



# INANNA

QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer

DIANE WOLKSTEIN  
and  
SAMUEL NOAH KRAMER

Art compiled by Elizabeth Williams-Forte



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## Commentaries

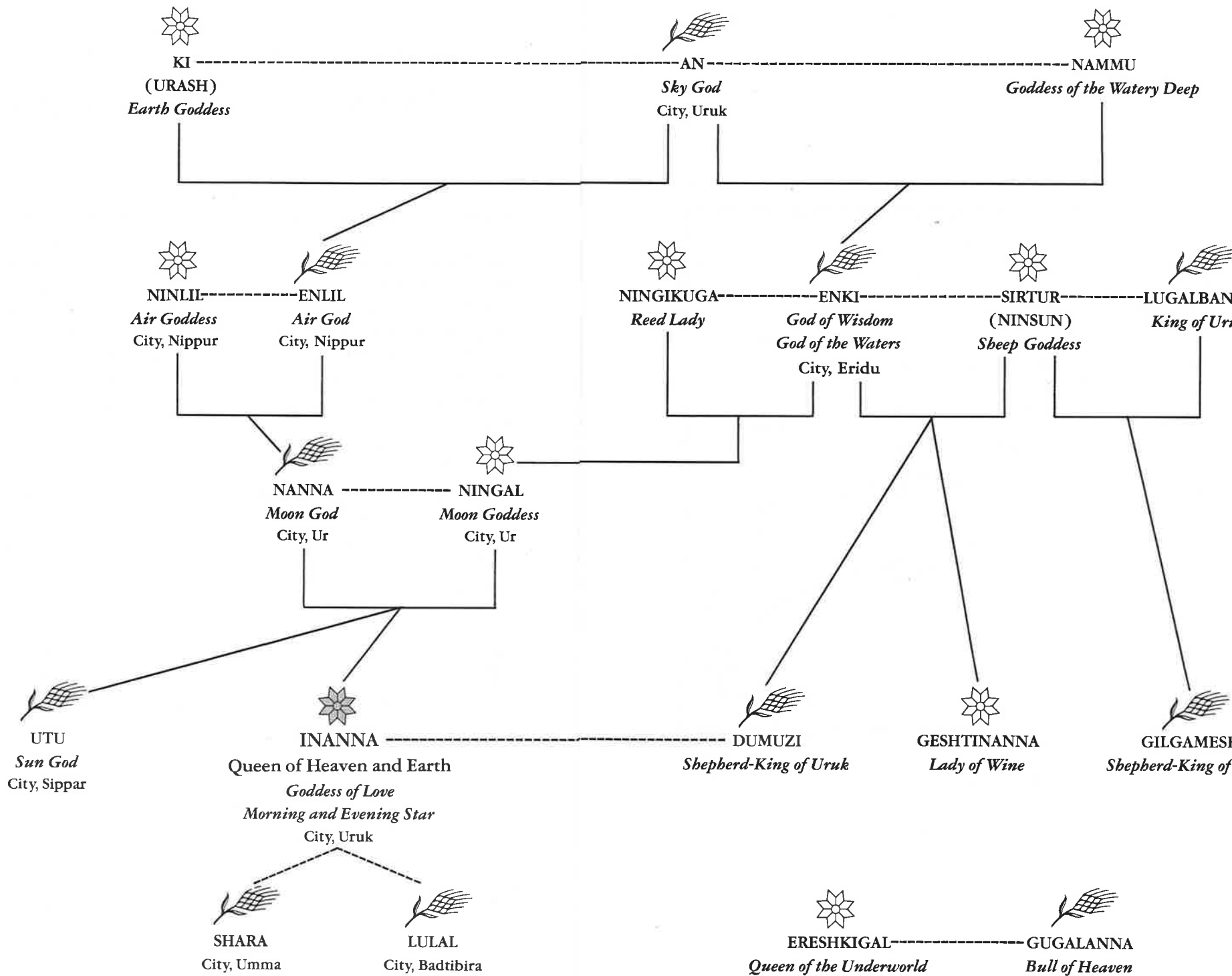
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## INANNA'S FAMILY TREE

The stories in this cycle express an amalgamation of Sumerian and Akkadian religious and political beliefs that go back at least a thousand years before Sumer was a unified political entity. During the third millennium B.C., there were periodic attempts to unify the various city-states in Sumer and Akkad; and with the increasing political centralization came a concurrent movement to bring together the many local gods and goddesses into one pantheon.

In the Cycle of Inanna, we encounter aspects of the earlier Sumerian Dumuzi as well as the later more politicized Akkadian Dumuzi. The Sumerian Dumuzi, who comes from the agricultural, more traditional area of southern Sumer, Eridu, which emphasized order (the *me*), is characterized as the force in the grain and as the priestly lover and attendant of the Fertility Goddess, Inanna. The Akkadian Dumuzi, coming from the northern nomadic peoples who emphasized the arbitrary will and power of the gods, is characterized as the shepherd, the astral heavenly bull, and the king who has "godlike" powers. Inanna, too, by her epithet Queen of Heaven and Earth, subsumed the many local cults to the goddess and combined the earlier, more peaceful Fertility Goddess with the attributes of the more directing and directive Goddess of Love.

Although in other legends and stories the Sumerian divinities and heroes may have different relationships to each other, for the purpose of clarification the family tree on the following page indicates the relationships of the divinities to each other within the context of these stories.



# PREFACE

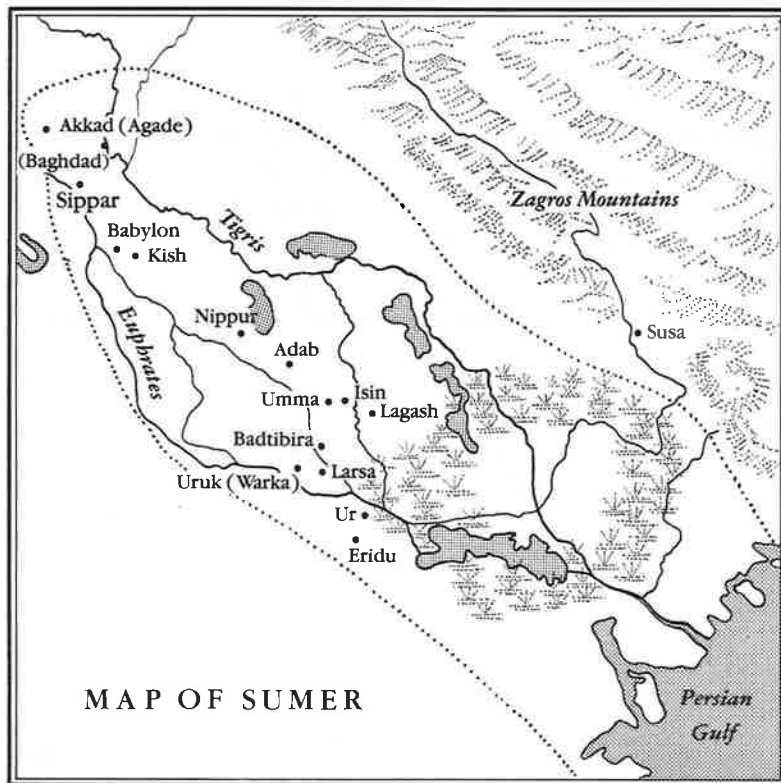
by Samuel Noah Kramer

This book is a graphic example of an effective cooperation between two specialists working in contrasting, yet complementary, areas of humanistic research: a folklorist who has collected and recorded the tales, legends, and songs of modern contemporary societies, and a cuneiformist who has devoted his entire scholarly career to the restoration and translation of the written tales, legends, and songs of the ancient Sumerians.

The Sumerian tales, legends, and songs are part of a vast literature inscribed on clay tablets and fragments scattered throughout museums the world over. Their contents, which date back to 2000 B.C., are now in the process of being deciphered, translated, and interpreted by a small international group of dedicated scholars; gradually, they are becoming available in one form or another to the world at large. Inscribed on these tablets and fragments, numbering some five to six thousand in all, are hundreds of compositions—myths, epic tales, hymns, psalms, love songs, laments, essays, disputations, proverbs, fables—that constitute a treasure house of comparative source material for the historian of literature and religion, for the biblical and classical scholar, and (as this book demonstrates) for the folklorist and cultural anthropologist.

The main goal of the selection presented here is to provide the reader with an authentic portrait of Sumer's most beloved and revered deity, the goddess Inanna. To compile this collection, I first combed the extant Sumerian literary documents, which I had deciphered and translated over the decades, for the relevant compositions on Inanna. Then, with the help of the most recent contributions by fellow Sumerologists, I brought the translations up to date. Finally, I turned the stories over to Diane Wolkstein, who proceeded to arrange, combine, and mold their raw contents in a way that would make them alive and meaningful to modern readers.

As a gifted storyteller and professional folklorist, Diane Wolkstein performed her delicate task with originality, ingenuity, and sensitivity. She eliminated cluttering repetitions, added explanatory words and lines when advisa-



ble, restored a broken passage when possible, and skillfully wove the texts of numerous related poems into a unifying whole. Diane Wolkstein has succeeded in re-creating a significant group of rather esoteric tales and songs, long erased from the memory of man, in a form that is at once imaginative and evocative, attractive and engaging.

## INTRODUCTION

by Diane Wolkstein

Inanna was a birthday gift—and more. In the spring of 1979 I had been asked by Priscilla Moulton to present a program at Simmons College in Boston the following November. As the date fell on the week of my birthday and the program was open to my choosing, I decided that this must be the occasion I had been waiting for.

I had for years wanted to tell the story of the Moon Goddess, Diana. Not only am I her namesake, but in her cyclical aspect, the Moon Goddess is an identifying symbol for women. And all of us, both women and men, have long needed a “grand” story of a woman—as inspiration, guide, and model—for ourselves as well as for our children.

To my surprise, four months of research on the moon goddesses of the world turned up only scattered bits. The most complete tale of the goddess is that of Demeter; but the story revolves around the mother-daughter aspect of the goddess, and I wanted to tell a story of the goddess in *all* her aspects. Where was she to be found?

To look at the statues of the goddess in museums and to read of her impact in books of mythology and religion was only a beginning. As a storyteller, in order to truly know her, I had to hear her speak. I had to find the goddess in relationship with others. In order to know her, I had to find her text.

I went through the world's anthologies in search of the names of moon goddesses: Ishtar, Mari, Diana, Isis, Hecate, Pasiphae, Selene, Brigit, Cybele, the Shekinah, Lilith, Persephone, Inanna . . . I sought her by name, and at last I found mention of her and her stories in Samuel Noah Kramer's most recent book, *From the Poetry of Sumer*. In this book, Kramer describes the goddess of the first civilization from which we have texts: “Female deities were worshipped and adored all through Sumerian history. . . . but the goddess who outweighed, overshadowed, and outlasted them all was a deity known to the Sumerians by the name of Inanna, ‘Queen of Heaven,’ and to the Semites who lived in Sumer by the name of Ishtar. Inanna played a greater role in myth, epic, and hymn than any other deity, male or female.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Noah Kramer, *From the Poetry of Sumer*, Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1979, p. 71.

In Kramer's *The Sacred Marriage Rite*,<sup>2</sup> I found the various love poems of the young earthy Inanna and the story of the mature Inanna's descent into the underworld. I read Inanna's descent again and again. I was drawn to the story of the woman who gave up, at seven successive gates, all she had accomplished in life until she was stripped naked, with nothing remaining but her will to be reborn.

Although fragmented, the story of Inanna as I began to perceive it followed the same pattern as the archetypal Moon Goddess: the young woman who is courted; the ripe woman who enjoys her feminine powers and generously offers her bounty; and the mature woman who meets death in the underworld. In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves conjectures on the heavenly aspect of the Triple Goddess, "As the Sky Goddess, she was the moon . . . as the New Moon or Spring she was girl; as the Full Moon or Summer she was woman; as the Old Moon or Winter she was hag. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

In Sumerian, Inanna's name means literally "Queen of Heaven," and she was called both the First Daughter of the Moon and the Morning and Evening Star (the planet Venus). In addition, in Sumerian mythology, she was known as the Queen of Heaven and Earth and was responsible for the growth of plants and animals and fertility in humankind. Then, because of her journey to the underworld, she took on the powers and mysteries of death and rebirth, emerging not only as a sky or moon goddess, but as the goddess who rules over the sky, the earth, and the underworld. Here was the goddess in *all* her aspects; here was my story.

But as I prepared the story for presentation, piecing together the different sections, there were many gaps and question marks in the text, often at the most crucial moments, and I wondered what many of the words meant—literally. My friend Susan Bergholz, long a Sumerianophile, suggested I telephone the source: Samuel Noah Kramer, who had deciphered the text.

"So you love Inanna?" Kramer said, answering the telephone himself. "Well, then come and see me." He was giving a Jayne Lecture on Inanna in two days' time at the Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and why didn't I come then?

I arrived eager and full of questions:

"In the first line of 'The Descent of Inanna,' 'From the Great Above she set her mind to the Great Below,' what exactly does 'mind' mean?"

"Ear," Kramer said.

"Ear?"

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, p. 386.

"Yes, the word for ear and wisdom in Sumerian are the same. But mind is what is meant."

"But—I could say 'ear'?"

"Well, you could."

"Is it *opened* her ear or *set* her ear?"

"Set. Set her ear, like a donkey that sets its ear at a particular sound."

As Kramer spoke, a shiver ran through me. When taken literally, the text itself announces the story's direction: From the Great Above the goddess opened (set) her ear, her receptor for wisdom, to the Great Below.

While these thoughts were darting about in my mind, Kramer looked at the shaping I had done of his texts and said that he thought if I could find a publisher there might be a possibility for our collaborating on a joint publication. I had read the story of "Inanna and the *Huluppu*-Tree," and asked Kramer if there were other stories about Inanna that were intact. He mentioned "Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech," but said it had not yet been completely translated into English.

In November of 1979 I told "The Courtship" and "The Descent of Inanna" at Simmons College to an astonished and awestruck audience. When I told Kramer about it, he insisted that the people were responding to me, but I assured him it was the Inanna who had captivated him for fifty years who was now captivating them as well. By February, 1980, we had an eager and supportive publisher. In March, Kramer sent me a translation of "The *Me*." Then, a month later when Kramer showed me Reisman's scholarly translations of the hymns, I suddenly understood that with the rebirth of the goddess into the sky, the texts formed one story: the life story of the goddess, from her adolescence to her completed womanhood and "godship."

In beginning the work of trying to find the appropriate written form for the stories of Inanna, I tried prose, the form I knew best from storytelling. But I found myself continually returning to verse. After six months of experimenting with different forms for "The *Huluppu*-Tree," it seemed there was some invisible, irreducible essence buried in each Sumerian line. Only by keeping the actual Sumerian verse line could I hope to express the mystery and power that lay within it.

For over two years I worked on the texts Kramer gave me. On my visits to Kramer, I asked him: What did this word mean? This sentence? Could he express it in different English words? What did it mean literally in Sumerian? Sometimes he could answer my questions. Other times he'd throw up his hands and say: "No matter how many times you ask me the same question, I *still* don't know."

With Kramer's consent, I turned to the writings of Thorkild Jacobsen for alternative ideas and words. I consulted the translations of Kramer's students for further possibilities on puzzling sections. I condensed sections, added, and edited—always with the idea of "story" in mind. During the first year, I dreamed of being in an enormous green meadow and having the task of cleaning the meadow—blade by blade.

In thinking about the book, I felt it was essential to use the art of Sumer and the surrounding areas to illustrate the text. Elizabeth Williams-Forte offered me expert and encouraging guidance both in finding and in selecting the appropriate works of art. Together we spent many wonderful hours discussing and choosing the cylinder seals and terracotta sculptures that seemed best to express the stories' moods and meanings.

After the first nine months of reading everything I could find on Sumerian literature, culture, and history, speaking with Kramer, and working and reworking each line, I decided I had to bring the story once again to an audience. I arranged to tell the Cycle of Inanna at Robert Bly's Mother Goddess Conference in Maine in June, 1980. But the thought of telling the stories to other people propelled me to rework the text again. In fact, each time I have told Inanna I have reworked the text as I realized that expressions such as "days of yore" or "I, the Maid" would immediately deaden the receptivity of the audience.

Further changes came to the manuscript from the telling. Audiences had difficulty keeping more than one foreign name in their minds and at the same time following the flow of the story. For this reason I decided to use English epithets to accompany the names of the characters as they appear. I also tried to minimize the use of Sumerian place names and epithets. Still, I kept such Sumerian words as *kur*, *me*, *sukkal*, and *abzu*, for they are metaphysical concepts that seem to me intrinsic to Sumerian thought; and in time, I hope, they may come to enrich our English thought and language.

My aim has been to keep as close as possible to the power, wonder, and mystery embedded in the Sumerian texts, and simultaneously to render the stories both accessible and compelling. For the latter reason, I have eliminated much of the repetition. For the former reason, I have retained as much of the repetition and Sumerian grammatical structure as the flow of the story would allow (for example, the three-part progressing parallelism, as in he—father—Enki). Whenever there is a break in the text, I use ellipses. When a certain section seems to demand clarification, often because there is a break at a crucial point, parentheses have been used to indicate that these are my own words.

Here, then, is the Cycle of Inanna. In "The *Huluppu*-Tree," she appears to us as a young woman in search of her womanhood. In "Inanna and the God

of Wisdom," she achieves her queenship. In "The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi," she chooses the shepherd Dumuzi to be her lover, her husband, and the King of Sumer. In "The Descent of Inanna," Inanna leaves for the underworld and is allowed to return from the Great Below only on the condition that she choose a substitute. In the last section of the cycle, the "Seven Hymns to Inanna," Inanna is greeted and loved in her many aspects.

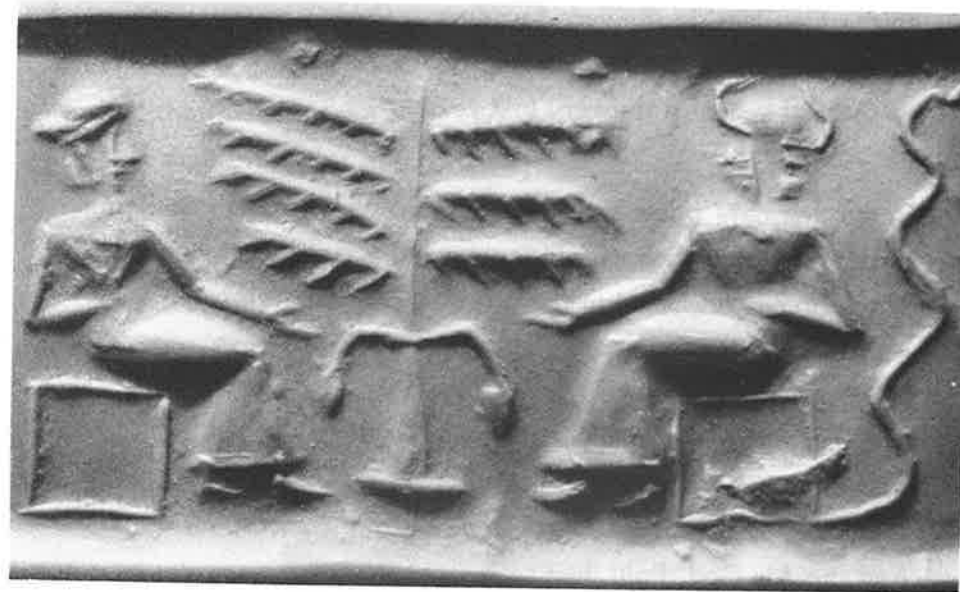
The world's first love story, two thousand years older than the Bible—tender, erotic, shocking, and compassionate—is more than momentary entertainment. It is a sacred story that has the intention of bringing its audience to a new spiritual place. With Inanna, we enter the place of exploration: the place where not all energies have been tamed or ordered.

Inanna's scribe, Samuel Noah Kramer, gave me her words. I have sung them as best as I can. Now, we pass them on to you.

**INANNA'S  
STORIES AND HYMNS**



THE *HULUPPU*-TREE



In the first days, in the very first days,  
In the first nights, in the very first nights,  
In the first years, in the very first years,

In the first days when everything needed was brought into being,  
In the first days when everything needed was properly nourished,  
When bread was baked in the shrines of the land,  
And bread was tasted in the homes of the land,  
When heaven had moved away from earth,  
And earth had separated from heaven,  
And the name of man was fixed;  
When the Sky God, An, had carried off the heavens,  
And the Air God, Enlil, had carried off the earth,  
When the Queen of the Great Below, Ereshkigal, was given  
the underworld for her domain,

He set sail; the Father set sail,  
Enki, the God of Wisdom, set sail for the underworld.  
Small windstones were tossed up against him;  
Large hailstones were hurled up against him;  
Like onrushing turtles,  
They charged the keel of Enki's boat.  
The waters of the sea devoured the bow of his boat like wolves;  
The waters of the sea struck the stern of his boat like lions.

At that time, a tree, a single tree, a *buluppu*-tree  
Was planted by the banks of the Euphrates.  
The tree was nurtured by the waters of the Euphrates.  
The whirling South Wind arose, pulling at its roots  
And ripping at its branches  
Until the waters of the Euphrates carried it away.

A woman who walked in fear of the word of the Sky God, An,  
Who walked in fear of the word of the Air God, Enlil,  
Plucked the tree from the river and spoke:

“I shall bring this tree to Uruk.  
I shall plant this tree in my holy garden.”



Inanna cared for the tree with her hand.  
She settled the earth around the tree with her foot.  
She wondered:  
“How long will it be until I have a shining throne to sit upon?  
How long will it be until I have a shining bed to lie upon?”

The years passed; five years, then ten years.  
The tree grew thick,  
But its bark did not split.

Then a serpent who could not be charmed  
Made its nest in the roots of the *buluppu*-tree.  
The *Anzu*-bird set his young in the branches of the tree.  
And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk.



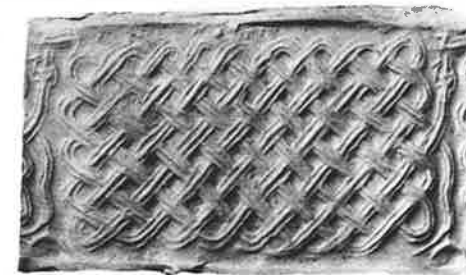
The young woman who loved to laugh wept.  
How Inanna wept!  
(Yet they would not leave her tree.)

As the birds began to sing at the coming of the dawn,  
The Sun God, Utu, left his royal bedchamber.  
Inanna called to her brother Utu, saying:

“O Utu, in the days when the fates were decreed,  
When abundance overflowed in the land,  
When the Sky God took the heavens and the Air God the earth,  
When Ereshkigal was given the Great Below for her domain,  
The God of Wisdom, Father Enki, set sail for the underworld,  
And the underworld rose up and attacked him. . . .

At that time, a tree, a single tree, a *buluppu*-tree  
Was planted by the banks of the Euphrates.  
The South Wind pulled at its roots and ripped at its branches  
Until the waters of the Euphrates carried it away.  
I plucked the tree from the river;  
I brought it to my holy garden.  
I tended the tree, waiting for my shining throne and bed.

Then a serpent who could not be charmed  
Made its nest in the roots of the tree,



The *Anzu*-bird set his young in the branches of the tree,  
And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk.  
I wept.  
How I wept!  
(Yet they would not leave my tree.)”

Utu, the valiant warrior, Utu,  
Would not help his sister, Inanna.

As the birds began to sing at the coming of the second dawn,  
Inanna called to her brother Gilgamesh, saying:

“O Gilgamesh, in the days when the fates were decreed,  
When abundance overflowed in Sumer,  
When the Sky God had taken the heavens and the Air God  
the earth,

When Ereshkigal was given the Great Below for her domain,  
 The God of Wisdom, Father Enki, set sail for the underworld,  
 And the underworld rose up and attacked him.  
 At that time, a tree, a single tree, a *buluppu*-tree  
 Was planted by the banks of the Euphrates.  
 The South Wind pulled at its roots and ripped at its branches  
 Until the waters of the Euphrates carried it away.  
 I plucked the tree from the river;  
     I brought it to my holy garden.  
 I tended the tree, waiting for my shining throne and bed.  
  
 Then a serpent who could not be charmed  
 Made its nest in the roots of the tree,



The *Anzu*-bird set his young in the branches of the tree,  
 And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk.  
 I wept.  
 How I wept!  
 (Yet they would not leave my tree.)”

Gilgamesh the valiant warrior, Gilgamesh,  
 The hero of Uruk, stood by Inanna.

Gilgamesh fastened his armor of fifty minas around his chest.  
 The fifty minas weighed as little to him as fifty feathers.  
 He lifted his bronze ax, the ax of the road,  
 Weighing seven talents and seven minas, to his shoulder.  
 He entered Inanna’s holy garden.

Gilgamesh struck the serpent who could not be charmed.  
 The *Anzu*-bird flew with his young to the mountains;  
 And Lilith smashed her home and fled to the wild, uninhabited places.  
 Gilgamesh then loosened the roots of the *buluppu*-tree;  
 And the sons of the city, who accompanied him, cut off the branches.

From the trunk of the tree he carved a throne for his holy sister.  
 From the trunk of the tree Gilgamesh carved a bed for Inanna.  
 From the roots of the tree she fashioned a *pukku* for her brother.  
 From the crown of the tree Inanna fashioned a *mikku* for Gilgamesh,  
     the hero of Uruk.



INANNA AND THE  
GOD OF WISDOM



Inanna placed the *sbugurra*, the crown of the steppe, on her head.  
She went to the sheepfold, to the shepherd.  
She leaned back against the apple tree.  
When she leaned against the apple tree, her vulva was wondrous to behold.  
Rejoicing at her wondrous vulva, the young woman Inanna applauded herself.

She said:

“I, the Queen of Heaven, shall visit the God of Wisdom.  
I shall go to the Abzu, the sacred place in Eridu.  
I shall honor Enki, the God of Wisdom, in Eridu.  
I shall utter a prayer to Enki at the deep sweet waters.”

Inanna set out by herself.

When she was within a short distance of the Abzu,  
He whose ears are wide open,

He who knows the *me*, the holy laws of heaven and earth,  
He who knows the heart of the gods,  
Enki, the God of Wisdom, who knows all things,  
Called to his servant, Isimud:

“Come, my *sukkal*,  
The young woman is about to enter the Abzu.



When Inanna enters the holy shrine  
Give her butter cake to eat.  
Pour cold water to refresh her heart.  
Offer her beer before the statue of the lion.  
Treat her like an equal.  
Greet Inanna at the holy table, the table of heaven.”

Isimud heeded Enki's words.

When Inanna entered the Abzu,

He gave her butter cake to eat.

He poured cold water for her to drink.

He offered her beer before the statue of the lion.

He treated her respectfully.

He greeted Inanna at the holy table, the table of heaven.

Enki and Inanna drank beer together.  
They drank more beer together.  
They drank more and more beer together.  
With their bronze vessels filled to overflowing,  
With the vessels of Urash, Mother of the Earth,  
They toasted each other; they challenged each other.

Enki, swaying with drink, toasted Inanna:  
“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!  
To my daughter Inanna I shall give  
The high priesthood! Godship!  
The noble, enduring crown! The throne of kingship!”

Inanna replied:  
“I take them!”



Enki raised his cup and toasted Inanna a second time:  
“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!  
To my daughter Inanna I shall give

Truth!  
Descent into the underworld! Ascent from the underworld!  
The art of lovemaking! The kissing of the phallus!”

Inanna replied:  
“I take them!”

Enki raised his cup and toasted Inanna a third time:  
“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!  
To my daughter Inanna I shall give  
The holy priestess of heaven!  
The setting up of lamentations! The rejoicing of the heart!  
The giving of judgments! The making of decisions!”

Inanna replied:  
“I take them!”

(Fourteen times Enki raised his cup to Inanna.  
Fourteen times he offered his daughter five *me*, six *me*, seven *me*.  
Fourteen times Inanna accepted the holy *me*.)

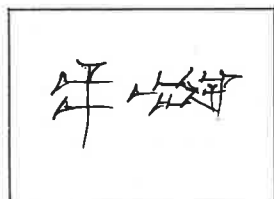


Then Inanna, standing before her father,  
Acknowledged the *me* Enki had given to her:

“My father has given me the *me*:



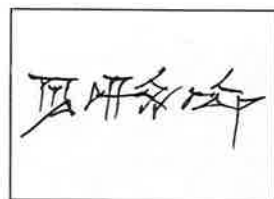
He gave me the high priesthood.  
He gave me godship.  
He gave me the noble, enduring crown.  
He gave me the throne of kingship.



He gave me the noble sceptre.  
He gave me the staff.  
He gave me the holy measuring rod and line.  
He gave me the high throne.  
He gave me shepherdship.  
He gave me kingship.



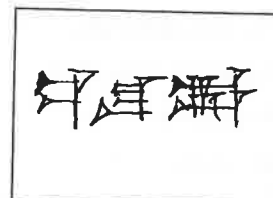
He gave me the princess priestess.  
He gave me the divine queen priestess.  
He gave me the incantation priest.  
He gave me the noble priest.  
He gave me the libations priest.



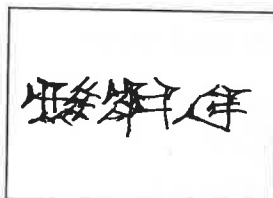
He gave me truth.  
He gave me descent into the underworld.  
He gave me ascent from the underworld.  
He gave me the *kurgarra*.



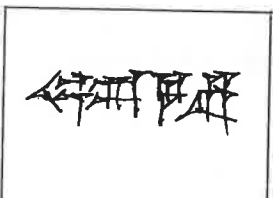
He gave me the dagger and sword.  
He gave me the black garment.  
He gave me the colorful garment.  
He gave me the loosening of the hair.  
He gave me the binding of the hair.



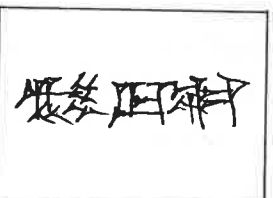
He gave me the standard.  
He gave me the quiver.  
He gave me the art of lovemaking.  
He gave me the kissing of the phallus.  
He gave me the art of prostitution.  
He gave me the art of speeding.



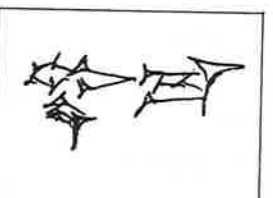
He gave me the art of forthright speech.  
He gave me the art of slanderous speech.  
He gave me the art of adorning speech.  
He gave me the cult prostitute.  
He gave me the holy tavern.



He gave me the holy shrine.  
He gave me the holy priestess of heaven.  
He gave me the resounding musical instrument.  
He gave me the art of song.  
He gave me the art of the elder.

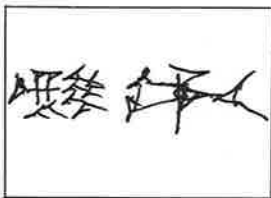


He gave me the art of the hero.  
He gave me the art of power.  
He gave me the art of treachery.  
He gave me the art of straightforwardness.  
He gave me the plundering of cities.  
He gave me the setting up of lamentations.  
He gave me the rejoicing of the heart.

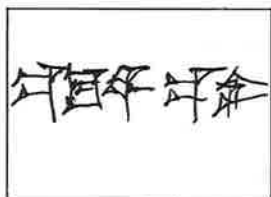


He gave me deceit.  
He gave me the rebellious land.  
He gave me the art of kindness.  
He gave me travel.  
He gave me the secure dwelling place.

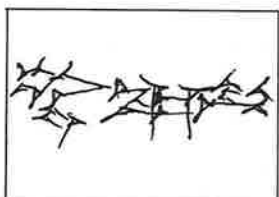




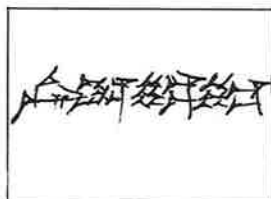
He gave me the craft of the woodworker.  
 He gave me the craft of the copper worker.  
 He gave me the craft of the scribe.  
 He gave me the craft of the smith.  
 He gave me the craft of the leather maker.  
 He gave me the craft of the fuller.  
 He gave me the craft of the builder.  
 He gave me the craft of the reed worker.



He gave me the perceptive ear.  
 He gave me the power of attention.  
 He gave me the holy purification rites.  
 He gave me the feeding pen.  
 He gave me the heaping up of hot coals.  
 He gave me the sheepfold.  
 He gave me fear.  
 He gave me consternation.  
 He gave me dismay.



He gave me the bitter-toothed lion.  
 He gave me the kindling of fire.  
 He gave me the putting out of fire.  
 He gave me the weary arm.  
 He gave me the assembled family.  
 He gave me procreation.



He gave me the kindling of strife.  
 He gave me counseling.  
 He gave me heart-soothing.  
 He gave me the giving of judgments.  
 He gave me the making of decisions."

(Still reeling with drink) Enki spoke to his servant Isimud:

"My *sukkal*, Isimud—

The young woman—is about to leave—for Uruk.

It is my wish that she reach her city—safely."

Inanna gathered all the *me*.

The *me* were placed on the Boat of Heaven.

The Boat of Heaven, with the holy *me*, was pushed off from the quay.



When the beer had gone out from the one who had drunk beer,  
 When the beer had gone out from Father Enki,  
 When the beer had gone out from the great God of Wisdom,  
 Enki looked about the Abzu.

The eyes of the King of the Abzu searched Eridu.

King Enki looked about Eridu and called to his servant Isimud, saying:

"My *sukkal*, Isimud—"

"My king, Enki, I stand to serve you."

"The high priesthood? Godship?

The noble enduring crown?

Where are they?"

"My king has given them to his daughter."

"The art of the hero? The art of power?

Treachery? Deceit?

Where are they?"

“My king has given them to his daughter.”

“The perceptive ear? The power of attention?  
The making of decisions?  
Where are they?”

“My king has given them to his daughter.”

(Fourteen times Enki questioned his servant Isimud;  
Fourteen times Isimud answered, saying:

“My king has given them to his daughter.  
My king has given all the *me* to his daughter Inanna.”)

Then Enki spoke, saying:

“Isimud, the Boat of Heaven, with the holy *me*  
Where is it now?”

“The Boat of Heaven is (one quay away from Eridu).”

“Go! Take the *enkum*-creatures  
Let them bring the Boat of Heaven back to Eridu!”

Isimud spoke to Inanna:

“My queen, your father has sent me to you.  
Your father’s words are words of state.  
They may not be disobeyed.”

Inanna answered:

“What has my father said?  
What has Enki added?  
What are his words of state that may not be disobeyed?”

Isimud spoke:

“My king has said:  
‘Let Inanna proceed to Uruk;  
Bring the Boat of Heaven with the holy *me* back to Eridu.’”

Inanna cried:

“My father has changed his word to me!  
He has violated his pledge—broken his promise!  
Deceitfully my father spoke to me!  
Deceitfully he cried:  
‘In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!’  
Deceitfully he sent you to me!”

Scarcely had Inanna spoken these words

When the wild-haired *enkum*-creatures seized the Boat of Heaven.



Inanna called to her servant Ninshubur, saying:

“Come, Ninshubur, once you were Queen of the East;  
Now you are the faithful servant of the holy shrine of Uruk.  
Water has not touched your hand,  
Water has not touched your foot.  
My *sukkal* who gives me wise advice,  
My warrior who fights by my side,  
Save the Boat of Heaven with the holy *me*!”

(Ninshubur sliced the air with her hand.  
She uttered an earth-shattering cry.)  
The *enkum*-creatures were sent hurtling back to Eridu.

Then Enki called to his servant Isimud a second time, saying:  
“My *sukkal*, Isimud—”

“My king, Enki, I stand to serve you.”

“Where is the Boat of Heaven now?”

“It is (two quays away from Eridu).”

“Go! Take the fifty *uru*-giants,  
Let them carry off the Boat of Heaven.”



The fifty flying *uru*-giants seized the Boat of Heaven.  
But Ninshubur rescued the boat for Inanna.

Enki called to his servant Isimud a third time, saying:  
“My *sukkal*, Isimud—”

“My king, Enki, I stand to serve you.”

“Where is the Boat of Heaven now?”

“It has just arrived at Dulma.”

“Quickly! Take the fifty *labama*-monsters,  
Let them carry off the Boat of Heaven.”

The fifty *labama*-sea monsters seized the Boat of Heaven.



But Ninshubur rescued the boat for Inanna.

A fourth time Enki sent the sound-piercing *kugalgal*.  
A fifth time Enki sent the *enunun*.  
But each time Ninshubur rescued the boat for Inanna.  
Enki called to his servant Isimud a sixth time, saying:

“My *sukkal*, Isimud—”

“My king, Enki, I stand to serve you.”

“Where is the Boat of Heaven now?”

“It is about to enter Uruk.”

“Quickly! Take the watchmen of the Iturungal Canal,  
Let them carry off the Boat of Heaven.”

Isimud and the watchmen of the Iturungal Canal seized  
the Boat of Heaven,  
But Ninshubur rescued the boat for Inanna.

Then Ninshubur spoke to Inanna:

“My queen, when the Boat of Heaven  
Enters the Nigulla Gate of Uruk,  
Let high water flow in our city;  
Let the deep-going boats sail swiftly through our canals.”

Inanna answered Ninshubur:

“On the day the Boat of Heaven  
Enters the Nigulla Gate of Uruk,  
Let high water sweep over the streets;  
Let high water flow over the paths.  
Let the old men give counsel;  
Let the old women offer heart-soothing.  
Let the young men show the might of their weapons;  
Let the little children laugh and sing.  
Let all of Uruk be festive!  
Let the high priest greet the Boat of Heaven with song.  
Let him utter great prayers.  
Let the king slaughter oxen and sheep.  
Let him pour beer out of the cup.  
Let the drum and tambourine resound.  
Let the sweet *tigi*-music be played.  
Let all the lands proclaim my noble name.  
Let my people sing my praises.”

And so it was,  
On the day the Boat of Heaven entered the Nigulla Gate of Uruk,  
High water swept over the streets;  
High water flowed over the paths.  
The Boat of Heaven docked at the holy shrine of Uruk;  
The Boat of Heaven docked at the holy house of Inanna.



Then Enki called to his servant Isimud a seventh time, saying:

“My *sukkal*, Isimud—”

“My king, Enki, I stand to serve you.”

“Where is the Boat of Heaven now?”

“The Boat of Heaven is at the White Quay.”

“Go! She has aroused wonder there.

The queen has aroused wonder at the White Quay.

Inanna has aroused wonder at the White Quay for  
the Boat of Heaven.”

The holy *me* were being unloaded.  
As the *me* which Inanna had received from Enki were unloaded,  
They were announced and presented to the people of Sumer.



Then more *me* appeared—more *me* than Enki had given Inanna.  
And these, too, were announced,  
And these, too, were presented to the people of Uruk:

“Inanna brought the *me*:  
She brought the placing of the garment on the ground.  
She brought allure.  
She brought the art of women.  
She brought the perfect execution of the *me*.  
She brought the *tigi*- and *lilis*-drums.  
She brought the *ub*-, the *meze*-, and the *ala*-tambourines. . . .”

Inanna spoke, saying:

“Where the Boat of Heaven has docked,  
That place shall be called The White Quay.  
Where the holy *me* have been presented,  
That place I shall name The Lapis Lazuli Quay.”

Then Enki spoke to Inanna, saying:

“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!  
Let the *me* you have taken with you remain in the holy shrine  
of your city.  
Let the high priest spend his days at the holy shrine in song.  
Let the citizens of your city prosper,  
Let the children of Uruk rejoice.  
The people of Uruk are allies of the people of Eridu.  
Let the city of Uruk be restored to its great place.”



THE COURTSHIP OF INANNA  
AND DUMUZI



The brother spoke to his younger sister.  
The Sun God, Utu, spoke to Inanna, saying:



“Young Lady, the flax in its fullness is lovely.  
Inanna, the grain is glistening in the furrow.  
I will hoe it for you. I will bring it to you.  
A piece of linen, big or small, is always needed.  
Inanna, I will bring it to you.”

“Brother, after you’ve brought me the flax,  
Who will comb it for me?”

“Sister, I will bring it to you combed.”

“Utu, after you’ve brought it to me combed,  
Who will spin it for me?”

“Inanna, I will bring it to you spun.”

“Brother, after you’ve brought the flax to me spun,  
Who will braid it for me?”

“Sister, I will bring it to you braided.”

“Utu, after you’ve brought it to me braided,  
Who will warp it for me?”

“Inanna, I will bring it to you warped.”

“Brother, after you’ve brought the flax to me warped,  
Who will weave it for me?”

“Sister, I will bring it to you woven.”

“Utu, after you’ve brought it to me woven,  
Who will bleach it for me?”

“Inanna, I will bring it to you bleached.”

“Brother, after you’ve brought my bridal sheet to me,  
Who will go to bed with me?  
Utu, who will go to bed with me?”

“Sister, your bridegroom will go to bed with you.  
He who was born from a fertile womb,  
He who was conceived on the sacred marriage throne,  
Dumuzi, the shepherd! He will go to bed with you.”





Inanna spoke:

“No, brother!  
The man of my heart works the hoe.  
The farmer! He is the man of my heart!  
He gathers the grain into great heaps.  
He brings the grain regularly into my storehouses.”

Utu spoke:

“Sister, marry the shepherd.  
Why are you unwilling?”

His cream is good; his milk is good.  
Whatever he touches shines brightly.  
Inanna, marry Dumuzi.

You who adorn yourself with the agate necklace of fertility,  
Why are you unwilling?  
Dumuzi will share his rich cream with you.  
You who are meant to be the king’s protector,  
Why are you unwilling?”

Inanna spoke:

“The shepherd! I will not marry the shepherd!  
His clothes are coarse; his wool is rough.  
I will marry the farmer.  
The farmer grows flax for my clothes.  
The farmer grows barley for my table.”

Dumuzi spoke:

“Why do you speak about the farmer?  
Why do you speak about him?  
If he gives you black flour,  
I will give you black wool.  
If he gives you white flour,  
I will give you white wool.  
If he gives you beer,  
I will give you sweet milk.  
If he gives you bread,  
I will give you honey cheese.”



I will give the farmer my leftover cream.  
I will give the farmer my leftover milk.  
Why do you speak about the farmer?  
What does he have more than I do?"

Inanna spoke:

"Shepherd, without my mother, Ningal, you'd be driven away,  
Without my grandmother, Ningikuga, you'd be driven into the  
steppes,  
Without my father, Nanna, you'd have no roof,  
Without my brother, Utu—"

Dumuzi spoke:

"Inanna, do not start a quarrel.  
My father, Enki, is as good as your father, Nanna.  
My mother, Sirtur, is as good as your mother, Ningal.  
My sister, Geshtinanna, is as good as yours.  
Queen of the palace, let us talk it over.  
  
Inanna, let us sit and speak together.  
I am as good as Utu.  
Enki is as good as Nanna.  
Sirtur is as good as Ningal.  
Queen of the palace, let us talk it over."

The word they had spoken  
Was a word of desire.  
From the starting of the quarrel  
Came the lovers' desire.



The shepherd went to the royal house with cream.  
Dumuzi went to the royal house with milk.  
Before the door, he called out:  
"Open the house, My Lady, open the house!"

Inanna ran to Ningal, the mother who bore her.  
Ningal counseled her daughter, saying:  
"My child, the young man will be your father.  
My daughter, the young man will be your mother.  
He will treat you like a father.  
He will care for you like a mother.  
Open the house, My Lady, open the house!"



Inanna, at her mother's command,  
Bathed and anointed herself with scented oil.  
She covered her body with the royal white robe.  
She readied her dowry.  
She arranged her precious lapis beads around her neck.  
She took her seal in her hand.

Dumuzi waited expectantly.



Inanna opened the door for him.  
Inside the house she shone before him  
Like the light of the moon.

Dumuzi looked at her joyously.  
He pressed his neck close against hers.  
He kissed her.



Inanna spoke:

“What I tell you  
Let the singer weave into song.  
What I tell you,  
Let it flow from ear to mouth,  
Let it pass from old to young:

My vulva, the horn,  
The Boat of Heaven,  
Is full of eagerness like the young moon.  
My untilled land lies fallow.

As for me, Inanna,  
Who will plow my vulva?  
Who will plow my high field?  
Who will plow my wet ground?

As for me, the young woman,  
Who will plow my vulva?  
Who will station the ox there?  
Who will plow my vulva?”

Dumuzi replied:

“Great Lady, the king will plow your vulva.  
I, Dumuzi the King, will plow your vulva.”

Inanna:

“Then plow my vulva, man of my heart!  
Plow my vulva!”

At the king's lap stood the rising cedar.  
Plants grew high by their side.  
Grains grew high by their side.  
Gardens flourished luxuriantly.





Inanna sang:

“He has sprouted; he has burgeoned;  
He is lettuce planted by the water.  
He is the one my womb loves best.

My well-stocked garden of the plain,  
My barley growing high in its furrow,  
My apple tree which bears fruit up to its crown,  
He is lettuce planted by the water.

My honey-man, my honey-man sweetens me always.  
My lord, the honey-man of the gods,  
He is the one my womb loves best.  
His hand is honey, his foot is honey,  
He sweetens me always.

My eager impetuous caresser of the navel,  
My caresser of the soft thighs,  
He is the one my womb loves best,  
He is lettuce planted by the water.”



Dumuzi sang:

“O Lady, your breast is your field.  
Inanna, your breast is your field.  
Your broad field pours out plants.  
Your broad field pours out grain.  
Water flows from on high for your servant.  
Bread flows from on high for your servant.  
Pour it out for me, Inanna.  
I will drink all you offer.”



Inanna sang:

“Make your milk sweet and thick, my bridegroom.  
My shepherd, I will drink your fresh milk.  
Wild bull, Dumuzi, make your milk sweet and thick.  
I will drink your fresh milk.

Let the milk of the goat flow in my sheepfold.  
Fill my holy churn with honey cheese.  
Lord Dumuzi, I will drink your fresh milk.

My husband, I will guard my sheepfold for you.  
I will watch over your house of life, the storehouse,  
The shining quivering place which delights Sumer—  
The house which decides the fates of the land,  
The house which gives the breath of life to the people.  
I, the queen of the palace, will watch over your house.”



Dumuzi spoke:

“My sister, I would go with you to my garden.  
Inanna, I would go with you to my garden.  
I would go with you to my orchard.  
I would go with you to my apple tree.  
There I would plant the sweet, honey-covered seed.”

Inanna spoke:

“He brought me into his garden.  
My brother, Dumuzi, brought me into his garden.  
I strolled with him among the standing trees,  
I stood with him among the fallen trees,  
By an apple tree I knelt as is proper.”



Before my brother coming in song,  
Who rose to me out of the poplar leaves,  
Who came to me in the midday heat,  
Before my lord Dumuzi,  
I poured out plants from my womb.  
I placed plants before him,  
I poured out plants before him.  
I placed grain before him,  
I poured out grain before him.  
I poured out grain from my womb.”



Inanna sang:

“Last night as I, the queen, was shining bright,  
Last night as I, the Queen of Heaven, was shining bright,  
As I was shining bright and dancing,  
Singing praises at the coming of the night—

He met me—he met me!  
My lord Dumuzi met me.  
He put his hand into my hand.  
He pressed his neck close against mine.

My high priest is ready for the holy loins.  
My lord Dumuzi is ready for the holy loins.  
The plants and herbs in his field are ripe.  
O Dumuzi! Your fullness is my delight!”



She called for it, she called for it, she called for the bed!  
She called for the bed that rejoices the heart.  
She called for the bed that sweetens the loins.  
She called for the bed of kingship.  
She called for the bed of queenship.  
Inanna called for the bed:

“Let the bed that rejoices the heart be prepared!  
Let the bed that sweetens the loins be prepared!  
Let the bed of kingship be prepared!  
Let the bed of queenship be prepared!  
Let the royal bed be prepared!”

Inanna spread the bridal sheet across the bed.

She called to the king:

“The bed is ready!”

She called to her bridegroom:

“The bed is waiting!”



He put his hand in her hand.  
He put his hand to her heart.  
Sweet is the sleep of hand-to-hand.  
Sweeter still the sleep of heart-to-heart.



Inanna spoke:

“I bathed for the wild bull,  
I bathed for the shepherd Dumuzi,  
I perfumed my sides with ointment,  
I coated my mouth with sweet-smelling amber,  
I painted my eyes with kohl.

He shaped my loins with his fair hands,  
The shepherd Dumuzi filled my lap with cream and milk,  
He stroked my pubic hair,  
He watered my womb.  
He laid his hands on my holy vulva,  
He smoothed my black boat with cream,  
He quickened my narrow boat with milk,  
He caressed me on the bed.

Now I will caress my high priest on the bed,  
I will caress the faithful shepherd Dumuzi,  
I will caress his loins, the shepherdship of the land,  
I will decree a sweet fate for him.”

The Queen of Heaven,  
The heroic woman, greater than her mother,  
Who was presented the *me* by Enki,  
Inanna, the First Daughter of the Moon,  
Decreed the fate of Dumuzi:

“In battle I am your leader,  
In combat I am your armor-bearer,  
In the assembly I am your advocate,  
On the campaign I am your inspiration.  
You, the chosen shepherd of the holy shrine,  
You, the king, the faithful provider of Uruk,  
You, the light of An’s great shrine,  
In all ways you are fit:

To hold your head high on the lofty dais,  
To sit on the lapis lazuli throne,  
To cover your head with the holy crown,  
To wear long clothes on your body,  
To bind yourself with the garments of kingship,  
To carry the mace and sword,  
To guide straight the long bow and arrow,  
To fasten the throw-stick and sling at your side,  
To race on the road with the holy sceptre in your hand,  
And the holy sandals on your feet,  
To prance on the holy breast like a lapis lazuli calf.

You, the sprinter, the chosen shepherd,  
In all ways you are fit.  
May your heart enjoy long days.

That which An has determined for you—may it not be altered.  
That which Enlil has granted—may it not be changed.  
You are the favorite of Ningal.  
Inanna holds you dear.”



Ninshubur, the faithful servant of the holy shrine of Uruk,  
Led Dumuzi to the sweet thighs of Inanna and spoke:

“My queen, here is the choice of your heart,  
The king, your beloved bridegroom.  
May he spend long days in the sweetness of your holy loins.  
Give him a favorable and glorious reign.  
Grant him the king’s throne, firm in its foundations.  
Grant him the shepherd’s staff of judgment.  
Grant him the enduring crown with the radiant and noble  
diadem.

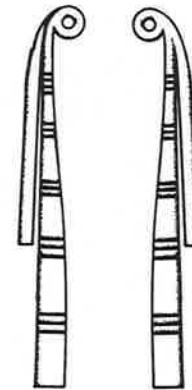
From where the sun rises to where the sun sets,  
From south to north,  
From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea,  
From the land of the *buluppu*-tree to the land of the cedar,  
Let his shepherd’s staff protect all of Sumer and Akkad.

As the farmer, let him make the fields fertile,  
As the shepherd, let him make the sheepfolds multiply,  
Under his reign let there be vegetation,  
Under his reign let there be rich grain.

In the marshland may the fish and birds chatter,  
In the canebrake may the young and old reeds grow high,  
In the steppe may the *mashgur*-trees grow high,  
In the forests may the deer and wild goats multiply,  
In the orchards may there be honey and wine,

In the gardens may the lettuce and cress grow high,  
In the palace may there be long life.  
May there be floodwater in the Tigris and Euphrates,  
May the plants grow high on their banks and fill the meadows,  
May the Lady of Vegetation pile the grain in heaps and mounds.  
O my Queen of Heaven and Earth,  
Queen of all the universe,  
May he enjoy long days in the sweetness of your holy loins.”

The king went with lifted head to the holy loins.  
He went with lifted head to the loins of Inanna.  
He went to the queen with lifted head.  
He opened wide his arms to the holy priestess of heaven.



Inanna spoke:

“My beloved, the delight of my eyes, met me.  
We rejoiced together.  
He took his pleasure of me.  
He brought me into his house.

He laid me down on the fragrant honey-bed.  
My sweet love, lying by my heart,  
Tongue-playing, one by one,  
My fair Dumuzi did so fifty times.

Now, my sweet love is sated.

Now he says:

‘Set me free, my sister, set me free.  
You will be a little daughter to my father.  
Come, my beloved sister, I would go to the palace.  
Set me free . . .’”



Inanna spoke:

“My blossom-bearer, your allure was sweet.  
My blossom-bearer in the apple orchard,  
My bearer of fruit in the apple orchard,  
Dumuzi-*abzu*, your allure was sweet.

My fearless one,  
My holy statue,  
My statue outfitted with sword and lapis lazuli diadem,  
How sweet was your allure. . . .’”





## THE DESCENT OF INANNA



## FROM THE GREAT ABOVE TO THE GREAT BELOW



From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below.

From the Great Above the goddess opened her ear to the Great Below.

From the Great Above Inanna opened her ear to the Great Below.

My Lady abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.

Inanna abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.

She abandoned her office of holy priestess to descend to the underworld.

In Uruk she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Badtibira she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Zabalam she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Adab she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Nippur she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Kish she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

In Akkad she abandoned her temple to descend to the underworld.

She gathered together the seven *me*.

She took them into her hands.

With the *me* in her possession, she prepared herself:

She placed the *sbugurra*, the crown of the steppe, on her head.

She arranged the dark locks of hair across her forehead.

She tied the small lapis beads around her neck,

Let the double strand of beads fall to her breast,

And wrapped the royal robe around her body.

She daubed her eyes with ointment called "Let him come,

Let him come,"

Bound the breastplate called "Come, man, come!" around her chest,

Slipped the gold ring over her wrist,

And took the lapis measuring rod and line in her hand.

Inanna set out for the underworld.

Ninshubur, her faithful servant, went with her.

Inanna spoke to her, saying:

"Ninshubur, my constant support,

My *sukkal* who gives me wise advice,

My warrior who fights by my side,

I am descending to the *kur*, to the underworld.

If I do not return,

Set up a lament for me by the ruins.

Beat the drum for me in the assembly places.

Circle the houses of the gods.

Tear at your eyes, at your mouth, at your thighs.

Dress yourself in a single garment like a beggar.

Go to Nippur, to the temple of Enlil.

When you enter his holy shrine, cry out:  
'O Father Enlil, do not let your daughter  
Be put to death in the underworld.  
Do not let your bright silver  
Be covered with the dust of the underworld.  
Do not let your precious lapis  
Be broken into stone for the stoneworker.  
Do not let your fragrant boxwood  
Be cut into wood for the woodworker.  
Do not let the holy priestess of heaven  
Be put to death in the underworld.'

If Enlil will not help you,  
Go to Ur, to the temple of Nanna.  
Weep before Father Nanna.  
If Nanna will not help you,  
Go to Eridu, to the temple of Enki.  
Weep before Father Enki.  
Father Enki, the God of Wisdom, knows the food of life,  
He knows the water of life;  
He knows the secrets.  
Surely he will not let me die."

Inanna continued on her way to the underworld.  
Then she stopped and said:  
"Go now, Ninshubur—  
Do not forget the words I have commanded you."

When Inanna arrived at the outer gates of the underworld,  
She knocked loudly.

She cried out in a fierce voice:

"Open the door, gatekeeper!  
Open the door, Neti!  
I alone would enter!"

Neti, the chief gatekeeper of the *kur*, asked:  
"Who are you?"

She answered:

"I am Inanna, Queen of Heaven,  
On my way to the East."

Neti said:

"If you are truly Inanna, Queen of Heaven,  
On your way to the East,  
Why has your heart led you on the road  
From which no traveler returns?"

Inanna answered:

"Because . . . of my older sister, Ereshkigal,  
Her husband, Gugalanna, the Bull of Heaven, has died.  
I have come to witness the funeral rites.  
Let the beer of his funeral rites be poured into the cup.  
Let it be done."

Neti spoke:

"Stay here, Inanna, I will speak to my queen.  
I will give her your message."



Neti, the chief gatekeeper of the *kur*,  
Entered the palace of Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld,  
and said:

“My queen, a maid  
As tall as heaven,  
As wide as the earth,  
As strong as the foundations of the city wall,  
Waits outside the palace gates.

She has gathered together the seven *me*.  
She has taken them into her hands.  
With the *me* in her possession, she has prepared herself:

On her head she wears the *shugurra*, the crown of the steppe.  
Across her forehead her dark locks of hair are carefully  
arranged.

Around her neck she wears the small lapis beads.  
At her breast she wears the double strand of beads.  
Her body is wrapped with the royal robe.  
Her eyes are daubed with the ointment called, ‘Let him come,  
let him come.’  
Around her chest she wears the breastplate called ‘Come, man,  
come!’  
On her wrist she wears the gold ring.  
In her hand she carries the lapis measuring rod and line.”

When Ereshkigal heard this,  
She slapped her thigh and bit her lip.  
She took the matter into her heart and dwelt on it.  
Then she spoke:

“Come, Neti, my chief gatekeeper of the *kur*,  
Heed my words:  
Bolt the seven gates of the underworld.  
Then, one by one, open each gate a crack.  
Let Inanna enter.  
As she enters, remove her royal garments.  
Let the holy priestess of heaven enter bowed low.”

Neti heeded the words of his queen.  
He bolted the seven gates of the underworld.  
Then he opened the outer gate.  
He said to the maid:  
“Come, Inanna, enter.”



When she entered the first gate,  
From her head, the *shugurra*, the crown of the steppe, was removed.

Inanna asked:  
“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the second gate,  
From her neck the small lapis beads were removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the third gate,  
From her breast the double strand of beads was removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the fourth gate,  
From her chest the breastplate called “Come, man, come!”  
was removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the fifth gate,  
From her wrist the gold ring was removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the sixth gate,  
From her hand the lapis measuring rod and line was removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

When she entered the seventh gate,  
From her body the royal robe was removed.

Inanna asked:

“What is this?”

She was told:

“Quiet, Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect.  
They may not be questioned.”

Naked and bowed low, Inanna entered the throne room.

Ereshkigal rose from her throne.

Inanna started toward the throne.

The Annuna, the judges of the underworld, surrounded her.

They passed judgment against her.

Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.

She spoke against her the word of wrath.

She uttered against her the cry of guilt.

She struck her.

Inanna was turned into a corpse,

A piece of rotting meat,

And was hung from a hook on the wall.



When, after three days and three nights, Inanna had not returned,  
Ninshubur set up a lament for her by the ruins.

She beat the drum for her in the assembly places.

She circled the houses of the gods.

She tore at her eyes; she tore at her mouth; she tore at her thighs.

She dressed herself in a single garment like a beggar.

Alone, she set out for Nippur and the temple of Enlil.

When she entered the holy shrine,

She cried out:

“O Father Enlil, do not let your daughter

Be put to death in the underworld.

Do not let your bright silver

Be covered with the dust of the underworld.

Do not let your precious lapis

Be broken into stone for the stoneworker.

Do not let your fragrant boxwood

Be cut into wood for the woodworker.

Do not let the holy priestess of heaven

Be put to death in the underworld.”



Father Enlil answered angrily:

“My daughter craved the Great Above.

Inanna craved the Great Below.

She who receives the *me* of the underworld does not return.

She who goes to the Dark City stays there.”

Father Enlil would not help.

Ninshubur went to Ur and the temple of Nanna.  
When she entered the holy shrine,  
She cried out:

“O Father Nanna, do not let your daughter  
Be put to death in the underworld.  
Do not let your bright silver  
Be covered with the dust of the underworld.  
Do not let your precious lapis  
Be broken into stone for the stoneworker.  
Do not let your fragrant boxwood  
Be cut into wood for the woodworker.  
Do not let the holy priestess of heaven.  
Be put to death in the underworld.”

Father Nanna answered angrily:

“My daughter craved the Great Above.  
Inanna craved the Great Below.  
She who receives the *me* of the underworld does not return.  
She who goes to the Dark City stays there.

Father Nanna would not help.

Ninshubur went to Eridu and the temple of Enki.  
When she entered the holy shrine,  
She cried out:

“O Father Enki, do not let your daughter  
Be put to death in the underworld.  
Do not let your bright silver  
Be covered with the dust of the underworld.

Do not let your precious lapis  
Be broken into stone for the stoneworker.  
Do not let your fragrant boxwood  
Be cut into wood for the woodworker.  
Do not let the holy priestess of heaven  
Be put to death in the underworld.”



Father Enki said:

“What has happened?  
What has my daughter done?  
Inanna! Queen of All the Lands! Holy Priestess of Heaven!  
What has happened?  
I am troubled. I am grieved.”

From under his fingernail Father Enki brought forth dirt.  
He fashioned the dirt into a *kurgarra*, a creature neither male nor female.

From under the fingernail of his other hand he brought forth dirt.  
He fashioned the dirt into a *galatur*, a creature neither male nor female.

He gave the food of life to the *kurgarra*.

He gave the water of life to the *galatur*.

Enki spoke to the *kurgarra* and *galatur*, saying:

“Go to the underworld,

Enter the door like flies.

Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld, is moaning

With the cries of a woman about to give birth.

No linen is spread over her body.

Her breasts are uncovered.

Her hair swirls about her head like leeks.

When she cries, ‘Oh! Oh! My inside!’

Cry also, ‘Oh! Oh! Your inside!’

When she cries, ‘Oh! Oh! My outside!’

Cry also, ‘Oh! Oh! Your outside!’

The queen will be pleased.

She will offer you a gift.

Ask her only for the corpse that hangs from the hook on  
the wall.

One of you will sprinkle the food of life on it.

The other will sprinkle the water of life.

Inanna will arise.”

The *kurgarra* and the *galatur* heeded Enki’s words.

They set out for the underworld.

Like flies, they slipped through the cracks of the gates.

They entered the throne room of the Queen of the Underworld.

No linen was spread over her body.

Her breasts were uncovered.

Her hair swirled around her head like leeks.

Ereshkigal was moaning:

“Oh! Oh! My inside!”

They moaned:

“Oh! Oh! Your inside!”

She moaned:

“Ohhhh! Oh! My outside!”

They moaned:

“Ohhhh! Oh! Your outside!”

She groaned:

“Oh! Oh! My belly!”

They groaned:

“Oh! Oh! Your belly!”

She groaned:

“Oh! Ohhhh! My back!!”

They groaned:

“Oh! Ohhhh! Your back!!”



She sighed:

“Ah! Ah! My heart!”

They sighed:

“Ah! Ah! Your heart!”

She sighed:

“Ah! Ahhhh! My liver!”

They sighed:

“Ah! Ahhhh! Your liver!”

Ereshkigal stopped.

She looked at them.

She asked:

“Who are you,  
Moaning—groaning—sighing with me?  
If you are gods, I will bless you.  
If you are mortals, I will give you a gift.  
I will give you the water-gift, the river in its fullness.”

The *kurgarra* and *galatur* answered:

“We do not wish it.”

Ereshkigal said:

“I will give you the grain-gift, the fields in harvest.”

The *kurgarra* and *galatur* said:

“We do not wish it.”

Ereshkigal said:

“Speak then! What do you wish?”

They answered:

“We wish only the corpse that hangs from the hook on the wall.”

Ereshkigal said:

“The corpse belongs to Inanna.”

They said:

“Whether it belongs to our queen,  
Whether it belongs to our king,  
That is what we wish.”

The corpse was given to them.

The *kurgarra* sprinkled the food of life on the corpse.

The *galatur* sprinkled the water of life on the corpse.

Inanna arose. . . .



Inanna was about to ascend from the underworld  
When the Annuna, the judges of the underworld, seized her.  
They said:

“No one ascends from the underworld unmarked.  
If Inanna wishes to return from the underworld,  
She must provide someone in her place.”

As Inanna ascended from the underworld,  
The *galla*, the demons of the underworld, clung to her side.  
The *galla* were demons who know no food, who know no drink,  
Who eat no offerings, who drink no libations,  
Who accept no gifts.  
They enjoy no lovemaking.  
They have no sweet children to kiss.  
They tear the wife from the husband's arms,  
They tear the child from the father's knees,  
They steal the bride from her marriage home.

The demons clung to Inanna.  
The small *galla* who accompanied Inanna  
Were like reeds the size of low picket fences.  
The large *galla* who accompanied Inanna  
Were like reeds the size of high picket fences.

The one who walked in front of Inanna was not a minister,  
Yet he carried a sceptre.  
The one who walked behind her was not a warrior,  
Yet he carried a mace.  
Ninshubur, dressed in a soiled sackcloth,

Waited outside the palace gates.  
When she saw Inanna  
Surrounded by the *galla*,  
She threw herself in the dust at Inanna's feet.

The *galla* said:

“Walk on, Inanna,  
We will take Ninshubur in your place.”

Inanna cried:

“No! Ninshubur is my constant support.  
She is my *sukkal* who gives me wise advice.  
She is my warrior who fights by my side.  
She did not forget my words.

She set up a lament for me by the ruins.  
She beat the drum for me at the assembly places.  
She circled the houses of the gods.  
She tore at her eyes, at her mouth, at her thighs.  
She dressed herself in a single garment like a beggar.

Alone, she set out for Nippur and the temple of Enlil.  
She went to Ur and the temple of Nanna.  
She went to Eridu and the temple of Enki.  
Because of her, my life was saved.  
I will never give Ninshubur to you.”

The *galla* said:

“Walk on, Inanna,  
We will accompany you to Umma.”

In Umma, at the holy shrine,  
Shara, the son of Inanna, was dressed in a soiled sackcloth.  
When he saw Inanna  
Surrounded by the *galla*,  
He threw himself in the dust at her feet.

The *galla* said:

“Walk on to your city, Inanna,  
We will take Shara in your place.”

Inanna cried:

“No! Not Shara!  
He is my son who sings hymns to me.  
He is my son who cuts my nails and smooths my hair.  
I will never give Shara to you.”

The *galla* said:

“Walk on, Inanna,  
We will accompany you to Badtibira.”

In Badtibira, at the holy shrine,  
Lulal, the son of Inanna, was dressed in a soiled sackcloth.  
When he saw Inanna  
Surrounded by the *galla*,  
He threw himself in the dust at her feet.

The *galla* said:

“Walk on to your city, Inanna,  
We will take Lulal in your place.”

Inanna cried:

“Not Lulal! He is my son.  
He is a leader among men.  
He is my right arm. He is my left arm.  
I will never give Lulal to you.”

The *galla* said:

“Walk on to your city, Inanna.  
We will go with you to the big apple tree in Uruk.”

In Uruk, by the big apple tree,  
Dumuzi, the husband of Inanna, was dressed in his shining *me*-garments.  
He sat on his magnificent throne; (he did not move).

The *galla* seized him by his thighs.

They poured milk out of his seven churns.

They broke the reed pipe which the shepherd was playing.

Inanna fastened on Dumuzi the eye of death.

She spoke against him the word of wrath.

She uttered against him the cry of guilt:

“Take him! Take Dumuzi away!”

The *galla*, who know no food, who know no drink,

Who eat no offerings, who drink no libations,

Who accept no gifts, seized Dumuzi.

They made him stand up; they made him sit down.

They beat the husband of Inanna.

They gashed him with axes.



Dumuzi let out a wail.

He raised his hands to heaven to Utu, the God of Justice,  
and beseeched him:

“O Utu, you are my brother-in-law,  
I am the husband of your sister.  
I brought cream to your mother’s house,  
I brought milk to Ningal’s house.  
I am the one who carried food to the holy shrine.  
I am the one who brought wedding gifts to Uruk.  
I am the one who danced on the holy knees, the knees of  
Inanna.

Utu, you who are a just god, a merciful god,  
Change my hands into the hands of a snake.  
Change my feet into the feet of a snake.  
Let me escape from my demons;  
Do not let them hold me.”

The merciful Utu accepted Dumuzi’s tears.  
He changed the hands of Dumuzi into snake hands.  
He changed the feet of Dumuzi into snake feet.  
Dumuzi escaped from his demons.  
They could not hold him. . . .

## THE DREAM OF DUMUZI



His heart was filled with tears.  
The shepherd's heart was filled with tears.  
Dumuzi's heart was filled with tears.  
Dumuzi stumbled across the steppe, weeping:

“O steppe, set up a wail for me!  
O crabs in the river, mourn for me!  
O frogs in the river, call for me!  
O my mother, Sirtur, weep for me!  
  
If she does not find the five breads,  
If she does not find the ten breads,  
If she does not know the day I am dead,  
You, O steppe, tell her, tell my mother.  
On the steppe, my mother will shed tears for me.  
On the steppe, my little sister will mourn for me.”

He lay down to rest.  
The shepherd lay down to rest.  
Dumuzi lay down to rest.

As he lay among the buds and rushes,  
He dreamed a dream.  
He awoke from his dream.  
He trembled from his vision.  
He rubbed his eyes, terrified.

Dumuzi called out:

“Bring . . . bring her . . . bring my sister.  
Bring my Geshtinanna, my little sister,  
My tablet-knowing scribe,  
My singer who knows many songs,  
My sister who knows the meaning of words,  
My wise woman who knows the meaning of dreams.  
I must speak to her.  
I must tell her my dream.”

Dumuzi spoke to Geshtinanna, saying:

“A dream! My sister, listen to my dream:  
Rushes rise all about me; rushes grow thick about me.  
A single growing reed trembles for me.  
From a double-growing reed, first one, then the other,  
is removed.  
In a wooded grove, the terror of tall trees rises about me.  
Water is poured over my holy hearth.  
The bottom of my churn drops away.  
My drinking cup falls from its peg.  
My shepherd's crook has disappeared.

An eagle seizes a lamb from the sheepfold.  
A falcon catches a sparrow on the reed fence.  
My sister, your goats drag their lapis beards in the dust.  
Your sheep scratch the earth with bent feet.  
The churn lies silent; no milk is poured.  
The cup lies shattered; Dumuzi is no more.  
The sheepfold is given to the winds.”

Geshtinanna spoke:

“My brother, do not tell me your dream.  
Dumuzi, do not tell me such a dream.  
The rushes which rise all about you,  
The rushes which grow thick about you,  
Are your demons, who will pursue and attack you.  
The single growing reed which trembles for you  
Is our mother; she will mourn for you.  
The double-growing reed, from which one, then the other, is  
removed, Dumuzi,  
Is you and I; first one, then the other, will be taken away.  
In the wooded grove, the terror of tall trees which rises about  
you  
Is the *galla*; they will descend on you in the sheepfold.  
When the fire is put out on your holy hearth,  
The sheepfold will become a house of desolation.  
When the bottom of your churn drops away,  
You will be held by the *galla*.  
When your drinking cup falls from its peg,

You will fall to the earth, onto your mother’s knees.  
When your shepherd’s crook disappears,  
The *galla* will cause everything to wither.  
The eagle who seizes a lamb in the sheepfold  
Is the *galla* who will scratch your cheeks.  
The falcon who catches a sparrow in the reed fence  
Is the *galla* who will climb the fence to take you away.  
Dumuzi, my goats drag their lapis beards in the dust.  
My hair will swirl around in heaven for you.  
My sheep scratch the earth with bent feet.  
O Dumuzi, I will tear at my cheeks in grief for you.  
The churn lies silent; no milk is poured.  
The cup lies shattered; Dumuzi is no more.  
The sheepfold is given to the winds—”

Scarcely had she spoken these words  
When Dumuzi cried out:

“My sister! Quickly, go up the hill!  
Do not go with slow noble steps.  
Sister, run!  
The *galla*, hated and feared by men,  
Are coming on the boats.  
They carry wood to bind the hands;  
They carry wood to bind the neck.  
Sister, run!”

Geshtinanna went up the hill.  
Dumuzi’s friend went with her.

Dumuzi cried:

“Do you see them?”

The friend cried:

“They are coming;  
The large *galla* who carry wood to bind the neck,  
They are coming for you.”

Geshtinanna cried:

“Quickly, brother!  
Hide your head in the grass.  
Your demons are coming for you.”

Dumuzi said:

“My sister, tell no one my hiding place.  
My friend, tell no one my hiding place.  
I will hide in the grass.  
I will hide among the small plants.  
I will hide among the large plants.  
I will hide in the ditches of Arali.”

Geshtinanna and Dumuzi's friend answered:

“Dumuzi, if we tell your hiding place,  
Let your dogs devour us,  
Your black dogs of shepherdship,  
Your royal dogs of kingship,  
Let your dogs devour us!”

The small *galla* spoke to the large *galla*:

“You *galla*, who have no mother, or father,  
No sister, brother, wife, or child,

You who flutter over heaven and earth like wardens,  
Who cling to a man's side,  
Who show no favor,  
Who know not good from evil,  
Tell us,  
Who has ever seen the soul of a frightened man  
Living in peace?  
Let us not look for Dumuzi in the home of his friend.  
Let us not look for Dumuzi in the home of his brother-in-law.  
Let us look for Dumuzi in the home of his sister, Geshtinanna.”

The *galla* clapped their hands gleefully.

They went searching for Dumuzi.

They came to the home of Geshtinanna. They cried out:

“Show us where your brother is!”

Geshtinanna would not speak.

They offered her the water-gift.

She refused it.

They offered her the grain-gift.

She refused it.

Heaven was brought close.

Earth was brought close.

Geshtinanna would not speak.

They tore her clothes.

They poured pitch into her vulva.

Geshtinanna would not speak.

The small *galla* said to the large *galla*:

“Who since the beginning of time  
Has ever known a sister to reveal a brother’s hiding place?  
Come, let us look for Dumuzi in the home of his friend.”

The *galla* went to Dumuzi’s friend.

They offered him the water-gift.

He accepted it.

They offered him the grain-gift.

He accepted it.

He said:

“Dumuzi hid in the grass,  
But I do not know the place.”

The *galla* searched for Dumuzi in the grass.

They did not find him.

The friend said:

“Dumuzi hid among the small plants,  
But I do not know the place.”

The *galla* searched for Dumuzi among the small plants.

They did not find him.

The friend said:

“Dumuzi hid among the large plants,  
But I do not know the place.”

The *galla* searched for Dumuzi among the large plants.

They did not find him.

The friend said:

“Dumuzi hid in the ditches of Arali.  
Dumuzi fell down in the ditches of Arali.”

In the ditches of Arali, the *galla* caught Dumuzi.

Dumuzi turned pale and wept.

He cried out:

“My sister saved my life.  
My friend caused my death.  
If my sister’s child wanders in the street,  
Let the child be protected—let the child be blessed.  
If my friend’s child wanders in the street,  
Let the child be lost—let the child be cursed.”

The *galla* surrounded Dumuzi.

They bound his hands; they bound his neck.

They beat the husband of Inanna.

Dumuzi raised his arms to heaven, to Utu, the God of Justice,  
and cried out:

“O Utu, you are my brother-in-law,  
I am the husband of your sister.  
I am the one who carried food to the holy shrine.  
I am the one who brought wedding gifts to Uruk.  
I kissed the holy lips,  
I danced on the holy knees, the knees of Inanna.

Change my hands into the hands of a gazelle.

Change my feet into the feet of a gazelle.

Let me escape from my demons.

Let me flee to Kubiresh!”

The merciful Utu accepted Dumuzi’s tears.

He changed his hands into the hands of a gazelle.

He changed his feet into the feet of a gazelle.

Dumuzi escaped from his demons.

He fled to Kubiresh.





The *galla* said:

“Let us go to Kubiresh!”

The *galla* arrived in Kubiresh.  
Dumuzi escaped from his demons.  
He fled to Old Belili.

The *galla* said:

“Let us go to Old Belili!”

Dumuzi entered the house of Old Belili. He said to her:  
“Old woman. I am not a mere mortal.  
I am the husband of the goddess Inanna.  
Pour water for me to drink.  
Sprinkle flour for me to eat.”

After the old woman poured water  
And sprinkled flour for Dumuzi,  
She left the house.

When the *galla* saw her leave, they entered the house.  
Dumuzi escaped from his demons.  
He fled to the sheepfold of his sister, Geshtinanna.

When Geshtinanna found Dumuzi in the sheepfold, she wept.  
She brought her mouth close to heaven.  
She brought her mouth close to earth.  
Her grief covered the horizon like a garment.

She tore at her eyes.  
She tore at her mouth.  
She tore at her thighs.

The *galla* climbed the reed fence.  
The first *galla* struck Dumuzi on the cheek with a piercing nail,  
The second *galla* struck Dumuzi on the other cheek with the shepherd's  
crook,  
The third *galla* smashed the bottom of the churn,  
The fourth *galla* threw the drinking cup down from its peg,  
The fifth *galla* shattered the churn,  
The sixth *galla* shattered the cup,  
The seventh *galla* cried:

“Rise, Dumuzi!  
Husband of Inanna, son of Sirtur, brother of Geshtinanna!  
Rise from your false sleep!  
Your ewes are seized! Your lambs are seized!  
Your goats are seized! Your kids are seized!”

Take off your holy crown from your head!  
Take off your *me*-garment from your body!  
Let your royal sceptre fall to the ground!  
Take off your holy sandals from your feet!  
Naked, you go with us!"

The *galla* seized Dumuzi.  
They surrounded him.  
They bound his hands. They bound his neck.

The churn was silent. No milk was poured.  
The cup was shattered. Dumuzi was no more.  
The sheepfold was given to the winds.

## THE RETURN



A lament was raised in the city:

"My Lady weeps bitterly for her young husband.  
Inanna weeps bitterly for her young husband.  
Woe for her husband! Woe for her young love!  
Woe for her house! Woe for her city!"

Dumuzi was taken captive in Uruk.  
He will no longer bathe in Eridu.  
He will no longer soap himself at the holy shrine.  
He will no longer treat the mother of Inanna as his mother.  
He will no longer perform his sweet task  
Among the maidens of the city.

He will no longer compete with the young men of the city.  
He will no longer raise his sword higher than the *kurgarra*  
priests.

Great is the grief of those who mourn for Dumuzi."

Inanna wept for Dumuzi:

“Gone is my husband, my sweet husband.  
Gone is my love, my sweet love.  
My beloved has been taken from the city.  
O, you flies of the steppe,  
My beloved bridegroom has been taken from me  
Before I could wrap him with a proper shroud.

The wild bull lives no more.  
The shepherd, the wild bull lives no more.  
Dumuzi, the wild bull, lives no more.

I ask the hills and valleys:

‘Where is my husband?’

I say to them:

‘I can no longer bring him food.  
I can no longer serve him drink.’

The jackal lies down in his bed.  
The raven dwells in his sheepfold.  
You ask me about his reed pipe?  
The wind must play it for him.  
You ask me about his sweet songs?  
The wind must sing them for him.”

Sirtur, the mother of Dumuzi, wept for her son:

“My heart plays the reed pipe of mourning.  
Once my boy wandered so freely on the steppe,  
Now he is captive.  
Once Dumuzi wandered so freely on the steppe,  
Now he is bound.

The ewe gives up her lamb.  
The goat gives up her kid.  
My heart plays the reed pipe of mourning.

O treacherous steppe!  
In the place where he once said  
‘My mother will ask for me,’  
Now he cannot move his hands.  
He cannot move his feet.

My heart plays the reed pipe of mourning.  
I would go to him,  
I would see my child.”

The mother walked to the desolate place.

Sirtur walked to where Dumuzi lay.

She looked at the slain wild bull.

She looked into his face. She said:

“My child, the face is yours.  
The spirit has fled.”

There is mourning in the house.

There is grief in the inner chambers.

The sister wandered about the city, weeping for her brother.

Geshtinanna wandered about the city, weeping for Dumuzi:

“O my brother! Who is your sister?  
I am your sister.  
O Dumuzi! Who is your mother?  
I am your mother.

The day that dawns for you will also dawn for me.  
The day that you will see I will also see.

I would find my brother! I would comfort him!  
I would share his fate!"

When she saw the sister's grief,  
When Inanna saw the grief of Geshtinanna,  
She spoke to her gently:

"Your brother's house is no more.  
Dumuzi has been carried away by the *galla*.  
I would take you to him,  
But I do not know the place."

Then a fly appeared.  
The holy fly circled the air above Inanna's head and spoke:

"If I tell you where Dumuzi is,  
What will you give me?"

Inanna said:

"If you tell me,  
I will let you frequent the beer-houses and taverns.  
I will let you dwell among the talk of the wise ones.  
I will let you dwell among the songs of the minstrels."

The fly spoke:

"Lift your eyes to the edges of the steppe,  
Lift your eyes to Arali.

There you will find Geshtinanna's brother,  
There you will find the shepherd Dumuzi."

Inanna and Geshtinanna went to the edges of the steppe.  
They found Dumuzi weeping.

Inanna took Dumuzi by the hand and said:

"You will go to the underworld  
Half the year.  
Your sister, since she has asked,  
Will go the other half.  
On the day you are called,  
That day you will be taken.  
On the day Geshtinanna is called,  
That day you will be set free."

Inanna placed Dumuzi in the hands of the eternal.

*Holy Ereshkigal! Great is your renown!*

*Holy Ereshkigal! I sing your praises!*

