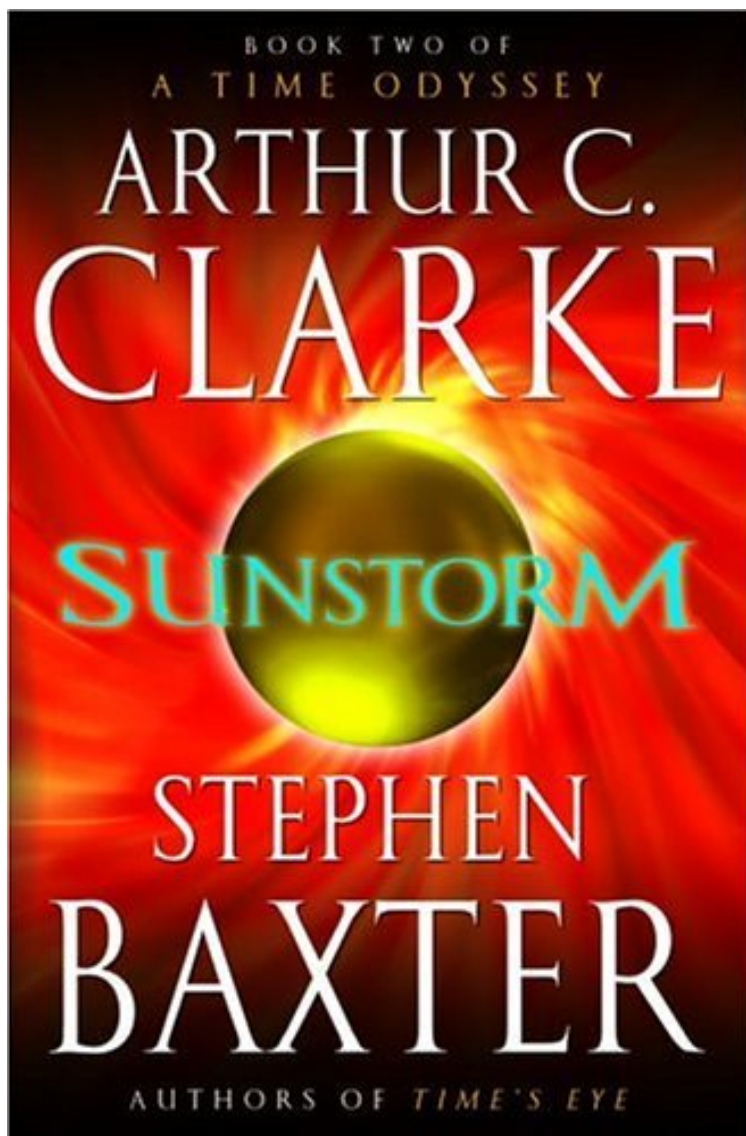


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Sunstorm



*Par Arthur C. Clarke, Stephen Baxter
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Par Arthur C. Clarke, Stephen Baxter : **Sunstorm** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sunstorm:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWhen Sir Arthur C. Clarke, the greatest science fiction writer ever, teams up with award-winning author Stephen Baxter, who shares Clarkes bold vision of a future where technology and humanism advance hand in hand, the result is bound to be a book of stellar ambition and accomplishment. Such was the case with Times Eye. Now, in the highly anticipated sequel, Clarke and Baxter draw their epic to a triumphant conclusion that is as mind-blowing as anything in Clarkes famous Space Odyssey series.SUNSTORMReturned to the Earth of 2037 by the Firstborn, mysterious beings of almost limitless technological prowess, Bisesa Dutt is haunted by the memories of her five years spent on the strange alternate Earth called Mir, a jigsaw-puzzle world made up of lands and people cut out of different eras of Earths history. Why did the Firstborn create Mir? Why was Bisesa taken there and then brought back on the

day after her original disappearance? Bisesa's questions receive a chilling answer when scientists discover an anomaly in the sun's core—an anomaly that has no natural cause—is evidence of alien intervention over two thousand years before. Now plans set in motion millennia ago by inscrutable watchers light-years away are coming to fruition in a sunstorm designed to scour the Earth of all life in a bombardment of deadly radiation. Thus commences a furious race against a ticking solar time bomb. But even now, as apocalypse looms, cooperation is not easy for the peoples and nations of the Earth. Religious and political differences threaten to undermine every effort. And all the while, the Firstborn are watching... From the Hardcover edition.

Extrait Return Bisesa Dutt gasped, and staggered. She was standing. She didn't know where she was. Music was playing. She stared at a wall, which showed the magnified image of an impossibly beautiful young man crooning into an old-fashioned microphone. Impossible, yes; he was a synth-star, a distillation of the inchoate longings of subteen girls. My God, he looks like Alexander the Great. Bisesa could barely take her eyes off the walls moving colors, its brightness. She had forgotten how drab and dun-colored Mir had been. But then, Mir had been another world altogether. Aristotle said, Good morning, Bisesa. This is your regular alarm call. Breakfast is waiting downstairs. The news headlines today are Shut up. Her voice was a dusty desert croak. Of course. The synthetic boy sang on softly. She glanced around. This was her bedroom, in her London apartment. It seemed small, cluttered. The bed was big, soft, not slept in. She walked to the window. Her military-issue boots were heavy on the carpet and left footprints of crimson dust. The sky was gray, on the cusp of sunrise, and the skyline of London was emerging from the flatness of silhouette. Aristotle. Bisesa? What's the date? Tuesday. The date. Ah. The ninth of June, 2037. I should be in Afghanistan. Aristotle coughed. I've grown used to your sudden changes of plans, Bisesa. I remember once Mum? The voice was small, sleepy. Bisesa turned. Myra was barefoot, her tummy stuck out, fist rubbing at one eye, hair tousled, a barely awake eight-year-old. She was wearing her favorite pajamas, the ones across which cartoon characters gamboled, even though they were now about two sizes too small for her. You didn't say you were coming home. Something broke inside Bisesa. She reached out. Oh, Myra! Her daughter recoiled. You smell funny. Shocked, Bisesa glanced down at herself. In her jumpsuit, scuffed and torn and coated with sweat-soaked sand, she was as out of place in this twenty-first-century London flat as if she had been wearing a spacesuit. She forced a smile. I guess I need a shower. Then we'll have breakfast, and I'll tell you all about it. . . The light changed, subtly. She turned to the window. There was an Eye over the city, a silver sphere, floating like a barrage balloon. She couldn't tell how far away it was, or how big. But she knew it was an instrument of the Firstborn, who had transported her to Mir, another world, and brought her home. And over the rooftops of London, a baleful sun was rising. The Peak of Eternal Light Mikhail Martynov had devoted his life to the study of Earth's star. And from the first moment he saw the sun, at the beginning of that fateful day, he knew, deep in his bones, that something was wrong. Good morning, Mikhail. The time on the Moon is two o'clock in the morning. Good morning, Mikhail. The time is two o'clock and fifteen seconds. Good morning. . . Thank you, Thales. But he was already up and moving. As always he had woken to within a minute of his personal schedule, without need of Thales's softly spoken electronic wake-up call, a schedule he kept independently of the Houston time to which the rest of the Moon was enslaved. Mikhail was a man of routine. And he would begin the day, as he began every day of his long solitary watches in this Space Weather Service Station, with a walk into the sunlight. He took a quick breakfast of fruit concentrate and water. He always drank the water pure, never polluted with coffee granules or tea leaves, for it was water from the Moon, the result of billions of years of slow cometary accretion and now mined and processed for his benefit by million-dollar robots; he believed it deserved to be savored. He clambered briskly into his EVA suit. Comfortable and easy to use, the suit was the result of six decades development from the clumsy armor worn by the Apollo astronauts. And it was smart, too; some said so smart it could go out Moonwalking by itself. But smart suit or not, Mikhail worked cautiously through a series of manual checks of the suit's vital systems. He lived alone here at the Moon's South Pole, save for the electronic omnipresence of Thales, and everybody knew that low gravity made you dumb—the space stupid, they called it. Mikhail was well aware of the importance of concentrating on the chores necessary to keep himself alive. Still, it was only minutes before he was locked tight into the warm enclosure of the suit. Through the slight distortion of his wedge-shaped visor he peered out at his small living quarters. He was a man equipped for interplanetary space, standing incongruously in a clutter of laundry and unwashed dishes. Then, with a grace born of long practice, he pushed his way out through the airlock, and then the small dustlock beyond, and emerged onto the surface of the Moon. Standing on the slope of a crater rim mountain, Mikhail was in shadow broken only by sparse artificial lighting. Above him stars crowded a silent

sky. When he looked up he had to lean back in his stiff suit he could make out dazzling splashes of light high on the crater wall, places the low polar sunlight could reach. Solar-cell arrays and an antenna farm had been placed up there in the light, as well as the sun sensors that were the Station's main purpose. This Space Weather Service Station, dug into the wall of a crater called Shackleton, was one of the Moon's smaller habitats, just a few inflatable domes linked by low tunnels and heaped over by a layer of charcoal-gray Moon dust. Unprepossessing the hab itself may have been, but it was situated in one of the Moon's more remarkable locations. Unlike the Earth, the Moon's axis has no significant tilt; there are no lunar seasons. And at the Moon's South Pole the sun never rises high in the sky. There the shadows are always long and, in some places, permanent. Thus the pool of darkness in which Mikhail stood had been unbroken for billions of years, save by humans. Mikhail looked down the slope, beyond the low bulges of the Station domes. On Shackleton's floor floodlights revealed a complex tangle of quarries and lumbering machines. Down there robots toiled over the real treasure of this place: water. When the Apollo astronauts had brought home their first dusty Moon rocks, the geologists had been dumbfounded that the samples contained not a trace of water, not even bound chemically into the mineral structures. It took some decades to unravel the truth. The Moon was no sister world of Earth but a daughter, created in the early days of the solar system when a collision with another infant world had smashed apart a proto-Earth. The debris that had eventually coalesced into the Moon had been superheated until it glowed blue-white, in the process driving off every trace of water. Later, comets had splashed on the Moon's surface. Out of the billions of tonnes of water delivered by these lesser impacts, most had been lost immediately. But a trace, just a trace, had found its way to the permanently shadowed floors of the polar craters, a gift of water to the Moon as if in recompense for the circumstances of its birth. By Earth's standards the Moon's water was little enough not much more than a respectably sized lake but for human colonists it was a treasure beyond price, literally worth far more than its weight in gold. It was invaluable for the scientists too, as it bore a record of eons of cometary formation, and offered indirect clues to the formation of Earth's oceans, which had also been bequeathed by cometary impacts. Mikhail's interest in this place was not lunar ice, however, but solar fire. He turned away from the shadows and began to toil up the steepening slope of the rim mountain toward the light. The path was just a trail, beaten flat by human footprints. It was marked by streetlights, as everybody called them, small globe lamps hung from poles, so he could see what he was doing. The slope was steep, each step an effort even in the Moon's gentle one-sixth gravity. His suit helped, with a subtle hum from exoskeletal servos and a high-pitched whir of the fans and pumps that labored to keep his faceplate clear of condensed sweat. He was soon breathing hard, and his muscles ached pleasantly: this walk was his daily constitutional. At last he reached the summit of the mountain and emerged into flat sunlight. A small collection of robot sensors huddled here, peering with unending electronic patience at the sun. But the light was too brilliant for Mikhail's eyes, and his visor quickly opaqued. The view around him was still more dramatic, and complex. He was standing on the rim of Shackleton, itself a comparatively minor crater, but here at its western rim Shackleton intersected the circles of two other craters. The landscape was jumbled on a superhuman scale: even the craters far rims were hidden by the Moon's horizon. But with long practice Mikhail had trained himself to make out the chains of mountains, slowly curving, that marked the perimeters of these overlapping scars. And all this was thrown into stark relief by the low light of the sun as it rolled endlessly around the horizon, the long shadows it cast turning like clock hands. The South Pole, shaped when the Moon was young by an immense impact that had bequeathed it the deepest crater in all the solar system, was the most contorted landscape on the Moon. A greater contrast to the flat basalt plain of Tranquillity where Armstrong and Aldrin had first landed, far to the north close to the Moon's equator, would be hard to imagine. And this peak was a special place. Even here among the mountains of the Pole, most places knew some night, as the passing shadows of one crater wall or another blocked out the light. But the peak on which Mikhail stood was different. Geological chance had left it steeper and a little taller than its cousins to either side, and so no shadow ever reached its summit. While the Station, only footsteps away, was in perpetual darkness, this place was in permanent sunlight; it was the Peak of Eternal Light. There was nowhere like this on tipped-over Earth, and only a handful of locations like it on the Moon. There was no morning here, no true night; it was no wonder that Mikhail's personal clock drifted away from the consensus of the rest of the Moon's inhabitants. But it was a strange, still landscape that he had grown to love. And there was no better place in the Earth-Moon system to study the sun, which never set from this airless sky. But today, as he stood here, something troubled him. Of course he was alone; it was inconceivable that anybody could sneak up on the Station without a hundred automatic systems alerting him. The silent sentinels of the solar monitors showed no signs of disturbance or

change, either not that a cursory eyeball inspection of their casings, wrapped in thick meteorite shielding and Kevlar, would have told him anything. So what was troubling him? The stillness of the Moon was an uncomfortable place to be having such feelings, and Mikhail shivered, despite the comfortable warmth of his suit. Then he understood. Thales. Show me the sun. Closing his eyes, he lifted his face toward the glare. When he opened his eyes Mikhail inspected a strange sun. The center of his faceplate had blocked much of the light of the main disk. But he could make out the sun's atmosphere, the corona, a diffuse glow spreading over many times the sun's diameter. The corona had a smooth texture that always reminded him of mother-of-pearl. But he knew that that smoothness masked an electromagnetic violence that dwarfed any human technology indeed, a violence that was a principal cause of the damaging space weather he had devoted his own life to monitoring. At the center of the corona he made out the disk of the sun itself, reduced by the visors' filters to a sullen, coal-like glow. He called for magnification and could make out a speckling that might be granules, the huge convection cells that tiled the sun's surface. And just visible near the very center of the disk, he made out a darker patch obviously not a granule, but much more extensive. An active region, he murmured. And a big one, Thales replied. I don't have my log to hand . . . Am I looking at 12687? For decades humans had been numbering the active regions they observed on the sun, the sources of flares and other irritations. No, Thales said smoothly. Active Region 12687 is subsiding, and is a little farther west. Then what? This region has no number. It is too new. Mikhail whistled. Active regions usually took days to develop. By studying the resonances of the sun, immense slow sound waves that passed through its structure, you could usually spot major regions on the far side, even before the sun's stately rotation brought them into view. But this beast, it seemed, was different. The sun is restless today, Mikhail murmured. Mikhail, your tone of voice is unusual. Did you suspect the active region was there before you asked for the display? Mikhail had spent a lot of time alone with Thales, and he thought nothing of this show of curiosity. One gets an instinct for these things. The human sensorium remains a mystery, doesn't it, Mikhail? Yes, it does. Out of the corner of his eye Mikhail spotted movement. He turned away from the sun. When his faceplate cleared he made out a light, crawling toward him through the lunar shadows. It was a sight almost as unusual, for Mikhail, as the face of the troubled sun. It seems I have a visitor. Thales, you'd better make sure we have enough hot water for the shower. He began to pick his way back down the trail, taking care to plan every step in advance despite his mounting excitement. This looks like it's going to be quite a day, he said. From the Hardcover edition. From Publishers Weekly. Set in the same universe as Clarke's 2001 and its sequels, Clarke and Baxter's second and final Time Odyssey book (after 2004's Time's Eye) will especially appeal to fans of hard SF who appreciate well-grounded science and humans with a can-do attitude to problem solving. In 2037, the same day the enigmatic alien Firstborn return Bisea Dutt, the heroine of Time's Eye, to her home in London, the city grinds to a halt as a sun storm sends a massive surge of energy to Earth, temporarily destroying the world's electronic infrastructure. This surge presages another, much larger sun storm, due to hit in 2042, which will utterly annihilate life across the globe. Against all odds, the nations of Earth come together to construct a huge space umbrella that will shield the planet from the worst of the barrage. The answer to why the sun's activity is being manipulated to wipe out life on Earth must wait, given the day-to-day difficulties and politics of the construction project. The five-year sweep of events, the plethora of characters and the cuts from Mars to Earth to the moon during the climactic sun storm give the story a movie montage feel, but the focus on the enormously challenging task at hand will keep readers turning the pages. Agent, Scovil, Chichak, Galen. (Mar. 1) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.