Yaay yíkde dikeeni Yéil

Raven that flew into the Whale

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English Version

Long ago, Raven was flying above the Earth. He drifted effortlessly on the breeze and eyed the world below with quiet interest. From so high up the crashing, turbulent sea seemed almost gentle. The giant waves softly lulled and sputtered from Raven's perspective. Birds and clouds peppered the scenery.

In the vast expanse something caught Raven's eye. Far off on the horizon, a dense cloud of birds stormed above one spot over the water. As Raven approached, the mass of birds grew louder, raucous in their excited state. "What is going on with these birds?" Raven thought to himself, "They are never this wild unless there is food around."

Finally, a humpback whale revealed itself directly under the seagulls. Its hump bobbed up and down amongst the waves. Periodically it would shoot a grey cloud of air and saltwater from its blowhole into the sky. With each blast the seagulls would tumble over each other violently, knocking feathers loose and crying at one another. Raven was baffled; he really could not understand why birds would fight over the one thing that is everywhere around.

Upon closer examination, Raven discovered what the birds were creating such chaos over. In the humpback whale's wake floated bits and pieces of small fish, especially herring. Raven marveled at what was happening; the humpback whale was feasting on the smelt and herring that were below the surface. "There must be so much food in there!" Raven thought excitedly. "Why are these birds fighting over scraps?" Then he realized that the smelt and herring were deep down under the water and the humpback whale was enjoying his fill of the little fish.

Raven contemplated the risk; even he could be obliterated if he was careless, but the reward was too great to pass up. Raven approached cautiously and he got close

quickly, but found himself deterred by the roar and sprays each time. "If I could just swoop in at the right time, I'll be out of danger." Raven thought determinately.

The first time he tried going in, he narrowly dodged a merciless jet stream. The briny rain and smell of food compelled him to keep going. The second time was even closer, this time Raven's wing was grazed and he found himself nearly swept away. The spot where he was struck was bare and tender; the rest of his feathers were ruffled and his eyes stung from saltwater. Raven was growing weary and doubtful that he could accomplish his task, but he would try one last time, thinking of how he would fill his hungry belly.

Raven inched closer gingerly, flinching now at every geyser produced by the whale. Raven decided it was now or never, took a deep breath and dove immediately once the path cleared. He made it to the blowhole instantly, but he was in more danger than ever. He struggled to get through the blowhole. The rubbery, wet tissue squeezed him tightly. He wriggled and fought, moving only a shoulder at a time. By the time his head was through he could hear the whale breathing in. Here was Raven's breakthrough. The blowhole widened around him and Raven plopped him out into the Whale's insides. He tumbled down into the dark, rolling down into the whale's belly.

Raven lay still for a moment, the fleshy floor of the belly pulsing beneath him. The fleshy walls glowed a brilliant pink, purple and green, illuminated dimly by a fire Raven built in the middle of the belly. How quickly he built the fire was amazing. Raven balked at the massive room around him. Fish and grime oozed from the ceiling. Fish in a digestive disarray and saltwater poured in periodically at his back. Everything piled up almost magically around the fire, never getting close enough to snuff it out.

Every time the whale breathed out it felt like a terrible storm, sucking piles of digested flesh out of the chamber. Raven planted himself firmly each time, clinging to what he could and tucking his head. When it would pass, Raven would stuff his beak and grab what he could of all the warm goodies. He spent days eating; only stopping to brace himself. When all the food was gone Raven found himself poking into the whale's body around him.

The whale rumbled in its agony, but Raven would not stop. Raven jabbed away down to gristle and bone. Finally, the whale quieted and would not stir. The fire burned down to embers and Raven realized too late that he was stuck. The whale had died and washed up ashore.

Raven waited for what felt like days until he started to hear a hollow 'thunk' coming from outside. He realized immediately what was happening. Some villagers had found the beached whale and begun salvaging what they could of the dead whale. Raven shouted, "Get me out of here!" to no avail. The hacking and chopping grew louder and Raven knew his time was growing short. He watched the walls around him attentively.

The people who were working on the whale would here sounds coming from in the dead whale. They were baffled. Someone said "it sounds like a raven calling out in there!" *What a strange occurrence* they thought.

Raven found his chance as a ray of light broke the darkness. He shot through the opening, swift as an arrow to the outside and escaped the dead whale. He watched from a safe distance as the villagers got what they needed and left. When night fell Raven returned and basked in his accomplishment. He thought happily of his full belly and healing wounds and fell asleep on the cool beach smelling like the breath of the whale that he was in.

To this very day it is said that the way we got all the information about the whale came from the raven that dived into the whale.