

## The Raven Prince – chapter 12 – Time to die

By Martin S. Beckley

The force field shimmered pale blue in the twilight as the metamorphs slammed into it, using each other as battering rams. Some metamorphs grew wings and flew over the force field, diving towards the enclosed army. Reluctantly, Prudens used more power to curve the force field into a dome. Whilst the flying metamorphs assaulted the force field from above, others grew enormous shovel arms and started tunnelling. Prudens waited as long as he could before expending further precious energy in closing the field completely.

The Mortifera stepped cautiously from the portal and shuffled uneasily into the chamber. They gathered into small groups; folding their massive wings into dark sinister capes, they gently swayed, hissing in unison. Edward watched them; their two-metre tall bodies were no thicker than his arm. 'What are they doing?' he asked. Corvidae reverently stroked Raymond's feathers, 'As I've mentioned, they only hunt at night. After feeding upon you they will hunt and destroy Prudens.' Nina fearfully glanced at the window. 'It's very dark out there,' she said. Olivia tried to communicate with Raymond but without her pendant, she was powerless. Suddenly the hissing stopped. Silence. 'Raymond, help us,' Olivia called. 'He stays with me,' laughed Corvidae walking among the stick-like nightmares. Then addressing the Mortifera, she whispered, 'Welcome to your new hunting ground.' Their small eyes shone out from their squat heads like two red lasers. Tiny crimson dots illuminated Corvidae and the Mortifera moved in. Raymond opened his wings to their full span and let out a loud 'KWACK.' The Mortifera shrank back hissing. Their red beams scanned the chamber for other food and found Olivia, Edward and Nina covering against a wall. 'Please Raymond,

hear me,' pleaded Olivia. The Mortifera stalked towards the three friends. Edward and Nina joined Olivia in shouting, 'Raymond, help us.' The Mortifera raised their arms, displaying their evil claws. Their black leathery skin glistened with rancid sweat. 'RAYMOND, WE NEED YOU!' Olivia's scream broke through Corvidae's spell; Raymond leapt from Corvidae and thrust past the Mortifera, landing between them and his friends. He looked up at the terrifying giants and suddenly felt very small. Corvidae shrieked, 'NO!' Raymond opened his wings, trying to make himself look bigger. 'KWACK KWACK KWACK.' The Mortifera hissed at him and turned back to Corvidae. She snatched Olivia's pendant from the seeker tablet causing the portal to collapse. 'Corvus Corax,' she chanted, placing the pendant around her neck. 'Corvus Corax Tranzmogrifai.' Her skin darkened and little feathers grew on her body. Laughing, she sneered at Olivia, 'Thank you for the Royal stone – quaaa quaaa, I will soon be invincible - quaaa.' 'You have to stop her,' Olivia told Raymond. He navigated through the Mortifera and stole the pendant; the Mortifera swarmed over the part transformed witch and consumed her. Avoiding Raymond, the Mortifera dived through the window and flew into the night in search of more souls.

Prudens contacted Olivia with the last of his energy, 'Gather the unkindness.' His force field failed.

