

Writings on Sharess: Thoughts and Prayers

Introduction

It has been many years that I have served this city as High Priestess of the Lady of Lust, and shortly the time will come for me to retire and let those flush with the bloom of youth take over my duties. In my years of dedication to the Goddess, I have seen much and considered long and hard the many issues that affect those of us who follow Her, and so now I take my quill in hand to write down my thoughts of the Princess of Passion, my understanding of Her, and what it means to call ourselves Sharessin.

It is ever our lot, it seems, to bear the scorn of both highborn and lowborn who think us but courtesans and loosecoin lasses, vapid vessels of carnality and concupiscence with no thought for aught but our next roll in the hay. I say, however, that those who think such speak with neither knowledge nor wisdom, for they have not taken the time to consider the ways of the Dancing Lady, nor to follow Her path and see where it truly leads.

It is my hope that these feeble words will help to convey some of the complex beauty and grand reach of our Goddess' philosophy, and that it will show how Her domain touches all of our lives in so many ways. I pray that those who jeer and whisper behind their hands but lust after us in their hearts and loins, or who seek us out solely for physical pleasure but dismiss the spiritual enlightenment we offer, will take a moment to read and heed these words and thereby be brought to a greater appreciation of the Lustful Mistress' divine blessings.

As all peoples differ in environment, in culture, and in belief, when we travel to a particular place we must put on the ways of the locals to at least some degree that our words may sound familiar to them, and so more readily find acceptance among them. So in this far land, we must perforce speak of Sharess differently than we would in, say, Calimshan. We are fortunate that our Lady does not hold us fast to rite and rote, but allows us the freedom to follow Her as we will. I say this in the hope that I shall not be judged a heretic by those who read these words, but that all who truly follow the Festhall Madam will take from this the essential message and adapt it to their own unique situations, their own temples and their own congregations.

In joyous praise of Sharess,

~ Xaviera

A Book of Sharessan Prayers

Song of Praise.

Sharess, our Goddess, Thou art Pleasure -
Thy touch, Thy kiss, our hearts make leap.
Thy gift to us, life's greatest treasure,
Sustaineth us from dawn till sleep.

The means for song and dance to please
Thou hast provided us, Thy blessing.
We pay Thee homage on our knees
Then rise, Thy servants, proud Sharessin.

Thou urgest us to new endeavours,
A feast Thou makest of our life.
Thou teachest how to live for pleasure
And join our hands to ward off strife.

In joy Thou keep'st us safe from pain,
In love ensure Thy song is heard.
Each morn we happy rise again,
Embrace the call to live Thy word.

Our hearts are Thine, O radiant Princess!
In bliss we sing Thy highest praises,
In Thy name burn sacred incense -
Divine Sharess, Thou e'er amaze us.

Each drop of life's sweet joy we capture,
And when time comes to pass the veil
We look to join with Thee in Rapture -
To Thee in death, as life, we hail.

Prayer of Thanks.

Sharess, I pray to You now, thankful for the light You have shown to us and to others. We are the messengers of Your wishes for freedom and life. To experience everything there is to see, feel, taste, smell, and hear. To fill us with passion and the truth of what life is. To show one another that there is more to life than day-to-day tasks. To help others to see and decide what they will do after they see. To help others make the choices to fulfill their lives. Sharess, I thank You for this vision of life and end this prayer in hopes of a new day for me and for everyone. Goddess, bless us all.

Prayer to Defend the Faith (The Knight's Prayer).

I have traveled far and my curiosity knows no bounds. I delight in every day given to me on this earth, to love and share my thoughts and feelings with others. I thank Sharess for my lust for life and all its wonders. I pray for the wisdom to comprehend Her ways and the foresight to see their implications. I swear by my sword that I will fight to protect the Temple, its priestesses, and all who seek sanctuary within it. I swear by my shield that I will provide shelter and comfort to those in need and to bring as much joy as I can into their lives. I swear by my heart to be true and faithful to Her teachings and to seek Her more each day in all things. This I pray to Sharess.

Prayer for Protection.

Sharess watch over me. Sharess protect me. Sharess give me joy. Sharess take away my pain.

Prayer of Invocation.

Sharess, Princess of Passion! You enthrall us with the beauty of your voice, and so we adore You!

Bast, Mother of Cats! You bewitch us with the clarity of your gaze, and so we praise You!

Zandilar, Dancing Lady! You enchant us with the grace of your movement, and so we celebrate You!

Bast, Feline of Felicity! You enrapture us with the scent of your perfume, and so we revere You!

Sharess, Lady of Lust! You captivate us with the gentleness of your touch, and so we worship You!

Prayer of Reverence.

Thank Sharess, that you may feel happiness at the sight of a morning sky, or an evening sky. *Thank Sharess!*

Applaud Sharess, that you may enjoy the sound of music, or of a child's laugh. *Applaud Sharess!*

Praise Sharess, that you may appreciate the scent of a flower, or of the air after a summer rain. *Praise Sharess!*

Venerate Sharess, that you may revel in the taste of fine food, or of a vintage wine. *Venerate Sharess!*

Worship Sharess, that you may rejoice in the kiss of a friend, or the touch of a lover.
Worship Sharess!

Blessing in Brief.

Bless us, O Lady, in the giving and receiving of pleasure. Take our pain and give us joy in return, and grant us happiness in all that we do.

Blessing at a Revel.

O Beautiful Sharess, we are here today to celebrate this festival in Your honour. We are here today to enjoy that great gift You have given us - the gift of pleasure. Without pleasure, our food would be as ashes, our wine as swampwater. Without pleasure, our lives would be filled with misery. Without pleasure, our loves would be bitter. I ask that You extend Your blessing over this, Your festival, that we may all take pleasure together, without hurt or harm, hatred or horror. Bless us, O Lady, in the giving and receiving of pleasure. Take our pain, Mistress, and give us joy in return. Grant us happiness in all that we do, insofar as we do it for You and in Your name.

Wedding Blessing.

I bless you both in the name of the Lady Sharess. I bless you both in the giving and receiving of pleasure. May She take your pain and give you joy, and may She grant you happiness in all that you do, both together and apart. May you love and pleasure each other for all your days, and may you forever share in the Eternal Revel that is life.

The Lament of the Supplicant.

My Lady Sharess, my Mistress, my Goddess! Teach and enlighten me. Show me Your way, that I may understand You and teach others Your proper doctrine. I beg of You, my Princess, bless me with the knowledge of Your truth.

Guide me, Sharess! Aid me, I beseech Thee, in standing against those who scorn and insult you. I have defended You against those who call You Goddess of Whores, and I have named You Goddess of all the senses and of all pleasures.

I have always held You close in my heart, my sweet Goddess. Do I not venerate You? Do I not anoint Your idol with sweet oils and burn fine incense to You? Can You not see my devotion, my love for You, Lady Sharess? Can You not see my desire to serve You? Can You not see my desire to know You?

I believe in my soul that You are the greatest of all goddesses, but if I have said aught wrong of You, correct me. If my tongue has lied about You, chastise me. You are my Goddess, and I am Your servant. I am Yours to command, Yours to guide, Yours to do

with as You will. It is my greatest desire to be Your priestess, though I be unworthy of Your divine grace. Bless me, My Lady, that I may do Your will.

The Philosophy of Pleasure

The Commandments of Sharess.

The Tawny Temptress has blessed us all with the ability to appreciate our sensations, to enjoy our experiences, to revel in our impressions of the world. If we believe, as I do, that this is indeed a gift, and so given freely to us, then all else follows from this first axiom:

I. Pleasure is the gift of Sharess, so bring happiness to all who seek it and joy to those in pain.

I humbly suggest that from this one basic commandment of the Goddess flows an entire philosophy, a majestic tree growing and branching from a single seed. This one statement guides us and dictates to us how we should live our lives so as to be most in harmony with our Lady and the world in general.

II. Pleasure is the path of life, and pain the door to death. Thus, a life without pleasure is a life not lived.

Happiness and joy affirm life, while pain diminishes it. Thus the way of Sharess is the way of life.

III. Life is an endless revel, so seek out pleasure at every opportunity, savouring the old and sampling the new.

If Her gift to us is that of being able to appreciate life, it stands to reason that we should do so joyously and continuously so as to best honour and celebrate Her glorious divinity.

IV. There is no limit to the Goddess' blessing, so let none restrict your freedom to enjoy Her bounty.

If Sharess, in Her divine wisdom, has decided to grant us this magnificent boon, to let Her grace flow down to us from above, then it is up to us to ensure that Her way and Her word flow freely to all, that all may benefit.

V. A pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled, but to take without consent is the worst of thefts.

A gift is given for both the enjoyment of the giver and of the recipient. The Goddess has blessed us with this facility, so too must we give this gift to others generously, not hoarding and not taking what others have for ourselves.

Pleasure, Pain and Excess.

We are creatures born of matter. We have material bodies to carry our minds about, and minds to tell our bodies where to go. Under normal circumstances, we do not exist in this world apart from our bodies.

Pleasure guides the body to maintain itself, to feed, to rest, to protect itself and other minds, and to encourage the creation of more minds through the medium of sex. Pain, on the other hand, signals that which can harm the body and thus endanger the mind. That is, pleasure and pain tell our minds, through the medium of our bodies, what is good and what is bad for our bodies. We seek out or avoid sensations depending on whether they are pleasurable or harmful. Thus, pleasure and pain guide our bodies and minds in order to preserve them both.

Pain signals danger and impending harm to the body, which generates stress and produces fear and thereby distorts our perceptions of the world. Pain thus produces imbalances in both mind and body. Pain, it cannot be denied, is a part of life, a sensation that is difficult to avoid, and we should appreciate it because it warns us of danger. Small amounts of pain can be stimulating, invigorating and motivating, but excess pain is worse than excess pleasure, since that which harms is more likely to kill than that which pleases.

Anything done to excess is, by definition, potentially harmful to the body. To exceed is to drive the body or the mind out of balance. Being out of balance too severely, as through damage or illness, or for too long, can impair the ability of the body or mind to function properly, to deal with the realities of the world. Thus, imbalance may harm the body or mind.

Creatures born out of balance - sick or in pain - often die soon after birth. Those who live may be injured or crippled, physically or mentally. Generally, organisms endeavour to avoid pain. It is therefore not normal to find pleasure in excess pain. Those persons who do are out of balance because of some injury - mental or physical - that has happened to them in the past.

One should strive to experience the sensations that life has to offer. It may be difficult to avoid experiencing negative sensations, or they may even be sought out, in some cases, in order to discover one's limits and tolerances. Pain, for example, is occasionally necessary in order to bring about greater pleasure, as in the pain of being born or of giving birth, which opens the door to an entirely new life. But to enjoy too many negative sensations, or to derive pleasure from pain, is not the way of Sharess, but of Loviatar and Shar. Pleasurable sensations are naturally much more enjoyable and should of course also be sought out and experienced.

Too much pleasure, of course, can also imbalance the body and the mind. Alcohol, for example, distorts one's perceptions, distracts the mind from the requirements of living in

the world, and limits the ability of the body and mind to fulfill those requirements. Too much of a good thing can in fact be a bad thing.

Knowing one's limits is important, since one then learns how far one can or cannot go, and striving is essential to our being. One should therefore push oneself to exceed. But to exceed, in the sense of striving to push the limits, is not necessarily to be excessive, in the sense of striving to push *beyond* one's limits.

Sometimes we cannot avoid excess. But since excess can harm, it follows that we should not exceed excessively. In the context of pleasure and pain, this means that we should not push ourselves out of balance too often, or we may become ill or suffer damage to the mind or body. It may be argued as well that social relations, since they also affect our minds and bodies, should be considered in deciding what is exceeding or excessive.

Some Sharessin believe that overindulging is the best way to worship our Lady, but the line between indulgence and excess depends on the person. I personally don't feel that Sharess is about excess at all, only the appreciation and enjoyment of experience. To overindulge too often is to diminish one's appreciation of reality by distorting or damaging the senses. That being said, even doing things to excess on occasion can be instructive and useful, if only to learn just how far one can go. Furthermore, some things can be done 'to excess', in the sense of 'frequently', without harming oneself. Nevertheless, one must not become caught up in mindless repetition or overindulgence in familiar things, for it is our charge to experience the new and different in addition to that which is well-known. So everything in moderation - including moderation!

Without pleasure and pain, we would not resist damage to our bodies and we would not seek out the joyous passions that create more minds to experience the world. To attend to all the messages that our senses bring us, to truly appreciate the interaction of our bodies with the world without, is to live fully within the world. Sensations – pain and pleasure – teach us how to live our lives to the fullest, how to learn and grow, how to reach and strive, and how to create that which is beautiful and good. It is for this that we honour Sharess, who has given us this divine blessing: the ability to live life to the fullest.

The Joys of Sensation.

We worship our Lady as the Goddess of Sensual Pleasure. If pleasure is important to you, you may wish to consider devoting yourself to Her, or at least acknowledging Her for all of the blessings she grants you in your daily life. Consider how many times each day you experience pleasure, or wonder at a particular sensation, and you will realize how much we really *should* be thankful for Her divine gifts. So if your sensual experiences bring you pleasure or are otherwise important to you, then Sharess is worthy of your devotion.

There are those who would argue that Sune is the Goddess of Beauty, that Hanali Celanil is the Goddess of Love, that Lliira is the Goddess of Joy, and they would be

right. But we Sharessin believe that the vast majority of our experience, our very *life*, is tied intimately to our senses. Without our senses we would know nothing, and without Her divinely-granted ability to attend to them appreciate what they tell us, we would neither learn nor grow. It is for this reason that we believe the so-called Succubus of Sensation to be among the greatest of goddesses.

Those who find pleasure in learning new things may worship Oghma or Mystra, but when they joyfully open an ancient book, smell the dust and run their fingers down that faded page, they revel in the pleasures that their senses bring them. The monk who masters the disciplines of the body takes pleasure in his control of it. The warrior whose blood sings and whose muscles strain with each swing of the weapon, who stands proud on the field of battle, experiences the pleasures of the strength, power and coordination of his body. The feeling of rising from bed in the morning as you open your eyes and stretch, and of going to sleep at night as you pull the sheets over you and drift off – even occasions such as these bring pleasure and should be acknowledged.

To explore your senses is to come closer to the world and to yourself. One can obtain pleasure from almost every event in life, and life should, after all, be enjoyed. A life without pleasure is an empty one. And just as we have many senses, so there are many ways to please them. We therefore liken life to a banquet – a feast, a Revel – and there is a place at the table for each of us. We also believe, as do the followers of Lliira, that joy is to be found in bringing it joy and pleasure to others, and that pleasure shared is greater pleasure. We invite you to join us and take your pleasure in all of that with which we have been blessed.

Different people take pleasure in different taste sensations, so we should all endeavour to be gourmets and try different wines and juices, sweets and sauces, vegetables and viands. If you are a chef or vintner, and are gratified by the taste of food and drink, perhaps you will send a prayer to the Goddess of the Ruby Lips.

The sense of smell reaches deep into our memories and may produce the strongest reactions of all the senses. We should take the time to smell flowers, perfumes, fresh hay, the scent of a loved one, or an old book, and think on them and how they make us feel. These are the pleasures of the sense of smell, for which glorious gift you might well consider worshipping Sharess.

Have you ever looked at something so lovely that your heart just aches? A sunset. A lover's face. A child playing. A beautiful view. Those are the pleasures of sight. If you enjoy any of those things, or if you enjoy painting or sculpting or other forms of art, and are gratified by your sense of sight, you should then perform appropriate devotions to our Lady.

The sense of touch is of course exemplified by the joyful and intimate pleasures of carnal congress. But it also grants us the feeling of fabric or sand on skin. Of furs, or sensual oils, or massage. If you enjoy soaking in a warm bath, lying on the grass in the sun, or other pleasures of the flesh, I suggest that you give thanks to the Mother of Cats.

The sense of hearing brings us sound and, above all, the joy of song and music. What can give more pleasure than music? Birds. A child laughing. A lover's voice. The ocean. A peaceful night. Milil, whom the bards worship, is a friend of Sharess. If you work with or enjoy music, poetry or song, and are pleased by that which you hear, you may want to acknowledge the Lady with the Velvet Voice.

What else? Temperature. The feeling of a warm bath, or bed, or a lovers' body. A cool rain. And movement, including the playing of music, as well as the intricate and involved movements of dance. Those who dance in shadows use their bodies in the same way that bards use their voices to call on magical forces. Zandilar is a Goddess of dance who has become a part of Sharess.

We exist in the world, and we experience it through our senses. Almost all that we know comes to us in this way. Why should not we then seek to enjoy those sensations? There are so many ways to experience life, and the pleasures thereof. To live a life without pleasure is to stand aside from the banquet to which the Goddess has invited us all. It is to live an empty life, to deny all that the world gives that is good. We are not happy in denying ourselves, but in fulfilling and enjoying ourselves. So enjoy life. Seek out the pleasures it has to offer and partake of them. Share them with others. And do not harm, but rather love, for love is the greatest of pleasures.

Love and Lust.

Sharess, the Dancing Lady, is the Goddess of Sensual Pleasure and Hedonism, which is to say the enjoyment of pleasure. Most people think that she is strictly about sex, primarily because prostitutes are often Her followers. Also, many see the worship of a pleasure goddess as equivalent to a license to have indiscriminate sex. So those who do not know the truths of the Goddess look down upon her followers with condescension or even outright revulsion. But that is because they do not understand.

After all, how can something pleasurable be disgusting? Sharess teaches us to enjoy pleasure, whether in food, or drink, or companionship, or in the physical sensations of loving. If there is naught offensive about eating or drinking, why should there be about touching another person intimately, to share pleasure with them? One should be as comfortable with another as with oneself. In fact, touching oneself and touching another are not two different things – you just happen to be closer to yourself than someone else.

Love and passion are two sides of the same coin. Passion is the physical act of love, and love creates lust and passion in turn. One and then the other, like a wheel rolling. You can have one without the other, but one leads to the other, as night follows day, and it is difficult to keep them apart. So why try? Love, and be passionate. Let the feeling take you where it will. Pleasure is to be enjoyed.

Everybody wants to be happy. And if it is good to receive pleasure, how much better must it be to give it? So seek out pleasure and passion and give yourself to them, and

share the same with others. In giving the gift of pleasure, you receive it as well, as Sharess takes pleasure in granting Her divine blessing to mortals.

Lust is only part of the worship of Sharess. We live through all of the senses, so stimulate them all and enjoy what they tell us about the world. Sharess is about the experience of life. This means both sensual and emotional. Satisfaction of the flesh and the heart. And the mind as well, if that is where your pleasures lie. We give honour to each other and to the Goddess Herself in sharing the blessings of Sharess with others, and in so doing we increase the amount of joy and happiness in this world.

The Nature of Evil.

What is your most valuable possession? What is it that drives you? What is it without which you die? What is the one thing that you keep even beyond death?

The answer is: Your soul.

What does your soul do? It keeps you alive. It animates your body and directs it to seek pleasure and avoid pain, that it may survive within this shell of flesh. It makes your blood flow, your lungs breathe, your mind think, your heart feel. But your soul is more than just your mind, your heart, your will. It is your very essence. It is the part that drives you, that controls all of your existence. Your feelings, choices, decisions. Your soul is the one thing that is truly yours. It is the most important thing you have, even more than your life here on this material plane. It is the deepest part of you, the part that remains when everything else is gone, and without which you do not exist in any way. It is you.

What is the best state, the best way, for you to live? What is the most important thing for your soul? I would say that it is... freedom.

Why? What is it that makes freedom so important?

Freedom is the ability to do what you want, when you want. Freedom is not being constrained, restricted, limited, controlled or imprisoned. Freedom, above all else, is about choice. If you are hungry, you need to eat. If thirsty, to drink. There may be many places to do this, but some more dangerous than others. Wild beasts may roam the fields, or the waterhole may be poisoned. I may offer you maggotty meat, mouldy cheese and bitter water, and your hunger and thirst may be satisfied, but you are not satisfied in the sense of being happy or pleased that your body's needs have been addressed. Not just for the continued survival of your body, but for the well-being of your soul. In other words, the better your physical needs are satisfied, the more you can turn your attention to things other than pure survival.

Once all of our needs are satisfied, when we don't hunger, or thirst, or crave warmth and shelter, we are free then to think of other things. Family and friends. Love and dreams. Worship and devotion, by which I mean following our gods as they wish, not merely desperately crying out for their aid. To think about great things and great ideas, and to seek knowledge. To undertake quests and great ventures.

Sharess teaches us that life is like a great feast, a table replete with many kinds of food and drink that is set before us, and we are invited by the Goddess to take a seat at that table and to try all that life has to offer. It would be a poor feast indeed if you were served naught but thin gruel and weak beer. No, I tell you, life is about choice! Life is about trying *all* of those foods, all of those things, that appeal to you. Life is about experiences. A life without experiences is a banquet uneaten – indeed, it is a life un-lived. You may as well lock yourself away in a dungeon if you do not live your life to the fullest.

We must feed our bodies in order to survive. But there is more to life than simply surviving. Life, in fact, is about living. The more ways you have to attend to those basic needs of life, the more joy you will find in doing so. Further, the more ways you have of satisfying your other needs – for companionship, for knowledge, for purpose – the more you will be fulfilled. It follows, then, that a life with more choices is a better life.

Of course, one must still make the *right* choices. One may choose to eat only bread, for example, but then one may as well not have the choice. One may choose to beat one's spouse, or drink oneself into a stupor nightly, but that is not a good way of living, for it harms the body – whether one's own or another's – thus hindering the ability to enjoy oneself in future and denying *oneself* the freedom of choice, thus corrupting and twisting the soul within.

So what, then, is evil?

The person who beats you, or who threatens harm to your family, or who takes your hard-earned coin until you do what he wants, is evil, no? There is a saying – those who seek power should be the last to receive it. And there is a good reason for this, as expressed in another saying – power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He who tries to control you, to coerce you, to force your obedience, is really trying to govern your soul and make it his. He attempts to corrupt your soul, to bend it to the service of his desires and away from your own.

I hope you would all agree that if someone drags you off to a dungeon and tortures you for no reason, that he is evil. Pain, when prolonged or forced, twists the soul and eventually causes the death of the body. Enjoying the pain of another is like drinking their blood, or eating their heart. He who tortures your body, who inflicts pain, is trying to control you. He who tortures you for his own pleasure, or for the pleasure or sustenance of his dark god or goddess, attempts to satisfy his own foul lusts by wringing your soul dry. Or one may give up control over oneself, by succumbing to drink, or drugs, for excess makes you a slave to your own lusts, damaging your body and making your soul a slave to those lusts. The addict gives himself over to the addiction and forfeits his own soul to it, as he forfeits his soul to dark powers when he attempts to steal yours on their behalf.

Evil, then, is about limiting choice. Evil corrupts your most precious possession, trying to damage it, control it, or take it from you. The evil person seeks to restrict your choices, to dictate what you can and cannot do. If you do not give in, the evil person threatens

the same to others – your family, your loved ones. Evil seeks to chain you, to limit you. And if you are limited, boxed in, you cannot dream those great dreams or do those great things, because you're too busy being in pain, and afraid, because someone else wants what you have, be it your toil or your loyalty or your worship. It is not a natural state, for a soul to be crushed or imprisoned.

Evil must always be resisted. It is better that the pain be brief so that the pleasure may be long, and not the other way around. Do not give in to those who wish you harm. Do not let others tell you how to live, or what to believe. Do not follow those who tell you that fear is the path to certainty, or to power, because fear closes doors and chains you down. Fear may give power to some, but only by taking it from others. The rabbit about to be pounced on by the hawk may freeze or run in a random direction – he may escape, he may not, but he is in no position to choose. The tyrant who rules a nation of slaves is not a happy person for all his power, because he knows that only for so long as he keeps his foot down will he be safe from those beneath it. Hold your hand out, and squeeze it tight. How long can you keep it like that? Not long, I'll warrant. Like trying to squeeze water, it will always escape between your fingers. So, the tyrant will always be vanquished, sooner or later, by someone who refuses to be crushed. By someone who wants the freedom to choose their own life.

As Bast, Sharess is the foe of evil, striking hard and directly at the source thereof. But even in Her guise as Sharess, the Princess of Passion, we can see that Her way is the way to happiness and the fullest enjoyment of life. We must resist evil, we must resist coercion, we must resist the use of force and terror and show by example the power of love. Sharess is about increasing rather than decreasing opportunities for experiencing pleasure, which means increasing freedom and choice.

Not all choices are easy. Sometimes the best choice may be painful in the short term – or even the long term – but the good of it outweighs the bad. Though we seek pleasure and abhor pain, we should not avoid it when it is the best choice. To bring greater happiness into the world, we must sometimes endure a little pain, either for ourselves or on behalf of others. A friend – someone who loves you – is a person who helps you through difficult times by taking some of your pain unto themselves. A friend is one who helps carry your burdens, in order to make it easier for you to make your way along the path before you, in order to make it easier for you to make the best choices. It is someone who seeks to maximize your choices and thus your potential for pleasure, joy and happiness. This is why love will always be more powerful than fear in the end, for as long as there is love there will be those who will take on the pain of others in order to resist oppression and terror, that others may be free to experience the joys of life. Help others to live their lives freely and without coercion, fear or pain, that all may enjoy the bounty of Sharess and the pleasures of the Eternal Revel that is Life.

The Temple of Love.

Imagine, if you will, a beautiful island set in a dangerous ocean. Imagine the rending rocks, the sucking whirlpools, the treacherous currents that make these waters a danger to all who sail them. Imagine, finally, the creatures that live within this ocean – the

dangerous, hungry, leviathans ready to pull a ship down and feast on those who are so unfortunate as not to drown immediately.

Those who sail this ocean wield the whip of terror, the flail of force. They survive by tooth and claw, breaking the bones and sucking the marrow of those who are weaker. These pirates of the soul must subsist on the blood and strength of others, for one cannot drink the waters of this sea, as they are bitter as gall.

What is this dread watery waste of which I speak? Where is this fearsome ocean? It is imaginary, an image, but one that should be familiar to you all, for I am speaking of Evil – I am speaking of the treacherous tides of Hatred that batter our spirits, the sharp rocks of Anger against which we are thrown, the vortex of Jealousy that drowns us.

Those who live on this beautiful island of which I speak avoid the brigands of the waves. They take care not to venture too close to those fearsome waters, and likewise spurn the burning deserts of despair, the swamps of suspicion and the crags of coercion. Rather, they revel in glowing fields of flowers, air that is fresh and perfumed, the melodious calls of songbirds, the pure azure of the sky. The inhabitants of this blessed land turn their eyes inward, to the shining capital of this glorious realm, which is ruled by three Queens – indeed, three Goddesses. For it is the Land of Love of which I speak, the land of the heart, of Sharess, Lliira and Sune.

Imagine that this idyllic island is divided into three districts, each ruled by a Goddess, and from each district there issues a road that leads to the shining heart of this blessed isle, the magnificent Temple of Love. One road is the Road of Sharess, Goddess of Pleasure and Passion. The second is the Road of Sune, Goddess of Beauty and Romance. And the third is the Road of Lliira, Goddess of Joy and Happiness. They twist and wander over hills and through valleys and cross each other here and there, but each will lead you to the Temple, and you may follow whichever you wish.

As you journey toward the Temple, you will meet the inhabitants of this land. Some live nearer one road, some nearer another. Some live closer to the Temple, others farther. But wherever you may find them, you will see that there is love in their hearts. Those who live closer to the way of Sharess may enjoy the pleasurable aspects of their love more than, say, the romantic. Those who live along the path of Lliira may prefer to concentrate on the joy their relationships bring. Most importantly, those who live between two roads may value equally any two, or even three, of these attributes of love. Still, anyone who holds love for another will feel some of the blessing of each Goddess., for everyone who lives on the island is blessed to a greater or lesser degree by each of the Three Queens who rule it.

The Temple of Love at the heart of the city is the end of your pilgrimage. By whatever road you travel, from whatever part of the island you come, this is your destination. It is here that all roads come together, it is here that your love is fulfilled and completed. Sharess, Lliira and Sune rule here and in your heart, all domains together in the perfection and beauty of true love.

I ask you, could there be any more beautiful place in all the Realms? Where the

romance, the joy, and the pleasure of love all combine in a harmonious whole? As love is a complex of different feelings, different parts, I believe that those of us who worship love in any and all of its forms should reflect this conjoint magnificence by worshipping together. Love, after all, is universal. Let us all join hands and go forth to spread that loving message to an island whose shores are battered by evil.

I urge you to keep love in your hearts. Let your eyes see it, your lips proclaim it, your hands offer it. We who follow Sharess travel one particular road, but our ultimate destination is always that Temple of Love where all meet together in joy and happiness. Turn away from anger, hatred, jealousy and greed. Love love, enjoy joy, take pleasure in pleasure, and praise all of the Goddesses of Love in everything that you do.