

# A MAIDEN'S CHOICE

a narrative presentation  
of the *Song of Solomon*

by  
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## PROLOGUE

Solomon's father, David, had been a shepherd boy when God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint David to be the second king of Israel. Many years later, Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, conceived a child when King David committed adultery with her in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel. Upon learning of the pregnancy, David arranged the death of Bathsheba's husband so she could be brought to the palace as another wife for David. A baby boy was born, but lived only a week. Prince Solomon was the next child born to King David and Bathsheba. Solomon was brought up in a life of privilege. His father died when Solomon was a young man, and he was crowned the third king over the united kingdom of Israel. He requested wisdom to rule and God granted it. He became a great king in many ways. Some believe Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. However, he did not always avail himself of that wisdom as we learn from his book, "Ecclesiastes." He eventually accumulated a harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines.

King Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (or poems). Only the best of these, "The Song of Solomon," or "The Song of Songs," remains with us to this day in the Hebrew Bible. This composition was surely an early form of opera. Opera is an art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic work that combines text (the libretto) and musical notes (the score). In the following narrative most of the artistic rendering has been removed, while attempting to maintain the storyline about the emotional turmoil of young love. Some embellishment of the story was unavoidable to provide a fresh and enlightening interpretation. If you are a purist, please do not hesitate to consult the original poetic version in your Bible.

A Shulamite girl was born to poor villagers who rented vineyards from King Solomon. Apparently, her father died when she was very young. She had older brothers and no sisters. Her mother taught her many important lessons about life and love. The girl developed into a beautiful young lady who grew fond of a local shepherd.

The Bible does not give us the names of the Shulamite girl or her shepherd boyfriend. For the purposes of this story, let us call them Shumara and Jedidiah.

It is the assertion of this writer that this is a true story in which a girl must choose between a rich man and a poor man. One seems to offer a lifetime of luxury and pleasure. Another can provide a life filled with romance and joy. Which would you choose? A life of ease without real love or a life of toil with true love?

## THE SONG OF SONGS

Once upon a time in a faraway land ...

King Solomon went to the countryside to inspect his vineyards and orchards. A beautiful young maiden caught his eye. As king, Solomon had become accustomed to obtaining anything or anyone he desired. He summoned this pretty teenager to share the evening meal with him in his camp. Anticipating that she would not have appropriate attire to wear in the presence of royalty, he assigned some of his servant girls to bathe, groom, and dress Shumara before her first meeting with the King.

Shumara was honored to accept the invitation to dine with Israel's king. However, this Shulamite maiden was a country girl. She had no experience that would prepare her to be in the presence of a man known to be the wisest, wealthiest, and most powerful in the world at that time. She had heard tales of beautiful girls being invited to move to Jerusalem, the capital city, to live at the King's palace.

While she was being made presentable to meet the King, she thought about the possibilities and opportunities that could be hers if he took a fancy to her. As the servant girls began to attend to Shumara, she felt a unique sensation that she was someone special. She began to reminisce about her life and wondered if she would ever again see her friend, Jedidiah, the shepherd.

Shumara shared with the King's servant girls her thoughts about enjoying Jed's kisses and how his love for her was more relaxing and more satisfying than fine wine. She mentioned how his scent and even his good name and reputation were more pleasing than the sweet-smelling ointments that were being applied during her makeover. She had noticed how the other village girls were also attracted to her boyfriend because of his character and personality.

In all of Shumara's simple life, there had been no experience to compare with the excitement of this afternoon. She knew this could be the most important day of her life. Shumara was apprehensive about meeting someone as important as the king of Israel. She briefly considered whether she should just run away. She had done nothing that caused her to be in this situation in the King's tent. Conflicted, she wished aloud that her boyfriend would come to rescue her and that they could run away together.

The servant girls attending to Shumara had no way of knowing that she had feelings for an obscure shepherd. The attendants did not recognize that she already had a boyfriend. They did not understand that she was thinking of Jed rather than of this great honor bestowed upon her by King Solomon. They mistook her comments of affection to be about the King and, they, too, expressed their extravagant admiration for him. As if speaking to the King, the servant girls exclaimed, "We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. The upright love you."

Even poor servant girls of the King had lives that shared little or no resemblance to Shumara's life. They spent most of their time indoors, seemingly with no worries about their future. The dark curtains in the tent accentuated how different she looked from her paler skinned attendants. She knew that lighter skin tones were favored for brides, but she had insufficient time to prepare herself. Shumara asked the palace maidens not to think less of her for having brown skin that had been made so dark from spending so much time in the sunshine. She faulted her brothers for forcing

her to care for their vineyards, not allowing her the time to keep up her own vineyard. She knew that she was lovely in spite of the commonness of her labor and her apparel.

Shumara could not help but notice how the skilled servant girls caused her physical beauty to be enhanced. She had been raised to value inward beauty more than the outward appearance. She knew there was greater value in a girl than what could be seen at first glance. The difference between Shumara's values and those of the royal attendants could not have been more obvious.

Shumara's thoughts went back to Jed, who would be busy at his work. He knew nothing of her present whereabouts. His mind was most likely focused on his sheep at that very moment that she was thinking of him. Sheep were important in the Israelite economy for their milk, meat, and wool. Jed responsibly took his sheep out to graze before sunrise and returned them to shelter by sunset. A shepherd had to move his flock of sheep from pasture to pasture throughout the day. A shepherd milked his sheep and made cheese from the milk. It was also a shepherd's duty to keep his flock together, protect the sheep from predators, and guide them to shearing when the time was right.

Shumara daydreamed of asking the shepherd, of whom she was so fond, to tell her where he and his flock could be found at midday. She knew Jed to be a hard worker who would have his sheep sufficiently fed to rest at noon. Perhaps she could find an excuse to be there and share lunch with him. She would not be like a girl who might just gaze upon him from a hiding place, wondering what he thought of her. From their conversations, Shumara knew of Jed's fondness for her and was aware of what he admired in her.

Having listened to her speak incessantly about her sweetheart, the servant girls told Shumara with a hint of derision, "Take your goats and follow the trail left by your boyfriend's sheep if you really want to find him." In other words, she was free to turn down Solomon's offer, if she dared, and leave whenever she chose.

After completing their assignment to make her ready for the King, the servant girls thought that Shumara was the fairest in the land, for the moment. Though it was a common practice for the King to choose a pretty girl and invite her to dine with him, the attendants knew he would not force himself upon her.

After being bathed and elaborately dressed, Shumara saw that she had been made more beautiful and desirable than she or anyone else in her village could have imagined. With this revelation she was unwilling to abandon the idea of living a life of luxury with King Solomon. She was ready to meet the King, and she was eager to impress him. Shumara tried to imagine how charming the King would be. Just being in the King's presence could well make her forget her dreams of being the wife of an unsophisticated shepherd, who, at that moment, was beginning to grow less and less desirable.

As Shumara was seated at the King's dining table, Solomon could not help but notice how stunning she appeared. He cared little, or perhaps none at all, about her character or personality. The King was a busy man. He had little time for building a relationship with a woman through lengthy conversations. He would use flattering words that had worked so many times in the past in similar circumstances with pretty girls who were impressed with his title and wealth.

The very first comment that Shumara heard from Solomon was, "I have compared you, oh my love, to my mare among Pharaoh's chariots." Shumara suspected that the King was not interested in getting to know her nor letting her get to know him. At first she could not believe her ears. As a country girl, Shumara was familiar with the behavior of animals. Stallions pulling the

chariots of Egypt would be very distracted by the King's mare running wild among them. The King's first words to Shumara implied that he was physically aroused by her in a fashion similar to that of a male horse chasing a female horse in heat. Although Shumara had limited experience with men, she perceived this to be a vulgar and rude attempt at a compliment.

Solomon began to admire the jewelry he had loaned to the maiden. He remarked about how the jewels and gold chains enhanced the loveliness of her cheeks and neck. When Shumara's attendants heard the King's compliments about the jewelry she wore, they claimed, with their fashion design skills, they could make Shumara even more attractive with additional gold and silver.

Shumara became keenly aware that the King and others in the room were focused on her appearance. No one showed the least interest in discovering who she was or what she thought. All words spoken seemed to lack depth and sincerity. It sounded as if the very same things may have been said to the last pretty girl who had dined with the King.

She wondered if Solomon had noticed her perfume. The scent stimulated her thoughts to drift to the pouch of aromatic myrrh that laid close to her heart at night while she slept. She fondly remembered the fragrance of the flowers in the vineyards. Memories of those sweet aromas caused her thoughts to return to her beloved shepherd. Shumara's relationship with Jed had grown into a romantic love, although until now she had not fully appreciated the depth of that bond. Her experience with Solomon ran counter to her belief that couples should first get to know one another before sharing intimate thoughts. Shumara was so unimpressed with the pretentiousness and materialism of the King, she began to lose interest in him.

Her attention returned to Solomon when he proclaimed, "Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves." Shumara doubted the propriety, even for a king, to speak only of her physical appearance. Was it appropriate to be speaking in this way to a woman that he had just met? Shumara knew that the King had many wives and concubines. Had they found it enticing to hear such words from the King? Did he truly find her to be more beautiful and charming than they? Shumara may have been naive, but she felt he was treating her merely as an instrument of sexual pleasure. Was he even capable of seeing her as a person?

Shumara did not show any disrespect to the King during their time together at his table. Privately, however, she was unimpressed with his flirtatious words. He appeared incapable of bonding emotionally with her before trying to sexually entice her. Shumara could not help but compare the King with her beloved shepherd. She continued to ponder how she and Jed had developed a deep friendship. In time, she realized that she was emotionally and physically attracted to Jedidiah. This fondness had developed only after they got to know one another.

Shumara envisioned the simplicity of the wooden house she could share with her handsome and thoughtful shepherd compared to the luxury that surrounded Solomon. She tried to imagine the luxurious feeling of joy when she would lie with Jed on their couch if they were to marry. She recalled that Jed had always treated her with courtesy. He had never attempted to seduce her. He had even praised her commitment to remain sexually pure until marriage.

Shumara knew that God had blessed her with physical beauty. King Solomon was not the first to make comments about her good looks. When finally she had opportunity to speak at the King's table, the maiden informed everyone that she recognized that she was a unique and special person. She thought of herself more as a tender flower than a horse. She eloquently acknowledged, "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys."

Solomon replied, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the maidens.” As superior in beauty as a flower is to thorn bushes, so the King saw her physical attractiveness as compared to other maidens. He might call her “my love,” but Shumara did not swoon when he spoke seductive words to her.

After Solomon proclaimed how Shumara stood out in the crowd, she was reminded how Jed stood out like an apple tree among the trees of a forest. She delighted in the thought of sitting in the shade of that tree. She imagined how deliciously sweet its apples would be. The elaborate and colorful banners that decorated the King’s dining chamber paled in comparison to the banner of the shepherd’s love that hung over her. Shumara noted that she was lovesick for the absent shepherd. She preferred the simple foods Jed could provide over the fancy foods before her on the King’s table. Daydreaming of Jed’s right hand holding her tight and his left hand under her head, she eagerly awaited the marriage embrace that could be hers someday.

King Solomon earnestly wanted to add this beauty to his collection. His experience with other peasant girls and princesses had boosted his confidence. With Shumara, though, it was obvious that she was not going to be so easily won with his usual seductive compliments. Still, the King was not deterred from his desire for sexual pleasures nor from his pursuit of finding the perfect woman to fulfill him. Perhaps this beautiful maiden just needed more time to fully appreciate what he could offer her. What the King did not know was that Shumara had already found the lover who was appropriate for her and that she was beginning to recognize that her boyfriend could provide a more meaningful relationship than could be offered by a king with a harem.

Shumara knew that she was not being held captive, but neither did she feel particularly free to return home after dining with the King. Not surprisingly, Solomon had arranged for her to spend the night in the camp. Shumara did not detect anger or disappointment in the King’s eyes when she wisely chose to sleep alone.

For Shumara it was a new and exciting experience for attendants to prepare her for bed. There was no doubt that a pleasurable lifestyle awaited if she made the decision to remain with the King. In spite of her feelings for the shepherd, she could not help but imagine whether something better had come along. Should she forget Jed and get on with what promised to be a new life for her?

Shumara appealed to the maidens from Jerusalem to not try to force her to love the King. She insisted, “Give love time to awaken if it is to be.” She had witnessed mating rituals among the wildlife around her village and understood that even wild animals must become acquainted before they mate.

She then spoke aloud about her pleasant thoughts of her beloved shepherd. He reminded her of a young antelope or deer playing on the mountains. He once playfully hid near her house, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. Oh how she loved his voice. She recalled his loving words to her that day, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

She remembered with fondness the pretty spring day when her shepherd said, “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs. And the vines with the tender grape give forth a pleasant fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliffs, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice. For sweet is your voice, and your countenance is

lovely.”

How she wished that King Solomon had said something that warmed her heart as Jed’s words did.

Shumara knew Jedidiah well enough to know that he would not invite her to meet for a sexual encounter. When he pleaded for her to go with him to a private place, it was to allow them to enjoy each other’s company undisturbed. Unlike Shumara’s encounter with Solomon at dinner, Jed had spoken romantically to her about the weather, the flowers, the birds, the fruit, and many other things. Jed loved to listen to her voice while he focused his attention on her facial expressions. There was no lustful or seductive tone to his speech. Jed was interested in Shumara’s daily life and what dreams she had for her future. After Shumara spoke of the destructive foxes that her brothers warned could spoil their grape harvest, she knew from Jed’s response that he would share in the responsibility of protecting their vineyards, if he remained in her life.

Thinking of these things as she was prepared for bed, Shumara could not hold her tongue. She proclaimed to her attendants, “My beloved is mine, and I am his!” She knew that Jed’s heart was hers and her heart belonged to him. She remembered how beautiful it had been to watch Jed’s sheep eat among the wildflowers.

Shumara had never seen nor had she heard any rumors of laziness in her beloved shepherd. Unlike Solomon, Jed did not have scores of people he could command to do the needed work. If Shumara had opportunity to watch Jed at work again, she would encourage him to be vigorous until the work day ended at sundown each day.

Shumara was dressed in luxury such as she had never seen nor imagined for sleeping. Soon the lamps and candles were extinguished and the tent in Solomon’s camp was quiet and dark. It was thrilling to think that there were two men interested in pursuing her. Nevertheless, she let go of the excitement and eventually fell asleep.

She dreamed that she was frantically searching in the streets and marketplaces for the man she loved. She inquired of the city watchmen, “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” Soon after leaving them, she found the man of her dreams. She hugged him, not wanting to let go. She took him back to her mother’s house and into her room. As dreams often end before concluding, Shumara awoke and it was morning. She found the girls from Jerusalem ready again to attend to whatever needs she had.

Shumara was surrounded by people unfamiliar to her. Her friends and family were not available to advise her. What would her friends who knew Jed recommend? Should she run away from Solomon’s camp and return to her village? Should she give more thought to what life as a queen could mean? Does not every young girl dream of becoming a princess and living happily ever after married to a king? At the moment, she was sure that life in Solomon’s court would be better than spending the rest of her days trapped in poverty. Even the servant girls from Jerusalem had easier lives than she.

Shumara reminded her attendants once again, “Give love time to awaken if it is to be.” Love must be allowed time to develop, just as the wild animals’ attraction for each other needs time to build. Could she forget her love for Jedidiah and develop a love for Solomon? Surely, a king could please her more than a shepherd. Though already impressed by the luxury in the King’s camp, she would go to Jerusalem to see how much more glorious the palace must be. She would have time to make up her mind, she thought, after tasting life at the royal court.

After breakfast the tents were taken down and all was packed for returning to Jerusalem. When the King gave the order to depart, Shumara was sitting in the carriage behind his carriage. As they journeyed, she sensed the distance increasing between her and her shepherd boyfriend. Her sadness was tempered by the excitement of soon experiencing the King's palace.

When the walled city of Jerusalem came into view, Shumara was suddenly filled with hope. They traveled only a short distance farther and she was graciously invited to ride beside the King. When she was relocated to the King's carriage, she noted that it was made of the finest materials, including silver, gold, and purple. The interior had been designed for comfort and elegance, undoubtedly to display wealth and to impress the maidens who were permitted to ride in it. Shumara quickly recognized that this carriage was obviously intended to stimulate sensual desires.

Their entry through the city gates drew a crowd as all parades do. Those in Jerusalem who witnessed this exhibition of majesty promptly determined it was King Solomon returning. They had seen him return to his palace on previous occasions with beautiful women so thought nothing of the pretty Shulamite girl's presence. It was common knowledge that the King could take any female in the kingdom that he wanted. And often foreign rulers would curry the King's favor by giving him a daughter in marriage.

Sixty of the mightiest men in the nation served as Solomon's well-armed bodyguards. They surrounded the carriage as it rolled through the streets heading for the palace. With all the swords in view, Shumara was learning that Jerusalem was not a safe place like her peaceful village.

Mothers watching this parade called for their daughters to behold the King and his crown. Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, gave him the crown on the day of his first marriage, when he was filled with gladness. Future weddings, no doubt, did not hold the same joy for him.

One could not help but be impressed with the palace of King Solomon. It had taken thirteen years to build. Overwhelmingly beautiful, it was constructed of the best cedar from Lebanon. The ground floor covered 11,250 square feet and the building was 45 feet high. Four rows of cedar columns supported trimmed cedar beams. High windows in sets of three provided daytime lighting. There was an attached colonnade that was 75 feet long and 45 feet wide. In front of that was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof. A great courtyard was also part of this complex, surrounded on three sides by blocks of high-grade stone, some as large as 15 feet in length. There were gardens and pools. There was a great number of slaves.

Once the King was back at his palace he had opportunity to have a conversation with Shumara. Instead, he again expressed his desire for her because of her physical appearance. Solomon attempted to win her affection, as he had with numerous other women, solely by offering flattering words about her anatomy. "Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like the doves behind your veil. Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep that are freshly shorn, which came up from the washing; every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them. Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your speech is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate within your locks. Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armory, on which there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Your two breasts are like two young gazelles that are twins, which feed among the lilies."

Unimpressed with the King's proclaimed, but surely exaggerated, physical attraction to her before any emotional bond had even begun to develop, Shumara asked to excuse herself. She



wanted to meditate till sunset in a nearby garden where she could privately ponder her options. Apparently ignoring what she said, the King continued to make comments about her outward appearance, “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.” Without trying to get to know her as a person, he had not learned that inwardly she was more precious than gold.

Away from the King’s flattery and wealth, Shumara had time to think and pray in the natural beauty of the myrrh and frankincense garden. It was very tempting for her to choose a life of leisure at the palace rather than deal with the hard work that a marriage to a shepherd would mean.

She knew that Jed, too, had found her physically attractive. She remembered a conversation with him after they were close friends. After inviting her to go with him to the mountaintops, he said, “You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one chain of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine! And the fragrance of your perfumes than all spices! Your lips, O my bride, drip as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue. And the smell of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.” Because trust had been given time to develop with the shepherd, his flattering words did not make her so uncomfortable as what she heard from the King.

There was good reason that Jed loved to be in her presence. The sparkle in her eyes and her selection of simple adornments enchanted him. The sweetness in her voice increased his enjoyment of being with her. It was mostly from her mother that she had learned that fragrant cleanliness and looking one’s best contribute to attractiveness and enhance the development of true love.

Shumara appreciated Jed’s acknowledgment, “A garden locked is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” He was honoring her wishes. Jed respected the decision which Shumara had made in advance of any temptations, that she would keep her virginity “locked,” “shut up,” and “sealed” until her sexual nature could be honorably expressed with a husband as she knew God intended. Jedidiah liked Shumara better than any of the promiscuous girls that he had encountered.

Shumara remembered that Jed had then added, “Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes with all the chief spices. You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” By these metaphors, the shepherd referred to the variety of unique children she could someday bear for him and the loving force she would be to abundantly quench his thirst for a meaningful life.

She prayed that God would awaken the north and south winds to blow upon her garden that the fragrance of its spices would flow out, inviting her beloved to come into what could soon be his garden and eat its choice fruits.

She imagined Jed’s response, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk.”

The shepherd and the Shulamite virgin offered their very best to each other. They were committed to delaying sexual gratifications till after they were married, at which time they would rightfully fulfil each other’s needs for companionship. God gave His stamp of approval with His blessing of the relationship between the girl and her shepherd boyfriend. Becoming friends before they were lovers, the couple cherished their sexually pure relationship. They enjoyed their conversations and delighted in each other’s company. They were "lovers" in the purest sense. Their

relationship had become one of true love. It was undeniable that King Solomon could only offer sensual love.

Shumara returned to the palace in time for bed in the living quarters. Once again she slept alone. She had a restless night, fearing what might become of her on the morrow should she decide to refuse Solomon's invitation to stay. She still wrestled with her confusion over what kind of husband to marry.

After she finally drifted to sleep, she had a dream that had some similarity to the pleasant dream of the previous night in the camp. Now in the palace, far away from her shepherd, this dream became a nightmare. When her beloved came knocking at her locked door, she dreamed that she was already tucked into bed for the night. She recognized his voice when he pleaded, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. For my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night."

She made excuses for not responding to him. "I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on? I have washed my feet; how can I soil them?" When she caught a glimpse of his hand, her desire for him overcame her sleepy reluctance to get out of bed. Her heart had skipped a beat at the sound of his voice and in her dream she now yearned to be with him. However, when she finally got the door open, after taking time to make herself fragrant for him and throw a shawl about her, she discovered that he had left. She went searching for him as in her other dream, but she could not find him. She called his name, but there was no answer. When she was found by the night watchmen at the city wall, they did not treat her kindly. Instead, they physically attacked her and stole her shawl.

Without having found her beloved shepherd in her dream, Shumara awoke with a feeling of sadness. She had a sense of urgency now to let Jed know he was the one she wanted to marry. She immediately tried sending her attendants to find the man of her dreams. "If you find my beloved, tell him that I am lovesick."

At first the servant girls wanted to argue with her. "Why do you think your beau is any better than any other suitor? Who is he that you should give us such a command?" They were naturally thinking that she should forget her lowly birthplace and remain with the King. Never in their experience had any sensible woman turned down Solomon's invitation to join his harem.

In response to the servants' challenge, Shumara quickly listed the good qualities and characteristics of her true love. "My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold. His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and well set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers. His lips like lilies, dripping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rods set with beryl. His body is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as alabaster columns, set upon pedestals of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is full of sweetness. Yes, he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Blessing and cursing cannot both proceed from a mouth "full of sweetness," as Shumara reported her boyfriend possessed. She spoke of what she admired about both his appearance and his character. She lovingly desired everything about him. Though Shumara was aware of Jed's shortcomings, she did not focus on her beloved's minor imperfections. She was willing to accept him as he was, without any attempts or hopes to change him. Because of loving him truly, Shumara

knew it would be inappropriate to point out his faults to others.

When Shumara proclaimed, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem,” she had finally made it clear to the servant girls that her decision was final. Solomon could never be her beloved nor her friend.

Finally the attendants saw the kind of man Jedidiah was and how deeply Shumara loved him. Convinced that this shepherd boyfriend truly was someone special, the attendants agreed to search for him. “To where is your beloved gone, O you fairest among women? To where is your beloved turned aside that we may seek him for you?”

Shumara told the maidens of Jerusalem, “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies. He feeds his flock among the lilies.” The attendants should be able to find him near her village.

She joyously proclaimed the choice she had made, and it was not for the King. “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine!” She recognized that the King offered a kind of love that appealed only to sensual pleasures that would inevitably fade from the initial excitement when he became attracted to another.

Even though the majesty of the palace was overwhelming, Shumara was intent on leaving as soon as she had an escort back to her village. Knowing that she presently had nowhere else to go, Shumara allowed attendants to dress her in the finest that Solomon’s money could buy. While servants went to search for her shepherd, she would be formally introduced to the King’s one hundred forty wives and concubines. As she entered the hall, she noticed that all the women were magnificently dressed in royal garments.

Shumara found herself in the throne room of the royal court. At the time, no throne existed as magnificent as Solomon’s in any other kingdom. King Solomon had built a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. Six steps led up to the throne with carved lions at the sides of each step. The throne’s back had a rounded top. Carved lions stood beside each arm.

That morning in the great hall there were sixty women who had been joined as wives to Solomon through wedding ceremonies. Many of them had been foreign princesses given to Solomon for royal favors. Another eighty women were of more common birth but blessed with uncommonly good looks. The King had added them as concubines, without benefit of a wedding, to his collection of beautiful women with whom he could have sexual relations. They were wearing equally expensive gowns. Each woman had aroused the King’s interest during some former encounter. He was the King. Who could refuse him as many wives and concubines as he desired for his sexual gratification? A king was accustomed to possessing the finest in his realm, even the finest looking women.

Though King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, he ignored wisdom from God about marital relationships and chose instead to be ruled by his undisciplined sexual nature. Surrounded by beautiful women, Solomon proved how the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life dominated his thinking. With Shumara he believed that he had finally found that unique female body that was the perfect match for his body. These other one hundred forty females had once been women of promise, but they had lost their appeal one by one. He now counted Shumara to be that one, necessary, and final girl of his dreams. Her physical perfection would make him content and satisfied at last.

Immediately upon Shumara’s arrival in his presence, Solomon repeated well-rehearsed lines

which he had spoken before to other pretty maidens, “You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.” Subsequently, he asked her to look away, because the undesiring look in her eyes distracted him from quoting what he considered to be his romantic lines. The words, though, were similar to what Shumara had heard each time she had encountered the King. He had learned that most women found such lines flattering, or at least the look in their eyes made him think that they were impressed. In his experience, Solomon knew that it was not uncommon for beautiful women to feel flattered and act sexually excited by this sort of attention from him.

He continued addressing Shumara, “Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep which go up from the washing; every one of which bears twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a slice of pomegranate are your temples within your locks.”

With these remarks, Solomon was introducing his new delight to his audience of sixty queens, eighty concubines, and more maidens than he could count. Amazingly, many of the wives listening to his praise of Shumara’s physique had once heard him say the same things about them. The King was clearly incapable of developing an intimate relationship with any woman. Without shame, he could shower a woman with luxury and flattering words. However, he failed to give a lady the kind of love that can be shared only between a devoted husband and wife who glorify God in their bodies, whose sexual embrace in marriage pleases the One who created our sexual natures. No one who seeks to find the perfect sexual adventure with the perfect sexual partner ever finds the kind of happiness that only occurs with married couples who keep themselves faithful to one another. These truths, which continue through the centuries, had been taught to Shumara by her mother.

When the virgin maidens in the court saw Shumara, they called her blessed. The queens and the concubines also approved and praised her before Solomon when they asked him, “Who is she who appears as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?” They recognized the physical beauty of this village girl and agreed with the King that she would be a suitable addition to his harem.

Answering the question of how he had met this fair Shulamite maiden, Solomon explained, “I went down to the grove of nut trees to see the new growth of the valley and to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates were in bloom. Before I was aware, my soul’s desire made me like the chariots of Amminadib, my noble people.” He claimed he could not help falling in love with her at first sight. By his description, when he saw her his heart became as excited as if he were watching racing chariots.

Shumara had heard enough to feel nauseated by the disrespectful comments being made about her. She was sickened by the thought of being displayed as a sex toy for the King. She was humiliated at the prospect of joining this crowd of women and becoming another spectator to the day when Solomon would undoubtedly bring home another pretty woman who would briefly satisfy his sensual longings.

When Shumara tried to leave the hall, the King and his wives implored, “Come back, come back, O Shulamite. Come back, come back, that we may look upon you.” They desired more time to admire her beauty.

“What would you see in the Shulamite?” Shumara asked. Did they only think of her as the day’s entertainment? Was there no one in the palace who desired to discover her inward beauty and

learn of her dreams and of her devotion to God? They did not even know her name.

The one hundred forty wives and concubines saw how captivated the King was by Shumara's appearance. They pointed out what they recognized as the Shulamite maiden's beautiful physical traits. "How beautiful are your feet in sandals. You must be the daughter of a prince. The curves of your thighs are like jewels worked into such beauty by the hands of a skillful workman. Your navel is like a round goblet which never lacks mixed wine. Your waist is like a heap of wheat encircled about with lilies. Your two breasts are like two young gazelles that are twins. Your neck is as a tower of ivory. Your eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like royal purple. The King is held captive by your tresses."

Most of these women had long ago abandoned any hopes of developing a loving relationship with a man. Their choice was to live in the King's luxury. They would not exchange their lavish lifestyle for devotion and admiration bestowed by a less wealthy man. These women were beyond understanding how a beautiful girl could turn down such promises of prodigal living.

The King continued trying to charm the Shulamite, "How beautiful and how delightful you are, O love, with all your charms! Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters. I am determined to climb the palm tree and will take hold of its branches. Now also your breasts shall be as clusters of the vine. And the smell of your breath like apples. And the roof of your mouth like the best wine." His dialogue was getting more sexually explicit. He had now expressed his desire to squeeze her breasts and grope her body for his own sexual pleasure. He had ceased being suggestive and was now overtly vulgar, she thought. At this point he made an effort to kiss her.

Shumara found it hard to imagine how she had been so thrilled to meet King Solomon at her village just days before. She now found him so repugnant. She was more resolved than ever that he would not be her future husband. There was nothing the King could say that would change her mind.

Trying her best to be respectful to her king, while repulsed by his behavior, the virgin Shulamite pointed out to everyone that her heart belonged to another. She declared, "May the wine go down sweetly for my beloved, flowing gently through the lips of those who will fall asleep. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me." Shumara valued the kind of desire Jedidiah had for her because he developed an emotional bond with her before expecting her to desire a physical union. Making love with her shepherd husband would be sweet. Lovemaking within marriage can induce the peaceful sleep that comes to those who do not worry if their lover will be there in the morning when they awaken.

Unknown to Shumara, a friend had informed Jedidiah of her departure with King Solomon on the day she left the village. Confused at first about what had happened, the shepherd feared he would probably never see her again. He longed to be with Shumara, but realized that the King could take anything and anyone in his kingdom that he desired. At first, Jed wondered if his beloved had abandoned him willingly and eagerly. Though not betrothed, he thought he knew Shumara well enough to know that she would not remain in the King's palace if given the chance to return to her village.

After finding someone to care for his sheep, Jed began the journey to Jerusalem. He had much to think about along the road. Not realizing during the days they shared together that Shumara

might not be in his future, he had neglected to fully express his devotion. Though he could not be certain she would leave the King's residence, he was determined to express his love for her and persuade her to marry him. Still, he wondered what he could offer her that would surpass the lure that a future in the palace was offering. Why would any woman prefer a relationship with a lowly shepherd over the allure of a rich and powerful king? How could he compete with Solomon? What sort of future was he, a shepherd, able to promise?

Jed's doubts were eased by remembering his conversations with Shumara. The relationship they built was healthy and virtuous. Their emotional bond was strong. He was certain that she cared very much for him and his happiness. Regardless of the insufferable outcome he could imagine, Jedidiah would not turn back. As always, he would respect whatever decision Shumara would make. But he first wanted her to hear his plea to reconsider the life they had anticipated before her beauty had come to the attention of King Solomon.

When he arrived at the palace and found Shumara, Jed did not have opportunity to tell of his great love for her. As soon as their eyes met it was clear to him that she was delighted to see that he had come for her. Shumara immediately proclaimed her desire to depart from the luxuriousness of the palace and return to the countryside with him. She said, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the tender grape blossoms appear and the pomegranates are budding." Shumara was a country girl who planned to marry a man with a similar background and similar values.

When he heard her say, "There will I give you my love," Jed knew this to be her promise to initiate lovemaking with him after they married. Shumara told him that she desired to be the mother of his children. She promised to kiss him in public, knowing that no one would think it improper for her to express her love to him in that manner. She had stored up for him sexual delights, willing to freely share her sexuality with him after they were married. She would serve him in his best interests as her mother had instructed her.

Turning to the countless maidens in the room at the palace, Shumara said of her shepherd boyfriend, "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me." How lovely it was going to be in the arms of her beloved.

She then warned, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases." She hoped that they understood as virgins that they should not give in hastily to sexual desires, but rather to first let real love grow, if it were meant to be. Her mother had taught her that to submit to a man's sexual advances outside of marriage would discourage him from making wise choices about his sex drive and long-term commitments. As she departed the palace with Jed, she realized that her mother had prepared her well on how to deal with seductive behavior from men like Solomon.

Shumara returned home with Jed. She entered the village with much less pomp than the way she had left it. She was proud to be going home arm in arm with her future husband. Everyone in the village knew that she had gone away with King Solomon. The townsfolk asked, "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" They were curious to learn why she had rejected the marriage proposal of the wealthiest man in the kingdom and instead had accepted the proposal of a poor shepherd.

Shumara admiringly told Jed, "I awakened your love under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she brought you forth who bore you. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as

a seal upon your arm. For love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flames are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, it would utterly be scorned.”

Shumara’s love for the shepherd had developed over sufficient time to have an enduring foundation. She wanted Jedidiah to pledge that he would never again hide his love for her, but would wear it for all to see. True love has always been as dependable and as certain as death. An infatuating love that is only sensuous, such as that offered by the King, depends upon sex for fleeting happiness and cannot be trusted since it lacks the emotional bond of commitment. Shumara would never again feel jealous of the women of the King’s palace.

Jed had experienced the cruel, burning pain of jealousy when his chosen maiden was with the King, but he would avoid this emotion in the future. He trusted that absolutely nothing could put out Shumara’s burning passion for him. It is a God-given and healthy desire in which a woman will give up her own rights to put her husband’s best interests before her own. As was evident by Solomon’s persistent efforts, a man’s wealth cannot buy a woman’s true love.

It seemed that everyone in the village turned out for the wedding of Shumara and Jedidiah on a beautiful day. Though the wedding feast was much simpler than a royal banquet, the bride was far happier than she had been when feasting with the King. The excitement of the day was shared by all in attendance. Many were still astonished that she had rejected the offer to live in luxury at the palace. Her friends admired how much she loved the shepherd. Shumara was held in high esteem for her chastity. She was praised for her commitment to saving her purity for her wedding night in the bed of her beloved.

Shumara had honored the instructions of her mother regarding sexual expression and gratification. The God who created sexual desires knows what is in our best interest. King Solomon apparently selectively chose to ignore his Creator's counsel about how men should interact with women. Solomon miserably failed throughout his lifetime to find the perfect mate he sought. Shumara found the greater joy by following God's instructions in all things.

Some of the wedding guests inquired of the bride, “We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?” Women in the village sought to learn from Shumara the secret to remaining sexually pure till marriage, hoping they could begin teaching wholesome principles to their daughters before they began to sexually awaken during puberty.

Some among them already knew the answer and responded, “If she be a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver. And if she be a door, we will barricade her with planks of cedar.” When a girl finds that a boy is attracted to her, she will be a “wall” or a “door.” If she is a wall, keeping boys’ hands off her, she should be rewarded by her family with encouragement to remain pure. If she is a door, too easily charmed by a boy who will say whatever it takes to get into her undergarments, then it is her family’s responsibility to prevent access to her until she emotionally matures and can say no. A girl should build a meaningful relationship with a boy before giving in to sexual desires. True love must first awaken, then grow in strength, if it is meant to be.

The young bride affirmed, “I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers. Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.”

Shumara revealed to them that she was like a wall over which no man was allowed to climb. Her virgin breasts were kept protected as towers on top of the wall, allowing no man to touch them.

She knew that any sexual activity outside of marriage is fornication, including fondling of the breasts. God designed marriage to be the setting for sexual love to be expressed. Acting on sensual love outside of marriage has never provided the lasting pleasure and joy that a devoted husband and wife can experience.

She added, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon. He leased out the vineyard to keepers. Everyone was to bring for the fruit from there a thousand pieces of silver. My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and those that tend its fruit two hundred.” She acknowledged how the King owned her land, but he did not own her mind and body. All she owed to King Solomon was the rent on her property, not sexual favors.

As bedtime approached, the groom was eager for the public ceremony to end, but he patiently waited till his new wife was ready for its conclusion. He kindly whispered to her, “You who sit in the gardens, the companions are listening for your voice. Let me hear it.” The newlyweds would soon begin the private celebration of their love for each other.

Shumara enthusiastically whispered back to Jed, “Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices.”

Time for lovemaking had come. The fair maiden had saved herself for her wedding night. She encouraged her new husband to be playful. She had prepared herself to both give and receive pleasure in the arms of her beloved spouse.

A lifetime of sexual bliss and fulfillment awaited them in a meaningful, healthy relationship.

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Read Aryeh Naftaly's online narrative for an alternative storyline:

<http://www.thesongofsongs.net/the-story-in-a-nutshell.html>

Recommended reading for in-depth study of the *Song of Solomon*:

- ***The Song of Solomon Love Triangle: God’s Soulmating & Lovingmaking Guide for a Lifetime of Passionate Sex***, by Patsy Rae Dawson, 2015

Enjoy a musical rendition by Aryeh Naftaly in Hebrew:

- [www.thesongofsongs.net](http://www.thesongofsongs.net)



## SONG OF SONGS or SONG OF SOLOMON

{1.1} The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

### **[ACT ONE, SCENE ONE: KING'S CAMP]**

[THE SHULAMITE, DAYDREAMING OF THE SHEPHERD]

{1.2-1.4a} Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. For your love is better than wine. Because of the fragrance of your good ointments your name is as perfume poured out. Therefore do the virgin maidens love you. Take me away and let us run together. The king has brought me into his chambers.

[MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM TO THE KING]

{1.4b} We will be glad and rejoice in you, we will remember your love more than wine. The upright love you.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{1.5-1.6} I am black, but lovely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me. They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

[THE SHULAMITE, SPEAKING OF THE SHEPHERD]

{1.7} Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed your flock, where you make your flock to rest at noon. For why should I be as one who hides herself by the flocks of your companions?

[MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM TO THE SHULAMITE]

{1.8} If you know not, O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the tracks of the flock, and feed your young goats beside the shepherds' tents.

### **[ACT ONE, SCENE TWO: KING'S DINING TENT]**

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{1.9-1.10} I have compared you, O my love, to my mare among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold.

[MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM TO THE SHULAMITE]

{1.11} We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.

[THE SHULAMITE, DAYDREAMING]

{1.12-1.14} While the king sits at his table, my spikenard perfume sends forth its fragrance. To me, my beloved is a sachet of myrrh that lies all night between my breasts. My beloved is to me as a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of Engedi.

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{1.15} Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves.

[THE SHULAMITE, DAYDREAMING ABOUT HER FUTURE WITH THE SHEPHERD]

{1.16-1.17} Behold, how handsome you are, my beloved, and so desirable. Indeed our couch is luxuriant. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE KING]

{2.1} I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{2.2} As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the maidens.

[THE SHULAMITE, THINKING OF THE SHEPHERD]

{2.3-2.6} As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins, comfort me with apples, for I am lovesick. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me.

**[ACT ONE, SCENE THREE: SHULAMITE'S LIGHTED TENT]**

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{2.7-2.17} I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the does of the field, that you not stir up nor awaken my love till it pleases. The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; he looks forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spoke, and said to me, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs. And the vines with the tender grape give forth a pleasant fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliffs, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice. For sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes. My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies. Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.

**[ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR: SHULAMITE'S DARKENED TENT]**

[THE SHULAMITE, DREAMING]

{3.1-3.4} By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I did not find him. I will rise now and go about the city in the streets, and in the squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I did not find him. The watchmen that go about the city found me, and I said to them, "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" It was but a little while after I left them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{3.5} I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the does of the field, that you not stir up nor awaken my love till it pleases.

**[ACT TWO, SCENE ONE: JERUSALEM]**

[CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM]

{3.6-3.11} Who is this who comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the scented powders of the merchant? Behold it is Solomon's carriage, escorted by sixty valiant men around it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its covering of purple, its interior fitted with love, for the maidens of Jerusalem. Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his wedding, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

**[ACT TWO, SCENE TWO: PALACE]**

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{4.1-4.5} Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are like the doves behind your veil. Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep that are freshly shorn, which came up from the washing; every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them. Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your speech is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate within your locks. Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armory, on which there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Your two breasts are like two young gazelles that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE KING]

{4.6} Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{4.7} You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

**[ACT TWO, SCENE THREE: GARDEN]**

[THE SHULAMITE, REMEMBERING THE SHEPHERD]

{4.8-5.1a} "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one chain of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much better is your love than wine! And the fragrance of your perfumes than all spices! Your lips, O my bride, drip as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue. And the smell of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes with all

the chief spices. You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Awake, O north wind, and come, you south. Blow upon my garden that its fragrant spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat its choice fruits. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk."

[GOD'S BLESSING]

{5.1b} Eat, O friends. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O lovers.

#### **[ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR: SHULAMITE'S PALACE BEDCHAMBER]**

[THE SHULAMITE, DREAMING]

{5.2-5.7} I sleep, but my heart is awake. It is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. For my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night." "I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on? I have washed my feet; how can I soil them?" My beloved extended his hand through a hole in the door, and my heart yearned for him. I rose up to open to my beloved. My hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart failed when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him, but he did not answer me. The watchmen that went about the city found me. They struck me and wounded me. The keepers of the walls took my shawl away from me. **[ACT THREE, SCENE ONE: SHULAMITE'S PALACE ROOM]**

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{5.8} I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am lovesick.

[THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM TO THE SHULAMITE]

{5.9} What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{5.10-5.16} My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold. His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and well set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.

His lips like lilies, dripping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rods set with beryl. His body is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as alabaster columns, set upon pedestals of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is full of sweetness. Yes, he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

[THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM TO THE SHULAMITE]

{6.1} To where is your beloved gone, O you fairest among women? To where is your beloved turned aside that we may seek him with you?

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{6.2-6.3} My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.

**[ACT THREE, SCENE TWO: PALACE HALL]**

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{6.4-6.9} You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they have confused me. Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep which go up from the washing; every one of which bears twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a slice of pomegranate are your temples within your locks. There are sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and maidens without number. But my dove, my undefiled, is unique. She is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her who bore her. The maidens saw her, and blessed her; also, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

[THE QUEENS AND CONCUBINES TO THE KING]

{6.10} Who is she who appears as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?

[THE KING TO THE QUEENS AND CONCUBINES]

{6.11-6.12} I went down to the grove of nut trees to see the new growth of the valley and to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates were in bloom. Before I was aware, my soul's desire made me like the chariots of Amminadib, my noble people.

[THE KING, HIS QUEENS AND CONCUBINES TO THE EXITING SHULAMITE]

{6.13a} Come back, come back, O Shulamite. Come back, come back, that we may look upon you.

[THE SHULAMITE]

{6.13b} What would you see in the Shulamite? As it were the dance of the company of two armies?

[THE QUEENS AND CONCUBINES TO THE SHULAMITE]

{7.1-7.5} How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skillful workman. Your navel is like a round goblet, which never lacks mixed wine. Your waist is like a heap of wheat encircled about with lilies. Your two breasts are like two young gazelles that are twins. Your neck is as a tower of ivory. Your eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple. The king is held captive by your tresses.

[THE KING TO THE SHULAMITE]

{7.6-7.9a} How beautiful and how delightful you are, O love, with all your charms! Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters. I said, "I will climb the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches." Now also your breasts shall be as clusters of the vine. And the smell of your breath like apples. And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE KING]

{7.9b-7.10} It goes down sweetly for my beloved, flowing gently through the lips of those who fall asleep. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE ENTERING SHEPHERD]

{7.11-8.2} Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the tender grape blossoms appear and the pomegranates are budding. There will I give you my love. The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved. O that you were as my brother, who nursed at the breasts of my mother! When I should find you outside, I would kiss you, for which I would not be despised. I would lead you, and bring you into my mother's house, who would instruct me. I would cause you to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM]

{8.3-8.4} His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

[ACT THREE, SCENE THREE: SHEPHERD'S VILLAGE]

[VILLAGERS]

{8.5a} Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

[THE SHULAMITE TO THE SHEPHERD]

{8.5b-8.7} I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she brought you forth who bore you. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flames are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man

would give all the wealth of his house for love, it would utterly be scorned.

**[ACT THREE, SCENE FOUR: WEDDING BANQUET]**

**[WEDDING GUESTS TO THE SHULAMITE]**

{8.8-8.9} We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver. And if she be a door, we will barricade her with planks of cedar.

**[THE SHULAMITE TO THE WEDDING GUESTS]**

{8.10-8.12} I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers. Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace. Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon. He leased out the vineyard to keepers. Every one was to bring for the fruit from there a thousand pieces of silver. My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and those that tend its fruit two hundred.

**[THE SHEPHERD TO THE SHULAMITE]**

{8.13} You who sit in the gardens, the companions are listening for your voice. Let me hear it.

**[THE SHULAMITE TO THE SHEPHERD]**

{8.14} Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices.

*[AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER]*

