

TIDE AND SORROW
Ginosko: between literary vision and spiritual realities
Spring 2003
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Though the world was very new, Raven watched the beach from a spruce that looked old and dead, towering as bare as a bone atop a cliff. Raven knew hunger, and he felt lust, but no tide had washed the shore yet, nor had any sorrow washed a soul, and then Otter raised his head from the surf, and a bell-like crooning caught sadly inside Raven's throat.

Otter blinked tiny inky eyes, squinching up a black nose, shaking flakes of fish from gray whiskers as if the hairs could stay clean and dignified. Otter crossed forelegs like arms across his chest, and with little webbed fingers he eased a sea urchin into his mouth, as if he could handle things fastidiously. Raven closed his wings as silently as Falcon. Clearly Otter thought himself better than any animal, *more*, and Raven dove down, and he screamed like Hawk, slamming his beak against Otter's breast, lashing claws into his belly.

The sea whooshed into Raven's bill, past his head, hands wrenching his bill, binding his legs. Otter dragged Raven down through green murk to red and purple shapes, urchins on rock, and he shoved Raven hard, pushing him against spines sharper than fish bones, and Raven squirmed, fighting water in his throat, cuts through his feathers.

Otter thrust his face close, his inky eyes suddenly as big as Sea Lion's. He wiggled his whiskers like tentacles, his mouth yawned open, ugly blunt teeth thundered against rock. Urchins and clams burst apart, and shards flew against Raven, stinging, and Raven raised a wing, sprouting webbed fingers. His feathers turned to otter fur, and his legs, to otter flippers. Otter squirmed away, and Raven swam after the ripple of bubbles—rocks were everywhere, swarming with kelp and anemones, and Otter was gone, hiding like a helpless sculpin beneath some ledge.

Raven snatched an urchin and bolted up, flapping his old wings in the air, spitting and coughing, croaking his old croak. He tucked his urchin beneath his old feathers and flew up and down the shore, glaring at waves for the presuming little head, his mutters echoing like the empty clatter of surf stones off the cliffs.

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The waves spilled foam way up the sand and left only driftwood and broken cockles, and Ghost Plover ran like a snow-shadow beneath Raven, peeping desperately. "If only the water would go down, and I could find a mole crab!"

Oystercatcher bobbed up and down and screamed in a shrill voice, "If only there were a rock with mussels, and I could pry the clams loose!"

Gull bowed his head deeply and yelped, "If only a flounder were stranded in a tidepool, and I could tear his belly!"

Raven cawed like Crow, harshly, and Cormorant answered, laughing. He flew to her cave, and she flashed him a look bluer than any lungwort, more dazzling than any bunting. She stood by her shelf, admiring her memories, and her fishy smell rose from her cedar-bark skirt, and Raven lifted a talon, fondling her fiercely, rapidly.

"You've been trading shapes with Otter?" she giggled.

"Otter is a dream I do not like!" said Raven. His touch grew heavy and slow, and he looked out at the water. "You asked the whales to help make tide?"

"The whales will not tie the surf with kelp or pull it from the beach," said Cormorant.

"They will sing the surf out to sea?"

"The whales do not believe things should be left stranded on the sand. I think we must make mood."

Raven gave Cormorant a beady look. Otter had urchins, Bear had salmon, and she herself had smelt. Now Ghost Plover needed mole crabs, Turnstone needed barnacles, and Buzzard wanted a washed-up seal, dead and bloated. They needed food, not mood, but Cormorant shrugged her wings, grinned and rolled a soft mat of cattails at Raven's feet. She lit little fires that made big shadows on the walls and then arranged pretty piles of reminders on the floor—bits of the new things she and Raven had already made for the world, shells of snails, caps from limpets, claws of crabs, bones and teeth of fish and birds.

She nibbled Raven's throat, and he wanted fingers for caressing, and he pricked her with his urchin, and she squealed and shoved him away.

"That is not mood!"

"Sorry, it was not!! It was Otter!"

"Otter?" From her memories Cormorant snatched a razor clam and threw it past Raven's head. "What are you saying? Something that is not true?"

"I only meant I did not mean—"

She snatched a sand dollar, threw it spinning at Raven, was yanked strangely toward him. Suddenly both clung to the mouth of the cave with their talons, leaning toward the sand dollar, which hung as a giant white face above the water, the old gray rays on it warped from the spinning, vague and cloudy even in the bright blue

sky.

Raven and Cormorant huddled together, trembling, watching Sun. The two had never dared to put anything in his sky, and now Sun burned his heat angrily, and the birds sweated, panting, and Sun wrapped a cloud around himself, and the cloud swelled and swallowed Sand Dollar, and all the ocean turned flat without waves, heavy and dark.

Sun had never sunk before without putting up pinks from Salmon and yellows from Sea Lemon, but now he threw down a dirty puddle of gray and slipped without a glimmer into it. Cormorant sidled in front of Raven and spread her wings as if to block the hardest rain. She hissed like reeds that would not break in the strongest gust, and the clouds gave way, and a radiant rose flooded the horizon. Sand Dollar beamed through the dusk, and copper ribbons of kelp hung down black rocks, dripping pearly drops on slick-pink sand.

Ghost Plover bobbed before the wave-claps, squeezing a crab in her bill, whacking it against bubbles popping silver.

Now was certainly Tide, guarded by Moon, and Raven leapt upon Cormorant, and she took him as never before.

* * *

And so today when Sun is stirred by Moon, he invites her beneath the sea with the color of a flower, and the two chase each other around the sky, and when Sun rises in the east, Raven croaks, his ruff swelling as if passionately plucked, and during the ebb the entire beach, not only Cormorant, smells fishy and salty and ready.

But ages ago, the morning after Moon and Tide were made, Raven sucked in his ruff meanly, glowering at the cedar-plank lodge that housed Cormorant at the far end of the beach. Suddenly she bled, and she refused his entry, and he strutted about the black rocks alone, thrusting his throat around as if the bites she had delivered in the moonlight had infected him with bitter magic.

Here on a rock crawled the latest life that had spilled from Cormorant—an ochre sea star with five wondrous rays, beautifully symmetrical—but what fun was creating creatures if Cormorant grew fussy, fastidious like Otter? Raven did not mind splashes of blood on his member, and when Cormorant had growled at him, demanding he leave this morning, she had merely made his desire more urgent.

Raven eyed the sea star hungrily—it bunched its rays around a mussel, and the clam's rich, oily scent rose as if the star were somehow eating some, soft, delicious flesh Raven had not tasted yet. He pecked the star, finding it nearly as hard as the mussel. He inched his bill behind the star, and suddenly there were gasps behind Raven, gags, slaps against the sand.

Raven turned to the noises, leapt up and bolted to the bleeding lodge. Cormorant clacked her tongue in disbelief as he flapped down the smoke hole.

"There is a new otter!" he said. "She has fingers without webs and is pounding fists against the beach as though she is about to die! She stinks of grief!"

"You are trying to change the world," said Cormorant.

"No, she is there on the sand wrapped in some flimsy skin that has no fur! Her face is as smooth as Seal's, and the only hair she has is bound on her head! She has feet instead of flippers, is kneeling, weeping!"

Cormorant did not stir from the steam of her bath.

"I will turn into a baby otter, call her out to the waves and see if she can swim," said Raven.

"She is a dream I do not like," said Cormorant.

"Down, down deep I will call her."

"An otter woman!"

Cormorant flew with Raven—row after row of new otter men sat offshore in some kind of giant hollow eel that raced through waves as swiftly as whales—some wrapped fingers around slender logs that cleaved powerfully through the water—and others drew strings of sinew as if to shoot pointed shafts from boxes of oak—catapult otters!

A dirty taste like whitewash surged on Cormorant's tongue, and she spat as she landed by the otter woman.

The otter woman went on wailing, whipping down sand as if she hated every grain.

"You have lost your sons to the giant eel?" said Cormorant.

"My husband is dying!" said the otter woman.

"And you cannot be with him?"

The otter woman writhed toward the headland, and a pink-faced pup squalled from her wrap.

"My husband is with his friends and has sent me off!" said the otter woman. "The jailer has already mixed the hemlock! I cannot bear it!"

A new stink of grief gusted across the beach, blowing from Cormorant's cave, and

Cormorant and Raven flew to a ledge outside the mouth, gripping the rock with claw-tips, craning necks, watching silently. Inside, the husband sat against a wall as easily as Otter reposed upon the sea, bowing an ancient head of white hair before four young men who sweated like nervous elk and wept as loudly as the wife on the beach.

"Certainly the charges are false, and you have not corrupted us!" cried the first young man.

"A ship waits for you!" cried the second.

"Here are coins to pay its captain!" cried the third.

"And more to pay the jailer!" cried the fourth.

"Tell me," said the husband, "shall we honor that which is evil and ugly and turn our backs on that which is beautiful and good?"

The young men threw themselves at the husband's feet, clasping and stroking his ankles, and the husband raised a bowl of hemlock to his lips and drained it.

"You shall bury nothing but my body," he said, walking to the back of the cave, lifting a dead ochre star from Cormorant's shelf of memories. He held the star high in the mouth of the cave, and its shadow leapt across a wall.

"If you were born kneeling as you are now, and chains held you in your places, and you were unable to turn, and you had never seen the sun or the mouth of the cave or the star in my hand, then you would call the shadow of the star the real star, and you would not know any other star to name," he said.

"The shadow of the star would seem the real and only star," said the men.

Cormorant damped Wind beneath her nostrils, building steam inside herself, and she pressed her black body against the black headland and nodded at Raven to do the same.

The husband stepped out to the ledge of the cave and held the ochre star high again, and its dried-up rays shone clearly in the air.

"But if you had been born out here, you would call the star itself and not its shadow the true thing?" said the husband.

"In the sunlight we would call the actual star the real star," said the men.

The husband gasped gayly and then sank down, rubbing his legs. He looked at his friends proudly, as if each had caught an enormous halibut, and no man anywhere would have to fear or suffer or puzzle over any hunger again.

"Let us call our lives inside the cave the lives inside our bodies," said the husband.

"Our tastes for flesh," said one man.

"My heartbreak now," said another.

"The pain of a crushed bone," said another.

"The stink of my bowels," said a fourth.

"And let us call our lives out here in the sun the release of our souls at death and at last an entry into the only place where knowledge can be free of the troubles of our bodies," said the husband.

"The death of our bodies is a loss for that which is evil and ugly and a gain for that which is beautiful and good," said a man.

"The wisdom of the soul," said the husband, and he reclined his head upon the rock ledge, clasped the star to his chest and gave up his breath.

His friends dropped around him, keening and kissing him, and Cormorant flew into her cave, spreading her wings, and fog poured from her nostrils and feathers, soaking the men, and she lit on the husband's chest, and fog poured from her skirt, pink from her bleeding, rank like rotting cod, sour and salty like sea water. She sang a twitter like a warbler, and the dry-dead star heaved up, flexing its rays. The star leapt beneath Cormorant's skirt, and she sang a gush like a wren, and she shook moaning and whinnying, and Raven screamed, swooping down, driving his bill into the husband's stomach, shuffling green-bloody worm strings between mandibles.

The men gagged, a foot found Raven, he sailed backward above the beach, and fingers clutched Cormorant, yanked her skyward, tore at her feathers, pinned her wings against a wall.

The pink stink curled beneath arm hairs, clogged the men's nostrils, swirled around tongues, stung swollen eyes. Fingers tore shreds from the cedar-bark skirt, and then a hard-grainy-grabbing thing fell upon a knuckle. A man slapped it, another dropped onto his wrist, cold as a sea stone, and another clung to his navel, pinching and sucking his stomach.

By the time Raven flew into the cave again, Cormorant sat slumped, her cloaca sopping, her cheek patches sallow and shallow, her breath slow but calm, her smile wan but replete with joy. The pink fog had sunk, and sprawled everywhere on the black-wet rock were new sea stars.

One oozed red, inching across the last bit of a vein, and a second rippled as roughly

as the hide of Deer, folding itself across the last of a foot. A third swelled with web-like rays, sucking up the last of an elbow, and a fourth glowed as brightly as Sun, wrapping petal-like rays around an entire head, but otherwise there was no sign of the husband or his friends.

Once again Cormorant's cave belonged only to her shelf of memories and the fishy scent of Tide.

* * *

And so today Cormorant raises nestlings on a rock so high men cannot climb it, and Blood Star, Leather Star, Sunflower Star and Bat Star join Ochre Star hunting Tide, and birth is feared by ugly bodies, and afterward Mother and Father sense new threats as well as pleasures.

The next morning Cormorant gazed from her cave, flashing a blue look of worry at Raven.

"Bound and her pup are nowhere," she said.

"Nor do I see Otter," said Raven.

"If Otter took them, we would see the giant eel searching the water for the pup."

"The eel is gone already."

"Maybe none of it was, and it will never really be!"

Into the cedar and spruce the birds flew, soaring along the streams that cascaded from the mountains, flying around icy peaks, calling without answer into the fir that sloped back to the sea. Near the beach, dunes blew the color of snow, hiding driftwood and pine where Bound might hunch with her pup.

The birds lit upon the headland again, and Cormorant glared miserably into her cave.

"A dream of separation!" she said, and Raven reached around her wing, brushing her. He sang the flash and bolt he saw inside her, the fog, the hollow-sounding sweep, her sorrow, and his feathers turned to fingers, and as he caressed her, his tongue turned soft and broad, lapping her tears, and the two rolled down the headland, joining as otters, crying out.

On the beach Cormorant threw back arms, dug into sand with toes, lifted Raven with hips. He sprouted rays like sea stars, explored her with each, and she slid onto him, lapped him with narrow licks, made his belly tingle.

She was yanked skyward again. Fingers pinched the back of her neck, shook her,

threw her into a crashing wave.

A man in a black robe slapped his hands, cleaning filth from them. His nose wiggled, a centipede thrashing, and his eyes bugged like blowfish eyes at a woman dressed in a blue wrap behind him. "Look, look at them!" he said. "Two different beasts! Right out here! And neither has seen he who will save them!"

The woman absorbed the words, her eyes blue too, calm like a quiet cove, her face pale but glowing as warmly as Sun behind a haze.

Raven stood slowly, knowing how well Cormorant negotiated seas—his otter member had not yet shrunk inside him, and it wagged big and stiff, painted with the little bleeding left.

The man in the robe wretched into the surf, and Cormorant dove into a crest, lifting her rump, oozing juices. The man's hands flew to his eyes, and he fell on his back, squirming, hacking as if his deepest insides would come flying out his mouth. His eyes turned black and murky, rolled backward inside his head. "The beasts will meet the Lord!" he yelled. "He is coming, finally coming! Coming!"

The woman's glow sank beneath her wrap, she plopped onto a rock, her belly swelled like a bear's before a cub. She pushed out a pup, but not like a bear or otter. The pup was as clean as an egg—no blood or feces from the woman, no splash or splotch on the boy, no rash or cord gunk, no smell.

The woman's glow shone inside the boy, and the man leapt up, his eyes glistening clear again, fixed on Cormorant as she rode a curl of surf onto the sand and stood beside Raven.

"The boy's father is the Lord, and he is the Lord!" said the man.

The no-huff woman swaddled the baby in a hide, and the man reached in and grabbed the baby's member. The man fingered the member and made it stiff, and he pushed and tugged at it and spoke to the sky. "Praise to our Lord, our God! Oh, King of Earth!"

The glow flashed inside the man's thumb, a beaver nail sharper and brighter than in any dream so far, and he snapped the edge down across the member, and the baby screamed, turning the red of one sea urchin and then the purple of another.

Cut Nail kissed the member, drank blood from it and spat again, tossing flaps of foreskin onto sand.

The blue of Cormorant's eyes went black, and her feathers drooped against her breast.

"It binds him to his soul!" said No Huff.

"Soul?" said Cormorant. "You know the word, and you believe in it?"

"My son is the Word!" said No Huff.

"Do you know the woman Bound?" said Cormorant. "The old man Hemlock?"

"We know his father is the Lord in Heaven!" said Cut Nail.

"Listen to my boy!" said No Huff. "Listen, and he will heal you!"

Raven flew up and circled the boy to see if he was so clean he had no anus or not even any dirt in his hide, but Cut Nail seized the boy and plunged him in and out of water, and the baby grew as big as Fisher, as Seal, as Cut Nail, and then his hide hid only his loins, fitting so tightly Raven saw only the butt crack in back and the cut part pressing against the front, hanging like a leaf-slug dangling from a branch.

No Dirt stepped from the waves, and Cormorant waited as he shook himself, her eyes shining blue again, glimmering.

"Do you know your grandmother?" she said. "Her husband is gone, eaten, but she may be lost in the blowing sand."

"My boy will make the sand stand still!" said No Huff.

The glow flashed in the beaver finger again, and Cut Nail yanked a pole of driftwood from the beach and carved she-things on it—crookedswaying hips, flappingflaming tongues, snortingheaving nostrils, tangledlicking tresses, gianthollow eyes, splittingfrothing spider bellies.

Cut Nail slammed the pole in front of Cormorant. "This I see inside you!"

"There in the part where she wiggles any shape she craves!" said No Huff.

No Dirt gazed down tenderly at Cormorant and laid fingertips upon her crest. "Praise to our Lord, oh, God!" he said. "King of Earth, forgive this beast!" He shoved gently at Cormorant, and she bowed reluctantly, holding her hiss. "Go on your way and sin no more," said No Dirt.

Cormorant pumped her head, fuming, and a little fog rose from her, sour, and she made no more. It was true the pole resembled some moods she had with Raven, and she wondered, was sin real? Did it curse the creatures that came out of her? Keep her from finding Bound?

No Dirt and No Huff and Cut Nail walked into the dunes, and Cormorant raced after them.

"Oh, watch him now, and do not be blind!" Cut Nail thrust the she-pole up and down. "Our souls shall live forever!"

Raven hovered in the flying sand, beating his wings furiously. "The dunes must blow! They must move, or they will not stay!"

"It is written!" said Cut Nail. "We shall prepare the path for the Lord!"

No Dirt came to the foot of a dune, and the sand howled like sea lions the size of mountains, beating his cheeks purple again. He dug hard into his hide, and then the glow went into his hand, lighting up seeds in his palm.

"Quiet! Be muzzled!" No Dirt tossed the seeds across the dunes, and then grass grew and rippled in supple green waves. Sand blew only in quiet shush-sounds, and Ghost Plover popped her head above the ground, bobbing her bill so excitedly she seemed about to fall on her chin.

"Come, tell us, have you seen the woman Bound?" said No Dirt.

"I can see hardly anything!" said Ghost Plover. "Look, look at my chicks! They have always been the color of sand, and the sand has always hidden them! They have never been like grass, and I have always seen fine around them!"

"Come, bow before me," said No Dirt.

Cormorant bit his wrist. "This little grandmother is trying to tell you, No Dirt, you do not know this ground well enough to throw your seeds here."

"Look at the plover's legs," said No Huff. "She can kneel, I think."

"E-e-e-eee!" cried Ghost Plover. "I do not! I make myself flat, ease my wings across my chicks, fade like snow against the sand!"

Suddenly she flew up, wheeling around, stabbing her bill at waving grass. Red Fox sprang from the stalks, Gray Fox snapped his teeth, chicks raced like gusting puffballs across the sand, shrieking.

Red Fox snatched one, pounced sideways, bit into a second, and Gray Fox shook a third in his mouth, gnawing its downy neck.

The foxes dashed into the grass, disappearing, and Ghost Plover flew to the beach, followed by Cormorant. Cormorant got small like Ghost Plover. She keened, screaming like Sandpiper, and she threaded a new needle-bill up and down in front of waves. She gulped the losses she sought, and she flew back to the dunes, holding them in her old black throat, beating her old black wings.

"Ghost Plover is pulling out feathers, wailing, stabbing herself, falling headfirst into

breakers, flying backward on her neck. All her chicks are dead, and she is delirious!"

"She is sorry she doubted him?" said No Huff.

Raven made new howling claps, whoomping his wings, hovering, glaring all about.

"Over there Raccoon sneaks through grass, and there Weasel slinks through, and there Opossum noses through, and everywhere else Skunk and Coyote and Gull and Crow crack and slurp plover eggs, and none are bothered by sand anymore!"

"Do you see Bound?" said Cormorant.

"I see baskets larger than whales coming on the sea, blown by wraps from leafless trees! I see dunes that do not move, but no woman, no pup, no young plovers, only bad grass from hasty seed!"

The glow flashed in the beaver finger again, and Cut Nail twirled the she-pole around and carved bonyhollow skulls, emptyblack eyes, wormyblack nostrils, blackbeaks-blackdevils-eating-deadblackflesh. "This I hear in Raven's voice, I see in Raven's wrath!"

"In the part that puffs out and sticks itself into any shape it wants!" said No Huff.

"Please, all of you, go!" said Cormorant. "Get on a sailing basket and keep your story home! It does not consider us, and the boy will not be wise here!"

"Nail me!" cried No Dirt, pointing at the bare-bone spruce atop the headland. "Bury me in that cave, and you will see! Nail me, and I will be the truth!"

Cormorant spat wet, wrinkled skin-pieces down onto his sandals. "Forget your truth, your soul, your lord, your bind, your vanity! Sew these back on yourself and go!"

She fell backward onto grass, spreading her legs, and needle-billed birds spewed out, so many so fast they swarmed across the dunes, digging up grass. They swirled high into a funnel, roaring, calling Wind, and Wind blasted from the sea, waves smashed against dunes, and the sailing baskets tossed and heaved behind the boy.

Woodpeckers whooped war cries, hammering the bare-bone spruce, and Raven got big as five eagles, six, seven, and he dove onto No Dirt, slashing through muscle to clavicles, yanking him toward the sails, and No Dirt hung slack.

The glow flared in the beaver finger, and Cormorant leapt up, jabbing her bill at Cut Nail, and the edge flashed down, and then Wind grew still, and all the air felt gray and soupy and as heavy as Earth itself.

* * *

And so today a slow and quiet croak creeps up inside Raven's throat, stops, starts again, and he sounds unsure, as if the Lord and Virgin and Boy had never had a true way to change their believers, and instead of themselves the believers had changed the world, and Raven had suffered sorrow ever since.

Today Raven glides above Tide, and the glow burns from memories, glinting from the ax that had hacked the last chips from the bare-bone trunk, gleaming from gold crosses that had come on all the ships.

Raven had hung No Dirt upon a mast, a musket had popped, he had flown back through fog.

Blue coats, red coats, beaver coats ran across the beach, shooting fire from new black poles, and on the sand lay an uncle who had sung and carved Raven into stories and wood, a freshet of blood running from his head, soaking his otter cape.

And beside the uncle lay an aunt who had sung and woven Cormorant into stories and baskets, and fingers tore loon skins from her mantle and periwinkles from her dress, and she thrashed on sand.

"E-e-e-e-eee!" Ghost Plover screamed. "E-e-e-e-eee!"

A blue-coated captain stood atop the dunes, pointing a brass compass at all the mountains and plains beyond. "In the name of the Lord I claim the land for the Crown!"

Seeds dropped from his beard, beach grass he called European sprouted across the dunes, and Ghost Plover spread white wings on new-fluffy chicks on smaller and smaller patches of powdery sand.

"The snowy plover," the captain named her, but year after year Raven would watch the little grandmother fade as surely as a phantom.

* * *

Wind bellowed like monstrous sea lions clubbed inside a cave, and Raven beat giant wings above red coats, blue coats and beaver coats who lit lodges with torches. Feathers gusted up, flaming, and an orange blaze crackled around the she-pole, and Cormorant's head hung down from a wire bind, bits of her popping out like burning sap.

Sun poured through grainy-gray mist, and the glow flashed in the beaver finger again, and the edge was speckled with the last bloody chunks of the part of Cormorant that had pleased Raven with so many shapes.

Cut Nail thrust his edge into the sand, falling to his knees, clasping and shaking his

hands. "Lord, have mercy! Have mercy, Lord, please!"

The glow gleamed in Raven's claws, smote zigzags in his eyes, shone like obsidian shields around his wings. He dove, but Cut Nail grew hard like stone, gray as if from salty spray, and green gobs oozed like sea anemones from his eye sockets.

A pink smear bubbled from the sand, and a chick stretched out two downy stubs and then flapped bigger and bigger wings. Cormorant flew to her old cave, and Raven lit upon the old mouth, and she glared at him with eyes as blue and hard as any ice field.

"You are angry I dropped No Dirt into the sea, leaving you?" said Raven. "And sorry for Bound?"

Cormorant waddled to a higher ledge, and Raven shrank from seven-eagles big to less than one.

"Cut Nail cut the cords inside your throat?" said Raven.

Cormorant leaned out of the wind and preened a shoulder.

"I will sing the sulk inside you, the hiss," said Raven.

Cormorant shat whitewash at his feet, and Raven stormed inside her cave.

Her shelf of memories—gone! She did not know his voice, and she eyed him from behind, chilling his back. Her wings clapped, and she darted along the cliff and lit beside another cormorant, who unfurled his neck, nipping the pouch beneath her bill—she would not have Raven again, not sea stars, not anyone but her own.

"She is just a shadow of herself," thought Raven, "and I am just a shadow."

Forests fell, and cabins rose in clearings. Beaver coats built towers of bare-bone poles, and the glow rippled through furry cheeks as Otter bit his whiskers with worry above the surf.

A beaver coat stood in a scow upon the sea, swinging a rifle from his shoulder. A shot rang out, Otter dove, and beaver coats paddled high-prow canoes, pushing him to shore.

Otter leapt from the face of a wave and slip-slopped his paws across wet sand. His back arched high, and a beaver coat shot a rifle from a bare-bone tower.

Otter fell snapping at a red glow in his dark fur, a breaker swept him, he rolled landward like tangled lump of seaweed.

Another shot from a scow! Otter's daughter sank in a bed of kelp. Bangs from

towers up and down the beach! Otter's son fell, his wife too, his father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, nieces, nephews, cousins.

No more otter heads above the surf! Long white fingers clutched lustrous fur softer than silk, richer than Ermine, warmer than Bear, and the glow glinted from knives cutting splayed otter bodies.

Otter coats left on ship after ship, and the glow lit up the yellow film of otter innards, the sandy white sinew and purple organs on the beach. Buzzard bent his gnarled skull beside Maggot and Fly and Gull, and they ate and ate and ate the dead.

How hungry Raven felt, how empty. To feel the right fear, but in the wrong hands, the wrong beast!

* * *

And so today Raven does not talk with men and women walking the beach. He watches us warily, and he glides with crimped wings above the hiss, howl, sweep and thunder, and he listens for the old voices to sing inside the surf again.