

## Altonio and the Raven

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The keys clacked as his thin, white fingers played over the tiles with practised ease, the metal pegs branding the flaky paper with a rich red ink. There was a subtle clicking outside, and as the typist looked up, he saw it was a large raven. His black feathers ruffled out as much as possible in the chilly Burian air. Andrew. The air-head maid had named him Andrew. Andrew was always coming back to the balcony, waiting for Fracella, the maid, to 'accidentally' drop a spare fruit cake or bread slice for him to salvage.

Altonio, the typist, got up from his chair. He was a Governor, a head of the Tertiary court, the court of public justice. He had a lot of power over the court, and in turn, over the laws and restrictions that controlled the Burian citizens.

He strode lankily over to the glass double doors, his ebony cane tucked under his armpit. The doors swung open soundlessly as the politician drew closer to the balcony, his boots ringing out as he loped over the threshold and out the door into the brisk outside air.

Andrew turned to face Altonio in an annoyingly playful way as he trod grumpily towards the raven. He had been in this situation before, and the man had never gotten the best of him. His eyes glinted with mischief with the anticipation of the ensuing kerfuffle.

Altonio lazily took his ebony cane out and waved it in Andrew's direction, hoping to get this inconvenience over with as quickly as possible.

Andrew didn't move.

Altonio stepped forward and flicked his cane down onto the balustrade no more than an inch away from the rascal.

Andrew didn't so much as flinch.

Tired of this repeated nuisance, Altonio sought to end this routine and swung his cane at Andrew, but it just cut through the air, as Andrew fluttered over towards the lookout.

The lookout was a small rectangular peninsula that hung out over the crowded cityscape, presenting the viewer with a grand panorama of steel and smoke.

Altonio stamped over towards the raven, getting more irritable as the cold got to him. He swung his cane around tempestuously, hoping it would scare off the audacious avian, but he should have known better.

Andrew just croaked in a mocking fashion.

Altonio cracked the ebony down on the copper railing right where the bird sat, but it only dented the soft metal. Andrew fluttered noisily up and landed on top of the cane, staring gleefully into Altonio's raging eyes. The connection was electric.

Before Altonio could retaliate, Andrew was already sitting at the very end of the lookout. As Altonio glowered at the raven, a small, sharp-edged feather drifted down and landed right on the tip of his nose. Altonio's face flushed red and he blew the feather off his nose, then turned his gaze to the bird. He stamped over towards the raven, his intent clear in his blazing eyes. He was gaining speed as he grew closer and closer to his would-be victim, but the bird barely seemed aware of his imminent demise, the edges of his beak curling up into a mischievous smile.

Altonio's rage swelled as he got closer and closer, and clutched his cane, his knuckles white with rage-fuelled exertion. His footsteps shook the lookout such was the force of his stride as he raised his right hand.

The next moments ensued in this order.

Andrew fluttered effortlessly towards Altonio.

Altonio's cane cracked down onto the balustrade, breaking both the railing and the ebony.

Altonio flinched to the side in order to avoid the rambunctious raven.

Altonio tripped over his hard soled boots and flailed forward.

Altonio swung helplessly from the thin plating at the end of the lookout, his right hand the only thing keeping his body from the sickening plummet.

Andrew slowly fluttered down onto the metal peninsula, his head tilted down, seemingly oblivious to the dire situation. Either that, or he was enjoying the Governor's utter fear.

Altonio's eyes widened in terror as he saw the sheer joy burning in the raven's dark eyes. His hand was rapidly weakening as all his blood flooded to his brain. His hand was tired already, with the vigorous exercise of his attempted extermination.

If it wasn't for his villainous intent, then Altonio might not have slipped free from the lookout.

If he had let the raven be, he might not have felt the polluted air rushing against his skin.

If he hadn't gotten up from his typewriter, then his last sight might not have been a raven's joyful eyes slowly growing further and further away.