**Silverspot**

The Story of a Crow

Silverspot was a wise old crow; his name was given because of the silvery white spot, stuck on his right side between his eye and his bill, that looked like a five pence piece. Crows are wise, organised birds (like soldiers on duty – always at war, always looking out for their army) and Silverspot was no different. He was the leader of a large band of crows whose headquarters sat on top of a pine-clad hill in Canada, just by Dundas Mountain.

Every winter, Silverspot would lead his army South along the Niagara River but each February he returned to the familiar landmark of Dundas. Every year, for six weeks, he came with his troops and made his home up on the hill. In the early morning dew, the crows would fly out, in three separate troops to forage, with Silverspot always leading the last, following the ravine for shelter.

One morning in May, a respected British naturalist by the name of Ernest Thompson Seton sat gazing out of his window when he noticed an old crow flying past. He remembered an elderly neighbour telling him, “That old thing’s been flying up and down this ravine for years!” Over the years, the route of course changed: the ravine became smaller; houses were built all around, but twice each day during March and part of April, Silverspot passed by with his troop.

Seton enjoyed watching the army of crows, going about their morning routines. He became acquainted with their conversations and began to understand Silverspot’s orders to his legion. As he heard the old crow caw, he knew that Silverspot was watching him closely. “Be on your guard,” Silverspot warned his troop as they flew past the old man.

One Wednesday morning, Seton decided to walk to the high bridge above the ravine and wait for the army of crows to arrive. As they came near, he raised his walking stick and pointed it at them. “Danger!” cried out Silverspot, and every crow in the troop began to tower and scatter from the rest.

As time went on, Seaton began to learn old Silverspot’s words of command: he learnt that sometimes a very little difference in sound made a very large difference in meaning (number 5 meant hawk, or any large, dangerous bird and so the birds would turn around and number 4 always meant retreat).

Early in April, mating season began. Seton noticed that the crows spent half the day among the pines instead of foraging from dawn till dark. Pairs or trios would showcase their skills, like an aeroplane performing a dangerous, yet brave, routine and, by the middle of May, the newly formed couples had scattered and left the pine-clad hill deserted and silent.