

When The Crow Calls

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Warning: Reading this may cause terror, dread, fright, and dismemberment. This story is not for the faint-hearted, and though reading this is not that dangerous, it may cause a possible heart attack. And remember, when the crow calls, it will be too late...

It was first noticed on September 30, 2024. It had happened many, many, times before but never really was noticed, and, if it was, would barely cause a stir in the community. But today, that would change.

Alexia Williams was walking to school, excited by the fact that her birthday was only 19 days away, or 456 hours and then she would be 12 years old, or 4,383 days old! Alexia loved numbers, and was excited for Math Club to start its meetings. But back to her birthday. It would be small, with just her family and her friends Zach and Nina going to it. Still, she would make sure it would be fu- "Auuuggggghh!" she screamed.

An old lady missing quite a few teeth had grabbed her! "Beware, child!" she said. "Beware of the Dark!"

"Wha- dark?" stuttered Alexia, backing away.

"Yes, the Dark," said the woman. "First you will feel a wind, pulling you away, softly and gently, away from everything,". "You must run when you feel that wind, run into a building, but the right building. That is key. For when the crow calls, it will be too late..."

Then she faded away.

Needless to say, Alexia was quite disturbed by this whole experience. She was terrified of the idea of the Dark, whatever it was, but then she had an important realization. That old lady was quite clearly bonkers. She had evidently lost her mind. But then Alexia thought of her fading away. Her mind was playing tricks on her, she decided. Still, she hurried to school and decided to try to walk home with one of her friends.

Now, it was cloudy that day, and soon the clouds began to let down their rain. Recess was canceled, and it continued to pour for hours. Alexia didn't give it a second thought until Zach and Nina's parents came to pick them up early, and Alexia would have to walk home by herself, and then she felt a twinge of nervousness. As much as she wished for the school day to go on, it soon came to an end.

When she walked home, she noticed how the rain seemed to be crying, mourning over something. She went further still, and was around halfway there when she felt a gentle breeze heading to an old, abandoned building. She went on, but she kept feeling the urge to turn around. Finally, she stopped and did just that, unsure of what she was thinking. Her legs seemed to be moving themselves. She went back to the old building.

Alexia was terrified, but also felt kind of relaxed as the wind pushed her closer still to the building. Finally, she arrived back there. Then she heard a crow cawing. And she remembered the old woman's deathly words.

Then, lightning struck, seeming to terror open the sky. Everything went quiet. Alexia suddenly felt drained. She went down to her knees, gasping for air. She felt more and more tired. Finally, she lied down, and the last thing she heard before everything went dark was a terrible, echoing laugh tearing away her soul.

It was one thing when Alexia disappeared. Her family was devastated. It took a few days, but eventually the police found Alexia's dead body. The most interesting thing? There were no apparent wounds. But she was quite clearly dead. Many people were confused, and the news was on the case for a little while, but what really shocked the world was when it happened again, in the same town, in the same week.

October 5, 2024: Marcus Rodriguez was on his way to work. He could have driven, but his car's engine would not start. So he had decided to walk and get some fresh air. Marcus was in a good mood. He had recently bought a Rolex with the money that the company was giving him. Who knew how much people would be willing to pay for wi-fi? Being the only network provider in town certainly was nice. Especially with the position of C.E.O. of power line repair. That storm a few days ago had knocked out quite a few, resulting in more money for them.

Marcus considered himself not to be a dirtbag, though he admitted he had a lot of pride. He had a family with an amazing wife and two amazing children. He shivered momentarily. The winter chill was certainly starting early. He continued to head to work.

Then an old lady grabbed him! He instantaneously panicked as well as notice she was missing quite a few teeth.

"Beware!" she said. "Beware the Dark!"

"Huh?" he answered. What was this about the dark?

"Unless you wish to suffer the same fate as that little girl, run!" she exclaimed. "Run when you feel the wind, pulling you away from everything!" Run then, into a building, but the right building!" "For when the crow calls, it will be too late!"

Then she disappeared.

Now, Marcus immediately ran the rest of the way to his office quickly, terrified by what had just happened. He then sat down in his comfy chair and gathered his thoughts. The old lady seemed a little nutty, but with how horrified she was he wanted to believe her. He remembered the little girl she mentioned. He did a Google Search. Huh. Something about someone named Alexia being supposedly murdered and her body being found near the old abandoned watch tower just yesterday. Interesting. He decided he would check out the scene of the murder in a few days. Still, right now he decided to order a taxi to drive him home, spooked by that old lady.

Now, it was cloudy that day, and soon the clouds began to let down their rain. When the work day ended, Marcus got into his taxi and began the ride home, noticing the rain pitter-pattering against the window, and how it sounded like it was crying, mourning over something. He opened his window to feel some of it, maybe catch a raindrop on his tongue, and then he felt a nice gentle breeze, seeming to call him. He closed the window immediately, remembering the woman's words. The storm got worse. The wind grew violent, shaking the trees. But Marcus didn't notice, too nervous about what was happening. A tree branch hit the car, stopping the engine with a violent jolt. He got out of the car, wondering what was going on.

And then he felt the breeze again, once again gentle and kind, pushing him somewhere. And he followed. He kept following the breeze, continuing until he got to the old abandoned watch tower. He heard a crow cawing. But he just went into the tower. He saw a flash of light outside, cutting open the sky. Marcus suddenly felt tired. He lied down. Then he saw a dark cloth. And the last thing he heard before everything went dark was a terrible, echoing laughter.

Now after the second strange disappearance in one town, in one week, the authorities were on the case 24/7. They found his body on October 6, and set up security measures around that watch tower. It wouldn't happen again for a little while.

October 10, 2024: Zach was terrified. First, his good friend Alexia had been murdered. Then, his mom's cousin Marcus had had the same fate. In the same place. Nothing creepy about that at all. The point is, Zach was certain he was next. It was even the same number of days apart! Fearing his own death, Zach went to school.

Now, reader, you are probably expecting Zach here to have a similar experience as my past two descriptions, but you would be gravely wrong. I said it would not happen again for a little while, and I spoke the truth. You see, with so many guards around the tower, the Dark realized it would not be safe to go and try to suck someone's soul away. So it had decided to stay away. A rather smart move by the Dark. So, Zach's day was perfectly normal. And the next. And the next. And... you know, let's fast forward.

October 16, 2024: Zach was feeling better. It had been a while since the last time a murder had happened, and the tension was dying down. The security forces around the watch tower were getting less intense. Zach had already been able to see the scene of the murders twice. Maybe Zach wasn't next after all. He kept thinking about that.

On his way to school, he noticed something. Or someone, rather. It was an old woman, crying. He suddenly felt bad. He went up to her.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

She just kept crying. He asked again.

"Are you okay?"

This time, she responded.

"Not really," she said. "Twice I have tried to save them from that awful Dark. Both of them wouldn't run away from that gentle breeze. Neither of them is alive now."

"Wait a minute," Zach said. "Do you mean Alexia and Uncle Marcus? What happened to them?" What's this about darkness and gentle breezes? Who are you?"

Now she looked at him carefully.

"I see a little bit of the Dark's scent on you. It wants you. You may not be next, though. Alas, it may take mere hours or entire decades, but the Dark will eventually get you. You may not feel that gentle breeze or see the signs. But you can remember, when the crow calls, it will be too late. And, I am a victim of that awful Dark. A ghost, I suppose you would say."

Then she faded away.

Zach didn't even know what to think. He was scared, shocked, and he was in complete disbelief. He didn't know what this meant. So he ran. Ran away from it all, away from his school, the place where the old lady just was, away from his home, right to the tower. The watchtower. He didn't know what he was thinking. He felt no breeze, he heard no crow. Wait. Yes he did. Outside, he heard that crow cawing. Then he saw it. A dark figure draped in cloth, coming toward him. He saw the Book Of The Dark. He took it and ran with inhumane speed to his house.

Okay, you probably don't know what that was. The thing is, Zach didn't either. He didn't know what he was doing, but he just knew that book would be there. And how did he escape the Dark? Like the old woman said, he wasn't next. The Dark literally *couldn't* take him. But that protection wouldn't last long.

Zach was alone at his house as his parents were at work, and his little sister was at school. He should be there too. But he wasn't. 'Well', he thought. 'I have this book. I might as well look at it.' So he did. He scrolled through it, and then he found something interesting.

The Dark is one of the most powerful creatures in the entire universe. It has claimed 76 victims. The most recent was when it took Marcus Rodriguez on October 5, 2024.

Wait. How did the book include that? There was no way this book was that new, judging by the texture of it. How?

One of the most unusual victims was Elizabeth Bernes in 1827. She destroyed part of its cloak in her death, banishing it for centuries. She was the third most recent victim. As she destroyed part of the Dark's cloak, her ghost now haunts the Earth.

So that was who that old lady was! He found another interesting part.

The Dark's next five victims will in this order be:

- **Eva Trujllio**
- **Evan Barnes**
- **Zach Montgomery**
- **Penelope Dakk**
- **Noah Jones**

Zach almost fainted when he saw his name on the list. He couldn't believe it. The Dark was after him! He looked at the other names. Eva Trujllio was a girl from a grade below him. He didn't know Evan Barnes, or Penelope Dakk, but he knew Noah Jones. He was one of the third grade teacher's husbands, who occasionally brought French Fries to their school for the kids to share. Zach was sad to think of him dying. Then Zach remembered he was also on the list. Now he was just scared again.

Zach suddenly had a feeling that he didn't want this book. He couldn't think of a good place to put it, though. Then he had it. He would drop it off at his school's library. He ran to school.

Zach was tardy. It seemed lucky to him that they hadn't called his parents. He asked if he could be excused to the library, and the teacher seemed pleased he was asking. She didn't even seem to notice the book that he was carrying. He went to the library.

Zach found a nice place to hide it, right in the nonfiction book section. He thought of that because the only person who ever went there was the librarian, and that was only because she was removing books that hadn't been checked out for 30 years. But he wanted to take one last look at The Book Of The Dark.

The Dark is one of the most powerful creatures in the entire universe. It has claimed 77 victims.

Wait. Didn't it say 76 befor-? Then he almost simultaneously heard a crow cawing, a deafening scream, and a terrible, echoing laugh. Zach ran to the spot where he heard it, dropping the book. There stood the Dark, a crow perched on its shoulder.

Zach was surprised at first. He thought that the Dark was more than just a black cloak. But then he realized something. The Dark wasn't some all powerful monster or some giant, mystic force. It was just an old, ragged cloak. Why? Because it was so hard to catch, so impossible to be defeated or manipulated, that it didn't need those glamorous bodies. That cloak was all it would require.

Zach refocused. It was standing right next to Eva Trujllio's body, which was lying on the floor. It started to move away. Then it turned to him. The face Zach saw was so terrible he fainted.

When Zach got up, he heard some quite alarming news. The librarian noticed some sounds and went to where she heard them. Then she saw Eva and him lying on the floor. She immediately called the police, and they found that though Zach had just fainted, Eva was dead, marking the third strange murder in that past month. This unusual as it was, but the images of what happened were not there on the security cameras. They just skipped over. Because of all of this, school and work was shut down for a week while police from all over the state investigated.

Zach sat at home each day becoming more anxious. He was panicked enough as it was, but when the newspaper reported the mysterious death of Evan Barnes, who was found dead around a mile from his house, near the watch tower he went into a frenzy. No matter how many people he tried to tell, his parents, his sister, his friends, no one would listen to him. So he sat miserably, awaiting his death.

Now, this may seem like a depressing story of sorts. But don't worry. It turns out... shall we say interesting?

On October 18, 2024, Zach heard a ringing on his doorbell. That was strange. Outside it was raining, plus, it was 8:30 at night. Who would be out here so late in such miserable weather? Zach went to check it. There was no one there. But The Book Of The Dark lay on his doormat. Zach gasped in shock. But the Book Of The Dark wasn't the only surprising thing. The book was lying open to the page entitled: **How To Defeat The Dark:**

The Dark can only be defeated in one way; its cloak being torn by burning glass. This is because the Dark's essence is so strong, and it only gets stronger by each victim, that it can only be defeated by sheer force. It also has to do with the unusual way the Dark was created. (See page 15).

It went on, but Zach knew the important thing. Plus, a piece of broken glass was lying on top of the page, along with a note that said: *You know what to do.* And he did.

Zach ran out of the house with a fireproof oven mitt that he had quickly grabbed, carrying the glass in it. He didn't tell anyone where he was going, but he didn't care. He would get in big trouble, but he didn't care. He knew what he had to do.

He felt a wind, urging him on, gentle and kind. He heard the rain, crying, mourning over something. He knew what they were. He continued on to the watch tower. He got there, and he waited.

Suddenly, lightning struck, seeming to tear open the sky. He heard a crow cawing. And there, right in front of him, stood the Dark. It started to move toward him, but Zach held up the burning glass. It stopped. It looked at him, the cloak covering its face. Its arms moved up, preparing to uncover it. Zach charged.

From that day forward, there would be no mysterious murders. The five that year would be all the five the town of Greenwood would ever notice. The fifth was the most mysterious, people would always say. Because after Zach left his house without telling anyone, his sister found a book, and left it on the table, but when she went to tell her parents, it was lost and never seen again. Mysteriously, that was the same time Zach had charged.

And by the watch tower? All they would ever find was Zach's body, holding a shard of glass, and a torn cloak, and a few crow feathers on it.