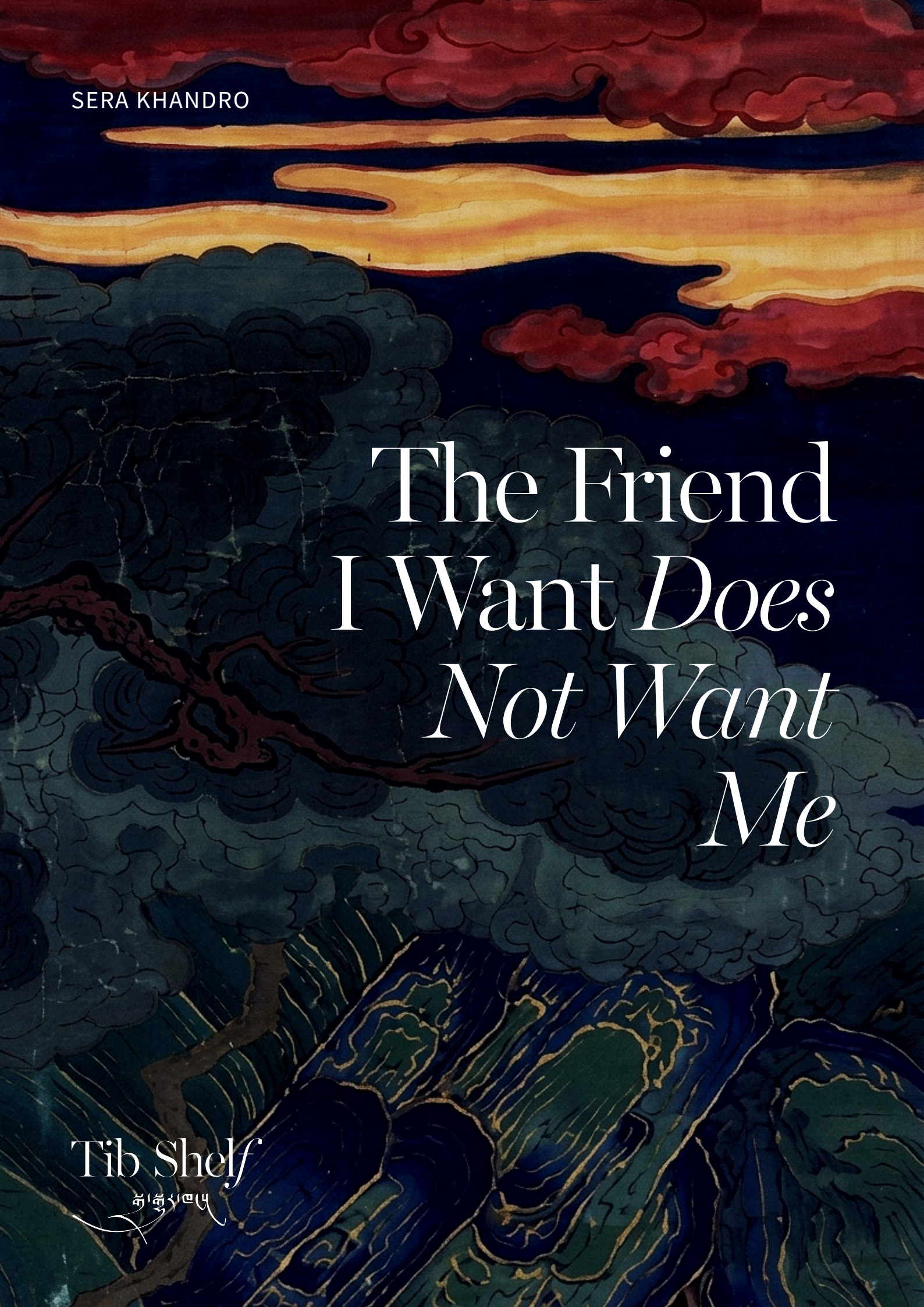




SERA KHANDRO

The Friend
I Want *Does*
Not Want
Me

Tib Shelf

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The Friend I Want Does Not Want Me
By Sera Khandro

Translated by Tib Shelf



The Friend I Want Does Not Want Me

By Sera Khandro

Listen, Chötreng, kindred friend of mine!
 This story of a woman can never be told in full.
 Though I am but twenty-three years of age,
 In all my karma, good and bad, in all my joy and sorrow,
 My suffering equals that of one aged eighty.

At first, I was my parents' cherished child,
 Nourished on the three whites and three sweets.¹
 My body's radiance rivalled even the gods above—
 Adorned in precious jewels,
 Draped in costly silks.
 Suitor after suitor vied to claim my hand,
 Courting me with riches, with every luxury.
 My parents' wealth and power swelled my pride—
 I spared no thought for the Dharma.

In the middle period, through the compassion of the Three Jewels,
 I saw my homeland as an isle of flesh-eating demons,
 My kin as iron shackles of *saṃsāra*,
 This body's beauty as the wellspring of the five poisons,
 And wealth and property as the seeds of sin.

¹ The “three whites” (*dkar gsum*) are milk, curd and butter; the “three sweets” (*mngar gsum*) are honey, molasses and sugar. Together they evoke the rich food with which Sera Khandro was nourished as a cherished child.



The thought arose in me to wander without fixed abode.
 I cut across the black earth with each stride,
 Wearing the white clouds as a hat upon my head.
 For sustenance, I had only black water and air.
 My radiant skin turned ashen, like a risen corpse.
 My clothes, thin rags, could not turn back even a breeze.
 They all called me beggar-woman, demoness;
 They drove me off, would not let me near,
 Tossed their scraps of food and drink from afar.
 Still, I persevered,
 And pursued the path of Dharma with pure resolve.

The road to distant lands wore me to nothing.
 Winter's biting winds raised blisters head to toe,
 Leaving only my tongue untouched.
 Blood and pus flowed without cease.
 Illness lingered, sharp and long—
 No different from the Cold Hells.

When the signs of spring returned,
 Like a hungry ghost, I found not one morsel to eat.
 Outside, the cutting wind gave no mercy;
 Within, lack of food and clothing tormented me.
 Strength drained from every limb.
 My body could no longer bear its own weight—
 A feather with a broken quill.
 Though my heart yearned to go on,
 I could cover ground no more.

And when the great wind element raged,
 My body was blown about like weathered paper.
 Ravaged by starvation, I lost consciousness.
 Such unbearable suffering I endured—
 Though I had not died,
 It was as though born into hell.



In the end, I became a servant to others.
 I toiled at the never-ending tasks of saṃsāra—
 Though I saw the pointlessness of it all.
 Just as the deities and gurus foretold,
 Now I have become neither nun nor laywoman.

Through the force of past negative karma,
 Wherever I go, I become a servant.
 Though Dharma should be guarded as treasure,
 I let it slip away in deference to others.
 Though the auspicious time had come,
 It was obscured by my own ill deeds.
 Just as Lord Milarepa said:
*'The friend I want does not want me;
 The bad companion who wants me, I refuse.'*
 Yet by the power of the Protector Padmasambhava's aspirations —
 What lies ahead, no one can say.



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Tib Shelf
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