

Sixth Precept

By Larry Ivkovich



Larry Ivkovich is an IT professional and the author of several science fiction, fantasy and horror short stories and novellas, published online and in various print publications and anthologies including M-Brane SF, Afterburn SF, Penumbra, Twisted Cat Tales, Abaculus III, Raw Terror, Triangulations, Shelter of Daylight and SQ Magazine. He has also been a finalist in the L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future contest and was the 2010 recipient of the CZP/Rannu Fund Award for fiction. His debut urban fantasy novel, **THE SIXTH PRECEPT**, is now available from IFWG Publishing, Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com. He is a member of two local writing/critique groups, the Pittsburgh Southwrites and the Pittsburgh Worldrights, and lives in Coraopolis, PA with his wife Martha and cats Trixie and Milo.

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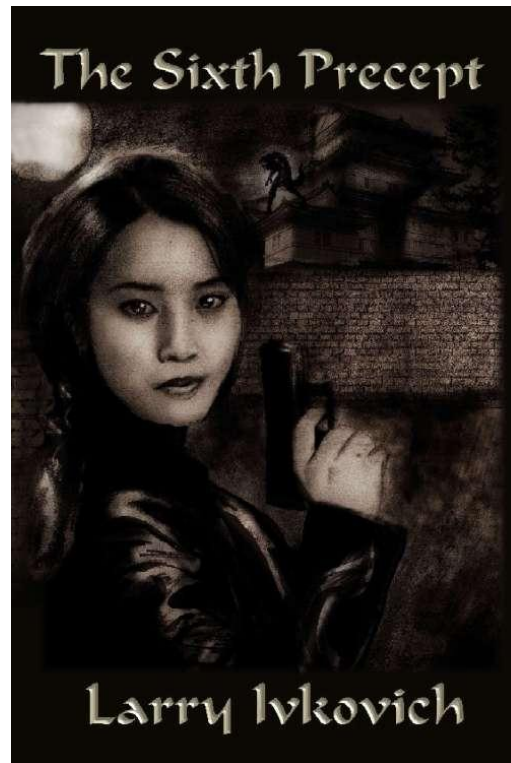
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Tags/Labels:

urban fiction, urban fantasy books, medieval japan, japanese medieval, monk warrior, precepts, practice of Buddhism, half human, comic books, comic book, psychic predictions, Larry Ivkovich, The Sixth Precept



The Sixth Precept In 16th century medieval Japan, Yoshima Mitsu, who is gifted with psychic powers, uses her prescient abilities to send her young attendant, Shioko, into the future. There, Mitsu believes Shioko will be safe from the purges of the maniacal warlord Omori Kadanamora, his warrior monks and his half-human, half-bestial Shadow-Trackers. In present-day Pittsburgh, police Lieutenant Kim Yoshima is attacked by a creature out of someone's twisted nightmare. In the aftermath of that terrifying struggle, Kim finds a young Japanese girl named Shioko, lost, confused and calling Kim "Mitsu" and her monstrous attacker a "Shadow-Tracker." Wayne Brewster dreams of the costumed hero, ArcNight. But more than that, he feels bizarrely connected to the fictional crime fighter as if ArcNight and his comic book world are real. And in all of his dreams, Brewster sees one constant, one face repeated over and over--the face of Kim Yoshima. Empowered by a mysterious book, The Five Precepts to Enlightenment, Kim realizes her destiny is in the past. Using her own burgeoning esper powers, Kim, accompanied by Shioko and Brewster, travel by means of a temporal rift to feudal Japan. There they must assume different personas to fight Omori and creatures of Japan's mythological world to fulfill ancient prophesy and modern historical fact. If they fail, history will be altered and the world will change forever.

Excerpts – Please choose only one

EXCERPT #1 – 16TH Century Japan

The attempt on his life had been an act of desperation, he knew. The battle was lost, the opposing forces broken and scattered. Without the inspiration of Soun Ujitsuna, the Odawaran armies had been routed. Omori Kadonomaro had vanquished those foes who had defended this city as he had crushed everyone else who had ever opposed him. Even now, most of his own army and all but a few of his warrior monks were rounding up prisoners or putting to the sword any who offered even token resistance. But the assassins' threat had been real enough, though for a different reason entirely.

He had led a small party of his warrior monks and a trio of shadow-trackers in the hunt for the shirabyoshi spoken of by Eela. He had no desire to sit and wait, to allow others to do his work for him. He had always been a man of action and the Prophecy of the One Child concerned him greatly.

Though the shadow-trackers had no real scent or clue to rely on, through the magic urging of the majo, one of them had led Omori and his men to the market district of the city. The creature's manner was agitated yet focused; the beast appeared like something out of a traveler's tale. Naked, it moved like a ghost, spiriting almost invisibly in and out of the smallest places as it used the shadows as cover.

Omori had never gotten used to them but the creatures did serve his purpose. Whatever magic the witch called upon to create such monsters was the warlord's to control. At least for the moment.

And he meant to keep it that way.

Located near the lower west gates, the marketplace was the one area his attacking land forces had been able to breach. Parts of it lay in smoldering ruins; the remaining residents hiding fearfully behind closed and latched doors.

The city's defenders had been beaten but the fear of Omori and his allies—the sohei, the witch and the shadow-trackers—still hung thickly in the air. To most of the downtrodden Odawarans, it was their worst nightmare realized.

Eela rode by the daimyo's side. Both men's armored horses picked their way among the scattered rubble and trash that lay strewn about the streets. "My pet seems sure the one we seek is here, Lord," the majo said silkily. "He is the best of the three and can discern his prey with very little assistance."

His pet. Omori frowned. Eela's skills had extended to supervising the breeding, raising and training of the shadow-trackers, skills Omori appreciated but which gave the majo another point of power in his favor. "Just make sure your pet finds her," Omori said distastefully. "I will stop this child once and for all."

EXCERPT #2 – Pittsburgh, PA 2010

Kim heard the shot just as she was putting her briefcase into her car. She didn't think twice, her instincts taking over. She pulled her Sig P228 and an extra clip from her backpack, threw the pack into the back seat and headed for the lot's exit door.

The door had a special keyed locking system on the outside to keep possible intruders out. From within the parking lot, it was essentially an emergency exit. She looked up at the security camera stationed above the door and thought about contacting Joe, Lazo's security head. No time, she decided. Besides, there was no need for two people to be in a possible line-of-fire. Once she took stock of the situation, she'd call for backup on her cell phone. She punched the button and as the door shussed open, exited the lot.

The humidity was all over her; heavy, moist air settling on her skin like a hot towel. It had stopped raining but the streets steamed; the glow of the streetlights cast an eerie luminescence throughout the empty block. She blinked, creeping into the shadows at the side of the garage and then, quickly, opened the section of gating outside the emergency exit and jogged out into the street.

No sounds. Nothing. The street was devoid of life.

That was when she saw the figure walk out into the light.

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It's her. The Yomitsu. The Eminent Lord be praised!

The shadow-tracker felt a thrill of another kind as he saw his target, gun in hand, crouching across the street. Her scent, even at this distance, filled him to the bursting.

I can take her, he thought, his head throbbing as he blinked the spots from his eyes. I can bring her back to the masters myself! The hell with their rules! The situation had become something entirely different. She was so close! Why shouldn't he take advantage of this? The masters would know then, that despite his miscalculation on the three gang members, despite the wound he had incurred as a result, that he had still served his purpose.

Yes, he thought, rising to his feet. He would make his mark, no matter what. He walked out of the alley.

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The silhouette was tall, lean, moving like a dancer, sinuous and mincing. The muted light revealed some kind of tight-fitting garment clinging to its body. Its hair was long, knotted into thin corn rows. Its eyes reflected the light as...yellow?

Something sharp glinted from the tips of its fingers.

What in heaven? Kim raised her gun. The figure stopped, its form backlit by a wavering glow from the alley behind it.

Trash fire? This one doesn't look like your typical street person.

The figure began to move again, loping (yes, loping was the right word) toward her, its motion controlled and precise like a gymnast.

“Stop right there!” Kim cried. “Police officer!”

The figure entered a pool of streetlight, its face briefly illuminated.

It was the face of an animal.

“Freeze!” Kim yelled, a chill running up her back. “Stop or I’ll shoot!”

The creature speeded up, suddenly charging like a sprinter on overdrive. Kim fired once over its head. No effect. It was only a few feet away now, its arms and legs moving in a whirlwind of motion. My God! Kim thought, her fear building. She aimed a kill-shot, straight at the creature’s head.

The thing shifted to its right, dodging the bullet as if the deadly projectile was moving in slo-mo. It reached a clawed hand out toward Kim, its suddenly visible face stretched into a ghastly parody of a smile.

Kim threw her body sideways. She fell, rolling on her side, the pavement smacking her hard. She felt a crunching pain on her waist.

She pulled herself to her feet, breathing fast, holding her luger with both hands extended in front of her.

Her breath caught in her throat. The creature was down.

Kim blinked. The thing was fast, unnaturally fast. It should have had her. She was positive it had dodged her bullet.

Yet, it lay facedown on the street, struggling to get up. This close, Kim could see the blood on the side of its head.

And that face. Inhuman features glared up at Kim. Man? Dog? It looked a combination of both—exaggerated bone structure, sharp teeth, high cheekbones, sloping forehead, yellow eyes.

Kim fell back a step, a sudden, unreasoning fear taking control. What is it? Both her hands shook as she tried to hold the gun steady. What—?

The creature suddenly leaped to its feet and flung itself at her, arms wide, mouth open. Kim fired and fell back, flinging her arms up over her head.

What? Kim looked wildly around her. The thing was gone. Where had it vanished to?

Have to call for backup! she thought frantically. And surely Joe saw what happened on the security cams! She started back towards the garage, hoping the gate would open again as she fumbled at her belt for her cell phone, looking over her shoulder. The fear was like a burning fire running through her system.

A low moaning floated through the night air. Kim stopped and turned back towards the alley. Someone's hurt, she thought, licking her lips. Probably by that dog-thing.

Taking a deep breath, she jogged back toward the alley and stopped at its entrance, the skin between her shoulder blades tingling. If this dead-ends, I'm trapped. And yet I just can't leave someone in there if they've been injured.

The moaning increased, a desperate sound radiating pain and confusion. Kim got her cell phone off of her belt. Got to call Lazo, she thought. Have to get—Damn! She stared dumbly at the cracked casing of the now-useless phone. That's what I felt breaking when I hit the street. Cheap shit! The Captain's going to hear about this!

She snorted. Listen to me. Come on, Yoshima, get your act together!

Darting another look back towards the street, Kim took a few tentative steps into the alley. "Who's there?" she called, her mouth dry. "Are you hurt? I'm a police officer!"

A gurgling, wet sound answered her, a barely recognized imitation of speech. Gritting her teeth, Kim entered the alley.

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