

## How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Raven

1. Don't stand in the sunshine with a raven and watch as its plumage shifts between black, purple and blue. This metallic shine will mesmerize you and make it extremely difficult to look away. The longer you stare, the more it will enchant you. You might start to wonder how those jet black feathers would feel against your silky skin or entwined around your limbs. This type of thinking is dangerous.

2. Don't listen to the caws and warbles outside your window in the morning. His thirty sonorous vocalizations including mews, whistles, croaks, glooks, tocks, quorks and dripping water sounds will beguile you. Under his melodic spell, you'll listen for familiar notes and find yourself soothed by them. You might start to wonder how his breathy song would feel against your neck and what melodies your voices could make together. If he is brazen enough to sit on your window sill and warble directly to you, put ear plugs in and refer to number 1.

3. Don't accept an invitation to a courtship dance. Otherwise, you'll find yourself captivated by his acrobatic moves. In this dance, you'll soar up into the sky. His wingtips will touch your fingertips, and then you'll dive and tumble together. Fingers will touch wings, lips will touch his stout beak and legs will intertwine with clawed feet. This arousing dance, combined with mesmerizing feathers and beguiling caws, will stupefy you. You'll begin to wonder what it would be like if you could dance together every day. If he persists, continue to refuse his corvid magnetism.

4. Don't be swayed by the tokens of affection your raven gives you, particularly a paper box where he has scribbled inside that you've opened his box of daylight. Don't think this is a sign of devotion and give it a

prominent spot on your dresser for all to admire. If he finds you on one of your moonlit photography walks and arranges sticks into shapes that are obviously you and him, walk away. If you fall for any of these gestures, the affair will intensify in domesticity. You might come home from work to find him cooking dinner for you. Or you might start to notice your apartment is tidier than usual, and a sweet and smoky aroma lingers around your pillow. These are all wiles to shield his real intention of transforming you into one of his playthings.

5. Don't be besotted by your raven's ability to recognize your face in a sea of other faces. If you happen to remark on this talent, he'll tell you the next logical step is to meet his friends and family. He will take you to the territories his family calls home and introduce you to everyone important to him. You might begin to think you should do the same. Yet, he will make no attempt to meet your friends and family. Clearly, he is avoiding your pale-faced tribe.

6. Don't be riveted by his extraordinary performance of ant cleansing. He'll say he must perform this act because your love for him is making him more human than raven, and to not be a raven anymore is like a bullet in the head. To cleanse himself he'll perch on top of an ant hill and let the ants swarm over his feathers and beak. He'll crunch a few in his mouth and rub their guts all over himself, and then repeat. Some naturalists say mashed ants are like insect repellent. But, anting, full of gyrations, wing gestures, and head nods, is like a tribal dance, one that you can't pull your eyes away from. Watching this mesmerizing masquerade, you'll forget it means he is pulling away from you.

7. Don't fall for his monogamous nature. You are not the only mate in his life, and if you believe it to be so, you have been bewitched and thoroughly ensnared in his love trap. Unfortunately, ravens have lots of tricks up their feathers. He might stop waking you up with morning song. He might stop asking for courtship dances. He might stop leaving you affectionate tokens.

When you ask why he might, say the anting didn't work, and he must become a lone raven to stop the death coming for him. When you say lone ravens don't exist, he might say the naturalists got it wrong. Not all ravens form lifelong monogamous pairs.

8. Don't be bewildered by the trip he plans without you and the many months that will pass before you see each other again. You might offer to meet up with him for part of his journey. Don't, for he will shake his black mane of feathers in firm refusal. Knowing that ravens like to play with sticks, you might suggest using a lead stick to mark daily thoughts on a piece of paper and when he returns the two of you can exchange your markings. You envision yourself looking at his drawings of new faces and places and it feeling like you had been with him all along. He'd read the scribbles of your unglamorous daily routine and be reconnected to the life you once shared. He'll agree it's a logical solution but reject that idea too. He is a noble raven after all and doesn't want anything human weighing him down. He might stay around to finesse his explanations or fly away with one thunderous swoop. At first, you might shed a tear or two. Then, in his absence, you'll be glad to be rid of his corvid theatrics.