

Some Inguruki Myths

by Marta Randall

**Rave
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make
s the
world

and
the
stars**

Once, when Snow Wolf and Raven trekked through the Big Empty, Snow Wolf grew bored so Raven made him a toy. She scooped ice and snow and fashioned the ball of the world, but it fell apart in her hands. So she breathed on the world and the warmth of her breath sank deep into the heart of the ball, and it turned brown and green and white and stayed together.

Snow Wolf liked his new toy. After he played with it, he demanded that Raven carry the world back to their lodge, their kamak, while he took a nap.

Raven took the world up in her beak, but on the way she dropped it. The warm heart of the world splintered into a million small, sharp pieces that sprayed up into the Big Empty and hung there, glowing. Raven didn't have time to gather them all, so she dipped out a single beak-ful and re-built the world's shell around that small scoop of frozen stars. Then she flew on to their kamak.

Snow Wolf never noticed the crack in the skin of the world, and Raven knew he wouldn't. But he was furious that there were shining things in the Big Empty and demanded that Raven make him a light to see them by. While Snow Wolf slept, Raven rolled the stars together into a glowing ball which lit all of the Big Empty. Snow Wolf searched from one side of the Big Empty to the other but didn't find a single star. Disgusted, he threw the ball away. When it landed it shattered into a million stars again. Snow Wolf was furious.

He demanded that Raven make the light again, which she did. She does it each morning so that Snow Wolf can search through the Big Empty for the truth. But he never finds it, because although he is Snow Wolf, Raven is always more clever than he.

**How
Uruk
was
made**

They say that in the days when all the Deathless lived together in one land, Raven and Bear were great friends. Snow Wolf was jealous.

He dug a great hole in Bear's path. Bear tumbled into it and Snow Wolf taunted him. Bear grew as his anger grew, until he burst up from the trap, scooped up Snow Wolf, ate him whole, and went home.

Raven found Snow Wolf's blood on the snow. She took it up and breathed on it, and it told her what had happened. She went to Bear's house and said, "This will not do, brother. I need Snow Wolf and you must give him back."

Bear said, "I won't do it until he promises to leave me alone." Inside Bear's stomach, Snow Wolf laughed.

Raven said, "If I give you something so that you will always see Snow Wolf's night tricks, will you give him back?"

Bear agreed. Raven fashioned two perfect balls of snow. She blew on them so that they glowed, and took them back to Bear. She showed Bear how to hold them up before him, one in each paw, to light his way.

Bear was pleased and vomited up Snow Wolf, but Raven's gift made Snow Wolf furious with jealousy. He raised his leg and pissed on both of the white balls. One shrank more than the other, but both had great dirty spots on them from the piss. Bear flung them into the sky and ran after Snow Wolf. Snow Wolf fled, laughing, back to his kamak where he was safe. In his anger Bear took up his kamak on his great broad back and moved it to the very end of the world, where the mountains hold up the Big Empty. This made Raven so mad that she refused to lay with Snow Wolf, which made Snow Wolf angry, and for a long time they fought. They scooped dirt from the land to throw at each other, and where they scooped there were valleys. They piled stones together to make walls against each other, and where they piled the stones there were mountains. Raven pissed in the snow to wash away Snow Wolf's mountains, and her piss became the great rivers. Snow Wolf shat in the river to make dams, and the shit became green islands, and between them in their anger they made Uruk.

**Snow
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One day while flying around Uruk looking for mischief, Raven found an apple tree growing in a remote valley. Raven loved apples but knew that if she kept any in the lodge, Snow Wolf would sniff them out with his sensitive nose and eat them all, leaving none for her. She gathered the apples and pressed their juice into a barrel, which she carried back to the lodge and covered with fragrant pine boughs and hid around the hill behind the kamak. Then she became busy and forgot about the barrel of juice.

The winter came and Snow Wolf grew bored, as he often did, and annoyed Raven with his constant complaining. He followed Raven from one end of the lodge to the other, carping and bellyaching and getting in the way. Especially he said he was bored with the dried meat and stored fat that they had to eat through the months of winter. Raven was bored too, but she remembered the barrel of apple juice that she had hidden during the autumn.

When Snow Wolf was asleep, Raven crept from their bed and went around the hill to where she had hidden the barrel. She dug it out of the snow and dragged it against the side of the lodge so that the juice could melt a little bit, and when a cup full of the juice was liquid, she drank it.

It was sweet and heavy and bitter all at once, and it made her throat and stomach burn and it made her head very happy. Raven drank all the juice in the cup and curled up by the fire and made up songs until she fell asleep.

When Snow Wolf awoke he knew something was different but, as usual, he didn't know what it was. He prowled around the inside of the lodge, knocking things over and shouting until Raven brought him a cup of the applejack.

Snow Wolf drank the applejack and became so happy that he rolled around on the floor of the lodge, singing and shouting and trying to fuck the furs on his bed. At first Raven thought this was very funny, but soon Snow Wolf began to annoy her. She made some dough and put it into his hands.

"Here," she said. "Sit quietly and make people."

Snow Wolf sat by the fire and made people out of dough. But because he was very drunk, he made some people with too many legs and some people

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Every time Raven lay with Snow Wolf, she gave birth to something impressive: the winds, trees, insects, ice. One day she gave birth to the igaruku tree. She planted it outside the lodge. It soon grew tall and strong, and made two red fruits at its very top. Raven flew to the top of the tree and picked one of the fruits and cut it in half. Inside, the fruit was folded to resemble a man's penis inside a woman. The flesh was delicious. Raven ate it all.

The igaruku fruit grew inside Raven and soon she gave birth to a girl, whom she loved very much. Snow Wolf was jealous that Raven had given birth to something he had not started. He wanted to make something himself. He couldn't reach the last fruit, so he cut down the tree and swallowed the fruit whole.

Instead of turning into a baby inside him, the igaruku fruit turned into shit. Snow Wolf tried making people out of the shit, but they smelled so bad that Raven swept them out of her lodge and most of them froze in the snow. Raven went back inside and nursed her daughter. Snow Wolf didn't care. He always forgot about the things he made the minute he turned his back on them.

One day Snow Wolf was digging beside a stream, trying to capture tunnel worms. The worms dug faster than Snow Wolf did, and soon he gave up and sat beside the hole on a pile of pale mud. The mud stuck to his fur. When he tried to brush it away it kept the shape his fingers made. Snow Wolf gathered a great basket of the mud and took it into his lodge, where he sat beside the fire making people from the pale mud. As he finished each person he put it down. The ones that he put by the fire baked firm and hard, but the ones he put behind him stayed wet and soft, and when he lay down to sleep, he squashed them. But the baked ones soon stood up and moved around, talking to each other and poking things. They were full of mischief and they soon made a great mess inside the kamak.

Raven came with her broom to sweep them away. Unlike Snow Raven's previous people, these people ran away from her and hid in places where she could not reach them. They laughed and sang rude songs about her.

It is never wise to tease Raven. She went outside

Rave n dies

Raven was big with child. When her time came, the child did not want to be born and in the struggle of birth, Raven died.

Snow Wolf cleaned the baby and gave it to Owl to feed. Then he cleaned his kamak. At last he came to Raven's body. He said to it, "Come on, old woman. It has been very peaceful with you dead, but it's time to be alive again." Raven didn't move. Snow Wolf jumped over her body four times and Raven opened her eyes.

"Go away," she said. "I like being dead." She closed her eyes and died again. Her spirit went into Bear's cave and hid in the farthest corner.

Bear wouldn't leave his cave while Raven was in it because he didn't trust her. Without Bear, nothing in the world could die. If plants and animals didn't die, they could not be eaten. People and animals began to starve, but even so they couldn't die. The ill and old and wounded lived on in pain.

The people appealed to Snow Wolf, who traveled to Bear's cave and told him that he must bring death back to the world. Bear said that Raven had to leave his cave first, but Raven remained stubbornly dead.

Snow Wolf had an idea. He had applejack left from the last time Raven had made it, and fine cakes and a haunch of u'niktu, snow deer. He prepared a feast and to it he invited the most handsome men and the best minstrels. Then he jumped over Raven's body four times. She opened her eyes. "Why did you do that?" she demanded. "I want to be dead." Before she shut her eyes the minstrels began singing praise-songs about her. Raven loved music and flattery. She smelled the cakes and meat and applejack. Raven loved to eat and drink. Lastly she saw the handsome men and her lust awoke. So she shook herself back into her feathers and joined the feast, and when her spirit went out of his cave, Bear returned death to the world.

**How
Death
came
to the
world**

Raven set Owl to watch her mortal daughter, whom she loved better than the world. Owl saw Bear come crouching and hid the child deep in her feathers. Bear looked into Owl's eyes and because Owl cannot lie, Bear saw the girl hiding under Owl's wing. He took the girl away with him. When Raven found her child gone she set out to find Bear's cave and get her child back.

She searched for a long time, up and down the spine of the world and across the Big Empty. When at last she found Bear's cave she washed her face and brushed her feathers, and stood calling for him.

Bear said, "You have traveled many years for nothing, sister Raven. The mortal spirits in my cave can never leave again."

Raven said, "Take me, then. I am a greater prize than some puny girl."

Bear laughed. "You cannot trick me, sister. Your time is not yet come. My cave would spit you out and I would lose you both."

Now clever Raven said, "You are right, brother, my quest is foolish. But I am tired. Let me warm myself beside your fire, and look on my daughter one last small time before I leave."

Bear agreed, for he was fond of Raven despite her trickster ways. He made her an honorable seat beside the fire and brought the girl out of the cave. She blinked and sat beside her mother. Raven took the girl under her wing and held her close.

Raven and Bear talked long into the night, about the things that old friends talk about. Bear's sweet tooth is famous, so his round ears pricked up when Raven told him about the bee maidens of the south, who make the sweetest honey in the world. A great hunger kindled in Bear's belly as Raven talked.

"Sister Raven, I would like to taste that honey," Bear said, licking his lips.

"It is dangerous and difficult to find," Raven said, pulling at her beak. "If I bring you southern honey, what will you give me for it?"

"Anything that I can trade, sister," Bear said. "Do you want my winter coat, or my fishing skill, or my magic that brings the snow?"

"I do not know, brother. But I travel far and

**The
Name
less
Hunter**

There was a hunter. His name no longer matters. I will tell you why.

He was a good hunter, providing for his family and for his parents, who were not yet ready to walk into the ice. Every year he brought many pelts to the Ice Fair. His name was known and respected as far as his tribe wandered, and farther.

One summer, on his long hunt, he saw the largest u'niktui, snow deer, he had ever seen. An old bull led the group, huge and tall and proud. The hunter stalked it with all his skill but he could not trap it. Instead he killed another u'niktu, smaller than the old bull but still larger than any taken before. He built an ice cairn over the u'niktu so that his family, traveling behind him, could find it to dress it out. It would amaze them - its antlers alone could shelter two people. Great honor would come to his family; the u'niktu's meat would feed them for a long time. Still the hunter burned to kill the old bull itself. He cut a piece of the u'niktu's flank to take with him and he tracked the herd further into the tundra.

That night, as he sat before his fire, Jaybird dropped down to sit across from him.

"Why are you tracking the old u'niktu?" the bird said, cocking his head. "You have killed his oldest son and your fame will be as great as your ukame-agku. Go back to your people now."

The hunter frowned. "Who will believe me, that there was an u'niktu larger than the one I killed? And if they do believe me they will disparage my skill, that I could not kill the greatest one but had to settle for second best. Be gone! Jaybirds know nothing of a hunter's spirit."

The bird flew away, laughing.

The hunter found the herd again. The old bull was wise with age and still strong, and led the hunter far from the herd into a maze of thorn bushes and standing stones. Any other Inguruk would have abandoned the chase, but after a week the hunter brought down the old bull and covered him, too, in an ice cairn. He built a fire and over it he cooked the old bull's heart, and ate it, and rejoiced. But the next morning as he left his camp, he found the body of an u'niktu even larger than the old bull. A bear had killed it with one blow to the head. The hunter knew that the bear was a greater

