

# *The Exaltation of Inana*

Enheduana is the high priestess of the moon god Nanna in the city of Ur, but a revolt led by the usurper Lugal-Ane has driven her into exile. In despair, Enheduana prays to Nanna, but the god does not answer her. Enheduana instead turns to her personal goddess, Nanna's daughter Inana: the Sumerian goddess of war, sex, paradox, and transformation.

Enheduana attempts to convince Inana to intervene in her favor in her case against Lugal-Ane, implicitly taking over Nanna's role as a divine judge. But Inana's heart is famously difficult to please, and to make matters worse, Enheduana has lost her poetic skills. She must regain her powers of speech if she is to persuade Inana to help her, and so save her own life.

## **Textual basis**

The first complete edition of the *Exaltation* was made by Bill Hallo and J.J.A van Dijk in 1968. An update and more complete edition, which established much of our current understanding of the text, was published by Annette Zgoll in 1997. In 2006, Paul Delnero completed a "score edition" of a string of Sumerian poems, including the *Exaltation*. Delnero's score shows all the manuscripts of the poem side by side, and this is the basis of the translation given here. My understanding of the grammatical structure of the text is based in part on Zgoll's analysis, and in part on the translation and commentary by Pascal Attinger. Zgoll's edition covered 107 manuscripts, but several more have come to light since; see the list in Attinger's translation.

Besides Attinger's French translation, other updated, reliable translations from the original Sumerian include a revised German translation by Zgoll; the English translation on the ETCSL website, which was also published in book-form by Jeremy Black et al.; and English translations by Benjamin Foster and by Sophus Helle.

**For more information on the translation below, visit [enheduana.org/translations/](http://enheduana.org/translations/)**

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**nin me šar<sub>2</sub>-ra u<sub>4</sub> dalla<sub>e3</sub>-a**

lady ME all-of day shine-that

*nin me šara u dalla ea*

## 1 – Lady of all *me*, resplendent daylight,

The first two words of the poem, **nin** and **me**, are both keywords that play a crucial role throughout the text. On the nature of the **me**, see [this page](#). The word **nin**, “lady,” recurs at regular frequencies, mostly to open or close a section of the poem. Note that **šar<sub>2</sub>**, “all,” can also mean “countless.” One manuscript renders the line as: “lady of sweet (**du<sub>10</sub>**) me”; this is likely due to a graphic confusion of the two signs **šar<sub>2</sub>** and **du<sub>10</sub>**, which look almost identical.

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**munus zi me-lam<sub>2</sub> gur<sub>3</sub>-ru ki-aĝ<sub>2</sub> an uraš-a**

woman true terrifying<sub>light</sub> carry-that beloved An Urash-of

*munus zi melam guru kiaĝ An Uraša*

## 2 – righteous woman, laden with a terrifying light, loved by An and Urash,

An and Urash are the deified forms of heaven and earth, respectively. The **me-lam<sub>2</sub>** is the awe-inducing halo of light that surrounds gods and other supernatural beings. Zgoll (301–302) notes that the signs **munus zi**, “righteous woman,” also form an archaic spelling of the word **zirru**, which was one of Enheduana’s titles as high priestess. The writing of the word **zirru** had since changed into **nunuz-zi**, but it is possible that the older form lingered in the background, instilling a connection between Inana and Enheduana herself.

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**nu-gig an-na MUŠ<sub>3</sub> KEŠ<sub>2</sub> gal-gal-la**

**nugig** An-of jewels<sup>?</sup>\_bound<sup>?</sup> great-of

*nugig Ana sub<sup>?</sup> keš<sup>?</sup> galgala*

## 3 – *nugig* of An, she of the great jewels,<sup>?</sup>

The **nugig** was originally a designation for a wetnurse or midwife, often of high status and sometimes affiliated with a temple. It is used as an epithet for Inana and other goddesses, but its meaning was confused already in antiquity: for the history of the term, see Brisch. The reading of the signs MUŠ<sub>3</sub> KEŠ<sub>2</sub> is unclear. Zgoll, Foster, and Black et al. take it to mean “pectoral jewels,”

an emblem of power worn on the breast. Attinger understands it as “bound” (**keše<sub>2</sub>**) “coronets” (**suh<sub>10</sub>**): the phrase would then mean “she to whom the great coronets are bound,” that is, “she who holds the great coronets.”

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**aga zi-de<sub>3</sub> ki-aĝ<sub>2</sub> nam-en-na tum<sub>2</sub>-ma**  
crown righteous loves **en**-ship suitable\_for-that  
*aga zide kiaĝ namena tuma*

#### 4 – she who loves the righteous crown, who is suitable for *en*-ship,

The **en**-ship can refer to the position of either a political ruler or a high priestess—**en** can mean both. The second part of the line is here taken to describe Inana, but it could also describe the crown, as in: “She who loves the righteous crown that befits the high priestess.” The ambiguity may be intentional, again implying a connection between Inana and Enheduana herself, who was the **en** of Nanna.

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**me imin-bi šu<sub>11</sub>-sa<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>-ga**  
**me** seven-its take-that  
*me iminbi šu sa duga*

#### 5 – who has taken hold of its seven *me*!

“Its” may refer back to **en**-ship; alternatively, it can be read as “their” (of the gods) or just “these.” The number “seven” is not necessarily to be taken literally: it hints at Inana’s many **me** (which, as noted in l. 1, are innumerable), but also signposts the poetic structure of the following section, which consists of stanzas of seven lines, introduced by the phrase **nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub>**, “my lady.” Note that the emphasis of the line is on Inana taking her divine powers herself—the agency is clearly hers—perhaps recalling the story *Inana and Enki*, which tells of how she tricked Enki into giving her the **me**.

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**nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub> me gal-gal-la saĝ-keše<sub>2</sub>-bi za-e-me-en**  
lady-my **me** great-of guardian-their you-are  
*ninĝu me galgala saĝkešebi zaemen*

## 6 – My lady! Of the great *me*, you are their guardian:

This is the first appearance of the phrase **nin-ġu**<sub>10</sub>, “my lady,” which in this section introduces a new stanza.

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**me mu-e-il<sub>2</sub> me šu-zu-še<sub>3</sub> mu-e-la<sub>2</sub>**

**me lift me hand-your-to hang**

*me mueil me šuzuše muela*

## 7 – You lifted the *me*, you hung the *me* from your hand,

Here as elsewhere, the **me** are depicted as physical objects, hanging from Inana’s hand perhaps like beads on a string.

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**me mu-e-ur<sub>4</sub> me gaba-za bi<sub>2</sub>-tab**

**me gather me breast-your-at clutch**

*me mueur me gabaṣa bitab*

## 8 – You gathered the *me*, you clutched the *me* to your breast.

This heavily patterned couplet (**me verb me limb verb**) is also structured by groups of four syllables, and by a heavy alliteration on **m-**, with all but the last verb beginning with **mu-**.

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**ušumgal-gen<sub>7</sub> kur-re uš<sub>11</sub> ba-e-šum<sub>2</sub>**

**ušumgal-like mountain-onto venom give**

*ušumgalgen kure uš baešum*

## 9 – Like an *ušumgal*, you deposited venom on the foreign land,

The **ušumgal**, often translated “basilisk” or “dragon,” is a giant horned serpent with fangs and (evidently) a venomous spit. A relief depicting a similar creature, the *mušbuššu*, gives us an idea of what they were thought to look like. Note also that the word **kur** can mean “mountain,” “foreign land,” “enemy,” and just “land.” These multiple meanings are in play throughout the poem.



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**izi bar<sub>7</sub>-bar<sub>7</sub>-ra kalam-e šeĝ<sub>3</sub>-ĝa<sub>2</sub>**  
fire blaze-that land-upon rain-that  
*izi barbara kalame šēga*

### 13 – Blazing fire raining on the land!

In this section, every seventh line begins with **nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub>**, “my lady,” except this line, where the expected phrase is replaced by another kind of repetition: the threefold repetition of the cuneiform sign **ne**.

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**an-ne<sub>2</sub> me šum<sub>2</sub>-ma nin ur-ra u<sub>5</sub>-a**  
An me give-that lady beast-on ride-that  
*Ane me šuma nin ura ua*

### 14 – She to whom An gave the *me*, lady riding on lions,

Here, in [l. 128](#) below, and in l. 23 of the *Hymn*, the word **ur**, which generally means “beast” or “dog,” seems to refer to lions, which is the animal most often associated with Inana. Note also the play on sounds at the end of the line: **ura ua**.

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**inim ku<sub>3</sub> an-na-ta inim du<sub>11</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>**  
word holy An-of-from word speak  
*inim ku Anata inim dudu*

### 15 – who, by the holy order of An, gives orders.

The syntactical structure of the line is difficult—see the discussion in [Attinger](#)—but however one understands the grammar, it must refer to An empowering Inana to give orders. As in [l. 13](#), the same cuneiform sign, here **ka**, is used three times in a row, representing different sounds.

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**biluda gal-gal-la niĝ<sub>2</sub>-zu a-ba-a mu-un-zu**

rites great-of thing-your who know

*biluda galgala niĝ<sub>2</sub>zu aba munzu*

## 16 – Who can understand the great rites that are your possession?

Much as with the **me**, the “rites” mentioned in this line are best understood as activities that must be performed over and over again to keep the cosmos aright: other possible translations of **biluda** include “duties” and “ordinances.” The line thus makes the point that Inana plays a crucial, but unfathomable role in maintaining the world order—including the destruction of enemy lands. Note also the play on the syllable **zu**, which means first “your” and then “to know” (another play on the same syllable comes in [l. 27](#)).

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**kur gul-gul u<sub>4</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> a<sub>2</sub> ba-e-šum<sub>2</sub>**

mountain destroy storm-to strength give

*kur gulgul ude a baesum*

## 17 – Destroyer of mountains, you gave force to the storm.

This couplet is tightly constructed. In the previous line, the second word was **gal-gal**, “great”; here, it is **gul-gul**, “to destroy.” In the previous line, the second-to-last word was **aba**, “who”; here, that same sound is split into two words, **a<sub>2</sub>**, “force,” and the prefix **ba-** in “you give.” Note that the description of Inana as “destroyer of mountains” alludes to the myth of [\*Inana and Ebil\*](#).

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**ki-aĝ<sub>2</sub> d<sup>d</sup>en-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub> kalam-ma ni<sub>2</sub> mi-in-ri**

beloved Enlil-of land-in fear impose

*kiag Enlila kalama ni minri*

## 18 – Beloved by Enlil, you imposed fear on the land.

Besides “impose,” **ri** can also mean “to inject” or “to pour.”

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This is the third line in a row to start with the sound **ni**; note also the similarity with the previous line: **ni-me** vs. **niġme**. The expression **ġiri\_gub**, “to walk the foot,” is unclear: it might mean “to walk” or “to stand in attendance.” This translation follows Attinger in taking the movement in the previous line as implicit, resulting in humanity standing before Inana in this line, while Zgoll takes the couplet as describing one action: “When humanity directed its step to you in silence, through fear, terrifying light, and storms...”

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**me-ta me-huš-bi šu\_ba-e-re-ti**  
**me**-from **me**-horrific-their take  
*meta mehušbi šu baereti*

### 23 – you took the most terrifying of the *me*:

That is, Inana takes the most horrific of the cosmic duties upon herself. The sound **me** has been lurking in the background, as the second syllable of the previous two lines; here it is brought forth and emphasized.

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**i-dub er<sub>2</sub>-ra-ke<sub>4</sub> ġal<sub>2</sub>\_ma-ra-ab-taka<sub>4</sub>**  
thresholds tears-of open  
*idub erake ġal marabtaka*

### 24 – as the threshold of tears is opened for you,

This and the following two lines end with verbs that include the prefix **-ra-**, “for you,” in a subtle form of epistrophe (the repetition of a word at the end of the line).

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**e<sub>2</sub> A-NIR gal-gal-la sila-ba mu-re-du**  
house sighs great-of road-its-on walk  
*e anir<sup>?</sup> galgala silaba muredu*

### 25 – they walk on the road to the house of great grief for you,

Because of the verbal tense, Zgoll argues that the previous two lines should be read as an interjected clause, and that the sentence beginning in l. 21 ends here, leading to a translation such

as: “When humanity came to stand before you—since you had taken the most terrifying of the **me** and the threshold of tears had been opened for you—then did they (humanity) walk to the house of great grief for you.”

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**igi me<sub>3</sub>-ta niĝ<sub>2</sub> ma-ra-ta-si-ig**

front battle-from possession tear\_off

*igi meta niĝ maratasiĝ*

## 26 – before battle, (their) possessions are sacked for you.

That is, by Inana’s power, the grieving people are made to surrender all that they own without putting up a fight. It takes L. 24–26 as listing some of the terrifying **me** that Inana acquired in L. 23: her cosmic duty is to cause grief and loss. L. 23 began with the word **me-ta**, “of the **me**”; that sound is here repeated as **igi me<sub>3</sub>-ta**, “before battle,” neatly rounding off the stanza.

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**nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub> a<sub>2</sub> ni<sub>2</sub>-za zu<sub>2</sub>-zu<sub>2</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-ku<sub>2</sub>-e**

lady-my strength self-your-of teeth<sup>?</sup> eat

*ninĝu a niza zuzu ikue*

## 27 – My lady! The strength you have can eat through teeth.<sup>?</sup>

A new section is introduced by the repetition of **nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub>**. This is a difficult line, and the ancient scribes seem to have been confused about it. Scribes in Ur added the determinative sign **na<sub>4</sub>** before the first **zu**, which would indicate a pun between **na<sub>4</sub>zu**, “obsidian,” and **zu**, “tooth,” leading to a translation such as: “(With) your strength, teeth can eat stone.” But scribes in Nippur did not add this sign, so for them, the line may have turned on the irony of teeth—which normally do the eating—being eaten, by the force Inana’s huge strength.

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**u<sub>4</sub> du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-gen<sub>7</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>-en**

storm charge-that-like charge

*u dudugen idududen*

## 28 – You charge like the charging storm,

Note how the sound **zuzu** of the previous line is here echoed by the repeated **dudu**. The reduplication of the verbal root (**du7-du7**) in Sumerian indicates an ongoing movement, and this redoubling is used for full aural effect in this and the following three lines. Note the symmetry of the half-lines, which have four syllables (of which two are identical) and a half-rhyme on **-en**.

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**u<sub>4</sub> gu<sub>3</sub>\_ra-ra-da gu<sub>3</sub>\_im-da-ab-ra-ra-an**

storm growl-that-with growl

*u gu rarada imdabbaran*

### 29 – you roar with the roaring storm,

The line continues the doubled doubling introduced in the previous line, here of **ra-ra**.

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**ḫiškur-da še<sub>27</sub>\_mu-da-an-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-in**

Ishkur-with shout

*Iškurda še mudangigin*

### 30 – you shout with Ishkur.

The formulation recalls L 10, where Inana’s shout (**še<sub>27</sub>\_gi<sub>4</sub>**) is also compared to Ishkur, the storm god.

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**im-hul-im-hul-da im-da-kuš<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>-en**

hurricanes-with tire

*imbul-imbulda imdakušuden*

### 31 – You exhaust yourself with each hurricane,

That is, Inana tires herself out by roaring and running with every tempest that arises (literally, **im-hul** means “evil wind”). The theme of redoubling is marvelously continued here. The reduplication of a noun in Sumerian makes it plural, often a comprehensive plural: **kur-kur**, for example, can mean “mountains” or “all the mountains.” The sound effect of the reduplication is particularly strong here, in part because **imhul** is a relatively long word, and in part because the following verb also begins with **im-** (note also the repetition of **-da**).

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**ġiri<sub>3</sub>-za nu-kuš<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>3</sub> im-si**

feet-your-in not-tiredness fill

*ġiriza nukušu imsi*

### **32 – but your feet are filled with tirelessness.**

That is, even as she tires herself out, Inana is endlessly refreshed. [Attinger](#) (562) suggested that the previous line forms a rhetorical question that is answered here: “Are you exhausted by the hurricanes? No, your feet are inexhaustible.”

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**balag̃ A-NIR-ra-ta i-lu im-da-ab-be<sub>2</sub>**

**balag̃** sighs-of-with lamentation speak

*balag̃ anirata<sup>2</sup> ilu imdabbe*

### **33 – With a harp of grief, they perform the lamentation.**

The **balag̃** was a musical instrument used to accompany ritual lamentations. It began as a stringed instrument, like a harp or lyre, but around the Old Babylonian period it was changed into a kettledrum (see [Gabbay](#)). This line is one of several references to the genre of ritual lamentations in the poem; see [L. 98](#) below. It is not clear who is performing the lamentation: the people afflicted by the hurricanes? perhaps the winds themselves, or Ishkur? (see the discussion in [Attinger](#)). This translation follows a suggestion by [Foster](#), who takes Inana’s feet as the subject: their heavy footfall beats out the rhythm along with the **balag̃**, and so “intone” the lamentation.

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**nin-ġu<sub>10</sub> <sup>d</sup>a-nun-na diġir gal-gal-e-ne**

lady-my Anuna gods great

*ninġu Anuna diġir galgalene*

### **34 – My lady! The Anuna, the great gods,**

A new section is again introduced by the repetition of **nin-ġu<sub>10</sub>**. The [Anuna](#) are the highest circle of gods in the Sumerian pantheon.



ša<sub>3</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-ba-za a-ba-a ib<sub>2</sub>-te-en-te-en

heart angry-that-your who cool

*ša ibaz̄a aba ibtenten*

### 38 – Your angry heart—who can soothe it?

The heart was generally thought to be the seat of the mood and mind, and since an angry heart was a hot heart, to “cool” someone’s heart was to calm them, much as in today’s idiom (e.g. “to chill”). Note the three words in a row starting with **ib-** or **ab-**.

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ša<sub>3</sub> hul-ġal<sub>2</sub>-la-za te-en-te-bi mah-am<sub>3</sub>

heart wicked-that-your cool-its mighty-is

*ša hulġalaz̄a tentebi maham*

### 39 – Your wicked heart—to soothe it is overwhelming.

Enheduana again refers to her task (praising and soothing Inana) as **mah**, “mighty” or “overwhelming,” in L.64.

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nin ur<sub>5</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-sa<sub>6</sub> nin ša<sub>3</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-hul<sub>2</sub>

lady liver sweeten lady heart please

*nin ur isa nin ša ibul*

### 40 – Lady, will this mood be sweetened? Lady, will this heart be pleased?

The symmetries of the previous lines culminate in this highly compact line, which also rounds off the opening section. After this line, the poem is no longer structured by the repetition of **nin-ġu<sub>10</sub>** every seven lines. Note that the **ur<sub>5</sub>**, “liver” or “belly,” was another site of emotions, like the heart. It is unclear whether these two sentences are to be taken as questions: Attinger reads the sentence together with the next one, as “Lady, the mood may be good, lady, the heart may be happy, but when you become angry, they (the mood and the heart) cannot be cooled.” However, I take there to be a dividing line between these two verses, corresponding to the beginning of a new section, so I follow Zgoll in reading them as rhetorical questions.



invading it. Attinger takes the mountain as the subject, extending into Inana’s dominion: her destruction would thus be punishment for its attempted invasion. Both are possible, and either way, one should note the contrast to the rebellious city described in the next section: an external enemy (whether invader or invaded) v. an internal enemy (the rebel). Inana crushes both, thus cementing her unquestionable power.

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**abul-a-ba izi mu-e-ri-ri**

city\_gate-its-on fire put

*abulaba izi mueriri*

**44 – its city gates were set on fire.**

Literally, “fire was put on its city gates.”

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**i7-ba uš2 ma-ra-an-de2 uĝ3-bi ma-ra-na8-na8**

canal-its-in blood pour people-its drink

*iba uš marande uĝbi maranana*

**45 – Because of you, blood flows in its canals; because of you, its people drink it.**

Two manuscripts have instead “the people cannot drink,” drawing a different but equally painful consequence from the water having turned to blood.

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**uĝnim-bi ni2-bi-a ma-ra-ab-lah5-e**

army-its together bring

*uĝnimbi nibia marablabe*

**46 – Its army, all together, is brought to you,**

This and the next two lines repeat the exact same structure. Zgoll notes that **ni2-bi-a**, normally “together,” can also be read “in their fear” (both here and in the following lines); the ambiguity could easily be intentional.



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**zu<sub>2</sub>-keše<sub>2</sub>-bi ni<sub>2</sub>-bi-a ma-ra-ab-si-il-le**

elite\_troops-its together split

*zukešebi nibia marabsile*

**47 – its elite troops, all together, are disbanded for you,**

The word translated as “elite troops” literally means “the bound ones” (perhaps indicating professional soldiers as opposed to conscripts), which makes for an ironic fate: the bound are unbound.

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**ġuruš a<sub>2</sub>-tuku-bi ni<sub>2</sub>-bi-a ma-ra-ab-su<sub>8</sub>-ge-eš**

men strength-have-its together stand

*ġuruš atukubi nibia marabsugeš*

**48 – its strong men, all together, are presented to you.**

The word *ġuruš* specifically means “able-bodied man,” primarily meaning young men.

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**iri-ba ki-e-ne-di-ba mir i-ib<sub>2</sub>-si**

city-its-of place-merriment-of-in storm fill

*iriba kienediba mir ibsi*

**49 – Its city’s place of play is filled up by the storm,**

The **ki-e-ne-di** or “place of merriment” was presumably a locale for dancing and drinking. As always, the words could also be plural: “the cities’ places of merriment.”

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**ġuruš ša<sub>3</sub>-gan-bi heše<sub>5</sub>-eš<sub>2</sub> ma-ra-ab-sar-re-eš**

men best-its bound chase

*ġurus šaganbi hešeš marabsareš*

## 50 – its best men, captive, are driven before you.

It is uncertain how to transliterate the word rendered here as **heše<sub>5</sub>-eš<sub>2</sub>**—other possibilities include **lu<sup>2</sup>še<sub>3</sub>** and **heše<sub>5</sub>še<sup>3</sup>**, as well as **LU<sub>2</sub>xGANA<sub>2</sub>-eš<sub>2</sub>** or **LU<sub>2</sub>xKAR<sub>2</sub>-še<sub>3</sub>** (the capital letters indicate that we are unsure how to transliterate the signs). But either way, the meaning is clear enough: “prisoner,” “chained,” or the like. Note that if it can be read **heše<sub>5</sub>-eš<sub>2</sub>**, that would yield three of four words in the line ending in **-š**.

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**iri kur za-ra li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub>-ga-am<sub>3</sub>**

city country you-to not-say-that-is

*iri kur zara libindugam*

## 51 – To the city that did not say, “The country belongs to you,”

The second part of the chiasmic section begins here, as the text turns from the mountain to the city. Some ancient manuscripts display a different understanding of this line: “the enemy (**kur<sub>2</sub>**) city that did not say, “(we belong) to you.”

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**a-a ugu-za li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-eš-am<sub>3</sub>**

father bear-your-to not-say-that-is

*aya uguza libinešam*

## 52 – that did not say, “To your father,”

The line literally reads, “your birth father.” While unusual in English, the specification of Nanna as Inana’s birth father, or “your father who bore you,” is conventional in Sumerian. Most manuscripts simply write “your father,” leaving the rest of the sentence implied. I take the implication to be, “(The country belongs to) your father,” Zgoll has instead “(The city god is) your father.”

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**inim ku<sub>3</sub>-zu bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub> ki ġiri<sub>3</sub>-zu he<sub>2</sub>-eb-gi<sub>4</sub>**

word holy-your speak place foot-your return

*inim ku3zu bindu ki ġiri3zu hebgi*

### 53 – your holy order was spoken: the place returned to your feet.

This line concludes a fourfold repetition of the structure noun–noun–“your” (**zu** and **za**), a structure that opens the previous two lines (**iri kur za-ra** and **a-a ugu-za**) and is found twice here (**inim ku3-zu** and **ki ġiri3-zu**).

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**ša3-tur3-bi-ta ġiri3\_he2-eb-ta-an-ze2-er**

womb-its-from slip

*šaturbita ġiri hebtanzer*

### 54 – Its womb is disturbed,<sup>?</sup>

I take this reading from [Attinger](#) (6), but the line can also be read differently, parsing the signs **ša3-tur3**, “womb,” instead as **ša3 tur3**, “inside the cattle pen.” [Karahashi](#) (93), for example, translates the line as, “Your (?) slipped from its cattle pen,” implying that Inana has withdrawn her protection from the animals and thus, by extension, from the city as a whole. Following [Hallo and van Dijk](#), [Foster](#) takes the latter option and translates: “No one, indeed, had set foot in its sheepfolds.” [Zgoll](#) understands **ġiri3**, “foot,” to be an idiomatic expression for “responsible care”; following this logic, [Black et al.](#) translate “Responsible care is removed from its sheepfolds.” Here, I side with [Attinger](#) in understanding the signs **ša3-tur3** as “womb,” since it makes better sense with the following passage, which speaks of the city’s inhabitants becoming unable to procreate. [Attinger](#) takes **ġiri3\_ze2-er** as an idiomatic expression meaning “to slip,” and so more generally to become displaced, out of order. [Zgoll](#)’s latest translation also adopts the reading “womb,” and translates the line by explicating the metaphor: “in its wombs, no new life can flourish.” Either way, it is highly likely that the ambiguity is deliberate, and that the reader can parse the signs as forming either one or two words, yielding different interpretations: whether one chooses to read womb or stall, the other sense lingers in the background, interweaving the welfare of the city and the citizens, food and procreation.

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**munus-bi dam-a-ni-ta sa6-ga na-an-da-ab-be2**

woman-its spouse-her-with sweet not-speak

*munusbi damanita saga nandabe*

### 55 – its woman does not speak sweet words with her spouse,

Note the implicit connection between eloquence and eroticism: to speak words that are **sa<sub>6</sub>**, “sweet,” but also “beautiful,” is a none-too subtle metonym for sex, as the next line also makes clear.

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**ġi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-na ad-na-an-da-ab-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>**

nighttime-in not-consult

*ġiuna ad nandabgiġi*

### 56 – at nighttime she does not consult with him,

This line will be echoed later in the text, in [l. 140](#), where Enheduana does consult with Inana at “night-time,” **ġi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-na**.

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**niġ<sub>2</sub> ku<sub>3</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>-ga-na nam-mu-da-an-bur<sub>2</sub>-re**

thing pure heart-her-in not-reveal

*niġ ku šagana nammudanbure*

### 57 – she does not show him the pure things within her.

Note again the ambiguity of the word **ša<sub>3</sub>**, which as discussed under [l. 54](#) means “heart,” but also “inside” and “womb.” Likewise, the word **ku<sub>3</sub>** can mean “pure,” “shining,” or “holy”—in this translation, I primarily use the latter meaning, but all three apply to most contexts: things that were sacred were also thought to be resplendent and pure. In the context of the woman’s interior, however, the meanings “pure” and “shining” seem more prominent.

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**u<sub>3</sub>-sun<sub>2</sub> zi-zi-i dumu gal<sup>d</sup>suen-na**

aurochs rear-that child great Suen-of

*usun 𐎗𐎗zi dumu gal Suena*

### 58 – Rearing aurochs, great daughter of Suen.

The following couplet repeats [l. 41–42](#) and so closes the chiasmic structure. The aurochs is a now extinct breed of wild oxen (the name literally means *ur-ox*). They were larger than domesticated cattle, and they must have been a fearsome sight.

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**nin an-ra diri-ga a-ba-a ki-za ba-an-tum<sub>3</sub>**

lady heaven-to exceed-that who place-your-from take

*nin anra diriga aba kiṣa bantum*

## 59 – Lady, greater than heaven, who can take away from your dominion?

In the first appearance of this line, l. 42, Inana was said to exceed the earth, **kur**—here, symmetrically, she exceeds the skies, **an**. Note that some manuscripts mix up the two words, writing “heaven” for “earth” and “earth” for “heaven.”

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**me zi-de<sub>3</sub> nin gal nin-e-ne**

**me** righteous-for lady great ladies-of

*me ṣide nin gal ninene*

## 60 – Great lady of ladies, who, for the righteous *me*,

The next section—an autobiographical passage in which Enheduana introduces herself—is again introduced by two of the keywords of the poem, **nin** and **me** (see the note to l. 1). As noted by Attinger, the text could also mean that Inana was born *according to*, not *for*, the “righteous **me**,” since the **me** were also seen as the underlying patterns that regulate events.

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**ša<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-ta e<sub>3</sub>-a ama ugu-ni-ir diri-ga**

heart holy-from come\_forth mother bear-her-to exceed-that

*ša kuta ea ama ugunir diriga*

## 61 – was born from a holy womb, who surpasses her own mother!

Note the repetition of the words **ša<sub>3</sub>** and **ku<sub>3</sub>**, which were also juxtaposed in l. 57. Again, **ša<sub>3</sub>** is used to connote the womb, harkening back to l. 54. It is interesting that the self-referential announcement of the song which comes in l. 63–65 is immediately preceded by the theme of birth, especially given that Enheduana will (arguably) later describe herself as “giving birth” to the poem. On the specification of Ningal as Inana’s “birth mother,” **ama ugu-ni**, see the notes to l.

52. Zgoll notes that there is a pun in this couplet: the text first refers to Inana as **nin gal**, “great lady”; then turns to Inana’s mother, Ningal, without naming her directly.

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**gal-zu igi-ĝal<sub>2</sub> nin kur-kur-ra**

clever wise lady lands-of

*galzu igiĝal nin kurkura*

## 62 – Clever and prescient lady of the lands,

The translation of **igi-ĝal<sub>2</sub>** as “prescient,” specifically (as opposed to the more general “wise”) follows Zgoll.

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**zi-ĝal<sub>2</sub> uĝ<sub>3</sub> lu-a šir<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-zu ga-am<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>**

living people numerous-of song holy-your speak

*ziĝal uĝ lua šir kuzu gamdu*

## 63 – of living beings and countless people—I will sing your holy song!

Here, the “I” of the poem first appears as an active subject (as opposed to the passive role in the construction **nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub>**, “my lady”). It is also the first time that the text refers to itself, as the narrator announces that she will sing a hymn to Inana—which is what she is doing. Here and in the following, I translate the word **du<sub>11</sub>** as “sing” when it occurs in connections with hymns and songs, but in fact, it is just the default word for “speak.” Note that the first part of the line can also be read differently, as by Zgoll: “who lets there be life for the countless people.”

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**diĝir zi me-a tum<sub>2</sub>-ma gal-bi du<sub>11</sub>-ga-zu mah-am<sub>3</sub>**

god righteous **me**-in bring-that greatly speak-that-your mighty-is

*diĝir zi mea tuma galbi dugazu maham*

## 64 – Righteous goddess, to whom the *me* are brought, it is overwhelming to exalt you.

As in [l. 39](#), Enheduana refers to the task she has set herself—praising and soothing Inana—as **mah**, “mighty” or “overwhelming.” The phrase literally means, “your greatly speaking is mighty.” [Zgoll](#) interprets this differently, taking it as a description of Inana’s words: “your great speech is mighty.” While I consider this less likely, it would make for an interesting interweaving of Enheduana’s speech (in [l. 63](#) and [65](#)) and Inana’s (in this line); for a similar interweaving, see [l. 153](#). [Attinger](#) interprets the phrase “to whom the **me** are brought” instead as “who was made for the **me**” (reading **tum<sub>2</sub>** instead as **du**, for **du<sub>3</sub>**).



**ša<sub>3</sub> su<sub>3</sub>-ra<sub>2</sub> munus zi ša<sub>3</sub> dadag-ga me-zu ga-mu-ra-ab-du<sub>11</sub>**

heart distant woman righteous heart shining **me**-your speak

*ša sura munus zi ša dadaga mezu gamurabdu*

## 65 – Distant heart, righteous woman, shining heart! I will sing of your *me*.

Again, this is a clear instance of self-reference, since this poem is nothing if not a song about the **me**—as shown by its opening words. To have a “distant heart” means to be inscrutable, and this was a common description of the gods’ minds in Sumerian and Akkadian literature. Instead of **me-zu**, “your me,” some manuscripts have **me zi**, “righteous **me**,” or **me ku<sub>3</sub>**, “sacred **me**.” But note that **me-zu** would fit well with the pattern of the previous two lines, which also have **zu** as the last syllable before the last word.



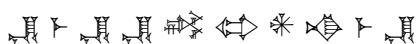
**ĝi<sub>6</sub>-par<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-ĝa<sub>2</sub> hu-mu-ši-in-ku<sub>4</sub>-re-en**

**ĝipar** holy enter

*ĝipar kuĝa humušinkuren*

## 66 – For you, I entered the holy *ĝipar*.

For the **ĝipar**, the home of the high priestesses in the temple complex, see [this page](#). Together with the next line, this is a turning point in the poem, in which the “I” that has been implicit so far—the narrator of the text—announces herself.



**en-me-en en-he<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-an-na-me-en**

high\_priestess-am Enheduana-am

*enmen enbeduanamen*

## 67 – I am the high priestess, I am Enheduana.

Note that in this striking line, Enheduana allows her name (which literally means “high priestess, ornament of heaven”) to emerge from her title: the words **en-men**, “I am the high priestess,” are unpacked into the longer phrase, **en-heduana-men**, “I am Enheduana,” as if one statement follows necessarily from the other. Enheduana—the implication goes—is naturally suited for her office (**he<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>** can also mean “may she be suitable”).

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**en<sup>si</sup>ma-sa<sub>2</sub>-ab i<sub>3</sub>-gur<sub>3</sub>-ru asilal-la<sub>2</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>**

carry-that joyful\_hymns speak-that

*masab iguru asilala idu*

## 68 – As I carried the basket, as I sang the hymns of joy,

The line refers to a ritual basket, containing offerings for the god. Note the vowel symmetry between the two half-lines: **a-a-i-u**.

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**ki-si<sub>3</sub>-ga bi<sub>2</sub>-ib-ĝar ĝa<sub>2</sub>-e nu-mu-un-ti-en**

funeral\_offering stand I not-live

*kisiga bibĝar ĝae numuntien*

## 69 – funeral offerings were presented—did I no longer live there?

The **ki-si<sub>3</sub>-ga**, Akkadian *kispu*, were offerings regularly presented to the souls of the dead, to keep them fed and happy in the afterlife. The word clearly caused confusion in antiquity, and several manuscripts replace it with different, similar-sounding words (such as **kin-sig-ga**, “afternoon meal”). Some manuscripts have instead: “(as if) I were dead.”

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**u<sub>4</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> ba-te u<sub>4</sub> mu-da-bil<sub>2</sub>**

light-to approach light burn

*ude baten u mudabil*



## 70 – I came toward the light—the light burned me.

The word **u**<sub>4</sub>, here translated “light,” can also mean “tempest,” hinting at the next line, where the shade becomes a storm. Note the tight construction of this line: two half-lines of four syllables each, both beginning with **u**. The line introduces two symmetrical couplets, where each line consists of first a positive half-line, then a negative one (matching the previous couplet, where a positive line was followed by a negative one).

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**ĝissu-ne ba-te u<sub>18</sub>-lu-da im-ma-dul**

shadow-to approach storm-with cover

*ĝissune baten uluda imandul*

## 71 – I came toward the shade—it was covered in a storm.

On the **u<sub>18</sub>-lu**, see [l. 21](#). Most manuscripts have not “it was covered,” but “I covered it”: [Attinger](#) takes this to mean that Enheduana, not intentionally but by her presence, transformed the shade into a storm.

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**ka lal<sub>3</sub>-ĝu<sub>10</sub> šu uh<sub>3</sub>-a ba-ab-du<sub>11</sub>**

mouth honey-my hand spittle<sup>2</sup>-in speak

*ka lalĝu šu uba babdu*

## 72 – My honey mouth became froth,<sup>2</sup>

This crucial but difficult line describes Enheduana’s loss of eloquence. The main problem is that the phrase **šu uh<sub>3</sub>-a** is unclear; the translation therefore relies on two manuscripts that replace it with **šu uh<sub>2</sub>-a**. Since **uh<sub>2</sub>** (possibly to be read **ah<sub>x</sub>**) means “spit, saliva, mucus,” the phrase is taken to mean that Enheduana’s poetic skills somehow degenerated into drool. However, this remains a tentative reconstruction.

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**niĝ<sub>2</sub> ur<sub>5</sub> sa<sub>6</sub>-sa<sub>6</sub>-ĝu<sub>10</sub> sahar-ta ba-da-gi<sub>4</sub>**

thing liver sweeten-that-my dust-toward turn

*niĝ ur sasaĝu sabarta badagi*





*kur amaru ġiriniše ina*

## 78 – Mountains and floods lie at her feet.

The two words **kur**, “mountain” (or “land”) and **amaru**, “flood,” are also juxtaposed in [L.11](#).

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**munus-bi in-ga-mah iri mu-da-ab-tuku<sub>4</sub>-e**

woman-this also<sup>2</sup>-mighty city shake

*munusbi ingamah iri mundabtukue*

## 79 – The woman is mighty, she makes cities tremble before her.

[Attinger](#) takes the word **iri**, “city,” to refer to Ur specifically, but most commentators see it as a more general description.

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**gub-ba ša<sub>3</sub>-ga-na ha-ma-se<sub>9</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>**

stand heart-her-in calm

*guba šagana hamasede*

## 80 – Stand by me! May her heart’s contents be reconciled with me.

This rather convoluted English translation reflects a much more straightforward Sumerian expression, literally: “may that which is in her heart be becalmed towards me.” I take the imperative “stand” as referring to Nanna, as do [Black et al.](#); [Foster](#) sees it as a description of Inana (“She stands paramount”). Both [Zgoll](#) and [Attinger](#) read it as An’s order to Inana (“Step forward!”); they also take this to be the last line of An’s speech.

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**en-he<sub>2</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-an-na-me-en a-ra-zu ga-mu-ra-ab-du<sub>11</sub>**

Enheduana-am prayer say

*Enheduanamen arazu gamurabdu*

## 81 – I am Enheduana. I will recite a prayer to you!

As noted in [l. 63](#), the word **du<sub>11</sub>**, “speak,” must often be translated with different verbs in English, such as “sing,” “intone,” or, as here, “recite.” However one interprets the previous stanza, here Enheduana is clearly addressing Inana again.

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**er<sub>2</sub>-ĝa<sub>2</sub> kaš du<sub>10</sub>-ga-gen<sub>7</sub>**

tears-my beer sweet-like

*erĝa kaš dugagen*

## 82 – My tears, which are like sweet beer,

For the description of tears as “sweet,” and more generally for why expressions of grief were thought to please the gods, see the discussion of [ritual laments](#).

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**ku<sub>3</sub> <sup>d</sup>inana-ra šu\_ga-mu-ni-re-bar di-zu ga-mu-ra-ab-du<sub>11</sub>**

holy Inana-to release judgment-your speak

*ku Inanara šu gamunirebar dizu gamurabdu*

## 83 – I will let flow free for you, holy Inana. I will say to you: “The decision is yours!”

This line introduces a metaphor that will become crucial to the poem as a whole: Enheduana describes her own situation as an unresolved court case, which Nanna has not settled, and which Enheduana therefore asks Inana to decide in his stead ([Zgoll](#)’s edition contains a thorough study of the legal metaphors in the poem). The word “**di-zu**,” “(It is) your decision,” is replaced in other manuscripts by “Judge!” (**di ku<sub>5</sub>**), “Greetings!” (**silim-ma**), and “Rise!” (**zi-zi-i**). Note also the echo of [l. 24](#), which also describes the flow of tears as being “opened.”

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**<sup>d</sup>dil-im<sub>2</sub>-babbar na-an-kuš<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>-en**

Dilimbabbar not-trouble

*Dilimbabbar nankušden*

## 84 – I cannot make Dilimbabbar care.?



**diĝir lu<sub>2</sub> gu-la-ta ni<sub>2</sub>-ba-ra-ba-da-te**

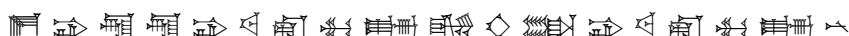
gods one great not-hold\_in\_awe

*diĝir lu gulata ni barabadata*

**87 – the greatest of the gods he does not fear.**

Note the symmetry of the half-lines, which have six syllables each, and the half-rhyme of their endings, **-ata** and **-ate**.

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**e<sub>2</sub>-bi la-la-bi ba-ra-mu-un-gi<sub>4</sub> hi-li-bi ba-ra-mu-un-til**

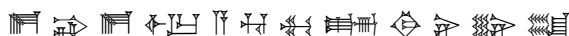
house-this charm-its not-satisfy delight-its not-complete

*ebi lalabi baramungi hilibi baramuntil*

**88 – This temple, with whose charm he was not sated, whose delights he had not exhausted:**

The word here translated as “temple,” **e<sub>2</sub>**, literally means “house.” The implicit subject of this line must be An, even though it is Lugal-Ane in both the preceding and the following line. Note the neatness of the line’s construction, with **lalabi** echoing **hilibi**, and **baramungi** echoing **baramuntil**.

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**e<sub>2</sub>-bi e<sub>2</sub> hul-a hu-mu-un-di-ni-in-ku<sub>4</sub>**

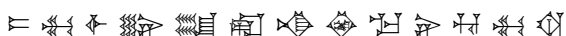
house-this house evil-into made\_enter

*ebi e hula bumundininku*

**89 – this house he transformed into a house of evil.**

The verb includes a particle meaning “against him,” that is, “to An’s detriment.”

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**tab mu-ši-in-ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-na ninim-ma-ni hu-mu-te**

equal enter-that-his-in envy-his approach

*tab mušinkurana ninimani humunte*





**ki-bal hul-gig** <sup>d</sup>nanna-za-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš an-ne<sub>2</sub> ha-ba-ab-šum<sub>2</sub>-mu  
 rebel\_land hateful Nanna-your-of-like An give  
*kibal hulgiḡ Nannaḡakeš Ane hababšumu*

**93 – Like a rebel land hated by your Nanna: may An deliver it.**

The word translated as “deliver,” **šum<sub>2</sub>**, here refers to passing something over to others. In this context, it would mean that An delivers it to destruction, giving it over so that it is no longer under divine protection.

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**iri-bi an-ne<sub>2</sub> ha-ba-ra-si-il-le**  
 city-this An split  
*iribi Ane habarasile*

**94 – This city—may An tear it to pieces,**

Note the balance of the half-lines, which have five syllables each and a symmetrical sequence of vowels: **i-i-i-a-e** / **a-a-a-i-e**.

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<sup>d</sup>en-lil<sub>2</sub>-le nam\_ha-ba-da-an-ku<sub>5</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>  
 Enlil curse  
*Enlile nam habadankude*

**95 – may Enlil curse it.**

As in [l. 18–19](#), Enlil appears alongside An, as the two main gods of the pantheon.

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**dumu er<sub>2</sub> pad<sub>3</sub>-da-bi ama-ni na-an-se<sub>25</sub>-e**  
 child cry-that-its mother-their not-calm  
*dumu er padabi amani nansede*

**96 – Its crying children—may their mother not comfort them.**

The expression **er<sub>2</sub> pad<sub>3</sub>** may refer, not exactly to crying, but to the welling up on tears in one's eyes.

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**nin A-NIR ki\_ĝar-ra**  
lady sighs set\_up-that  
*nin anir<sup>2</sup> ki ĝara*

### 97 – Lady! When their grief has been set up,

That is, when the city establishes the rituals of lamentation, in response to the destruction wrought upon by the gods.

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**ĝis<sup>8</sup> ma<sub>2</sub> A-NIR-ra-zu ki kur<sub>2</sub>-ra he<sub>2</sub>-bi<sub>2</sub>-ib-taka<sub>4</sub>**  
boat sigh-of-your place other-in abandon  
*ma anirazu<sup>1</sup> ki kura hebibtaka*

### 98 – your boat of grief should be left in a foreign land.

With [l. 97](#), this couplet explicates the logic of ritual laments, for which see [this page](#): when humans acknowledged the power of the gods through ostentatious grieving, the gods were expected to turn their destruction elsewhere. Note the parallel between **anir ki ĝara** and **anirazu ki kura**.

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**šir<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-ĝa<sub>2</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš i<sub>3</sub>-ug<sub>5</sub>-ge-de<sub>3</sub>-en**  
song holy-my-for die  
*šir kuĝakeš ingeden*

### 99 – Will I die because of my holy song?

It is unclear what precisely this line refers to, but perhaps it means that Enheduana fears that she will be put to death because of her previous service as high priestess.

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𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹

**ġa<sub>2</sub>-e<sup>d</sup>nanna-ġu<sub>10</sub> en<sub>3</sub>-ġu<sub>10</sub>\_ba-ra-an-tar**

I Nanna-my not-examine

*ġae Nannaġu enġu barantar*

### 100 – Me! My Nanna has not enquired about me.

In other words, Nanna has not shown interest in her case. Instead of “has not enquired,” one manuscript writes “has not made a decision.”

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𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹

**ki lul-la he<sub>2</sub>-eb-gul-gul-e**

place false destroy

*ki lula bebgulgulen*

### 101 – This false land has completely destroyed me.

The word translated here as “false,” **lul**, can also mean “criminal” or “renegade.” The expression recalls the earlier phrase **ki zi-ša<sub>3</sub>-ġal<sub>2</sub>-la**, “life-giving land.”

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𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹

**<sup>d</sup>dil-im<sub>2</sub>-babbar-e di-ġu<sub>10</sub> ba-ra-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub>**

Dilimbabbar verdict-my not-speak

*Dilimbabbare diġu barabindu*

### 102 – Dilimbabbar has not pronounced my verdict.

For the name Dilimbabbar, see [L 84](#) above.

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𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹𐎠𐎢𐏁𐎧𐎫𐎡𐎹

**bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub> nam-mu li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub> nam-mu**

speak what\_then not-speak what\_then

*bindu nammu libindu nammu*

### 103 – If he pronounced it—what then? If he did not pronounce it—what then?

Dilimbabbar’s verdict in the figurative court case no longer matters to Enheduana, either because it is too late (she is already on the verge of death), or because she has turned for support to Inana instead.

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**u<sub>3</sub>-ma gub-gub-ba e<sub>2</sub>-ta ba-ra-e<sub>3</sub>**  
victorious stand house-from come\_out  
*uma gubguba eta barane*

### 104 – Standing victorious, he stepped out of the temple.

The implicit subject of the line must again be Lugal-Ane. The word translated here as “victorious” means more precisely “having achieved one’s desires.” As observed by [Attinger](#), the traditional reading of the line as “he forced me out of the temple,” is complicated (if not, in my view, made entirely impossible) by the way most manuscripts write the final verb. This is another well-balanced line, with half-lines of five syllables each and a symmetrical vowel sequence: **u-a u-u-a / e-a a-a-e**.

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**sim<sup>mušen</sup>-gen<sub>7</sub> ab-ta ba-ra-an-dal-e zi-ĝu<sub>10</sub> im-mi-ku<sub>2</sub>**  
swallow-like window-from make\_fly life-my eat  
*simgen abta barandalen zīĝu immiku*

### 105 – Like a swallow, he made me fly through the window—my life has been devoured.

Other manuscripts have instead “he has devoured my life.”

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**ĝi<sup>s</sup>kiš<sub>16</sub> kur-ra-ke<sub>4</sub> bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>24</sub>-e-en**  
thorn land-of-to decree  
*kiši kurake binduen*



## 109 – Precious lady, beloved by An!

Once again, the word **nin** serves to mark the beginning of a new section. This fifth and penultimate section is framed by the three-fold repetition of the phrase “lady, beloved by An.”

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**ša<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-zu mah-am<sub>3</sub> ki-bi\_ha-ma-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>**

heart holy-your mighty-is return

*ša kuzu maham kibi hamagigi*

## 110 – Your holy heart is mighty—may it return to me!

In the Sumerian idiom, the heart “returning to its place” means a restoration of affection.

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**nitlam ki-aĝ<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>ušumgal-an-na-ka**

spouse beloved Ushumgal-An-of

*nitlam kiaĝ Ušumgal-Anaka*

## 111 – Beloved wife of Ushumgal-An,

Ušumgal-An—literally “the basilisk of heaven”—is an epithet of Inana’s lover, Dumuzi.

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**an-ur<sub>2</sub> an-pa nin gal-bi-me-en**

horizon zenith lady great-of-are

*anur anpa nin galbimen*

## 112 – you are the greatest lady from horizon to zenith.

The words translated as “horizon” and “zenith” literally mean “heaven-foundation,” **an-ur<sub>2</sub>**, and “heaven-top,” **an-pa**.

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<sup>d</sup>a-nun-na-ke<sub>4</sub>-ne gu<sub>2</sub>-ġiš\_ma-ra-an-ġar-re-eš

Anuna submit

*Anunakene guġiš maraġares*

### 113 – The Anuna have submitted to you.

This is the first of three lines in quick succession to begin with the name of the “Anuna,” marking Inana’s superiority over the other gods of the pantheon.

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u<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>2</sub>-da-ta nin ban<sub>3</sub>-da-me-en

birth-from lady-junior-are

*ududata nin bandamen*

### 114 – From birth, you were a minor lady,

Intriguingly, the line implies that Inana was not always held to be a major figure in the pantheon—perhaps to explain why the goddess needs to be exalted.

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<sup>d</sup>a-nun-na diġir gal-gal-e-ne a-gen<sub>7</sub> ba-e-ne-diri-ga

Anuna gods great how exceed-that

*Anuna diġir galgalener agen baenediriga*

### 115 – but now—how you surpass the great Anuna gods!

The Sumerian language is very sparing with conjunctions like “and” or “but,” so the words “but now” are not there in the original, though the sentiment is clearly the same.

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<sup>d</sup>a-nun-na-ke<sub>3</sub>-ne nundum-nundum-bi-ta ki su-ub\_ma-ra-AK-ne

Anuna lips-their-with place kiss

*Anunakene nundum-nundumbita ki sub marakene*

### 116 – The Anuna kiss the ground for you.

Literally, “rub the place with their lips.”

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**di** ni<sub>2</sub>-ĝa<sub>2</sub> nu-mu-un-til **di** kur<sub>2</sub> **di**-ĝu<sub>10</sub>-gen<sub>7</sub> **igi**-ĝa<sub>2</sub> mu-un-ni<sub>10</sub>-ni<sub>10</sub>  
case self-my not-complete case hostile case-my-like face-my encircle  
*di niĝa numuntil di kur diĝugen igiĝa munnini*

**117 – The trial against me is not over. A hostile verdict surrounds me, as if it were my verdict.**

As noted under [l. 83](#), Enheduana interprets the ambiguity of her situation (exiled, but still alive) as an open court case: she feels a negative verdict looming toward her, but insists that the matter is not yet fully resolved, giving Inana time to intervene. Note that the word here translated as “trial” and “verdict” is the same, **di**.

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<sup>ĝis</sup>**na**<sub>2</sub> **gi**-rin-na šu\_nu-um-mi-la<sub>2</sub>  
bed resplendent<sup>2</sup> not-defile  
*na girina šu numila*

**118 – I have not defiled<sup>2</sup> the flourishing<sup>2</sup> bed,**

It is unclear what this line refers to, in part because the expressions **gi-rin-na**, here translated “flourishing,” and **šu\_la2**, here translated “defile,” are unclear. [Zgoll](#) translates that later expression literally, as “I have not stretched out my hands over the resplendent bed,” which [Foster](#) takes to be a description of prayer: “My hands are no longer clasped together on the god’s bed.” [Attinger](#) argues that the subject of the line is Lugal-Ane (“he has not defiled”). The new translation by [Zgoll](#) follows him on this point, but it seems to me unlikely. One manuscript has “my flourishing<sup>2</sup> bed.” Note the balance of the half-lines, which have the same syllable structure: one, then three.

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**inim** du<sub>11</sub>-ga <sup>d</sup>nin-gal lu<sub>2</sub>-ra nu-mu-na-bur<sub>2</sub>  
word spoken Ningal anyone-to not-reveal  
*inim duga Ningal lura numunabur*

**119 – I have not revealed Ningal’s speech to anyone,**







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𒊕 𒀭 𒄀 𒄁 𒄂 𒄃 𒄄 𒄅 𒄆 𒄇 𒄈 𒄉 𒄊 𒄋

**kur-ra gu<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>2</sub>-e-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**

land shout-that-your know

*kura gu deza hezuam*

**125a – That you roar against the enemy land—may it be known.**

This line further complicates the different line orderings described above. Zgoll decided to count this line as 125a, presumably because it is placed after l. 125 in some manuscripts, but last in several others, suggesting (to her) that it was treated as an extraneous addition. Delnero (I think rightly) argues that there is not sufficient evidence for discounting the line, and in his new ordering, he gives it the number 133. However, as a result, the two editions yield different line counts from here and on to the end of the poem, which has 153 lines by Zgoll’s count and 154 by Delnero’s. Again, I follow Zgoll for the sake of convenience and ease of comparison across translations.

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𒊕 𒀭 𒄀 𒄁 𒄂 𒄃 𒄄 𒄅 𒄆 𒄇 𒄈 𒄉 𒄊 𒄋

**saĝ ĝiš-ra-ra-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**

head beat-that-your know

*saĝ ĝiš rараza hezuam*

**126 – That you smash heads—may it be known.**

The phrase **saĝ ĝiš ra** is also used in the more general, less graphic sense, “to kill.”

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**ur-gen<sub>7</sub> ad<sub>6</sub> gu<sub>7</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**

beast-like corpse eat-that-you know

*urgen ad guza hezuam*

**127 – That you devour corpses like a lion—may it be known.**

On the meaning of **ur** as “beast” or “lion,” see [L. 14](#).

𐎠 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎤 𐎤𐎥 𐎦𐎧 𐎨 𐎨𐎩

**igi huš-a-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**  
eye furious-that-your know  
*igi hušaza hezuam*

**128 – That your eyes are furious—may it be known.**

The word **igi** can also mean “face,” but in L.130, it does seem to refer to eyes.

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𐎠 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎤𐎥 𐎦𐎧𐎨𐎩 𐎪𐎫𐎬𐎭 𐎮 𐎮𐎯𐎰 𐎱 𐎱𐎲𐎳 𐎴 𐎴𐎵

**igi huš-bi il<sub>2</sub>-il<sub>2</sub>-i-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**  
eye furious-this lift-that-you know  
*igi hušbi ililiza' hezuam*

**129 – That you lift these furious eyes—may it be known.**

One advantage of Zgoll’s ordering of the section is that it puts the three lines beginning with **igi** next to each other, in a neat crescendo.

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𐎠 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎤𐎥 𐎦𐎧𐎨𐎩 𐎪𐎫𐎬𐎭 𐎮 𐎮𐎯𐎰 𐎱 𐎱𐎲𐎳 𐎴 𐎴𐎵

**igi gun<sub>3</sub>-gun<sub>3</sub>-na-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**  
eye iridescent-that-your know  
*igi gungunaza hezuam*

**130 – That your eyes are iridescent—may it be known.**

The word **gun<sub>3</sub>-gun<sub>3</sub>**, which is often applied to eyes, means “shining, multi-colored, dappled, beautiful.”

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𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎤𐎥 𐎦𐎧 𐎨𐎩𐎪𐎫 𐎬𐎭 𐎮 𐎮𐎯𐎰 𐎱 𐎱𐎲𐎳 𐎴 𐎴𐎵

**uru<sub>16</sub>-na nu-še-ga-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**  
towering-that disobedient-that-your know  
*uruna nušegaza hezuam*

**131 – That you are obstinate and defiant—may it be known.**

The word **nu-še-ga**, here translated as “defiant,” literally means, “one who does not obey.”

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**u<sub>3</sub>-ma gub-gub-bu-za he<sub>2</sub>-zu-am<sub>3</sub>**

victorious stand-that-your know

*uma gubgubuzza hezuam*

### 132 – That you stand triumphant—may it be known.

Note the parallel to [l. 104](#), where Lugal-Ane was said to stand triumphant, using the same expression: the implication is that Inana will rob him of his victory.

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𒌶 𒌶

**<sup>d</sup>nanna li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub>-ga za-a-kam bi<sub>2</sub>-in-du<sub>11</sub>-ga**

Nanna not-speak yours speak

*Nanna libinduga zakam binduga*

### 133 – Nanna has not spoken, so he has said: “It is yours.”

The line repeats the second part of [l. 122](#).

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**nin-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-gu-ul-en i<sub>3</sub>-mah-en**

lady-my make\_great make\_mighty

*niṅgu ibgulen imaben*

### 134 – My lady, this has made you great, this has made you mighty.

By letting Inana decide the case for him, Nanna has allowed Inana to become a ruler among gods, paving the way for her exalted position in the pantheon. One can also translate it as “he has made you, he has made you mighty.”

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nin ki-aĝ<sub>2</sub> an-na-ĝu<sub>10</sub> mir-mir-za ga-am<sub>3</sub>-du<sub>11</sub>

lady beloved An-of-my wrath-your speak

*nin kiāĝ Anaĝu mirmirza gamdu*

### 135 – My lady, beloved by An—I will sing of your wrath.

This is the third and final repetition of the phrase, “My lady, beloved by An,” marking the beginning of the climactic section of the poem.

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ne-mur mu-dub šu-luh si<sub>2</sub>-in-sa<sub>2</sub>

coal pile ritual prepare

*nemur mudub šuluh si binsa*

### 136 – I have piled up the coals, I have performed the ritual.

On the **šuluh** as rituals of purification, see [L.85](#). In this context, **si sa<sub>2</sub>** specifically means “to perform without fault.”

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eš<sub>2</sub>-dam-ku<sub>3</sub> ma-ra-an-ĝal<sub>2</sub> ša<sub>3</sub>-zu na-ma-se<sub>9</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>

Eshdamku be<sub>2</sub>-available heart-your not-calm

*ešdamku maraṅgal šazu namasede*

### 137 – The Holy Inn is ready for you. Will your heart not be reconciled with me?

The Holy Inn was a temple to Inana in the city of Girsu, but here it probably refers more generally to one of Inana’s cult centers; see [George](#) (83) and [Zgoll](#) (426–28).

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im-ma-si im-ma-diri-ga-ta nin UN-gal ma-ra-du<sub>2</sub>-ud

fill exceed-that-after lady queen<sup>2</sup> give<sub>2</sub>-birth

*imasi imadirigata nin ungal<sup>2</sup> maradu*

### 138 – As my heart was filled, overfilled—lady, queen—I gave birth to it for you.

Zgoll identifies the first part of the line—which literally reads “it was full for me, it was exceeding for me”—as a Sumerian idiomatic expression of overwhelming sorrow, with the heart as the implicit subject. The implicit object of the last verb refers to the poem itself, as made clear by the following lines: the narrator is here describing how she produced the text we have been reading so far. Crucially, however, the manuscripts write the last sign differently, leading to four different descriptions of Enheduana’s authorship. Four manuscripts have **du**<sub>11</sub>, “to speak,” or “to sing” (see note to l. 63); three manuscripts have **du**<sub>3</sub>, “to create”; one manuscript has **du**<sub>2</sub>, “to give birth”; and one manuscript has **du**<sub>8</sub>, “to release.” Since all four meanings of the sound **du** make sense in this context—authorship can be understood as both creation, recitation, birth, and release—the ambiguity may well be intentional. Zgoll (490) defends the reading **du**<sub>2</sub>, “give birth,” in part because of the parallelism to l. 544 of the *Temple Hymns*, where Enheduana’s authorship is also described through the metaphor of birth.

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**niĝ<sub>2</sub> ĝi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-na ma-ra-an-du<sub>11</sub>-ga-am<sub>3</sub>**

thing nighttime-in speak-that-is

*niĝ ĝiuna marandugam*

### 139 – That which I sang to you at nighttime,

The mention of the **ĝi<sub>6</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-na**, “dead of night,” alludes back to l. 56 and the description of the rebel woman. The link between the scenes establishes the rebel woman as Enheduana’s foil: where the woman cannot speak beautiful words to her spouse and so cannot give birth, Enheduana does speak eloquently to Inana, and so gives birth to the poem.

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**gala an-bar<sub>7</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub> šu\_hu-mu-ra-ab-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>**

**gala** midday repeat

*gala anbarka šu humurabgigi*

### 140 – may a *gala* repeat to you at midday.

On the **gala**, see [this page](#).

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**dam dab<sub>5</sub>-ba-za-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš dumu dab<sub>5</sub>-ba-za-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš**

spouse seized-your-for child seized-your-for

*dam dabaṣakeš dumu dabaṣakeš*

### 141 – Because of your captive spouse, because of your captive child,

It is unclear which spouse and child are meant. This line is also found in the genre of [ritual lamentations](#), and seems to be a deliberate allusion to that genre (see [Zgoll 431](#)), indicating that the **gala** has taken over as the narrator of the text (see [L.144](#)). Note the heavy alliteration on **d**.

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**ib<sub>2</sub>-ba-zu ib<sub>2</sub>-gu-ul ša<sub>3</sub>-zu nu-te-en-te-en**

anger-your make\_great heart-your not-cool

*ibazu ibgul šazu nutenten*

### 142 – your anger grows, your heart is not soothed.

It is again unclear how this line fits into the narrative of the poem. If Enheduana identifies herself as Inana's child (or spouse?) in the preceding line, it might mean that Inana goes from raging against Enheduana to raging on her behalf, but this is highly uncertain. [Attinger](#) suggests that the second part of the line is a question, paralleling [L.137](#): "Will your heart not be soothed?" Note the tight construction of the line: the repetition of **ib-** and **-zu** and the syllable structure 3-2//2-3.

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**nin gu<sub>2</sub>-tuku nir-ĝal<sub>2</sub> gu<sub>2</sub>-en-na-ke<sub>4</sub>**

lady powerful authoritative assembly

*nin gutuku nirĝal guenake*

### 143 – The powerful lady, who is respected in the assembly,

Once more, the word **nin** introduces a new section: the epilogue of the poem. Note that the two words of each half-line begin with the same syllables: **ni-** and **gu-**.



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**sizkur<sub>2</sub>-ra-na šu\_ba-an-ši-in-ti**

prayer-her receive

*sizkurana šu banšinti*

#### 144 – received her prayer.

Enheduana refers to herself in the third person, suggesting that the narrator is now the **gala** who repeated Enheduana’s hymn on the day after its composition. This is a striking moment in the text, as the grammatical structure reflects Enheduana’s transformation from character to composer, narrator to author. As noted by [Zgoll](#), **sizkur<sub>2</sub>** is specifically a prayer and an offering performed together.

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**ša<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub> 𐀀inana ki-bi\_ba-an-na-ab-gi<sub>4</sub>**

heart holy Inana-of return

*ša ku Inana kibi banabgi*

#### 145 – Inana’s holy heart returned to her.

For the idiomatic expression of the heart returning to its place, signaling a restoration of affection, see [l. 110](#). Because Inana is clearly the subject of this line and [l. 149](#), it is assumed that she is also the subject of the intervening lines, though any of these could also refer to Enheduana, since she is now likewise referred to in the third person. As noted by [Hallo and van Dijk](#) (62), “it is hard to tell whether the narrator . . . is speaking of one or the other,” an ambiguity that is particularly clear in [l. 151](#).

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**u<sub>4</sub> ba-an-na-du<sub>10</sub> la-la ba-an-su<sub>3</sub>-su<sub>3</sub> hi-li ma-az ba-an-du<sub>8</sub>-du<sub>8</sub>**

light be\_pleasant charm spread delight lust release

*u banadu lala bansusu hili maz bandudu*

#### 146 – The light pleased her: she was spreading charm, she was exuding passionate delight.

The juxtaposition of **la-la**, “charm,” and **hi-li**, “delight,” refers back to [l. 88](#) and the description of the Eana temple, perhaps suggesting that the damage done by Lugal-Ane has been reversed. Note also that the **u<sub>4</sub>**, “light,” being pleasant in this line contrasts with its appearance in [l. 70](#),



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**ġiš-ka<sub>2</sub>-na-ke<sub>4</sub> silim-ma mu-na-ab-be<sub>2</sub>**

doorframe greetings say

*ġiškanake silima munabe*

### 150 – the doorframe said to her: “Welcome!”

The mention of the doorframe at the very end of the poem is significant: the line is also a threshold of the text itself. For a similar association in *Gilgamesh*, between the thresholds of the text and in the text, see [Helle](#) (197–99).

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**nu-gig-ra du<sub>11</sub>-ga-ni mah-am<sub>3</sub>**

nugig-to say-that-her mighty-is

*nugigra dugani maham*

### 151 – Her speech to the *nugig* was mighty.

Note that the mention of the **nugig** again refers back to the beginning of the text: it was mentioned in the third line of the poem and appears again here, in the third-to-last line. As noted in [L.3](#), it originally designated a wetnurse or midwife, but came to refer more generally to high-status women associated with the temple, and it was used as an epithet of Inana and other goddesses. Crucially, its use in this line is ambiguous: does it refer to Inana, as it does in [L.3](#)? In that case, the line would describe Enheduana’s recitation of the poem to Inana. Or does **nugig** refer to Enheduana, in which case the line would describe Inana’s order that Enheduana be restored as high priestess? Different translators have taken different views, but the ambiguity seems to me deliberate (see [Helle](#), 61), as it shows the goddess and the priestess exalting one another.

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**kur gul-gul an-da me ba-a**

mountain destroy An-with me allotted

*kur gulgul Anda me ba*

### 152 – Destroyer of mountains, to whom the *me* were allotted by An,

