

# Corvus

by L. Lee Lowe

Bracing himself against the wind, Zach gets to his feet without a thought for direction or destination. In the white forever of this place, there is no lantern to light the dark and bitter woods of memory. Even the croakers would find little use for such knotted timber.

Do you hear me? he shouts full volume in his mind. Nothing worth felling.

Nothing worth  
nothing

He angles into the blowing snow. The cold has as much substance as the snow, thick and clean and impenetrable, almost lush, and it reminds Zach of a dense text encountered for the first time, against which you pit yourself, into which you tunnel for sustenance, at school his first Mandarin characters had been like that, you have to wrest sense from the meaty snowflakes before they melt on your tongue. He opens his mouth and catches one, then another. Tears gather at the corners of his eyes, and he wipes them away quickly—angrily—with gloved fingers lest they freeze his eyes shut—his damned traitorous eyes.

His booted feet are soon clogged with snow, and heavy. With each step they amass another layer, and then another, and though he tries to shake them free, the stuff clings like down, soft and fluffy yet as tenacious as the barbs that filled his roughquilted childhood—*auger*, *transfuck*, *mulac*, *devi*, *freak*. He bends his head and plods on, breathing painstakingly around the icy knife in his chest. Somewhere there would be shelter. Somewhere there would be food. They wouldn't want to kill him just yet, would they?

The cry slices through the silence. Zach stumbles and falls, the ground flying up to meet him like the breast of a great albatross. Black-vented against the unending white, its wings beat and beat about his head. He raises his arms to shield himself, the birdcall surrounding him like manic laughter.

Where is she, you buzzards?

*An excerpt from Chapter One. To read on, please go to my website.*

