reel it back in. The crows surrounded me and said "where's the map". "Overboard", I said. They were stunned and that gave me enough time to swing my sword. They came back to their senses and flapped away right off the boat. They flapped away towards the other side of the island. Just then the common raven caught up. He hung his head low. "I'm sorry," he said. "I knew I shouldn't have done that. You're my friend, I don't want to endanger your home or my home. It was the wrong thing to do". "Apology accepted, I said, now let's get away before the other crows catch up". "But the map is overboard, now we don't know the way," he said. "Oh relax", I said. "Just help me hoist up the anchor". We hoisted up the anchor and caught on the anchor was a box. We seized the box and I pulled out a key and opened the box and pulled out the spare map. "I was lucky I knew that trick," I said. Then we set sail but secretly We sailed down the river that went through the island. The crows on the other hand thought we would sail around. As we sailed down the river, monkeys hooted, fish splashed and green light shone through the leaves. It was a perfect day.

After we had cut through an island in the Philippines, we were in the middle of the Pacific ocean. We could see an island ahead, but before we got to the island a vicious storm hit. Lightening and vicious waves. The waves tossed our little boat to and fro, we had no chance to get to the island in this weather. But then the Common raven thought of an idea. He seized a rope, tied it to one of his arrows, and fired the arrow towards the island with all his might. The arrow with a "thwunk" hit the palm tree on the island. We started to reel ourselves in towards the island. The ocean was tossing and turning. Just then a bolt of lightning hit the rope and it snapped. Just then we saw an enormous wave foaming towards us. Then I had an idea. I steered the boat around the enormous wave, and steered us on top of the wave just before the wave crashed down. The force of the wave skidded our board onto the beach. We quickly threw the anchor and hooked onto a rock on the island. We jumped off the boat and set out to explore the island and find some shelter. We found a nice dry empty cave where we lit a fire and waited out the storm. We made beds of moss. The next day, the storm had gone and we decided to set out and explore the island before continuing our journey to the passerine base.

It was a large island with beaches and forests. It wasn't that large, more of a medium size. No mountains or anything. It was quite pretty. We walked along the beach until we came to a crashing waterfall and watched it for a while. Then my companion noticed something about the sand. He reached down and studied the sand closely. Then he stood up and said to me excitedly "this isn't sand, it's a bunch of tiny quartz crystals". "Wow" I said. Then we went up the beach into the forest. The forest was tropical. I guessed we were near the equator. There were palm trees, and monkeys and sloths and we had to watch out for ocelots. So we flew above the trees. We found a river and followed it. We hunted and took down a howler monkey. We took some crystal clear water from the river. Then we found a bunch of sticks and sharpened one long stick and found two y-shaped sticks and a bunch of thick logs. We used the logs to make a fire and the sticks we found to make a spit that we roasted the monkey over. my companion found some berries that he ate but I didn't like the berries. Then I had an idea. I took a bunch of ropes from the sail boat and made a large net. And then sailed the boat with the net dragging along the seabed around. We caught a bunch of fish and a shoal of red snapper. We also caught something else. A bunch of oysters. Hmm I muttered. Good enough. We packed up most of the fish for dinner at sea since we knew we'd have to sail without stopping for days now, and we packed some of the oysters too. But we noticed something. Inside each of the oysters was a pearl. We packed the pearls up too thinking they might be useful for bargaining. We ate fish for dinner that night and some more crystal clear water. We also packed a small barrel of "sand". And we slept in the cave and each night we used a flat piece of

wood and a log to roll a large boulder at the mouth of the cave so it blocked the entrance. After a few days on the island we packed up and left with a lot of fish, pearls and “sand” with us. Off we went again.

We sailed for days without stopping. Long, long days. We ate fish and oysters, and sometimes when we were low on food we caught some more. Sometimes we saw small islands with only one tree on them, but we did not stop. We kept going. Then we saw something. I seized the telescope and it sharpened into view. “Oh no”. I muttered. “It’s a ship. A ship of non-passerines. It looks like a group of Black skimmers got together and went out sailing. I think they’re a patrol. They’re heading our way”. Just then a storm blew in. Enormous waves, lightening and powerful winds tossed our boat. The non-passerines saw our boat being tossed on the waves. They saw the raven too. They jumped to the wheel and raised the sails and shot after us. “Why are they attacking us”, I said. “I don’t know,” the Common raven answered. Our boat was small but their boat was fast. Not as fast as our’s, but still pretty fast. A harpoon came sailing through the sky from the other boat and with a “thwunk” hit our mast. Immediately we started to get reeled in. I seized an axe and chopped the harpoon in half. Then I yanked out the half that was still stuck in our mast and threw it at the other boat as the Common raven jumped to the wheel and we sailed on. Then I saw an enormous wave towering and I knew how to get us safely away. I would perform a dangerous stunt. I sailed my boat and surfed along the wave. The wave was so big, our boat was tiny compared to it so we could skim along the side. The other larger boat followed crashing through the wave. In this predicament we had the upper hand and a headstart and speed on our side. The wave crashed down just as we skimmed off it. It crashed down right on the other boat. But they were struggling to keep their boat afloat or abandon ship as we sailed away.

A few days later “Land Ho” I cried, and we were there. Sailing towards the coast of South America. I saw a small cove and I knew I’d have to perform a tricky maneuver to get us in. I spun the wheel and our boat sailed into the cove. I released the anchor and we lowered a long plank that stretched from ship to shore, which wasn’t very far. But then I realized something and pulled the plank back on and flew there. I realized there were jaguars there and they would get onto our boat if I did that, so I decided to just fly. I took the axe with us. I chopped down a small tree and made a fire. We caught a sloth and roasted it. We skinned it with our knives and washed its fur. And made it into a cloak that could keep us warm. We also found an old pin that we used for the sloth fur cloak. We gathered sticks and made a stick dome and covered it with leaves. We slept in there in beds made out of moss. In the middle of the night I heard something and I got up. It was cold out so I put on our sloth fur cloak, grabbed a stick from the fire that we kept alive and raised it as a torch to look around. I took the axe just in case. I heard something, two things. Large about the size of a bird, but what bird. I listened carefully and my acute hearing identified that both of the birds were about the size of a Cooper’s hawk. I saw a lantern bobbing through the trees. I went towards the lantern. Suddenly the lantern got snuffed out quickly. I crept closer and found that the lantern was lying on the ground snuffed out. I noticed tracks, passerine tracks, going in the direction I came. A realization dawned on me but by then it was too late. Before I could move I felt a cold sharp blade pressed against the back of my head and a voice said “freeze if you want to live” I froze and then I heard something going away. I paused. “Is it going away?” I said to myself. Just then something cold and hard hit me in the side of my head and everything went dark.

I woke up in a cage. I was stripped of my armor and my sword and the cage was hanging above a fire and I was being watched. I jumped and turned and I saw two Chihuahuan ravens, one with a double sided battle axe and another with a spear. Armed and dangerous. They had captured me. How could I get out? I suppose I

could pretend I saw something to lure them away but would they believe me? And even if they did, how would I get out anyway? "What to do," I muttered. "In quite a predicament here aren't I. No way to get out. Even if I could get out while they were still around they would fight to the death. So that's not an option. What to do, what to do, what to do". I paced. I thought. I pondered. "What to do, what to do, what to do. Hmmm". Suddenly my friend the Common raven burst into the clearing and shouted "non-passerine patrol coming this way. There's only 3 of them. Quick go stop them, I'll guard the prisoner. Give me the keys". They quickly said "alright let's go" and they flapped off and gave him the keys. He flapped over to my cage, put the key in the lock, opened it and freed me. "Nice distraction," I said. "Thank you", he said. "Now we have some time to get away before they figure out you're lying". "Let's take a shortcut back to our camp". "By the way I owe you one".

A few days later our boat scraped against North american sands. We were nearly there. "Finally" the common raven said "I thought we'd never get there". "Well, I guess we did. We're here. We should set up a camp", I said. "Yeah we should". We worked together to make a tent then we caught some prairie dogs and roasted them over a fire. "So where should we go tomorrow?" "Tomorrow we should go to the passerine base". "We're here," I said, unrolling the map and pointing to the coast of California. "And the passerine base is there", I said pointing to the center of Oklahoma. "According to my calculations I muttered it will take about a two days journey. So, we have two days. But first we should rest while the sun is setting". So we walked into our tent and went to sleep.

We hiked and flew across mountains and forests and deserts for many days with many close skirmishes. Once in a forest we got attacked by a pack of wolves and barely managed to get away. Another time in the mountains a passerine patrol of song sparrows nearly spotted us. But our closest skirmish was in the desert. We found an oasis and were camping by it. We were roasting a fox over a fire that we had worked hard to bring down and had nearly bit my leg off when we heard something. We crept out to investigate and saw nothing. Just when we turned back we saw it. A mountain lion. Enormous, ferocious, strong. It lunged at us. We shot into the air, but it leaped higher and higher. My companion shot an arrow into its side but that only made it angry, it knocked him out of the air and pinned him to the ground. I lunged at it, sword raised but it batted me aside easily. It raised its paw to smash it on his head and kill him. Then I ducked and rolled under him and plunged my sword up into his heart. He yelped and careened away. I pulled my sword out of his heart and it ran away leaving a trail of blood. "Debt fulfilled" I said to him and we went back to our camp.

Later we saw the passerine fortress rising above the hills, strong and grey against the blue sky. We approached cautiously sneaking up then we saw the majority of the passerine army surrounding it watching, waiting. Then I noticed the passerine leader, a Superb Lyrebird. Standing by his side were the two chihuahuan ravens my companion had tricked. "What are they doing here?" asked my companion. "I don't know", I whispered back. Suddenly a tidal wave of birds rose from behind us and attacked the passerines and all was plunged into chaos. "The non-passerine army must have followed us", I shouted. "Yeah" he shouted. "We've got to stop them before everyone dies". "But how?" he added. "I don't know," I said.

We thought and thought. How to stop this battle. If it goes on then the majority of all birds will be wiped out as more join the battle. We spotted a patrol of Broad winged hawks joining the non-passerine side, at the same time a group of Hooded crows joined the passerine side. Then I had an idea. I whispered to my companion and he agreed it was a good idea, so "let's get going" I said. We split up. My companion headed for the passerine

side, I headed for the non-passerine side. We figured it would look strange to go together and we were fugitives from both sides. This is our plan - we were to fly above the battle and look for certain individuals then we would fly down and convince them to stop fighting until we had the majority of all the birds with us because we knew no one liked this war but had to fight. I was flying above when I saw a Broad winged hawk give a disappointed sigh after defeating a Western tanager. I flew down to him and after a chat he agreed to help and I sent him out to do the same thing I was doing. Later I spotted a Plum headed parakeet with a disappointed look in his eyes. I convinced him to join us too. And once more I saw a Little brown kiwi looking exhausted and tired. And my best accomplishment was convincing a large Whooping crane who I heard mumbling about how he hated this war under his breath. Slowly I began to pluck out certain individuals until I realized that almost every bird hated this war but some refused to come so I just left them alone. Soon I had gotten around a hundred birds out of the one thousand non-passerines. Then I met my companion, the common raven who had gotten another two hundred birds from the 1,200 passerines. "Still not enough," I muttered. "There's still 1900 other birds fighting and we only had 300". "Back to work" I said and all the birds fanned out. Later there were only about 500 non-passerines and 700 passerines fighting. We and our recruits had worked very hard. It took us over an hour but we finally recruited another 500 passerines and 500 non-passerines. "I think a hundred more to go each I said and we're good to go". Two hundred more recruited birds later, "Good" I said "we've got enough birds now. Now it's time to stop the war".

"Ok, here's the plan". Then he whispered the plan and his army agreed. They split up. One half flew toward the passerine side the other half flew toward the non-passerine side. The non-passerines of the army arrived at the non-passerine side. They saw the leader, an Ostrich, and I said "OK now we've got to play this very carefully. I'm assigning a few of you", I pointed to a Whooping crane, a Secretary bird and a Great white pelican. "OK. You will be some of the leaders along with me. OK. Remember the plan"? "Got it" they all said. They snuck off. They snuck behind the non-passerines side of the army until they saw the leader of the non-passerines, an Ostrich standing with his bodyguards. I signalled OK and a portion of my army quickly flew down and used chains and ropes to lash down the body guards capturing them. Then the Secretary bird, the Whooping crane and the Great white pelican flew down and surrounded the leader. They had a talk with him and eventually he agreed to come over and talk with them. He left his second in command in charge of the army. We met on the side of the battlefield with the passerines of our army. And my friend the Common raven. They had the leader of the passerines, the Superb lyrebird, with them. And then me and my friend the Common raven and the two leaders sat down for a little discussion. Me and my friend told our story of how we came together and our goal. We asked them about their opinions of the war. It turns out the Ostrich started the war on some big disagreement because a Common raven killed his best friend accidentally. They don't know if it was an accident or not but he was furious and declared war on the passerines and started attacking them. He knew he didn't want to do that but he wanted to avenge his friend. And the leader of the passerines, the Superb lyrebird, had to gather his army and fight for his birds to live. And the war escalated and so on. Hmm, I thought. So, I said "this war is just a big misunderstanding. We presume that there's only one passerine to punish. We should punish him. But for now we should tell your armies to stop fighting so we can stop this war". They agreed and soon the war was stopped. To put the events after in a quick version of them, we'll just say that the leaders told their armies to stop and their armies agreed, we searched the passerines until we found the common raven and we punished him. It was up to the leaders to decide how he should be punished so we weren't involved. Then everything was peaceful again.

The end.