



“The Wind Horse represents good fortune,” he said as he hung fresh rectangles of cotton out to dry. “The flag fades and dissolves in the sun and on the wind, and when its spirit touches you, good opportunities will come your way.”

Simon passed through the old fortress town of Gyantse, and crossed long stretches of harsh, inhospitable terrain before arriving, as dusk overwhelmed daylight, into Shigatse, home of the sprawling Tashilhunpo. One of the largest and finest buildings in the Buddhist world, the monastery was alive with the sound of a hundred young monks emptying from the main prayer hall and hurriedly pulling on yellow hats resembling cockerels’ combs. They formed a circle in the courtyard and, following the lead of the master lama, began to sway in unison, booming out the words of sacred texts. Powerful chanting reverberated around stone walls and trembled in Simon’s torso. Night had already fallen

by the time their profoundly affecting music reached its crescendo.

He continued westward, the elevation steepening further, the road snaking wildly toward the foot of the Great Himalayan Range where heavy cloud and swirling snow obscured Everest from view. Close to Base Camp at Rongbuk, the highest monastery in the world, he refueled guttering altar lamps with his yak butter to symbolically mark the nearing of journey’s end. Sleep was impossible in the biting cold, so the next morning, well before dawn, he climbed up beyond the monastery walls and waited. Slowly the outline of Chomolungma—the “beautiful queen” as Tibetans know her—began to emerge from the shadows. Then, moments later, her north face was revealed in all its glory, the looming peak magically bathed in the first rays of morning sun.

His kora was complete. □