



## The crow dreams of nuts

The first snowflake sat on the black beak of KarKa and slowly melted by the touch of his warm breath and left a dew on his beak.

"Daddy, I cannot fly anymore, I am freezing!" Said Kaar, her voice quivering. KarKa landed on a dried branch of a tall tree. He opened his black wings and shook his body, moved a little on the branch to warm himself. Following him, the other crows landed on the nearby branches and trees. KarKa looked up at the sky. The big shining sphere was completely covered by the gray-pink clouds.

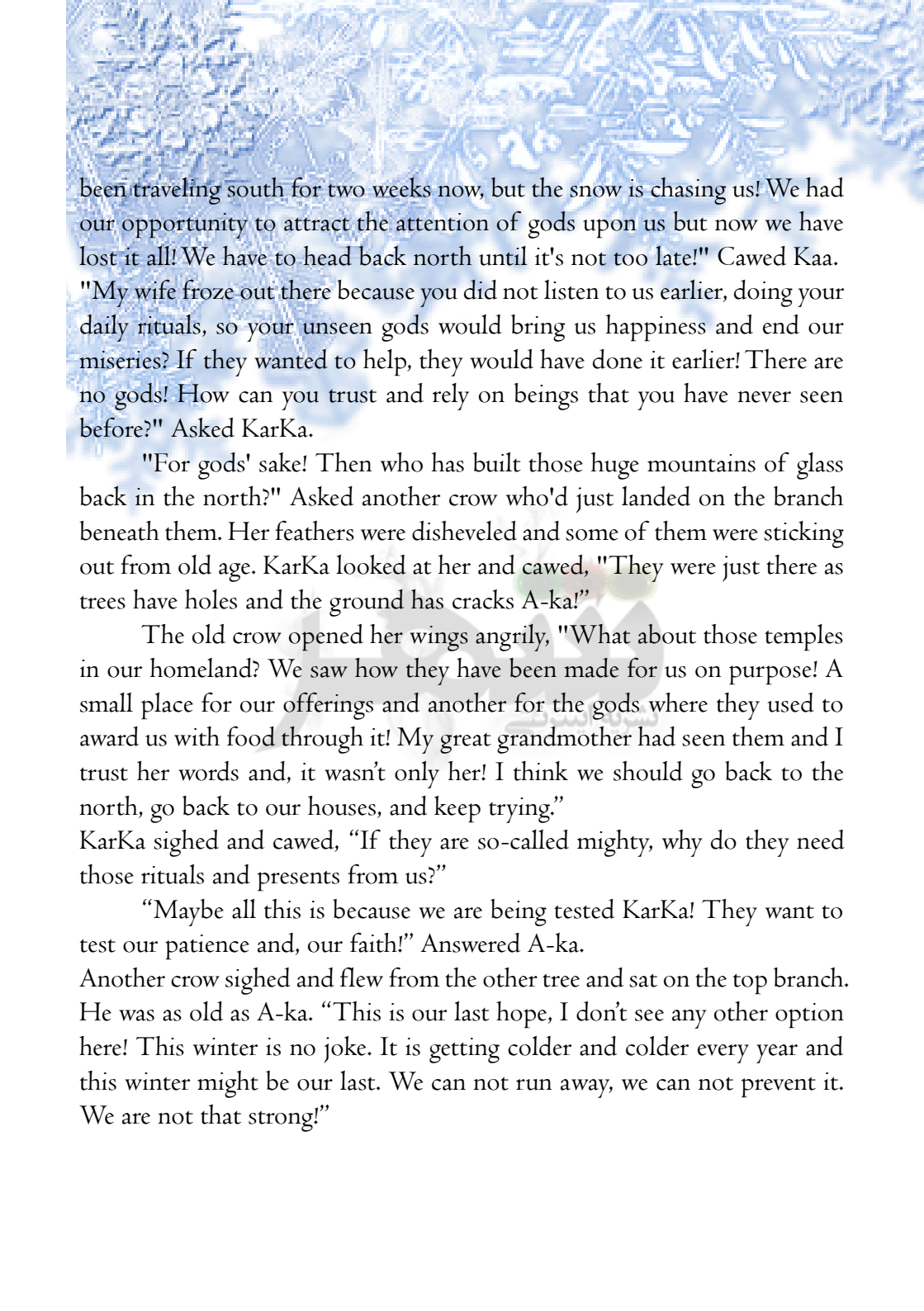
Although, it wasn't much different than the other days. He had never seen the big shiny sphere as bright as the elders had said before; that once the sky was clear and the shining sphere was so dazzling that you couldn't look at it directly, but one day something happened. Something exploded; then the curtain of dust and ashes covered the sky, blocked the light and heat of the sun and caused the winters to last longer and colder than ever. Because the ashes never settled down.

"It is chasing us! We're all gonna die!" One of the crows cawed while landing next to them. Kaar hopped beside KarKa, "What is chasing us father?"

He looked at his chick and said, "Don't be afraid! This cold has frozen their minds!" Another voice interrupted, "Don't you feel cold KarKa?"

KarKa looked up at his fellow and said, "I do. But I haven't lost my mind and hope yet Kaa!"

"You youngsters were insisting that there is hope in the south. We've



been traveling south for two weeks now, but the snow is chasing us! We had our opportunity to attract the attention of gods upon us but now we have lost it all! We have to head back north until it's not too late!" Cawed Kaa. "My wife froze out there because you did not listen to us earlier, doing your daily rituals, so your unseen gods would bring us happiness and end our miseries? If they wanted to help, they would have done it earlier! There are no gods! How can you trust and rely on beings that you have never seen before?" Asked KarKa.

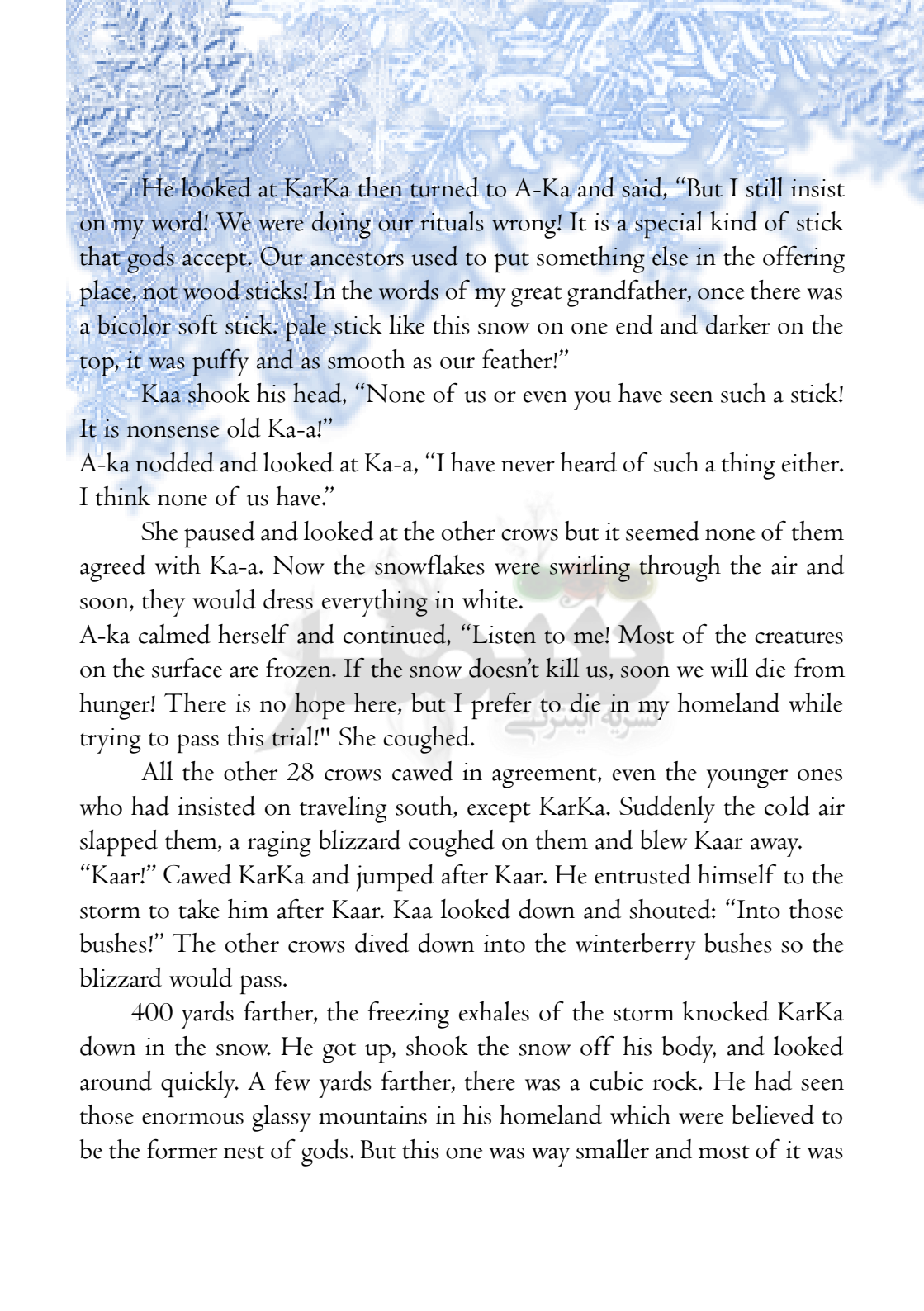
"For gods' sake! Then who has built those huge mountains of glass back in the north?" Asked another crow who'd just landed on the branch beneath them. Her feathers were disheveled and some of them were sticking out from old age. KarKa looked at her and cawed, "They were just there as trees have holes and the ground has cracks A-ka!"

The old crow opened her wings angrily, "What about those temples in our homeland? We saw how they have been made for us on purpose! A small place for our offerings and another for the gods where they used to award us with food through it! My great grandmother had seen them and I trust her words and, it wasn't only her! I think we should go back to the north, go back to our houses, and keep trying."

KarKa sighed and cawed, "If they are so-called mighty, why do they need those rituals and presents from us?"

"Maybe all this is because we are being tested KarKa! They want to test our patience and, our faith!" Answered A-ka.

Another crow sighed and flew from the other tree and sat on the top branch. He was as old as A-ka. "This is our last hope, I don't see any other option here! This winter is no joke. It is getting colder and colder every year and this winter might be our last. We can not run away, we can not prevent it. We are not that strong!"



He looked at KarKa then turned to A-Ka and said, “But I still insist on my word! We were doing our rituals wrong! It is a special kind of stick that gods accept. Our ancestors used to put something else in the offering place, not wood sticks! In the words of my great grandfather, once there was a bicolor soft stick: pale stick like this snow on one end and darker on the top, it was puffy and as smooth as our feather!”

Kaa shook his head, “None of us or even you have seen such a stick! It is nonsense old Ka-a!”

A-ka nodded and looked at Ka-a, “I have never heard of such a thing either. I think none of us have.”

She paused and looked at the other crows but it seemed none of them agreed with Ka-a. Now the snowflakes were swirling through the air and soon, they would dress everything in white.

A-ka calmed herself and continued, “Listen to me! Most of the creatures on the surface are frozen. If the snow doesn’t kill us, soon we will die from hunger! There is no hope here, but I prefer to die in my homeland while trying to pass this trial!” She coughed.

All the other 28 crows cawed in agreement, even the younger ones who had insisted on traveling south, except KarKa. Suddenly the cold air slapped them, a raging blizzard coughed on them and blew Kaar away.

“Kaar!” Cawed KarKa and jumped after Kaar. He entrusted himself to the storm to take him after Kaar. Kaa looked down and shouted: “Into those bushes!” The other crows dived down into the winterberry bushes so the blizzard would pass.

400 yards farther, the freezing exhales of the storm knocked KarKa down in the snow. He got up, shook the snow off his body, and looked around quickly. A few yards farther, there was a cubic rock. He had seen those enormous glassy mountains in his homeland which were believed to be the former nest of gods. But this one was way smaller and most of it was



covered by plants.

There was no noise but the howl of the wind and the creak of a small metal lid swinging on the wall of the rock with each blow. "Kaar?" KarKa cawed. His beaks were chattering from the cold and echoing in his head, but he could recognize someone whimpering in fear. "Kaar!?! It's me! Where are you? Don't be afraid I am here!" He saw a little black dot moving through the blizzard curtain, near the rock. He hopped toward it.

The little crow was shivering from the cold and was so scared. KarKa opened his wings and shielded his child. "I am cold and hungry father!" Sobbed Kaar.

"I know! Can you walk?" Asked KarKa. She nodded. KarKa looked at the swinging lid. It seemed there is an entrance to what could have been a small cave or a cube-shaped rock.

KarKa slowly walked toward the entrance with Kaar. Then he pushed the lid up and held it by his head. Some animal furs had stuck around the entrance. The lid was not heavy at all. KarKa looked at Kaar and said, "Jump forward into the lid. It will move up." Kaar nodded and jumped. Shoved the lid upward and landed on the floor. KarKa entered after her. Now they were safe from the wind but yet it was freezing. Kaar coughed and said, "Is this the nest of gods?" KarKa looked around. It was not a hollow rock. The place was made of wood. Wood could not shape a huge cubic place like this by itself. Just like the nest of those little weaverbirds in his homeland, this place had been built as a nest for a gigantic creature.

KarKa looked at her, "I don't know." Now he couldn't make sense of what he was seeing either. His mind was struggling to make him believe he was wrong all his life and it was not easy to accept. It was not easy to believe all those unrealistic and odd things about the past were true. Kaar broke the silence and tugged him out of these thoughts, "Are there any sticks?"

"I don't think so. Why do you ask?" Asked KarKa and looked at her.

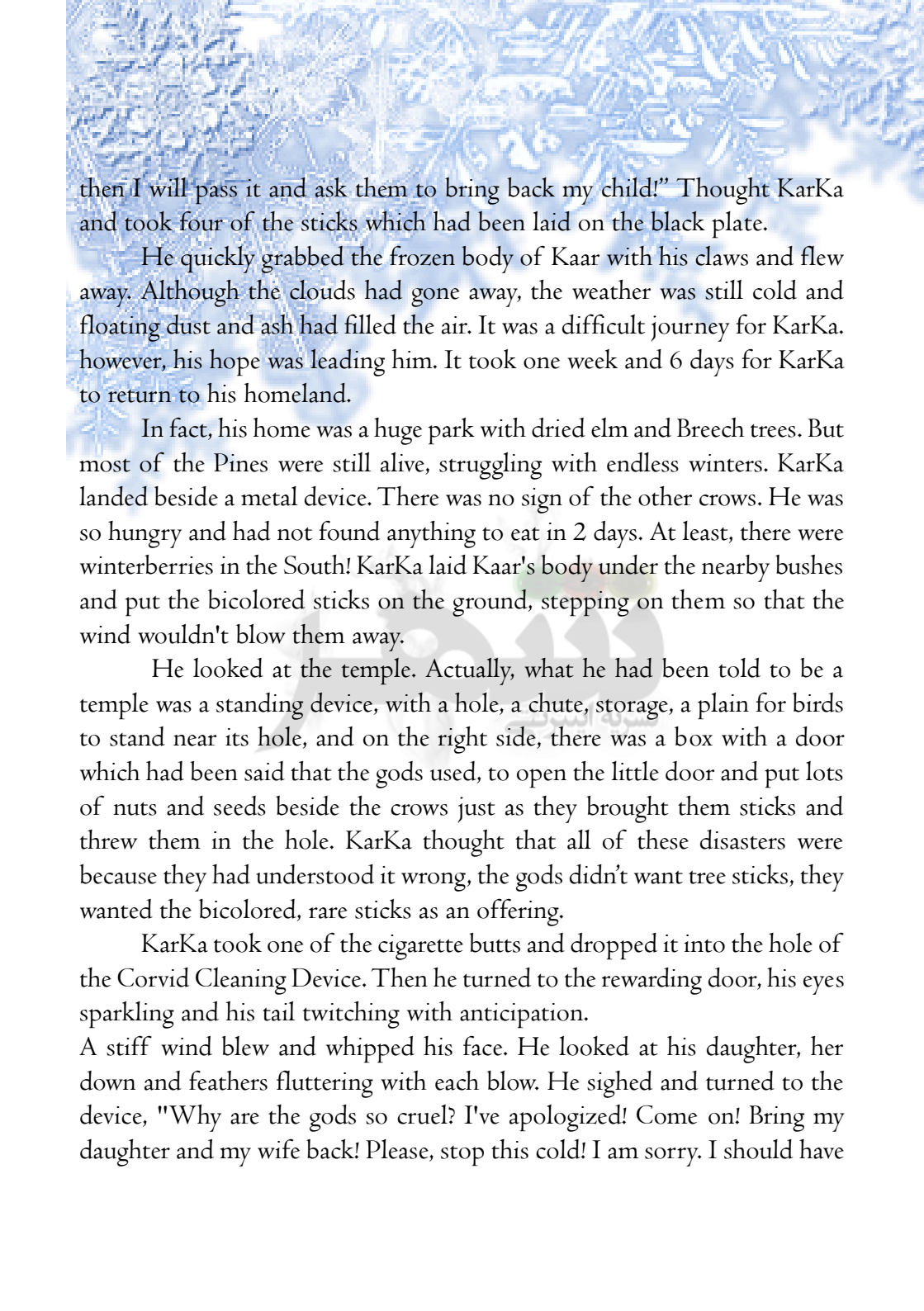
“Maybe the gods can end this unending winter if we pray and give them sticks! I can not feel my legs anymore.” Said Kaar, her beak chattering. She went toward a basket, filled with a silky material and sat down to warm her legs up in her feathers. Karka said, “There is no temple here to connect us to them. We should stay strong and spend the night here. Tomorrow we can go back to the others and have some winterberries or some pine seeds. Hmm?” Kaar nodded and closed her eyes to rest.

KarKa lay beside her. Put his wing on her shivering body to keep her warmer and he fell asleep too. But the snowflakes had passed through her new feathers and had sunk in Kaar’s remaining down.

When that shiny sphere rose and brightened the sky, the blizzard had set. KarKa woke up, Kaar’s body was as hard as steel and as cold as ice. “No!” He cawed out loud. He thought the gods are punishing him and, asked those invisible gods to forgive him and give him back his child. He poked the body of his poor child with his beak but she was rigid and her breath had been taken long ago.

KarKa brushed her feathers and tidied them up with his beak. He could not think straight anymore. He then hopped up to a wooden platform, cawed, and mourned for the loss of his child. Suddenly he noticed some things on the wooden surface.

A tray with the remnant of ashes and something he had never seen before in his life, but suddenly the words of Ka-a echoed in his head. He went closer and checked them more carefully. It was a bi-color cylindrical stick, but it wasn’t made of wood. There was something smooth and darker on the top and bright on the bottom, stuffed with a dry powder. Maybe some dried herbs or leaves? He pulled out some of the dried herbs. It didn’t taste good at all. It was bitter and burnt. “Ka-a was right! They were right! The gods have guided us here!” Cawed KarKa. “I should get back and give the gods what they’re expecting! If all of these were a test,



then I will pass it and ask them to bring back my child!" Thought KarKa and took four of the sticks which had been laid on the black plate.

He quickly grabbed the frozen body of Kaar with his claws and flew away. Although the clouds had gone away, the weather was still cold and floating dust and ash had filled the air. It was a difficult journey for KarKa. however, his hope was leading him. It took one week and 6 days for KarKa to return to his homeland.

In fact, his home was a huge park with dried elm and Breech trees. But most of the Pines were still alive, struggling with endless winters. KarKa landed beside a metal device. There was no sign of the other crows. He was so hungry and had not found anything to eat in 2 days. At least, there were winterberries in the South! KarKa laid Kaar's body under the nearby bushes and put the bicolored sticks on the ground, stepping on them so that the wind wouldn't blow them away.

He looked at the temple. Actually, what he had been told to be a temple was a standing device, with a hole, a chute, storage, a plain for birds to stand near its hole, and on the right side, there was a box with a door which had been said that the gods used, to open the little door and put lots of nuts and seeds beside the crows just as they brought them sticks and threw them in the hole. KarKa thought that all of these disasters were because they had understood it wrong, the gods didn't want tree sticks, they wanted the bicolored, rare sticks as an offering.

KarKa took one of the cigarette butts and dropped it into the hole of the Corvid Cleaning Device. Then he turned to the rewarding door, his eyes sparkling and his tail twitching with anticipation.

A stiff wind blew and whipped his face. He looked at his daughter, her down and feathers fluttering with each blow. He sighed and turned to the device, "Why are the gods so cruel? I've apologized! Come on! Bring my daughter and my wife back! Please, stop this cold! I am sorry. I should have

believed in you! But you finally showed me the way! You guided me to the truth! Please, help! I am starving!"

He dropped the other three cigarette butts inside the hole and his eyes froze on the door. The cold wind blew and blew and KarKa was numb from hopelessness so he let the cold air sink into his vessels as he was freezing. " Why did they need those sticks?" He thought to himself but it was too late for wondering around and looking for the right answer. He thought of those signs, about those glass mountains and all those devices that had been made for them, to please the gods with odd sticks. The others were right about the existence of gods. But everything was hollow, he knew he was right too. He had never felt their presence. Because those gods had left them a long time ago...



Leon Wolf