



# CrossTown

SCIENCE FICTION / FANTASY BY

Loren W. Cooper

In a place where all the roads that run through infinite possibility come together, a place where nearly anyone or anything can be found, a sorcerer's search for his master's killer could undermine the very foundation of reality...

Zethus is a sorcerer—a self-described spiritual thug for hire. He makes his living in CrossTown, a place where the many possibilities and probabilities overlap. Caught up in a web of intrigue as he investigates the death of his master, Corvinus, and pursued by agents that want to erase all knowledge of Corvinus's work, Zethus discovers that the key to his master's murder lies in the last project he had pursued before his death. The roots of this project lie deep in the past, at the origin of CrossTown's fractured reality. Once he understands the stakes, Zethus must make the dangerous journey to the cradle of history. The price he must pay to find the answers he seeks will threaten everything he holds dear—including his own humanity.

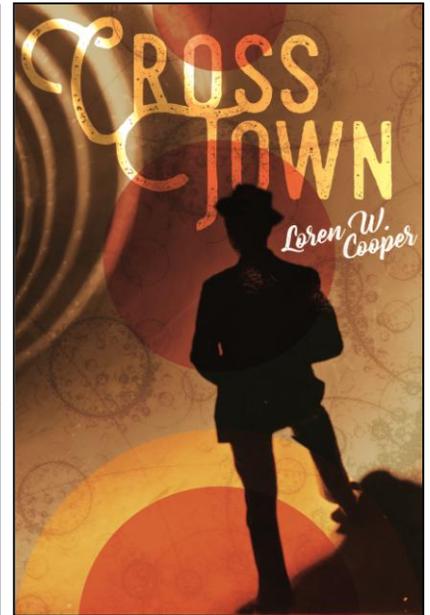
### ADVANCE PRAISE

"*CrossTown* is a fascinating mix of mystery, science fiction and mythology/folklore/magic. Loren Cooper lets us travel with the flawed sorcerer Zethus as he searches for answers through layers of realities, all connected by a range of multi-level roads crossing within, above, and below the town of the title. At one point, we encounter the powerful and frightening Fae of Irish tradition; at another, a community of vampires and other creatures of the night; at still another, a future world of high-tech weaponry—and more. The result is a wonderfully woven whole thanks to the storytelling, the pace, and the character of Zethus himself. Here's hoping for more adventures in this fantastic and believable world."

—Wayne Ude, author of *Maybe I Will Do Something: Seven Tales of Coyote*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Loren W. Cooper** is the author of three novels, one short story collection, and one nonfiction work. He is a member of the SFWA. He won the 2001 EPPIE for Best Anthology (*Lives of Ghosts and Other Shades of Memory*), the NESFA short story contest in 1998 for "The Lives of Ghosts" (title story of the anthology), and placed in the Altair short story contest with "Lanikaula and the Powers of Lanai," a fantasy short story based on Hawaiian myth. *The Gates of Sleep*, his first published novel, was nominated for the Endeavor award in 2002. Other novels include *A Slow and Silent Stream* (2003) and *A Separate Power* (2004). *The Lives of Ghosts and Other Shades of Memory* appeared on the Real Best Seller's List in 2004. He holds a Master of the Fine Arts in fiction from the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts, with degrees in English, Physics and Russian Studies. Currently he works as a Global Systems Engineering Manager at HP Inc. Loren is married with two daughters and lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



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### **FROM CROSSTOWN**

All roads may lead to Rome, but they pass through CrossTown first. Roads and streets run like veins and arteries through the beating heart of CrossTown. Each runs through all manner of distant and not-so-distant possibilities.

There's a theory in modern physics that posits a universe for every decision we make. Each time we choose, right or left, vanilla or chocolate, high or low, we split into separate universes. A vanilla me here, a chocolate me there, a rocky road with pistachio me somewhere else, and some poor lactose intolerant me further down the line. The dominant me is my subjective reality. In CrossTown, the probable mes collapse into the dominant wave, but all those wandering Ways continually wash other alternative lives, lives meant to be lived in CrossTown, up on its jagged shores.

The names of roads are choices; the turning and branching of roads are choices; roads are physical manifestations of their builders' decisions. Think of roads like Loxis Falangos and Agiou Nikolaou in my home town of Thebes, flowing together to become Epameinonda. In one possibility, Loxis Falangos dominates, and Epameinonda doesn't exist. In another, Loxis Falangos takes the lead. In a third, Loxis Falangos flows into Epameinonda, and Agiou Nikolaou never carried any merry wanderers on its narrow back.

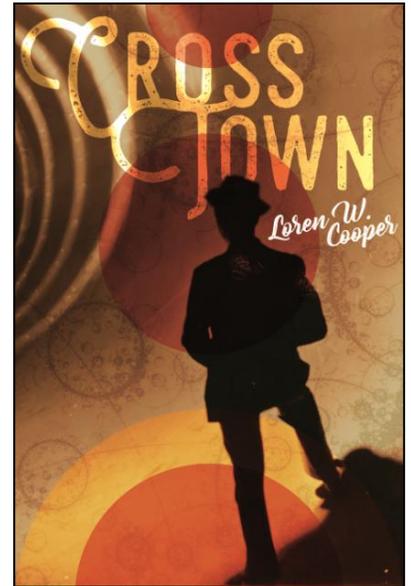
Think that's unique? Name a town. Take Longfellow and Hawthorne in Saint Louis, Missouri, which flow together, meld, then reappear as separate streets. In one possibility, Hawthorne is the single remaining street. In another, Longfellow takes the name of the blended road. The other road, the road not chosen, wanders off through possibility. In Eugene, Oregon, Tenth Street vanishes into a hill, then reappears on the other side. Broadway murders Ninth and has hidden its body and killed its name.

Everywhere, every place and every time where man or something like him has lived, Roads run into one another, branch, disappear here and reappear over there as if they were quantum tunneling. They run, meet, part, cross again, and form a bewildering Mandelbrot set of linked probabilities.

Beware the Road outside your front door, for it is both old friend and passing stranger.

All those choices, all hooked together, comprise a vast sea of possibility. A knowledgeable traveler can ride the currents in that sea to unimagined destinations. And an innocent, all unknowing, can trip over an errant probability wave and find himself or herself or itself somewhere quite far from home, quite far from ordinary. Even in the distant places, away from CrossTown, it's surprisingly easy for a traveler to take a wrong step and vanish from his known, small world into a strange place in a larger world. Sometimes those travelers wind up in CrossTown, to stay or to pass through to some other destination waiting in the wings.

CrossTown is the crossroads of probability.



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