



**Songs of Jampa Dorje**

DPress 2002 Sebastopl

*Art by Claude Smith*

*In Memory of  
Philip Whalen  
(1923-2002)  
&  
Joe Saviers  
(1950-2002)*

## **SITTING IN THE SAN JUANS**

taking teaching from Tulku Sang-ngag  
who was incarcerated in Chinese prisons for ten years.

He relates how happy he was when he discovered  
the blissful state of samadhi and could enter it  
while he was working at cutting logs  
but how this got him into trouble with the guards  
and the beatings he received.

He teaches us how to enter this state  
with a breathing practice called *tsalung*  
but while he is teaching this practice, a pickup arrives,  
and the port-a-potty man pumps out the honey box.

Tulku Sang-ngag is explaining how the seed syllable  
in the crown chakra melts into nectar  
when the odor of shit wafts through the yurt.

Eyes roll, noses lift, but everyone seems determined  
to maintain their composure as they realize  
the essential unity of the relative and the absolute.

Then, the lama laughs, and we join him.

## **DECISIONS, DECISIONS**

So many decisions, so much chance for derision—  
the deadly wind of praise and blame.

Birget's luscious Tara statue stands before the throne,  
but Tulku Sang-ngag says he would prefer it on the altar  
with the mandala offering placed in a lower position.

He does not mention which direction  
the Tara statue should stand on the altar.  
Should it face the lama when he's teaching  
or should it face the entrance?

I opt for Tara facing the throne— wrong.  
Rinpoche gives a lion's roar of laughter  
when he finds he must prostrate to Tara's butt.

## **PARTY DOWN, RINPOCHE**

And night time is a time for song and dance.  
After the Riwo Sangchod Retreat,  
we party at Tsultrim's and David's new house.

Tulku Sang-ngag feels expansive and dances  
the Warrior Dance of King Gesar,  
jabbing at the air with an African spear.

Ani Tersing translates one of the tulku's poems.  
Although her English falters,  
her voice is star-flecked.  
She knows more than she knows she knows.

"Red bird...big bird...a vulture...eating  
dead people on the mountain."

We are inspired to sing 'Blackbird Singing'  
and, much to David's chagrin,  
'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' and, then,  
'Om Tare Tutare' to flute and drum.

Given the right rhythm, even the dead can dance.

## **EVERYTHING IS PEACE**

I enter the quiet where flies buzz  
and leaves rustle in their immortality.

The silence ends at a yellow bird,  
a Western Tanager— I looked him up—  
atop a stalk of last year's mullein.

Each moment has its own climax.

## **A FLOATING REFLECTION**

I drift in infinite space,  
or no space,  
an illusion of myself  
in an obscure place—

Emptiness holds me up.

## **HUM OF AN INSECT**

During pointing out instructions  
a fly flies in my mouth,  
and I wonder if I will ever get it.

Stabilize in rigpa, that is.

I'm sitting, and then the fly flies in,  
and I sit with this fly in my mouth,  
all revved up, but I'm sitting still,  
and the fly walks out of my mouth  
and along my upper lip and onto my nose  
and then buzzes off into the limpid, blue sky  
and I am left feeling empty  
and a trifle confused.

During the question and answer period,  
I ask Rinpoche, "If I am sitting in rigpa  
and the fly is inside me, is the fly in rigpa?"

Tsok Nyi says, "We'll have to ask the fly."

## **SAMSARA IS AN AIRPORT**

Samsara is an airport surrounding a delayed flight.  
I'm stretched out with my eyes closed  
listening to the travelers and the intercom.

"...want my money back..."

"...want to be in San Francisco, now..."

"...really no reason for this..."

"...is it a red color code, today?"

"...is it really raining there?..."

"...will my luggage arrive?..."

"...will the pilots for flight 2807  
please report to Gate A6?..."

All this inside me.

## **DIRGE**

everybody knew  
your friends knew

your family  
your psychiatrist knew

but you kept drinking  
and drinking and drinking

and now your friends say prayers  
by the oven where you are cremated

and we did a puja in the gompa on a full moon night  
Tashi heard your voice, it was raining through sunlight

two rainbows appeared, so she put flowers on the shrine  
and Jack got a message, "What's up with the dead flowers?"

## **INTO THE LION'S MOUTH**

It's a very relaxed atmosphere in Hidden Valley.  
Des and Norbu are playing "Lion."  
They are making growling noises.  
Horses graze in the shade of the big elm.  
We've had a short puja, and we're all laid back.

I pluck up the courage to ask Rinpoche for a teaching  
on the *Dance of the Three Vajras*, which I'm learning.  
Mind transmission of OM AH HUM as the essence  
of the Five Seed Syllables of Samatabhadra.  
Inner, outer, secret, and innermost secret  
oral instructions on the Vajra Dances.

The body is a mandala, the world is a mandala,  
the movement, a dance of light and rays and sound.  
Manifesting as Tara or Avalokitesvara,  
receiving the blessings of the siddhis.

Purification of all realms occurring  
as we move through Samsara,  
and while we dance we are manifesting  
The State of Natural Perfection, our true nature,  
the actualization of the Energy of Dharmadatu.  
I shut up after this and enjoy the picnic.

When I get back to the mandala,  
I no longer have to look at my feet.  
I am transported into a realm of clarity and movement.  
The sky, the clouds, my breath, the scent of rabbit ear sage,  
*A La La Ho.*

## **PROTECTOR OF THE BENT**

a heart vowed to eradicate hells,

if I don't help who will?

warrior of the byways  
plunging into black chaos

into the unknown  
into the matrix of the world

I watch where I step—

if it's green with whiskers  
it's probably a Leprechaun

if it's soft and steamy  
it's probably a cow pie

## **SKYLINES**

Sky in my mind  
Sky in my voice  
Sky in my heart

Walking the path  
our fingers touch  
beneath the stars

We make funny sounds  
in the serious stillness

Much laughter  
much joy  
pervasive and empty

## **1-800-BUDDHAS**

*for Joe*

you have reached the offices  
of Guru, Dharma & Sangha  
this is a recorded message  
if you have a touch-tone phone  
press the appropriate button

having pure intention  
and you want to take refuge  
press 1 for Hinayana  
press 2 for Mahayana  
press 3 for Mantrayana  
press 4 for Dzogchen

if you miss part of the transmission  
it will repeat itself upon completion  
if you have any questions  
press the # key, and a Bodhisattva  
will come on the line to assist you

for those with desire-attachment  
or guests of karmic payments  
we suggest dialing our new number  
1-900-Distract

press 1 for a crazy-wisdom bitch  
press 2 for yidams in leather  
press 3 for assorted hindrances  
press 4 to be listened to attentively

## **RAINBOW HEART**

*for David*

84,000 passions give rise  
to flowers, rivers and mountains

appearing in a rainbow sphere  
dancing with bell and drum

she feeds her demons  
and dissolves duality

white feast  
red feast  
black feast

essence of the elements  
conquest over hope and fear



## **AND PUS FOR THE HUNGRY GHOSTS**

I'm sitting, happily reading  
in a mandala of sunlight  
a goddess with golden hands  
feeling neither anger  
nor joy  
my forgiving heart  
sends out a secret mantra  
to prevent war

## **DHARMA TALK**

Blue flurry near where  
my prayer flags flutter.  
A jay drinks  
from one of my offering bowls.

I try to teach this jay to chant  
without much success.  
He nods inquisitively  
then continues his way beyond training.

## **SIT LIKE A MOUNTAIN**

I'm in the tent of self-produced mind  
late at night, candles flickering  
soaking up his mind essence, like  
being in Tibet a thousand years ago  
with Guru Rinpoche, tough and gentle.

He taught three words that hit the vital point  
Lama Wangdor, doing it the hard way

sitting on his ass in a cave for twenty years  
until his bone touched the stone  
listening to waves of bliss-emptiness  
crash on the shore of nirvana.

Noise floods in from the street  
here in the pure land of Santa Rosa.  
One taste in the supermarket aisle—  
and new asanas for highway maneuvers.

## **TARA-PEACH TRANSMISSION**

Adzom wants to learn how to can peaches.  
Tsultrim is telling him how, step by step.  
Erik translates. Adzom takes notes,  
while giving Tsultrim a short version of the Tara practice,  
which he wants included at the end of the main text.  
I sit outside the tent, chuckling to myself,  
waiting for the text to emerge,  
so I can run off another edition of the book.

Adzom is transmitting it word by word.  
Tsultrim writes down each word in phonetic Tibetan,  
and Erik translates it into English.  
Then, another step in the process of canning peaches,  
and Erik translates that into Tibetan,  
and Adzom writes it down in his notebook.  
Then, another line of the Tara practice,  
and Tsultrim writes that down, and Erik translates.

*OM CHAG TSAL JETSUN TARE*  
*OM* Homage to Jetsun *TARE* Goddess  
Wash jars, rinse. Place jars in hot water.  
*TU TA RA E YI DUNG WA KUNCHOB*  
*TU TA RA E* Save from all suffering  
Pack the sliced peaches into hot jars.  
*TUGJE TOGMED TURE PALMO*  
Unimpeded compassion *TURE* Glorious One  
Leave one finger of space at top of jar.  
*DAK LA DRUPCHOK TSOL CHIK SWA HA*  
Grant me the ultimate siddhi *SWA HA*

Cover with boiling sryup, leaving headspace.

## **DEJA VOODOO**

*for Ashlee*

o, never always  
would the mind  
let go

even the grass  
will attain  
liberation

## **WARM LIGHT**

*for Brent*

spring soon  
still winter

still winter stillness  
the brown ground moves

bees have no attainment  
bees have no non-attainment

## **THINGS CHANGE YET ARE ONE**

Mountain Blue Bird  
Varied thrush  
Starling  
Stellers Jay

A jay and a lizard in a fray,  
Lizard tugged by jay.  
Jay pecks yet kept at bay.  
Clap of hands— jay flies away.

Porcupine  
Red Squirrel  
Shrew  
Wood Mouse

Lists never end, nor do difficulties  
and obstacles.  
Not easy to outwit the fox of desire.

## **ADDLEHEADED IN SAFEWAY**

beyond joy and woe  
where I can do what I do  
without having to lie

Jigme Lingpa arises in the eggplants  
transmits mantra to my inner idiot

OM AH HUM OM AH HUM  
WICHA TYE TYE WICHA TYE TYE  
CUMA ROMA CUMA ROMA HEY HEY

coming before coming before  
coming way before coming

## **SPACE & LONGING & A FEW FLASHES OF LIGHT**

*for Jane*

Early morning in the garden  
different intensities of color  
grass and stone.

So hot— no hurry— heavy air  
water-loaded air moving slowly  
across the yard.

Practice no-resistance  
just a fan and a hammock  
in Tornado Alley.

## BACK FROM A RETREAT

This morning, feeling  
that I am finally integrated into my normal,  
Santa Rosa routine body,  
noticing the levels of protective shield forming,  
able to get through the day,  
driving the freeways,  
maneuvering the shopping lanes,  
reduced awareness of the intense abrasives and chaos,  
still a few reverberating visions lingering  
at the threshold of the doors of my senses,  
but my clam shell is nearly in place,  
once again robotic responses to samsaric stimuli  
are practically automatic.

## BASELINE

I've been told. I've been shown.  
It's been pointed out— the path, the fruit.

I see a little dog.  
I wonder why he doesn't have a tail.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any hair.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any eyes.  
I wonder why he doesn't have a head.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any feet.  
I wonder how he is trotting down the street.

As Jigme Lingpa says, "Through examples,  
one recognizes the meaning.  
Through signs, one comes to believe."

## A SIGN

I'm walking up a trail, deep in conversation with Debbie.  
We are talking about *tigles*, tiny rainbow spheres,

when I see a little flash of light shooting down the trail,  
and a young chipmunk runs under my boot.

With its spine crushed, blood running from its mouth,  
and it writhing in the dust, I tell Debbie to walk ahead.  
She'll not want to watch what I am going to do.

I've lived on farms.

It's reasonable to put down a suffering animal.

A blow to the head with a rock, and the creature is still.  
I dig a small hole, put in a few leaves to make a cushion,  
and lay the body of the chipmunk in its grave.

I say a mantra.

I cover it with earth and place a cobble on top.

During one Dharma talk, the subject of killing comes up,  
the difference between accidental and intentional acts of killing,  
so I tell about it, and Adzom says, the first act was accidental  
& didn't involve me in the chipmunk's karma in a negative way,  
but that my intentional act of "putting it out of its misery"  
was more serious in its repercussions, that I should have left it  
to "burn out its karma" without interfering in the process.

Such is the difference between the East and the West.

My chances of being reincarnated as a chipmunk are very good.

## **PARDON MY FRENCH**

We are studying the Ngöndro text,  
and Erik suddenly chokes and says  
that we shouldn't say the next line.

There's a mistake in the phonetic Tibetan.  
A word is misspelled, which has then become  
a colloquial term, so that the line reads  
"naturally arising Fuck Body."

## **ON THE ROAD HOME**

Driving through the small village of Gem,

I point to a twenty-foot stack of elk antlers  
in front of a shop, probably a tannery,  
where there's a sign, "The Buck Stops Here."

Lama Gyurme Tsering's eyes get really big,  
and his mantra machine kicks into overdrive.  
Within a mile, a huge rainbow arcs across the road.  
"Man, Tsering, you liberated a whole herd of dead elk."

## **STUFF OF LEGENDS**

It's getting late, going on midnight.  
Where is my ride?  
I phone camp, but no one picks up,  
so I keep on printing.

I'll hike back— only fifteen miles.  
Shouldn't take but half the night.  
I'll make it in time for the puja.

But I don't have a coat.  
What can I use to keep warm?  
This door cover with an eternal knot embroidered on it?  
I see myself walking all night wrapped in a door cover,  
carrying a box of Tibetan texts along the county road.

Then, I'm hiking the last three miles,  
wishing I knew how to do yogic fast walking,  
when I encounter a mountain lion in the dark.  
All that's found of me are shreds of the door covering,  
the scattered texts, and a leg bone,  
which makes a good thigh bone trumpet.

## **AND HERE I AM**

mistakes in my mind  
but light in my heart

Ol' Dog  
dancing to a drum

with feathers on

"Look!"

I'm growing wings

I'm

falling in love

## **CHACO RIVER BEING**

*for Gaela*

what is it  
gives pleasure  
in a minim?

don't ask,  
let's not  
force it

## **OL' DOG AT THE END OF SUMMER**

not sure which side's up  
doing my doggie thing

going to town to print some poems  
only it's Labor Day

and the streets are empty  
except for flags

I flap about  
have a cup of tea

figure, since it's Labor Day  
I'll honor the struggle

lucky me, others mostly  
have to work harder to make



ends meet

## **BIG MAP**

summer signing off with a scorcher  
kids hit the water with a vengeance

at the city pool, parking places full  
cars soaking up the sunshine

I'm sitting here, feeling transparent  
and not particularly real

maybe it's all this talk of war  
the West Nile virus in our blood stream

or the battle around who's  
going to pick up the garbage

how can I take myself seriously  
when everything's the world

everywhere it's happening  
everything is everywhere?

## **PRAISE AND BLAME, LOSS AND GAIN**

To be peace— empty, clear, compassionate in this  
Jumble of good and evil and not escape through sleep  
Through normalcy, through wrapping myself in the flag

A prayer tree flutters in our town square  
Prayers for war to disappear in this warm breeze  
The leaves are prayers blowing in the deadly winds

## **BUDDHA'S LAST WORDS**

This stuff is just stuff.

Keep on keepin' on.

## **TELECOSMOS**

the sunshine  
beyond the actual sun

is a song you sang  
along the San Juan

a canticle of water and air  
a riff of iridescence

## **COASTWALK**

I walk along the lost coast  
I become limpid blue sky

seaweed seaspray  
seagulls and sand

dry wet high low  
empty full fast slow

bored blissed

## **AT COLD MOUNTAIN BOOKSTORE**

*for Charles & Nancy*

At my reading  
a man named Neah  
asks if he can say  
a few words.

I say, "No," and  
he turns away.  
And then,  
the mist clears,

and I ask him to do  
his thing—  
a bit from Jung  
on the *eternal fountain*.

Try and buy the well,  
and it dries up  
and then springs up  
somewhere else.

My shadow and I  
make a wise choice  
on this western face  
of Cold Mountain.

## **POEM WITHIN A PLAY WITHIN A STORY**

I went to an art opening by Claude Smith in  
Railroad Square  
in Santa Rosa. His show was titled *Wabisabi*,  
which is a Japanese Zen  
phrase referring to the beauty of things  
impermanent, imperfect,  
and incomplete. The artworks were found  
objects,  
stained ceiling tiles, tattered awnings, a  
large film box  
with the corner torn out revealing the  
word "signature,"  
rusted metal, busted shingles. Claude's  
expertise is in  
presentation and juxtaposition.  
When I lived on the ranch in Ellensburg,  
I began collecting  
junk I found laying around, and I attached  
it to the old  
outbuildings until I had them completely  
covered with bones,  
rope, barbed wire, twisted metal, old farm  
implements, broken

furniture, whatever seemed to fit. *Fit*,  
Belle Randall tells  
me is an Old English verse form, as in  
Lewis Carroll's verse  
"The Hunting of the Snark," which is a  
poem in 8 fits.  
I've always found my found object  
sculptures a satisfying  
extension to my collages, a shift in scale  
and a challenge  
in how to engineer objects so that the  
least amount of  
fasteners, glue, wire, nails are used  
to hold the structure  
together. These "combines" are assembled  
as though there is  
an inner fusion of parts, a union of  
forces, a merging of  
disparate elements, a meshing of objects  
in a metaphysic so  
loose that no accident is possible. This  
is the power of  
hoodoo. Have you heard of hoodoo? Hoodoo?  
Yes, he do. He  
do what? He do whatever he wants. How?  
By the power. What  
power? The power of hoodoo. He has the  
power. Who do?  
He does. Does what? Have the power. What  
power? The power  
of hoodoo. This is a vaudeville routine I was  
reminded of after watching the  
San Quentin Drama Production of *Endgame*  
by Samuel Beckett  
with my 98 year old dad, who amazingly  
became quite focused,  
actually riveted. The main character,  
Hamm, is a blind, old  
man who pretty much dominates center stage  
in his armchair.  
He is attended by his adopted son, Clov,  
who is his lackey.  
Two other characters, Hamm's aged parents,

Nagg and Nell, are  
contained in two barrels and make brief  
appearances. The scene: bare  
interior, gray light, two small windows, Hamm  
in his armchair on castors  
covered with an old sheet, and the two ash bins  
containing Nagg and Nell.

After a brief tableau, Clove speaks at the  
very beginning,

"Finished, it's finished, nearly finished,  
it must be nearly  
finished. (Pause.) Grain upon grain, one  
by one, and one  
day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap,  
the impossible  
heap. (Pause.) I can't be punished any  
more. (Pause.)

I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten  
feet by ten feet,  
and wait for him to whistle me. (Pause.)"

This was so like  
the actual reality of my situation, I was amazed  
when Dad turned to me and said,  
"I don't need to watch this. I'm aware there are  
these changes."

(Note: Quote from Endgame by Samuel Beckett, Grove Press, 1970)

## **EARTH TERMA**

I find Tulku Gyurme on the path  
bent over with the dry heaves.  
I'm patting him on the back  
when I hear my name called,  
and Adzom beckons us to come.

He points to a rock, moves his hand in a circle.  
I remove the rock.  
He hands me a sharp stick, and I dig.

It's daylight, but it is like a long night.

A piece of paper appears.  
I can see Tibetan script bleeding in the damp.  
I want to unfold this dark treasure,  
but Adzom makes a gesture for fire,  
both hands upturned, fingers wiggling.

I try to build a small fire with wet leaves and twigs.  
Ani Sherab comes with a box of kitchen matches,  
and we light the whole box and hold the paper  
over the flames between two sticks.

The paper catches and curls into a question.

Adzom dances in a circle, flapping his arms.  
We all bow to one another and go our separate ways.  
Later, I ask Erik, who translates for Adzom,  
what all this was about, and he says,  
"So, you're becoming a magician's apprentice."

## **MORE LIGHT**

my father gulps air  
jaw slack, hands astray  
in front of the TV  
sound on full blast

he can't make out the words  
but the music helps him sleep  
it's Ida Lupino Month on *TCM*  
May and December

his 75th Masonic Anniversary  
at the Luther Burbank Lodge tonight  
proud he can walk to the East  
worried he won't remember the Word

how to tie his tie is a real mystery  
his first car, a 1916 *Buick*  
I drive into the fire  
to help him

## **SAMSORRY**

I'm looking for an exit  
from this buddhadrama

an exit out  
of the head

an exit in  
to the heart

grasshoppers jump for joy  
when the grass is liberated

## **ENERGY**

At the end of summer  
two boys and a dog  
splash in the river.

Light through the leaves—  
no death in them.

## **SAMBHOGAKAYA COWBOY**

rein in your mind  
there's rain in your mind

don't shy, relax  
let it fall

you built it  
now, it's gone

it's alright  
the tears

head 'em up  
herd 'em out

## **CARRYING MY BONES**

rays of light coming out of me  
as I walk down the street

I'm walking an inch above the pavement  
skimming the surface

responding to the simplicity of rainbow body  
while I dissolve into a welcome mystery

ahead of me, temptations pile up