**We’ve Been Here Before**

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Ravi leaned his head against the window of the train as the passengers exited onto the platform. Dark grey clouds blanketed the sky and threatened rain. Maybe even ice. Or worse, snow. He tucked his chin inside the collar of his thin jacket. He wasn’t dressed for the snow.

A young woman hopped off the train and onto the platform. Her thick burgundy coat was in sharp contrast to the black-cloaked passengers that swarmed to the parking lot. A sense of déjà vu rushed through him as he watched her. She gazed up to the sky and closed her eyes as if waiting for the snow to touch her face. A man walked up to her and embraced her underneath the cold, evening sky.

*I recognize them*, he thought*.* The feeling hit him so hard that it was like he was swimming in his seat. *Focus*, he told himself. He should never have accepted those extra hours at the office. Getting home late always made him feel strange. It was the last train of the night, and home was 45-minutes away. *What do I focus on?* A large crow about the size of a small dog hopped around on the ground outside his window. *Yes, I’ll focus on that bird.*

Ravi watched as the crow attempted to fly. Its wings fluttered as it rose a few feet off the ground but failed to take off. The crow hopped around then tried again. It failed, landing on the ground. That's when Ravi realized something, and the déjà vu hit him hard. It was all so familiar. He had seen that bird before—that same one.

"Mind if I sit down?" a young woman said, making herself comfortable. She pressed her bag onto her lap, and a cloud of perfume wafted into the air.

His heart raced. He recognized that perfume. He focused back on the crow. *How can that bird be so familiar?* The couple outside started to walk away, and he caught a glimpse of the man’s profile. *This night happened already,* he realized.

The woman next to Ravi leaned over. Her shoulder pressed into his as she looked out the window. "It'll start snowing soon." The crow attempted to fly again. She made a *tsk* sound. "That poor bird. I think its wing is broken."

Ravi gazed at the woman’s reflection in the window. He recognized her voice and that familiar tone when she mentioned snow. A memory filled his mind of the two of them slow dancing in the snow under the moonlight. He realized this was the night they first met. They met on this very train after his double shift at the plant. *And in one year,* he thought. *We will have a terrible accident.* A sense of tremendous loss overwhelmed him and he almost wept. The scene of the accident flashed across his eyes, and he jumped in his seat. *We drove home that night,* he realized*, during the coldest spring on record. The ice sent us into a tailspin and slammed us into a tree.* He tried to remember. Someone had died, but who? "*There isn’t anything else we can do,”* he heard a doctor say somewhere in the future.

His heart racing, he turned away from the window and smiled at the young woman. “Maybe we can tell the train conductor about the bird.” His own words echoed inside his mind like a distant memory that had already happened.

Her eyes misted over. “I don’t think they’ll do anything.”

Ravi turned his attention back out the window. *What if I didn’t say anything else? I could undo that moment when we met. Undo whatever terrible loss I sense. I could say I am too tired and need to sleep. I could put on headphones*. *Avoid all that terrible pain.* Instead, Ravi faced her and said, “I have a feeling he’ll be okay out there.” He wanted to console her. Make her feel better. He resisted the urge to pull her into his arms.

Concerned, she looked out the window and searched the platform for the bird. “Do you think so?”

Ravi nodded. “Sure, I’m Ravi, by the way.”

“I’m Grace.” She peered at him closer. “Do we know each other? You look familiar.”

“Could be," he said, while his eyes glistened with the tears over a memory that hadn’t happened yet. "I grew up here. Hey, how about if that bird flies away, we take that as a sign we go for dessert sometime?” *She was always saying she had a sweet tooth,* he recalled.

Her eyes brightened, but suspicion lingered in the corners. No one invites strangers on a train to dessert. “Maybe…” she said reluctantly. Her attention was distracted by something outside the window. She gasped. “There it goes!”

Ravi smiled and looked outside. The crow flew into the evening sky, his black wings only visible because of the streetlight. He focused his attention on her reflection. *Maybe it’s a sign,* he thought.

“Well, it must be a sign,” she said as if reading his mind.

He looked back at her—his love. “A sign,” he repeated.

“Alright, we should go for dessert. Why not?” she said, her face beaming from relief. *She loves birds*, he recalled.

Ravi shrugged. “I can’t think of any reason not to.”

They talked the rest of the train ride home. It was all so familiar to Ravi. While he listened to her, he thought of when she will arrive at her stop and give him her phone number. She will insist Ravi call her for a date so they can go for dessert. When they do, she will have strawberry cheesecake, and he will have the diner’s homemade brownie with vanilla ice cream. They will fall in love, and he will forget about that terrible feeling until a cold spring day—the coldest on record—reminds him once again.