

***Smiling Buddha***

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Look at the smiling Buddha  
The left hand gathers love from the world  
as a gift to the other universe,  
where all is always well.  
The right hand sternly points down  
to the earth.  
Straight fingers, simple laws –  
stand upright, patiently wait  
for the rain of blessings to fall upon you  
with the weight of Buddha's crown.

When I saw my first Buddha  
I thought it was a mistake,  
Not a handsome young shepherd  
Carrying a wounded lamb across his shoulders  
Not a stern, bearded countenance  
With a gold halo and almond eyes  
Piercing me to the core of my being  
But this, just this, only this –  
An overabundance of serenity  
Contentment and a smile, always  
A new puzzle and a smile

*Yes, the Awakened One  
I will close my eyes to see*



Illustration by Stephen Linsteadt