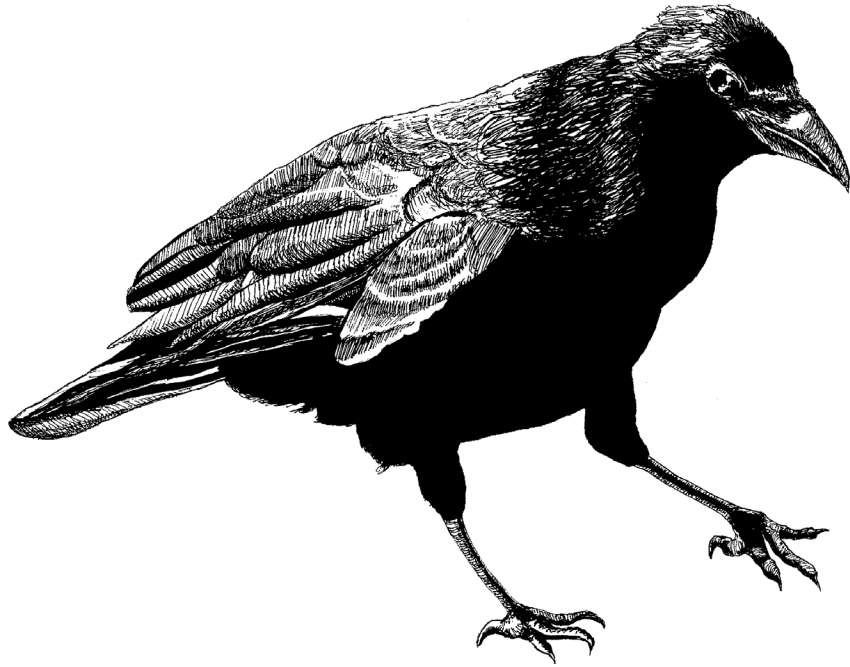


Westwind Horror Collection



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U N E A R T H E D :

F A L L 2 0 1 9

C h a n g e l i n g

Sebastian Peraic

What city folk don't realize is that we always hear strange noises in the woods at night. The chittering, the distant wailing, the sounds of women weeping—you learn young that they don't hurt you if you leave them be. I had a cousin visit out here once, and this seemed to scare him—not that we hear them, but that it doesn't bother us. But why would it? It's like those whispers you hear in the corn in the midwest, or those lights you see over the desert. It's not like we don't know they're dangerous; we just don't bother them cause we're not idiots. I've never been scared of them, but when he heard the low, guttural growling we hear on Tuesdays, he wanted to check it out. I had to stop him, of course. Like I said, none of us are that stupid.

I'm definitely not stupid either, but I did get curious once. I stopped being curious at maybe 14. You're young, stupid, rebellious at that age. It wasn't enough to hear them—I had to see one to know they're real. But I'm not stupid—if they really were out there, they could also maybe kill me. I was gonna be careful if I wanted to find them. I bought a cheap flashlight: one that could light up the trees some, and that I wouldn't mind losing.

Every two or three nights we heard humming. We've written down the tune so the kids can learn it, like I once done. We're supposed to take it to heart, so we can all recognize

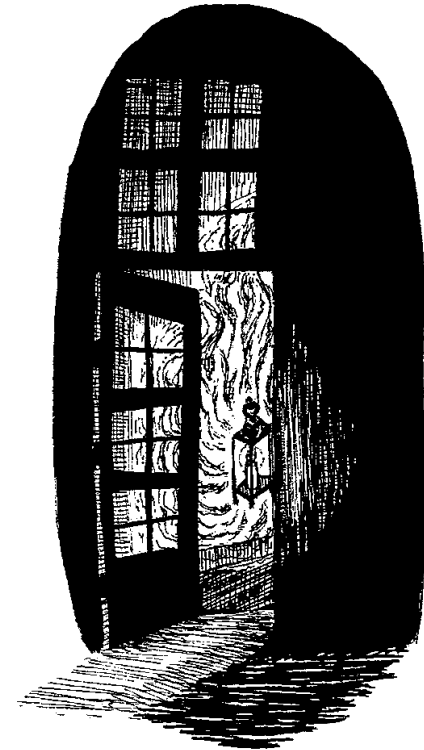
Voice on the Wind

J. M. Yaden

Wilt thou not come out on the moor, my child?
Wishest thou not to find thy parents there?
Thy brave father and dearest mother mild
Looked long for thee by lantern's lambent glare—

Desperate to find thee they found my lair
Now their voices roam the whispering halls
Of dreaming death, where hateful light ne'er galls
The glorious shadow of Erebus—

List' child, hearest thou not the plaintive calls
Rising o'er the sobbing slough: "Come to us!"



It's in the Room With You

Sarah Dean

It's in the room with you and you can't turn away because the harder you try the more panicked you become and needles of fear jut from the arteries of your heart and trickle down your legs so you shut your eyes and squinch them up real tight and dig your nails into your palms to make sure you're awake but when you open your eyes its still there and the sight of it forces more needles out of your heart this time into your arms which burst into goosebumps and the little hairs stand on end while your clenched fists become hot and sweat seeps through the cracks of your fingers then the hairs on your neck prickle as if being blown on and you want to turn around to see if something is behind you breathing on you but you cant because if you take your eyes off of it it'll get you and there's a thudding at the back of your skull *thump thump thump* and you've never fainted before yet somehow you feel like you're about to while dark patches infect your vision and your head feels weighted and you try to hold your breath so it wont come closer but you cant and you breathe very very very quickly and your breath only becomes louder and louder and louder and you piss yourself because that is all you can do when your body is frozen so your mind attempts to escape from your body but it fails and you're trapped you can't escape and its closing in and you're in shock in fact you're absolutely terrified but don't worry you won't always feel this way because after all

**you
don't
have
much
longer.**

it as one of them. I wanted to see what made the humming. Something about a monster that sings fascinated me, and it sounded the least like a monster.

I went to the edge of town at dark, and waited for the humming to start. I felt real good about my plan—even put a good distance between me and the treeline so I wouldn't get grabbed. I'm not stupid. That's why I wasn't even gonna go in the forest.

Then the humming started. I shined my light. I looked for it. I didn't see it. I tossed my light out. It landed a good way out I thought, and I thought I was lucky that the light landed facing out. I got impatient, cause the hum sounded even louder now. Still didn't see nothing.

Until I saw the light burn out.

Then I saw nothing.

But I'm not stupid. None of us are. That's why I'm still here. Never did find it that night, and I didn't look since. Everyone looks at me different now. I bet they think I'm gonna check again, cause my parents are still, to this day, real worried when I go out at night. It's like they think I'm different. I don't know why.

Well, I think that tune stuck with me ever since. I hum it every night I can. We don't hear it from the trees anymore, though.

C r a w l i n g

Gianna Provenzo

She could feel the mark his eyes were making between her shoulder blades. It didn't take much to make her feel like she was fourteen again and hiding in a bathroom was her only way to escape. Some days a look was enough. (Or, rather, it was too much.)

She could feel her skin crawling and the urge to shake off that man's glance like a dog shaking off mud was overwhelming. But instead she pulled her bag closer as if it was a shield and quickened her pace. It wasn't like she could give him the what-for. From experience, she knew, it would only make things worse. She'd had enough of the 'God, what a crazy bitch' kind of looks that confronting him would bring. Some nights she could control the urge to crawl out of her skin, but not tonight.

"Hey lady, I'm talking to you," the man calls, obnoxiously satisfied with himself. Her hair stands on end and she knows it's too late. She drops her bag.

"Glad you decided to listen." She can hear his footsteps coming closer. He grabs her shoulder. She turns around. He screams.

She's only seen how she looks when she's like this once, but she can remember it as clearly as she remembers feeling helpless at fourteen. Spikes, scales, and a sharp toothed smile, the result of begging someone, anyone, to give her a way out. And she got it and more.

He screams and then he stops abruptly, cut off at the peak. It used to bother her, this part, but

it's happened so many times that at this point all she feels is hollow. She leaves him slumped on the sidewalk, breathing shallowly. Frightened, but not dead. She takes a breath, feels the slow slide of scales, spikes, and sharp teeth returning under the skin. Delicately, she picks up her bag and walks away.

