

Descent Of Inanna Wolkstein - Kramer

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.

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 **shugurra**, 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 breast plate 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:
"Oh, father Enlil, do not let your daughter
 Be put to death in the underworld.
Do not let your bright silver
 Be covered with dust in 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;
Knows the secret of life.
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 traveller returns?'

Inanna answered:

'Because... of **my** older sister **Erishkigal**,
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 Erishkigal, 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 in her hands.
With the *me* in her possession, she has prepared herself:
On her head she wears the shurgarra, the crown of the steppe.
Across her forehead her dark locks of hair are carefully aranged.
Around her neck she wears the small lapis beads.
At her breast she wears the double strand of beads.
Her body is wrapped in the royal robe.
Her eyes are daubed with the ointment "let him come, let him come."
Around her chest she wears the breast plate called "come, man, come!"
On her wrist she wears the gold ring.
In her hand she carries the lapis measuring rod and line.'

When Erishkigal 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.'

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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.'

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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.'

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When she entered the **fourth gate**,

From her chest the breast plate called 'Let hime come, let him 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.'

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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.'

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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'

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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**.

Erishkigal rose from her throne.

Inanna started toward the throne.

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

They passed judgement against her.

Then **Erishkigal** 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 assembled 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 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:

'Oh Father **Nanna**, do not let your daughter

Be put to death in the underworld.

Do not let your bright silver

Be covered with 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 fro the woodworker.

Do not let the holy priestess of heaven

Be put to death inthe 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 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 fro 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 **fangernail** 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 fashione 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,
saying:

'Go to the underworld,
Enter the doors like flies,
Erishkigal, the Queen of the Underworld, is moaning
With the cries of a woman about to give birth.
No linen is spread on 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! our 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 on her body.
Her breasts were uncovered.
Her hair swirled around her head like leeks.

Erishkigal was moaning:
'Oh! Oh! My inside!
They moaned.
'Oh! Oh! Your inside!
She moaned:
'Ohhhh! Oh! My outside!
They moaned;
'Ohhhh! Oh! our outside!
She groaned:
'Oh! Oh! My belly!
They groaned:
'Oh! Oh! Your belly!
She groaned:
'Oh! Oh! My back!
They groaned:
'Oh! Oh! 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!'

Erishkigal 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.'

Erishkigal said:

'I will give you the grain gift, the fields in harvest.'

The kugarra and galatur said:

'We do not wish it.'

Erishkigal said:

'Speak then! What do you wish?'

They answered:

'We wish only for the **corpse** that hangs from the hook on the wall.'

Erishkigal 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 rose.....

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 large 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 shall 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, Innana,
 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, Inanna,
 We will **take Lulal** in your place.'
Inanna cried:
 'No, 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 the 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 away! 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.....

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