

{This is an excerpt from the final chapter, the 100th chapter, of Asenath and Our Song of Songs by Carolivia Herron. Here ancient Asenath and contemporary Shirah Shulamit become ONE. }

One hundred
ONE
A Song

*Let me be a seal upon your heart,
Like the seal upon your hand.
For love is fierce as death,
Passion is mighty as Sheol;
Its darts are darts of fire,
A blazing flame.
Vast floods cannot quench love,
Nor rivers drown it.
If a man offered all his wealth for love,
He would be laughed to scorn.*

Shir Hashirim 8: 6-7

You arise and depart. You do not stay put. You do not obey. You are racing for the future for freedom, you are sailing for the past for freedom.

We were caught. We were broken. We were murdered.

We were Hebrews.

We were slaves.

We were Carthaginians. We were Germanic tribes.

We were slaves.

We were Araucanians. We were Pueblos. We were Aztecs. We were Navajos.
We were Apaches. We were Wampanoags. We were Incas.
We were slaves.

We were French peasants. We were Spanish merchants. We were Gaelic farmers. We were Nordic seamen.

We were slaves.

We were British Colonials of the Americas. We were Portuguese Colonials. We were Spanish Colonials of the Americas.

We were slaves.

We were Africans of the Americas.

We were slaves.

We were Mexicans. We were Russian peasants. We were Soviet peasants.

We were slaves.

We were Chinese scholars and peasants and workers.

We were slaves.

We were Northern Europeans. We were Eastern Europeans. We were Southern Europeans. We were Armenians.

We were slaves.

We were Jews.

We were slaves.

We were Indians.

We were slaves.

We were colonized Africans.

We were slaves.

We walk into the future to sing a song of freedom.

What song?

This song.

So sing it.

Sing

Let my people go

Sing

Our song, our song of songs, our song of the song of peace our epic song of the song of peace singing

When Israel was in Egypt's land
Let my people go
Oppressed so hard they could not stand
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land.
Tell ole, Pharaoh - o - ooh
Let my people go.

When we were down in slavery's land
Let my people go - o - oo - ooh freedom
Oppressed so hard we could not stand
Let my people go - o - oo - oo - ooh
Freedom

We have returned to the future for freedom, we have sailed to the past for freedom. We are . .

Well, we are, . . . we are what?

Who are we?

WE? WE!

Whatcha talkin' 'bout we?

Who are you?

Who am I?

Yeah, who are you, lying there on that dirty brown couch bed? What's your name?

I'm Shirah Shulamit.

What's that mean?

My name means joyful song of peace?

Yeah? You don't act like it! What are you? What is this place? What are you doing?

What am I? I'm a graduate student. This is a university. I'm completing my graduate degree on You, Asenath.

Asenath? But that's me!

You? How can Asenath be you? Asenath was a long time ago.

No, I'm not. I'm here. I'm right now. And why are you writing my story?

I'm getting a doctorate degree. I'm writing your story so I can be a Doctor of Philosophy.

What the heck is a Doctor of Philosophy? And how does a Doctor of Philosophy get the right to write my story?

But that's how it works. I found out about you in the library and I wrote about you and now I get credit for you. A Doctor of Philosophy is a highly honored title.

Highly honored? It sounds like stealing to me. Sounds like you just stole my song and now you talkin' 'bout *highly honored*. What kinda place gonna honor you just 'cause you stole my song?

But you don't understand. This is something that changed since you lived way back in ancient Egypt.

Don't sound like nothin' has changed to me. Sound like ya'll still be stealing somebody's song and it ain't your song, it's my song. You should shut your mouth up, seems to me! Or go somewhere and make up your own song!

But you don't know how much work I've put in to this. I've finished it and everything. I'm just resting here in the dorm this week and next week my parents and everybody will be here for my graduation.

What's a graduation?

A graduation is when the university officially makes me a Doctor of Philosophy because I sang your song.

But you can't sing my song. I don't want you singing my song. I can sing my own song. You ought to go off and mess with your own stuff and let me get this Doctor of Philosophy, I'm the one ought to be having a graduation.

But the university doesn't work like that.

I don't care how the university works if it's my song, I'm gonna sing it and you don't get to sing another word about me. It's mine, I'm sayin' it loud, it's mine!

Yours, you think it's yours, but you don't even have a song. You wouldn't even be here in this room if I weren't so worn out from writing my dissertation that I'm starting to hallucinate you. You're not real!

I am so real.

You're not real, if you're real tell me how you got here.

I got here on a boat.

On a boat?

Yeah. I came out of the corridor to the garden because I didn't feel like going into a temple so I came down the hill into this garden with some of the others and I found a boat somebody had tied there. I got in the boat and it sailed through lots of places and brought me right here.

You can't be real and you don't even have a song unless I sing it.

I do sing it.

You don't sing it. Who? You. Me? You. I. So what's the song. I know the song. So stop telling me you know it and sing it. Sing. I can sing. What.

Since I lost my baby I almost lost my mind
 Sing
 They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad
 Sing
 She's not a bad girl because, she wants to be . . .
 Sing
 Let my people go
 Sing

Our song, our song of songs, our song of the song of peace, our epic song of the song of peace
 singing

When Israel was in Egypt's land
 Let my people go
 Oppressed so hard they could not stand
 Let my people go.
 Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land.
 Tell ole, Pharaoh - o - ooh
 Let my people go.

When we were down in slavery's land
 Let my people go - o - oo - ooh freedom
 Oppressed so hard we could not stand
 Let my people go - o - oo - oo - ooh
 Freedom

* * *

We were caught. We were stolen. We were broken. We were murdered. We were slaves. We came to ourselves. We ran for our lives. We headed for the hills. We stood up and lived. We organized our defense. We broke loose. We endured the enslavers no longer. We proclaimed our

selfhood. We destroyed the chains of our oppressors. We threw off the bigots, the racists. We rose up. We revolted. We chased off the victimizers, the invaders, the thieves. We lifted up our heads from degradation. We gathered our strength never to be held down again. We refused to bow down. We made our choice. We staked our land and our lives and we stepped forth from the prisons we opened our arms and our mouths and our hearts in great ecstatic joy and we sang, in spite of all odds in the face of all opposition through much trial and terrible pain and great struggle and deep humiliation our moment has come and we have it after bitter tears after exile and grief after such loss after too much time after so many crushed souls the time is here and now of our desire and our hope and we have come to it we are slaves no more we woke up this morning with our minds stayed on

Yes, we are awake this day and we know that we are you are y'all are she is he is they are thou art I am

Sing, sing out to the great culminating beautiful darkness, sing, sing the lovesong of human life oh peace oh love oh Freedom,

*O you who linger in the garden,
A lover is listening;
Let me hear your voice.
Hurry, my beloved,
Swift as a gazelle or a young stag,
To the hills of spices!_*

Shir Hashirim 8: 13-14

I AM

Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom
Oh Freedom over me, my Lord
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my lord and be

Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom
Oh Freedom over me oh yes
And before I'll be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
I will die as myself and be

FREE