

## Lunch with Madge

Left my house that day in my little green Hyundai on my way down Thirty-sixth Avenue, heading to Hawthorne by way of turns left and right and right and left. I came up to the first stop sign; stop as opposed to a red light stop. I was on my way to wherever. It is beautiful this morning with the trees in various stages of articulated branches to some still full of the autumn oranges and yellows. As I am sitting at the stop which intersects Birdwing Way, I notice a raven standing in the very middle of the intersection. It is a large raven and he or she totally ignores that I am about to roll past, and very close to that. By the way it is strutting, I am sure it is a female, and she is eagerly picking at what appears to be a candy bar, one that has been discarded by a passerby, one that did not pay attention to the litter-y laws. I pull out into the intersection and beside the raven to shoo her out of the way and open my window to call out, *Hey there, you are in the middle of the street.* Expecting her to fly off, she instead turns her head in a proud manner and says to me *So, go around me, can't you see I'm eating?* I replied with a very startled look on my face *Well, whatever—I was just trying to keep you from getting run over.* She looked at me again and replied *Well thanks, but it's been cold and I just couldn't resist this chocolate bar leftover, and yes, I am in the middle of the street.*

*Well, I replied I'm not in a big rush today so maybe you would like to come over for a nice lunch out of the cold?*

The raven shifted her head upwards toward my open car window with interest and replied in a cautious yet curious tone of voice, *That sounds very tempting and I might just accept your offer, but no funny business, understand?*

*Oh no I exclaimed, I just thought you might like a break from scavenging on a cold day like today.*

*Hey bud she replied, We don't call this scavenging, this is beneficial recruitment of product, and by the way, my name is Madge.*

*Well Madge, hop on in and I'll give you a lift.*

Madge hops up onto my outstretched arm and I swing her inside thru the open window. She ducks her head as if to bow to clear the window top and onto the upper shoulder rest of the passenger seat. As I close the driver's window with the electric button, Madge cocks her head back toward me with the subtle look of suspicion. We take off down the road to my house.

Madge did have lunch that day at my house and I did have something that she liked; in fact just about anything I had in the refrigerator. She told me of her family that she had lost a few years ago and of how she missed them. She said she had friends, and that was nice, but not the same.

Madge told me as she was perched on the counter in the kitchen, how she had to be careful who she went home with. *Yes she said, I have been picked up before; in fact, a friend of mine was picked up and ended up in a cage. We knew where he was but eventually he was moved to some bird zoo in another state.*

Time as passing slowly and I told Madge I was sorry to leave but I had to go to an appointment. She peered at the clock on the stove and ruffled her feathers as she stretched as birds do and replied *Yes, that was nice,* but she also had places to go to and birds to meet. I held out my arm and she hopped aboard, this time without reluctance. I walked to the front door and out onto the porch that dominated the front of my house above the street below. Madge hopped off and onto the railing but before she did, her head came forward and brushed my arm and she sighed a bird's sigh of a soft croaking purr.

As she flew away, she said in a proud croaky pitch, *Thanks kid, I hope we meet again.*

Well, we never did, I don't think, but every time a raven perches on the telephone wire in front of my house and bobs its head, I imagine it could be Madge. But then, there are other birds with her and she probably doesn't want to do the un-birdly thing and fly down to say hello; at least it makes me happy that she is still around and scratching.

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