

**BRANDON YING KIT BOEY**

**KARMA**  
of the  
**SUN**

**SIX SUNS. SIX BLASTS IN THE SKY. A SEVENTH—AND THE EARTH WILL DIE.**

KARMA  
of the  
SUN

BRANDON YING KIT BOEY

KARMA  
of the  
SUN



CamCat  
Books

CamCat Publishing, LLC  
Brentwood, Tennessee 37027  
camcatpublishing.com

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

© 2023 by Brandon Ying Kit Boey

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address CamCat Publishing, 101 Creekside Crossing, Suite 280, Brentwood, TN 37027.

Hardcover ISBN 9780744307603  
Paperback ISBN 9780744307610  
Large-Print Paperback ISBN 9780744307627  
eBook ISBN 9780744307634  
Audiobook ISBN 9780744307641

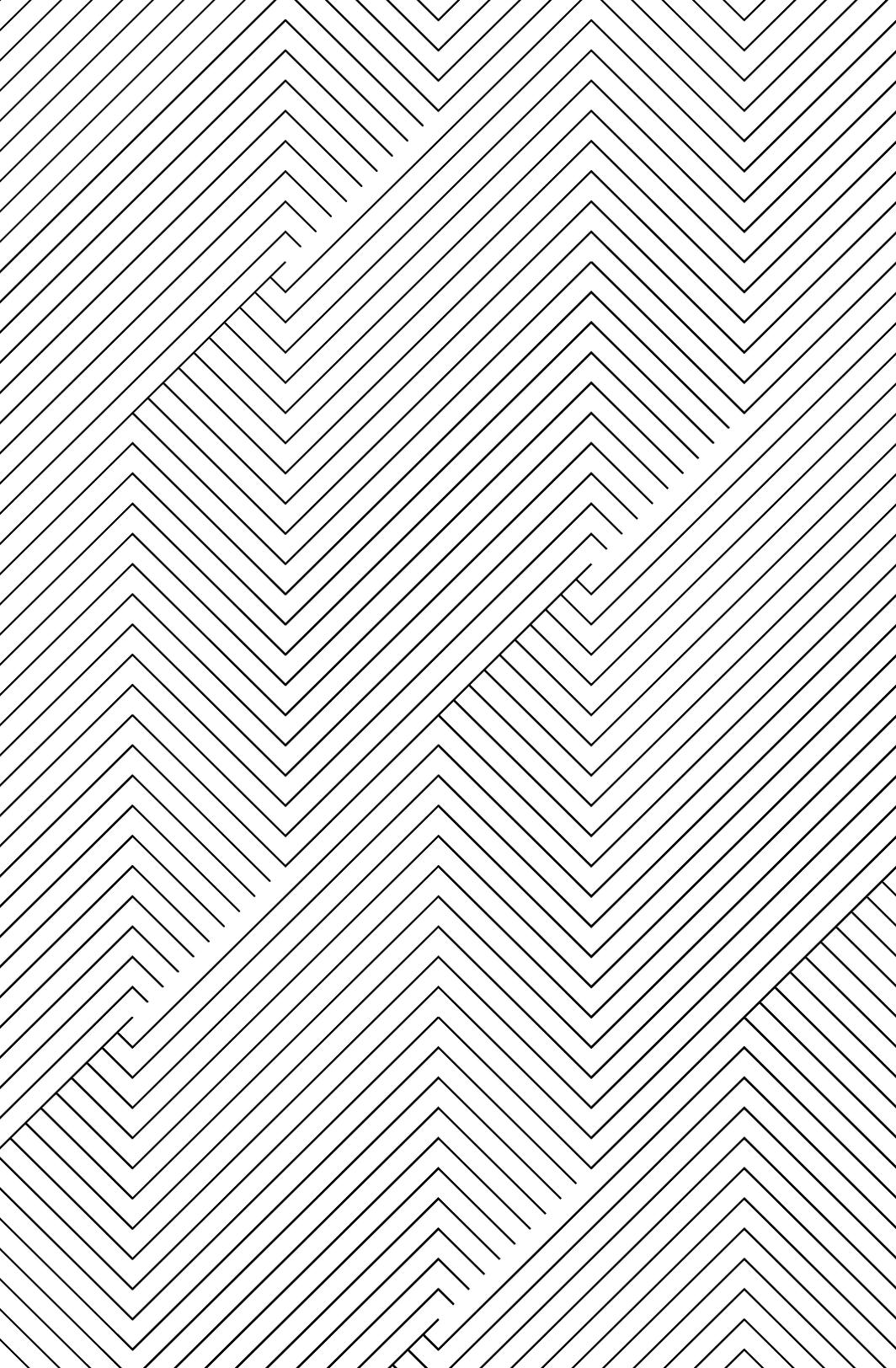
Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data available upon request

Book and cover design by Maryann Appel

5 3 1 2 4

FOR C.B.





After a last great interval, a seventh sun will appear  
and the Earth will blaze with fire until it  
becomes one mass of flame.

The mountains will be consumed, a spark will be carried  
on the wind and go as far as the worlds of God.

Therefore, monks, even the monarch of mountains  
will be burnt and perish and exist no more—excepting  
those who have seen the path.

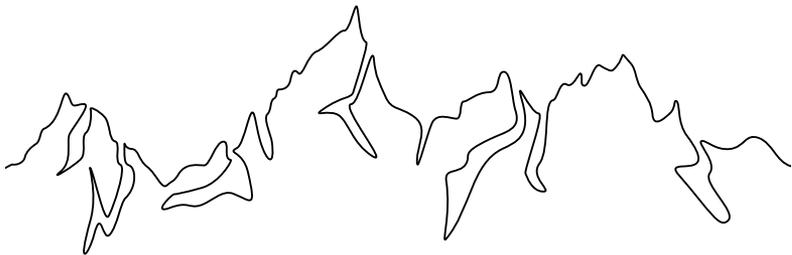
—*Pāli Canon (29 BCE)*

# PART I



There were also monks  
residing in the midst of forests,  
exerting themselves and keeping the pure precepts  
as though they were guarding a bright jewel.

*The Lotus Sutra (1st cen. CE)*



# 1

## THE YAK

**K**arma knows it is a bad omen.

He feels it in his body. A sudden chill in the summer air. A passing shadow in the white Tibetan sky. A hush in the rustle of the yellow grasses.

One moment, the yak calf was with the herd. Now it is gone—the gift for the shaman on his visit. The benefaction. Their offering. Missing.

Karma hastens frantically up the rise, climbing hill and dune as he searches, the little boy beside him scampering to keep up, three little steps for every one of his.

*Bad omen. Bad luck.*

*This day, of all days.*

The shaman is to arrive at the village tonight. Soon, the fathers of the valley will bring their sons, and the mothers their daughters, to have their fortunes told, the spirits consulted.

It is Karma's turn to graze the herd. His lot. His fate.

His fault.

Karma's heart pounds as he scales the last hill. The tattered prayer flags of the village outskirts come into view, trembling slightly in the uneven wind. They have been placed here purposely, auspiciously, adorning the rusted ruins of the iron wreckage said to have once been able to fly, a stupa to a miracle of the time before the destruction known only by the name of the Six Suns—six fires said to have consumed all the earth, leaving only the barrens of this remote hinterland. Now the cloth images of the Four Dignities float like ghosts against the sinking of the western sun: the snow lion, the tiger, the phoenix, and the dragon—chained to the east, south, west, and north.

An incongruous form catches the corner of Karma's eye, only paces away from the wreckage like some offering delivered before the stupa: white fur. No movement, except for the fluttering of a few woolen strands. His heart plummets. Before he can even fully comprehend what he is seeing, he already knows it is something terrible.

*The calfling.*

It lies on its side. Coming down the dune, Karma flinches at the sight of the animal's belly. A large hole gapes from sternum to flank. A jumble of intestines bulges out like a heap of spilled rope from a sack. The ground is a patch of blood so dark it looks black.

Karma is paralyzed at the sight, as if it were his own lifeblood drained to the earth.

*No . . . it can't be. Not the shaman's offering . . .*

Only hours ago, it was alive and with the herd. Now it is a bloody carcass, viscera baking in the sun.

"What happened?" a boy's voice gasps behind him.

Karma startles. It is his little cousin Lobsang. Karma moves to shield the boy from the sight, but the child is too far out of reach, or perhaps it is only that Karma's legs are too numb.

"It . . . it was probably wolves," Karma mumbles. "Maybe a pack of them, or something . . ."

His voice trails. True, there have been more sightings of wild animals, but his instinct tells him this is something else. None of the meat has been touched. The yak is a calf but by no means small. Looking at the sheer size of the wound, nothing on four legs could do damage that looks like this.

A swarm of horseflies buzzes fiercely, as if to defend their quarry. A feeling comes over him, even more fearful than before. He has been afraid for the yak. But now that he's found it, he is afraid for the village.

*If not animals . . . then bandits?*

Karma's gaze flickers to the distance, to the flat horizon, the mountains long gone, where the border bandits are known to dwell. Lobsang mirrors his gaze. The vista is empty, but he knows the bandits prefer the night anyway, the better to avoid being shot by the villagers' matchlock rifles. Still, if it was them, wouldn't they steal the calf, not waste it? As depraved as they are, they are more deprived of food, no different from the rest of the Four Rivers and Six Ranges.

*But if neither animals nor bandits . . .*

Little Lobsang seems to read his thoughts. "Could it be a *migoi*?" he asks in a hushed voice, invoking the name for the supernatural creature that, thus far, to Karma was nothing but a child's figment. "My father says that in the end, the cursed become even more savage because they know that their doom is near. It's like the ghosts who mourn at night because they will never be reborn—"

"That's quite enough, Lobsang. We shouldn't speak of such things."

Karma cannot help a shudder. First the missing yak, then the mutilation. Now talk of *migoi*, ghosts, and the coming of the Seventh Sun. The day is going from inauspicious to downright ominous.

The wind stirs, and the stink of slowly fouling meat hits them. Karma's little cousin buries his nose in his sleeve, tangling his arm in the necklace of amber and coral that the boy's father gave him that day.

"We should ask my father what to do," Lobsang says, his voice muffled by his sleeve.

It is a perfectly reasonable course of action. Karma has the same urge, to leave this scene and go back to the village. But he feels as if he cannot. He is seventeen, not a child. This has happened on his watch. He cannot go back empty-handed. The bones and the hide. The hooves, the fat, and the tendons. He cannot lose the rest to wild animals overnight. As the son of the scoundrel—it would be unforgivable.

Karma makes up his mind. “There isn’t enough time. The shaman’s ceremony will be starting soon. We’ll have to drag it back with us. Salvage what we can there.” He could ask his mother to help him. He meets his cousin’s skeptical gaze. “The meat’s already turned,” he explains. “If I lose the offal . . .”

*Your father will lash me for sure*, is what he wants to say, but doesn’t need to.

Lobsang seems to understand the logic. A look of sympathy crosses the boy’s face, and Karma wonders if his cousin, young as he is, actually understands a lot more. If so, he has never shown it. To Lobsang, Karma is not the cursed Sherpa’s boy, not the son of the scoundrel. He is just Karma—and for that, Karma has always loved him.

As they begin dragging the carcass away, Karma glances back over his shoulder. The sun is already beginning its descent behind the dusty horizon. Something about the light, the angle of his gaze . . . a memory floods him, searing in its suddenness: An image of his father in this exact place, ten years ago. The entire village is there too. His mother; his aunt; his uncle, the headman.

And a caravan, waiting. But not Karma.

He was only seven years old then, but the memory is clear. He turns his face away.

*Father’s farewell.*

“Are you all right, Karma?”

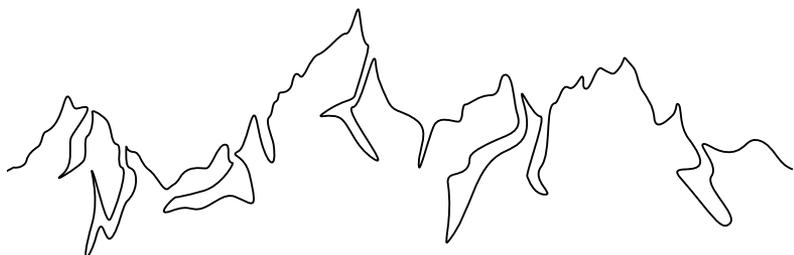
Karma blinks and the memory vanishes, leaving in its place the empty western landscape, the fluttering prayer flags the only things stirring. A strand of the pennants has come untethered and is snaking

now in the air like a loose kite string, whistling as it whips back and forth, back and forth.

His little cousin's head is cocked, watching him. "What is it?"

"It's . . . nothing," Karma says. "Nothing at all."

He nods to resume their movement. But though they continue on to the village, something lingers in the air, sticks to them like the scent of the fouling meat they carry, certain only to ripen even more. A feeling of some ill-fated consequence of the past now finding its way back home.



# 2

## THE GATHERING

If the death of the yak signals bad luck, bringing home its carcass augurs an even worse fate. In hindsight, Karma should have expected the reaction. Fear, anger, blame. He only wanted to do right by the village, thinking of their practical needs. He wanted not to let the people down. Not to anger them or remind them of . . .

*Of father.*

*Wasn't that the truth?*

That is why he brought the calfing back, after all. When he should have known better. When he should have seen it for what it was. A sign of the end. A reminder of the Seventh Sun, of the curse that hangs over them, and of the powerlessness of herd or village to afford any refuge. But like a fool, he brought it back. And along with it . . . the ill fate it portends. Now his face stings with shame as he tends the fire in the lodge room alone, stoking the coals, waiting for the villagers to gather.

The door opens, bringing in a draft of cold night air accompanied by the low and wind-like moan. Of course, it is not the wind but the

ghosts, who only come in the night, and tonight they are especially restless.

The elders enter first. In the shadows, in the flickering firelight, the sunken stares of their eyes are severe. At the front is Urgyen—Karma's uncle and Lobsang's father, who as the village headman is the one to escort the shaman into the room. The shaman is a grisly sight in his ceremonial garb—a crow's-nest weave of finger bones and mirror fragments, rosary necklace of skull beads, and belt holding a flute fashioned out of what looks like a femur. Rattling and tinkling, the reflection of the shaman's mirrors cast slivers of light. He is a burning skeleton on the move.

Next come the visitors from around the valley of Kham. Young men traveling with their fathers to hear the shaman's divinations. Young women pushed forward by their mothers hoping for blessings for their future, and in them, answers about the fate of the world at large.

Last come the rest of the villagers, shuffling in order, his mother at the very end of the line. Their eyes are on him. All look except his mother, who seems to linger, as if holding open the door to an escape into the ghostly land and fractured stars beyond. But then the door is drawn shut and the crowd closes in—only enough room to stand.

One of the fathers speaks. "Is it wise to continue with the ceremonies tonight, Urgyen? With the yak offering the Sherpa boy lost, would it not be more auspicious to wait for another date?"

*The Sherpa boy. The scoundrel's son.*

*Me.*

The shaman is the one to reply, with a snort. "Six Suns, six blasts in the sky," he recites. "A seventh one, and the earth will die. Can there ever be an auspicious date?" The mirrored crown shimmers as he jerks his chin to the assemblage. "The infant doesn't choose the day he is born, nor the old man the day he departs. What makes you think you can choose when your boys shall become men, or your young girls

women?” The shaman casts a jaundiced look at the father who has spoken. “When our days are numbered, how much time do you think your children have?”

The man shrinks back to the crowd. Uncle Urygen regards the room impassively. They all know the prophecy. They have heard the recounting of the story that had been told to their grandfathers about the six distant blasts that were so bright they appeared like suns in the sky, and about what they did to the rest of the world. An earth if not scorched, then frozen. Dried lakes and drowned deserts. Mountains sunken, valleys leveled. Cities transformed overnight, once-towering structures expended like incense to ash by morning. The destructive force of the blasts would have reached Tibet, would have burned them all, were it not for the tall range of the Himalayas, which have been their only bulwark, their rock and their defense from the winds and the poisons.

But they also know about the telling of one seventh, final Sun—a last and complete destruction. And there is nothing they can do to stop it. The end, they know, will arrive for them too.

Urygen gives the nod. “The fire,” he commands.

Karma immediately pokes the coals, knowing his uncle is talking to him. It is a cold summer night, and the flames have gone down. Karma places more dung chips, then a few precious sticks of juniper brush. The belly of the room fills with smoke, the fire begrudgingly offering more of its heat.

“Move the kettle, or you’ll spill the *chhaang*,” chides one of the men.

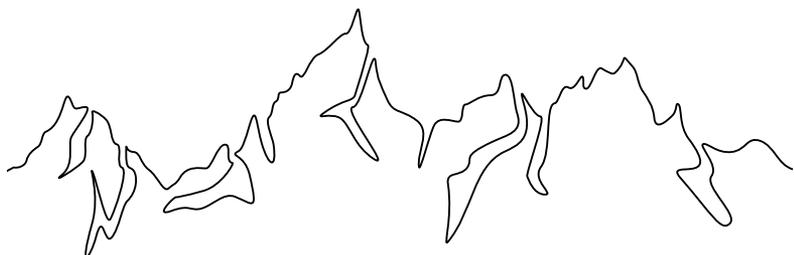
Karma obliges, without emoting so much as a sigh of complaint. The brass kettle burns even through the potholder. He pours the steaming liquid into two bowls and carries them to his uncle. Urygen takes one to the altar to make a set of seven bowls filled with water, grain, butter, and now—fermented barley.

He hands the other to the shaman.

## KARMA OF THE SUN

Despite the steaming heat, the old man tilts the cup to his mouth, slurping the hot brew down his throat.

Uncle Urgyen waves to Karma for more. “Pour it all. Tonight when the spirits speak, they speak for us all.”



# 3

## THE FORTUNE

The drums crack and the bells ring, the brass trumpets pulse, and the men sway. The shaman hops and dances to the wailing dirge, the mirrored hat and tinsel robes throwing reflections like shattered stars into the crowded room. The old man shows no signs of wearing out for how long he has been dancing, how much he has been drinking. Somewhere between the music and the chanting he stops to take more swigs of barley brew before resuming his trance.

The first boy they take is Lobsang. Urygen brings him forward—father and son going to the altar. Uncle Urygen and Auntie Pema have dressed Karma's cousin in a clean coat tonight, his new amber-and-coral necklace hanging below the paunch of his robe. Karma watches as the shaman shakes and shudders, spitting a mist of alcohol into the fire. The flames hiss as if responding, smoke rising like a spirit winking coal-red eyes.

The diviner comes with barley on his lips, trembling hands outstretched to press the head of the wide-eyed boy. Then with a shout

that smarts their ears and a strike of Lobsang's crown, the shaman cries through the vortex of horns and cymbals to summon the spirits. Thus possessed, the shaman's tongue loosens. Now comes the strain of pronouncements about a future of crops and money, herds and horses, and a hopeful reincarnation to another world when this one is gone, before he sends the boy into the world with the protection of dead lamas and enslaved but benevolent spirits.

Next is a girl. The shaman does the same, twisting and gyrating so that the ribbons on his cloak lift like prayer flags on a cairn and he seems almost to float off the ground, sending a churn of incantations along with the smoke from the den to the blistered stars beyond the windows. He swoons when he stops, straining like a nomad's tent in the wind. He strikes her head so hard the girl's eyes water. Her mother, holding her, begins to cry also, jerking to the rhythm of the skeleton drums. And then the utterances pour, fortunes of a fruitful womb and progeny one day like wild foals roaming valleys and hills, while the girl's mother sobs with gratitude—or more likely the grief for what she knows will never be in this life.

Last of all is Karma, who comes alone, without a father to bear him forward. He glances across the room to look for his mother in the shadows but meets only with the glare of the crowd.

“The *Sherpa's* son,” the shaman says.

Karma's face flushes with shame, though the appellation is merely a fact. He *is* the son of an outsider, the man from away who came to them with promises of deliverance and sanctuary, only to desert them to their doom.

Together now, the shaman and Karma begin to spin. Around they go, faster and faster. The room is a blur—whistling of flute and jangling of bells, stench of butter lamp oil and yak-dung smoke, brew on the shaman's breath, and wail of ghosts outside. Karma grows dizzy, his feet stumbling.

Just as he thinks he can take no more, the shaman stops.

They swoon, the room still whirling. The shaman opens his mouth to speak, the pink of his gums showing. But then a sudden change comes over his expression. His face sags, his eyes roll. The mirrored crown atop his head begins to tip.

The shaman collapses, sprawling on the floor in a burst of convulsions.

Shouts of alarm. Flurrying of panic. The elders rush forward.

Karma stumbles aside, flustered, head still spinning, heart beating where the drums have stopped.

*Bad omen. Bad luck . . .*

*This day, of all days . . .*

Eventually, the shaman's seizures cease. But his eyes remain closed. The men jostle around him, Uncle Urgyen barking orders. A space clears as someone brings more chhaang and food from the offering table, tipping the cup, chewing the meat, and pushing the food into the shaman's mouth like they are feeding a baby. A trickle of pale beer spills down his beard like milk drool.

Slowly, the old man's eyelids crack open. Two inscrutable pupils glint in the firelight, flickering over the circle of faces. Seeking but not finding, his gaze roves beyond the huddle.

A voice with a strange intonation emanates from the shaman's mouth. Within the walls of the lodge room, it sounds strangely to Karma like the ghost-winds outside. He's not the only one to think so, as the elders begin to draw back cautiously.

"The ghosts are suffering," the elders whisper to one another. "It is because they are trapped, no way to be reborn when the earth is destroyed by the Seventh Sun . . ."

*"The son . . . of the Sherpa . . ."*

The elders startle.

The words are coming from the shaman, but they are not his. Not a single voice, but multiple voices at once. Karma's skin prickles as the shaman's gaze falls upon him.

“They know the boy,” the elders hiss. “Because of the father. Bad luck.”

The familiar guilt floods Karma.

The shaman continues to speak, his mouth as detached from the words themselves as a trumpet from the breath that blows it, incriminating. “*He will follow his father. . . He will go to him . . .*”

A shocked murmur sweeps the room.

*Did he say, my father?*

No one has dared speak of Patrul Sherpa, not for ten years. Not with anything but a curse. His name has been all but blotted out in the village.

*Go to my father?*

No one moves or speaks.

Karma’s uncle pushes forward through the crowd. “Demons,” Urgyen curses. “Deceitful ghosts!” He snatches the bowl of chhaang and makes a motion as if to toss the contents into the fire.

“Wait!” Karma reaches to stay Urgyen’s hand, shocked by his own temerity but unable to help himself. It has been years since anyone has openly spoken about his father. He wants to know more.

Urgyen returns a withering look, and Karma’s hand falls away.

With a jerk of his arm, Urgyen tosses the drink. The fire hisses and crackles over the spilled chhaang, ejecting a puff of smoke. The ghost-winds shriek outside, trilling in a crescendo. The shaman’s eyelids droop. He twitches before going limp on the ground.

Still, Karma leans forward, straining for more, for any other revelation about his father. About himself. Anything.

*Please. If only I could just speak to him.*

But it is all over. The voices are gone.

The shaman’s body is inanimate. There is only an old man in a stupor, dribble seeping from his mouth. In the silence of the room, the mysterious pronouncements merely linger in the air like the vapors of a doused fire, nothing more.

Urgyen now turns to Karma, his eyes still hard. “You should know better.”

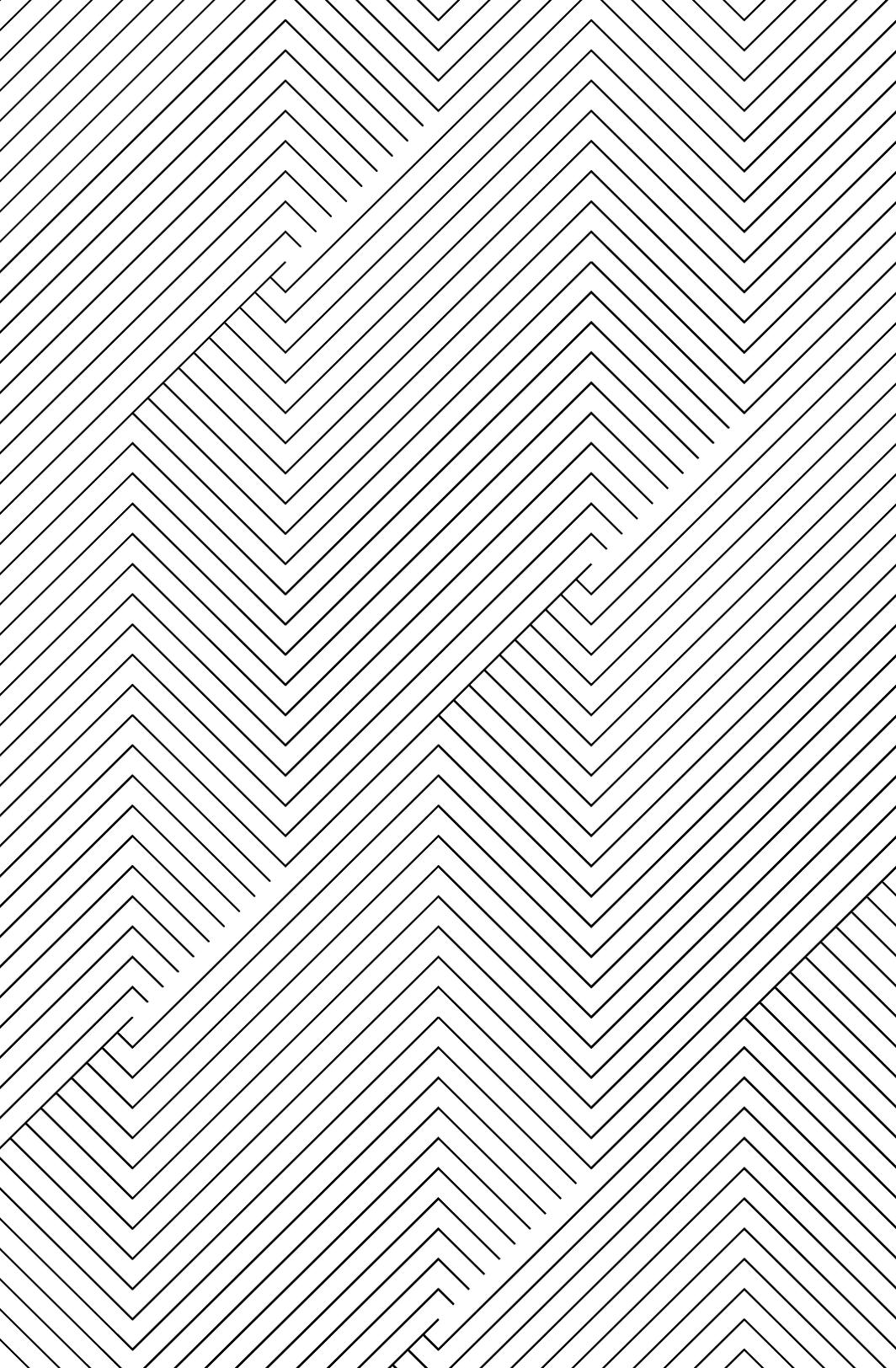
Karma flinches at the words. But of course, his uncle is right. After all, his father is a fraud, a thief. The curse of Kham. A scoundrel.

“Your father cursed this people once before with his lies,” Urgyen says. “Any fortune about him is no fortune at all.”

Someone is weeping. It takes a moment for Karma to realize that it is his mother.

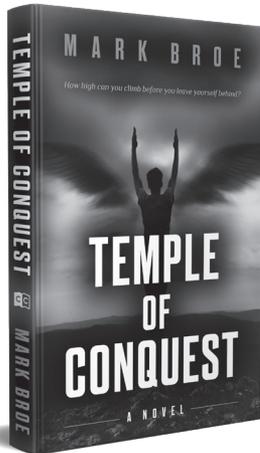
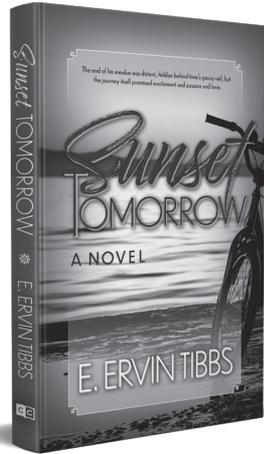
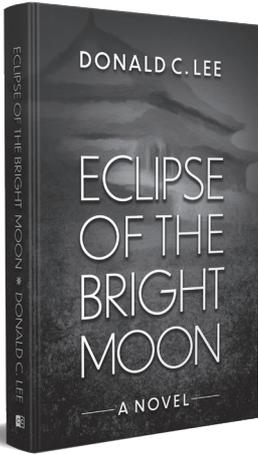
“I—I know,” Karma stammers, at a loss for what else to say. “I’m sorry.”

But surrounded by the elders of the valley, before the unconscious figure of the shaman on the floor, the words of the ghostly prediction hang in the air.



MORE ADVENTUROUS READS FROM CAMCAT BOOKS

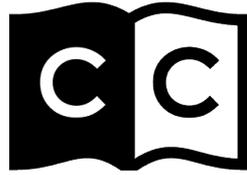
---



---

Available now, wherever books are sold.





# CamCat Books

VISIT US ONLINE FOR MORE BOOKS TO LIVE IN:  
[CAMCATBOOKS.COM](http://CAMCATBOOKS.COM)



CamCatBooks



@CamCatBooks



@CamCat\_Books

# Six suns. Six blasts in the sky. A seventh—and the earth will die.

**IN THE ISOLATION OF THE HIMALAYAS**, the snows still fall, but they are tinged with the ash of a nuclear winter; the winds still blow, but they wail with the cries of ghosts. The seventh and final blast is near. As the world heaves its final breaths, the people of the Tibetan plateau—civilization’s final survivors—are haunted by spirits and terrorized by warlords. Though the last of the seven prophesied cataclysms is at hand, young Karma searches for a father who disappeared ten years earlier, presumed dead.

Driven by a yearning to see his father again before the end, and called by an eerie horn unheard by anyone else, Karma forges into the Himalayas and discovers that his father’s disappearance may be linked to a mystical mountain said to connect the physical world with the spirit lands—and a possible way to save their doomed future.

“The seventh sun is coming.  
No fortune-telling can change that.”

  
**CamCat**  
Books

Cover Design: Maryann Appel  
Photography: Andres Conema

Science Fiction		
USD\$15.99	CAD\$19.99	GBP£11.99
ISBN 978-0-7443-0761-0		
9 780744 307610		90000



BE THE FIRST TO HEAR about new CamCat titles, author events, and exclusive content! Sign up at [camcatbooks.com](http://camcatbooks.com) for the CamCat Publishing newsletter.