



AHHOOOOOO
GARROO!

AS THE SILVER WOLF TOOK HIS first step onto the Ice Bridge, he turned back to look behind him at his final den in the Beyond. He had slept there with fourteen traveling companions, who were straggling out of the den now. Eight fully grown wolves, three wolf pups, two bear cubs, and a Masked Owl. They, too, turned around to take their last look at the only continent they had ever known — that of the Beyond. It was destroyed now. Famine struck the first blow, and then came the earthquakes. Only a very few had survived, and now this motley brigade of fifteen creatures was all that counted in Faolan's mind.

Every one of them was looking longingly in the wrong direction — east. There was nothing to the west save for an endless expanse of white, the Frozen Sea, over

which a bridge of ice arced like an inverted crescent moon. Faolan tipped his head one way, then the other. The bridge appeared to be supported by thick ice pillars. Sometimes the bridge rose quite high, and the thought of slipping off it and smashing onto the ice below was terrifying. And sometimes the bridge swooped low, skimming over the dark pools in the Frozen Sea where the ice had broken to expose water.

Faolan wondered how long the bridge had been there. Would there be signs of others who had crossed before — hoofprints? Paw prints? How could anything grow on the bridge? It seemed stark and sterile, incapable of supporting life. But Gwynneth, who had passed a great deal of time with owls in the northern kingdoms, had said that the owls found rodents in the ice — lemmings, snow mice, something called rockmunks, similar to chipmunks. Rodents would sustain owls for a while, but wolves needed more.

The end of the bridge seemed to dissolve into nothingness, as did the far edges of the sea. It was the nothingness, the gleaming nothingness of it all, that was the most unnerving.

Faolan tried to bark a command, but the sound broke in his throat. He only vaguely knew where they were heading — a place across the water where they hoped to

find a new land and safety. But the way there, this bridge of ice across a vast nothingness, was uncertain. Would a bridge that glistened like the thinnest slice of the moon even reach the new continent they could see only as a blue haze? Because of its color, they had come to call the new continent the Distant Blue. Might there be ruptures in the bridge? And if so, where would their journey end? The wolves could swim, but wolf pups did not learn until they were almost yearlings, and then only in the placid summer waters of rivers. The bridge was wide here at the start, but suppose it narrowed, or broke? If they were marooned in a melting sea on chunks of ice . . . what then?

But the fear that consumed Faolan's waking and sleeping dreams was losing a young one. The young ones would be the marrow of life on this new continent, their most valuable asset. But there was no choice. They must go ahead, despite the danger. There was no life left for them in the Beyond, and they must proceed on faith. He finally mustered a forceful howl.

"Ahhoooooooo garrooo!"

It was the point wolf's call to start the *byrrgis*, a hunting pack. It literally meant "Summon your marrow."

Faolan saw each animal take one last glance behind before stepping onto the Ice Bridge. He could not help but wonder what they were each thinking.