

The men of the tribe gathered in a circle, but took no part in the preparations—the torture of women was beneath them.

At last all was ready. A fire was lit near; the hags lit their firebrands and advanced. The chief gave the signal, and with a yell of exultation they rushed upon their victim, but fell back with a cry of surprise, rudely thrust off by three Indians who placed themselves before the captive.

The women retreated hastily, and the men advanced to know the reason of this strange interruption. The Raven and his companions were unarmed. The Indians frowned upon them, uncertain what course to pursue.

"My brothers," the Raven said, "I am come to die. The Raven's time is come. He has flown his last flight. He and his brothers will die with the little White Bird. The Raven and his friends are not dogs. They have shed their blood against their enemies, and they do not know how to cry out. But their time has come; they are ready to die. But they must die before the little White Bird. If not, her spirit will fly to the Great Spirit, and will tell him that the Raven and his friends, whom she had sheltered and rescued, had helped to kill her; and the Great Spirit would shut the gates of the happy hunting-grounds against them. The Raven has spoken."

There was a pause of extreme astonishment, followed by a clamour of voices. Those who had before espoused the cause of the Raven again spoke out loudly, while many of the others hesitated as to the course to be pursued.

The Stag hastily consulted with two or three of his principal advisers, and then moved forward, waving his hand to command silence. His countenance was calm and unmoved, although inwardly he was boiling with rage at this defiance of his authority. He was too politic a chief, however, to show this.