

Time-traveling ravens join Harriet Tubman freeing slaves and saving Washington.

Ravens of Time Go Underground with Harriet Tubman

by Jane Reville

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Ravens of Time
Go Underground
with Harriet
Tubman

*Adventures
in the
Civil War*

Jane Reville

Ravens of Time

The Ravens of Time are back! They travel with Harriet Tubman as she leads slaves to freedom, nurses an African American guard at a prison camp, and journeys with General Wallace to save the city of Washington.

Also by Jane Reville

The Plaid Robe

Ravens of Time Heap Havoc in the War of 1812

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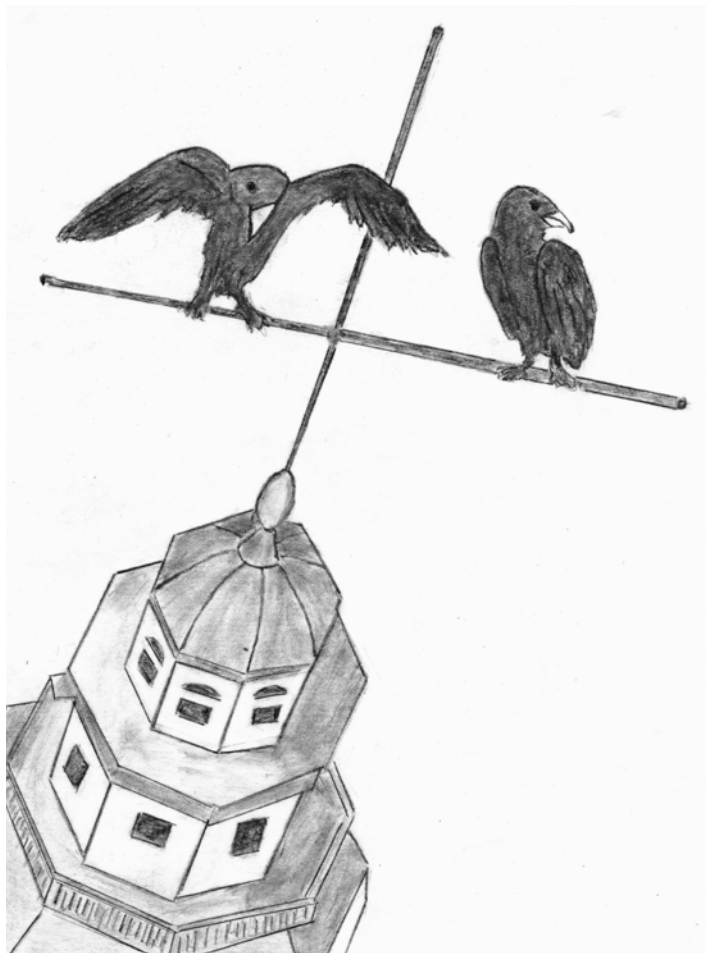
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First Edition

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1

Harriet



“I see the spires. We’ve almost reached the weathervane,” yelled Peck, the raven.

“Catch the gusts,” said Tally, the smaller raven.

A strong current lifted them. They glided toward Annapolis and landed on the State House weathervane just as thunder rumbled. Their claws held tightly as it spun round and round, faster with each turn.

Gray-black clouds moved swiftly with the ever-increasing wind. Large drops of rain pelted the ravens and thunder rolled like a bowling ball.

“Hang on, Tally. This storm looks like it has the power to take us to the present time.”

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“I hope so. We sure don’t need to be plunked down into another war,” shouted Tally.

A blue bolt of lightning struck a nearby oak tree, scorched the top branch, and leaped to the weathervane sending the ravens whirling into the clouds. Pinning their heads under their wings, they shot through a tunnel of cumulonimbus clouds. The black clouds pushed the ravens like soaring firecrackers, landing them in a marsh.

Peck poked his head out from beneath his wing and said, “You okay, Tally?”

“I’m missing a few feathers. That storm had blue lightning so we must have traveled to the present time,” Tally replied, inspecting her tail feathers.

“Well, we don’t live in this marsh, that’s for sure.”

“Oh, yeah. But do you think we’re close to home?”

“Hey, what’s that? Over there.”

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A woman with a bandana around her head crept through the tall marsh. She turned toward a mother and a child immersed in the murky water. Her finger rose to her lips.

Frightened eyes pleaded with the older woman, "Harriet, I hear dogs! The master's dogs are upon us!"

"Shhh! Be still," warned Harriet.

The ravens watched the partially submerged figures. Harriet's deep scar on her forehead furrowed deeper as she motioned for the mother and child to follow her. The younger woman, dressed in a torn linen sackcloth dress tied with rope, held the hand of a small girl clothed in a burlap dress. They crawled onto the opposite bank and hid in the cattails. The howls of the dog grew faint as the morning light streaked the pink sky.

"Oh, Peck. Why are dogs chasing those women?"

"Haven't a clue, Tally. They sure are scared."

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“Why didn’t they call 911 on their cell phone?”

“We may be back in time.”

“I hope not. I hope we’re near Annapolis so I can get some french fries. I’m hungry,” murmured Tally.

“I guess traveling through time doesn’t hurt your appetite,” said Peck with a wink and lifted his feathers for flight.

They flew low over the creek and the now hidden humans. Spying some wild plums nearby, Peck landed and felt a slight rush of wind when Tally plopped next to him. They ate. Tally’s eyes then spotted some berries; she flew to them. As her bill grasped a berry, she saw a hand on the other side of the bush reach to pick a berry. Peck landed next to Tally and stared into determined brown eyes. The woman paused, smiled, and continued picking.

Tally swiped the next berry even faster, swallowed quickly, and seized another. The woman’s hands flew into action, snatching berries with both hands and dropping them into a small bag. Tally’s beak

flashed like fireflies as she picked more berries. The woman's strong hands captured even more, and then she sat back and laughed so hard that tears streamed down her face. Tally, her belly swollen with berries, waddled next to the woman and laughed. Then the woman's whole body shook with laughter.

"Raven, you're something," the woman said.

"Tally," Tally squawked.

A little girl scampered next to the woman and squinted at the raven with the swollen belly. Peck landed next to Tally. The little girl jumped.

"Peck," said Peck, introducing himself, as he dropped a berry on the girl's lap.

"Well, I'll be. Two smart ravens if I ever saw one. Peck and Tally, I'm Harriet," said the woman holding the berries.

"Agatha," said the younger woman who joined them and "Ruby is my daughter."

A howl, snaking its way on the breeze, interrupted the laughter. Harriet straightened her back and signaled to the woman and girl.

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“Bloodhounds and patrollers! Lord, save us,” Harriet whispered, running towards the water. Agatha and Ruby followed.

“Mama, we’ll be tied to a tree and whipped bad and my back will be torn and bleeding,” wailed Ruby. “Or I’ll be hit in the head with a brick and have a big scar like Harriet.”

“Oh, Harriet, our master will whip and brand us with a hot iron. And you’ll be hanged!” sobbed Agatha.

“Hush! Come on!” Harriet replied, grabbing Ruby’s hand and dragging her into the reeds by the water’s edge.

2

Skunks



Thundering hooves shattered the air. Peck signaled to Tally, and they flew toward the noise. Their sharp eyes spotted a bloodhound leading two men on horseback. The dog stopped and sniffed the ground. He howled, with his belly close to the sandy soil, and lumbered off.

“Men on horses, Peck. We’re back in time again,” moaned Tally.

“Believe so.”

Peck saw something black and white in the cattails near Harriet. Tally, following, shook her wings. Peck lifted one leg and then zipped towards the cattails.

Go Underground with Harriet Tubman

A family of skunks was digging for insects with their claws. Peck nudged the large skunk with his beak and then landed in front of him. After grabbing a bug, Tally flew to a bush behind Peck, and waved the insect. The skunk lifted his head and tail and sauntered toward them. Peck, spying a mouse, grabbed it by the tail with his beak. The skunk family watched the ravens. Hearing horses, Peck flung the mouse through the air. The skunks rushed for the mouse just as the bloodhound broke through the brush.

Frightened, the skunks stood on their front legs in their warning position, waved their tails, and clicked their teeth at the bloodhound. The horses following the bloodhound stopped abruptly. The riders clung to their saddles to keep from falling. The skunks dropped on all fours, took aim, and shot yellow smelly liquid at the dog and riders.

The horses reared.

“Skunk!” yelled a stout man with a felt hat pulled close to his piercing blue eyes. “We’re done. The dog will lose the trail of those runaway slaves.”

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The bloodhound sniffed with his big nose and howled mournfully.

“My eyes! My eyes! They’re burning!” screamed the other rider, a burly man with a wild red beard. Pulling on the reins of his black horse, he whistled for the dog, and galloped away.

The ravens sky-danced above the fray, laughing as the patrollers rode away. Harriet heaved a sigh of relief as she crawled onto the river bank. Agatha grasping Ruby’s hand followed cautiously. The ravens landed nearby.

“Well, you two deserve a reward,” she exclaimed, looking into her satchel. Her calloused hands pulled out a hoecake. “Here, have some. You and that family of skunks saved us.”

Tally cawed and flew for the food.

“There’s enough for two,” she said.

Peck cocked his shiny black head and walked over to her. Tally hopped onto Harriet’s shoulder. Harriet stroked her feathers.

Go Underground with Harriet Tubman



“Well, ravens, come join us. The Lord must have sent you to be our protectors. We are slaves, you see, and we are running away from our owners who

are mean to us. They separate children from their mothers and fathers by selling them to other owners. I am leading Agatha and Ruby to a place where they will be free.

“A place where I can learn to read,” said Agatha with a sigh. “And not fear each day that Ruby will be taken away from me.”

“We can’t waste the night. We need to get a move on,” urged Harriet.

A few stars twinkled in the fading twilight. Harriet, gazing intently at the sky, looked for the North Star to lead her passengers to the safe house.

3

Safe House



Feeling carefully with her fingers, Harriet searched the tree trunk until she found moss.

“We’re good. Heading north. Stay close,” she whispered, locating the trail through the pines.

Agatha carried Ruby in her arms because the string holding Ruby’s shoes had broken. She pushed the vines with her free hand to keep thorns from poking Ruby’s skin.

“Mama, I’m scared of these woods. It’s so dark,” whimpered Ruby.

“Shhh, child. Mama and Harriet are here.”

Peck and Tally flew lower.

“Look, Ruby. Peck and Tally are with us too.”

Peck somersaulted in the air and Ruby laughed.

A whoo interrupted Peck's antics. Ruby shivered.

"Just an owl," assured her mother and then she tripped over a log and screamed.

Harriet rushed to them.

"Hush. We're near a farm," she said sternly. "I'll carry Ruby. I know these woods."

Agatha pushed herself upright on the log. Her dress was covered with burrs and her hands and knees were bleeding. Tally flew next to Agatha and started picking off the burrs. Peck joined in and pulled some from Agatha's hair.

Harriet scooped up Ruby into her arms and set off down the trail. She turned and put her finger to her lips just as an owl swooped low and brushed past them. Harriet covered Ruby's mouth so she could not make a sound. Harriet's mouth moved as she silently looked towards heaven, then bowed her head and finished her prayer. Then she hurried down the path strewn with leaves, acorns, pine cones and twigs. The ravens flew alongside Agatha as she stumbled along,

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and they continued to pick at the burrs caught in her dress. She smiled.

Long after passing the farm, Harriet suddenly broke forth in song, “Go down Moses, way down to Egypt land...” Harriet stopped singing and listened. The ravens could see a white gate with big round knobs on its post. A farmhouse sat at a distance behind the gate, silent and dark. Quiet blanketed them. There was no sound, not even a screeching owl.

Harriet sat Ruby behind a bush and motioned for Agatha to hide there, too. Turning her head from side to side, Harriet crept through the gate, up the path, and onto the porch. She tapped on the door. “Rat-a-tat-tat. Rat-a-tat-tat.”

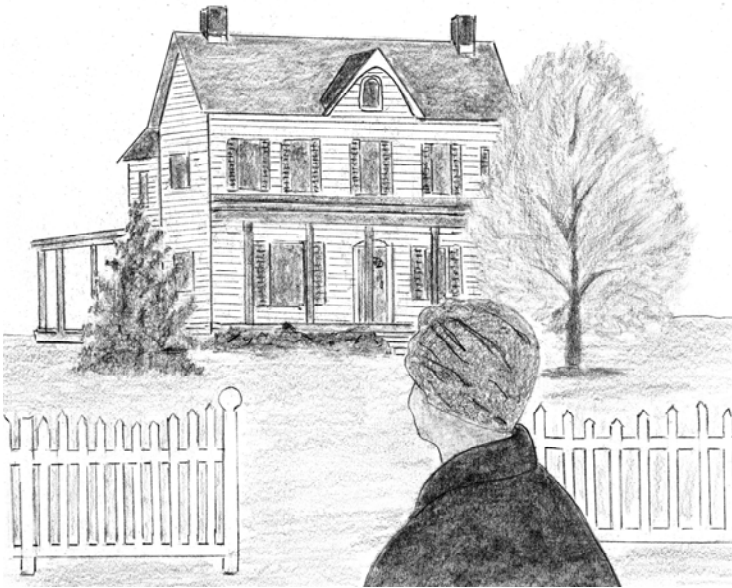
‘Who goes there?’ asked a man’s gruff voice.

“I’ve come with two bales of black wool,” whispered Harriet.

The latch on the door squeaked and the door opened. Harriet waved for Agatha and Ruby to come onto the porch and through the open door. Harriet smiled at her friend, Hans, with his tousled white hair

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and white beard. Hans closed the door; bolted it. The ravens flew to the windowsill and peered inside.



Hans lifted up a few floorboards in the center of the room and motioned for Harriet and the others

to crawl inside. They scrambled inside and he gave them a jug of milk and a loaf of bread.

Hans said, "I'll leave it open for now, but the patrollers are active. They know you travel by night and hide by day. I have a wagon ready for tomorrow morning filled with goods for you all to hide amongst that goes to the market in Philadelphia. Harriet, there are posters of you everywhere. Big reward for your capture. So, here's a man's shirt and trousers for your disguise."

Harriet nodded and said, "God bless you, Hans." Her eyes were misty with tears as she reached for the clothes.

Hans shook his head and said, "The emancipation amendment to the Maryland Constitution has been drafted. It should be passed before the end of the year. Finally, there'll be no more slaves in Maryland. Harriet, this could be your last journey."

"Praise Jesus!" Harriet said raising her hands to heaven.

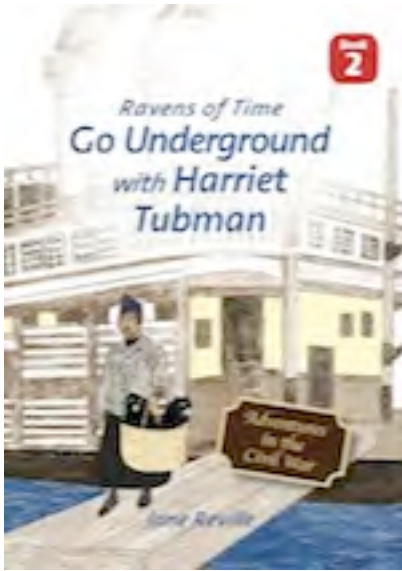
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“I’ve been hearing Edward Smith’s dogs and men looking for you. So, let’s be extra careful. Edward Smith is a tyrant. Mean as they come to his slaves.”

Harriet nodded her assent and climbed into the hole.

“Have you heard anything about Maggy Toogood? She has the same master as Agatha. We’ve heard she escaped.”

“No news,” said Hans, sighing and shaking his head.



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