

SEANA ZELAZO, LICSW



# THE WAY OF INANNA

A Heroine's Guide  
to Living Unapologetically



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to Living Unapologetically

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**HANIEL**  
PRESS

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A Heroine's Guide to Living Unapologetically  
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*For my mother and sisters*

Inanna placed the *shugurra*, 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 back against the apple tree,  
her vulva was wondrous to behold.

Rejoicing at her wondrous vulva,  
the young woman Inanna applauded herself.<sup>1</sup>

# Contents

Preface .....	i
How Working with Inanna Transformed Me .....	ix
Freefall: Finding Your Bearings .....	xxiii
Gate One: The Call to Spirit .....	1
Gate Two: Healing Ancestral Relationships .....	27
Gate Three: Moving Beyond Addiction .....	43
Gate Four: Achieving Positive Body Image and Self-Esteem .....	61
Gate Five: Erecting Sacred Boundaries .....	83
Gate Six: Transcending the Binary .....	103
Gate Seven: Surrender to Ascend .....	123
Next Steps for the Present-Day Priest/ess of Inanna .....	145
Appendix: Chakra Chart .....	161
Acknowledgements .....	163
About the Author .....	165
Endnotes .....	167
Bibliography .....	171

## Gate One



# THE CALL TO SPIRIT

## THE MYTH

### *The Descent of Inanna*

Inanna's ascension begins with her descent. Things to that point had been going smoothly for the Queen of Heaven and Earth. With a temple erected in her honor in seven cities, her beloved Dumuzi at her side, and devoted friends attentive to her needs and wishes, she was both powerful and comfortable.

But then she realizes that something about her situation is lacking. Compelled by an intuitive signal that comes from her soul, Inanna recognizes that she must submit to her deepest, darkest fears and descend

## THE WAY OF INANNA

---

to the underworld. An inner pressure to transform grows within her. Spirit knows Inanna is ready to understand the mysteries of the underworld, but Inanna herself is not without reservations—she cannot yet see the bigger picture. Confident in the process, however, Inanna gathers her courage and prepares to leave her holy office with its comforts and security. She gives herself over to the pull of the Great Below.

Before she goes, Inanna collects seven Divine powers: the seven *me*.<sup>17</sup> These are her *shugurra*, which is her crown; a single strand of lapis beads; a double strand of lapis beads; a breast plate; a gold bracelet; a lapis measuring rod and line; and her royal robe. She knows she must take these with her as the armor of a goddess. One by one, Inanna places these items on her body. Deliberately, as though engaged in a ritual, she dons her queenly apparel.

The process by which she does this is instructive. First, she places the *shugurra* on her head. She then arranges her bangs across her third eye and places her single strand lapis necklace around her throat chakra. Next, she situates her double strand of beads at her breast and dabs alchemical makeup on her eyes to enhance the allure of her gaze. Then she covers her chest with her breastplate and slips her golden bracelet over her wrist. Finally, she puts on her royal robe and picks up her measuring rod and line.

Dressed and ready, Inanna summons Ninshubur— her wise assistant, servant, and guide—to prepare a plan in case she does not come back from the underworld. Inanna knows she is venturing into a place from which no one has ever returned. Always respectful of the process of death, Inanna first instructs Ninshubur to mourn and lament her if she does not return. Following that, Ninshubur is to locate Inanna's three father figures—Enlil, Nanna, and Enki—to ask for their help in her resurrection. With this escape plan in place, she descends.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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First, Inanna comes to the outer gates of the Great Below. She bangs on the door with authority, loudly declaring her presence. The gatekeeper, Neti, asks Inanna to state her reason for arrival. Still not entirely sure, she recalls the impending funeral of her sister Ereshkigal's husband, Gugalanna, deciding on the spot to state this as her official reason. Ereshkigal is the Queen of the Underworld.

Neti tells Ereshkigal about the brazen visitor, describing Inanna's powerful accoutrement in detail and depicting her breathtaking presence as larger than life. Ereshkigal cannot contain her anger, jealousy, and resentment. She is described in the myth as a petulant child who: "slapped her thigh and bit her lip" upon hearing of Inanna's arrival.<sup>18</sup> We assume that there must be something deeper to her response than just jealousy and, in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*,<sup>19</sup> we learn that Inanna had a role in the death of her husband, which we explore in detail in Gate Seven.

Ereshkigal is appalled that Inanna presumes she will be allowed to leave the underworld once she enters. As ruler of this domain, Ereshkigal pauses to consider all that Neti has told her. She listens to her intuition about what steps she must take in response. She then commands Neti to lock the seven gates to the underworld and then to prepare to unlock them one by one. She instructs Neti to force Inanna to remove one of her items at each entry point, so she ultimately arrives, "naked and bowed low"<sup>20</sup> without her seven powers.

Neti opens the first gate and instructs Inanna to remove her crown. He does this at each gate for each of her seven royal attributes. Once Inanna has finally gained entry, the judges of the underworld encircle her. As Inanna moves closer to the throne, Ereshkigal fixes the "eye of death"<sup>21</sup> upon her and delivers a violent blow, effectively killing Inanna. Ereshkigal

then hangs Inanna's corpse on a nail to rot on the wall of the underworld. Clearly, Inanna is now at her weakest and lowest point. But will she rise?

### Thank Goddess for the Back-Up Plan

After three days and three nights, Inanna does not return to her temple. The faithful Ninshubur carries out the plan devised by Inanna before leaving. She goes into mourning and prepares a holy lament. She then seeks the help of Enlil, but he refuses her. Enlil reasons that as a goddess with many powers, Inanna knowingly ventured into the land of no return. She must deal with the consequences on her own, he says. Ninshubur then visits Nanna, who responds the same way. Only Enki, her grandfather and the God of Wisdom, comes to her aid.

Moved by compassion, but also pride in his granddaughter's willingness to face the unknown, he takes dirt from his fingernails to create two magical beings—the *kurgarra* and the *galatur*. They are neither male nor female. Enki equips each one with a specific power to alchemically restore Inanna. He connects the *kurgarra* with “the food of life” and the *galatur* with the “water of life.” He instructs them to enter the Great Below in the form of flies. Enki knows that Ereshkigal will be playing out the interpenetrating nature of life and death when they find her, symbolically mourning, while enduring simulated labor pains. Her process here underscores the rebirth of both herself and her sister self in the figure of Inanna. Enki instructs his two messengers to mirror Ereshkigal's birth pains by repeating the words of her suffering, thereby appearing to support her with compassion and empathy. Enki knows this kind gesture will elicit a gift from Ereshkigal. He instructs the *kurgarra* and *galatur* to ask for the gift of the “meat” hanging on the wall.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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As they arrive, the *kurgarra* and *galatur* find Ereshkigal lying naked with her hair spread out around her in a wild mess, clearly in distress. She is no longer the composed queen of the underworld. Her discomfort overrides her modesty. Moaning in pain, she insists she hurts inside and out. The *kurgarra* and *galatur* meet Ereshkigal in her suffering and mirror her lament.

Astonished at being truly heard with apparent sympathy, Ereshkigal asks: “Who are you,/ Moaning—groaning—sighing with me?”<sup>22</sup> Then, as Enki predicted, she says, “If you are gods, I will bless you,/ If you are mortals, I will give you a gift.”<sup>23</sup> Once the *kurgarra* and *galatur* receive Inanna’s corpse, they sprinkle the food and water of life on her, and Inanna is instantly resurrected.

## THE MYTH EXPLAINED

### Sacred Sevens

When Inanna opens herself to the Great Below, she experiences a longing to be reborn. Unknown to her, this is a move toward her initiation into mastery and wholeness. The story begins with a powerful incantation that immediately draws the reader into the experience with its rhythm. The spellbinding incantatory process is every bit intentional. Inanna wants us to learn with her to reap the benefits of her initiation.

As it does throughout her myths, the number seven figures prominently in this story. The seven gates Inanna confronts are the seven levels of initiation in the process of ascension. They relate to the seven chakras, which are connected to the seven notes of the musical octave. Harmonizing their resonance can directly impact our reality. The number seven is also reflected in the seven planetary spheres of the sun, moon, Mercury, Venus,

## THE WAY OF INANNA

---

Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, offering a cosmological map calling attention to these centers within as a central aspect of our initiation.

Inanna adorns herself with her seven *me*, her earthly possessions. The *me* are also universal laws that govern reality. They are spiritual powers and arts of civilization that support our physical growth and processes. An explanation of Inanna's seven *me* will give us insight into the symbolism and significance of your own gifts and powers.

We can interpret Inanna's crown, or shugurra, as the symbol of her mastery, not only as a leader to her people but also on a spiritual level. Placed upon her seventh chakra, or the crown chakra, it underscores her role as a spiritual teacher. The single strand of lapis beads placed at her neck highlights her capacity to use her voice in a commanding way. These radiant blue beads, positioned to activate her throat chakra, relate to her freedom to speak her truth. Lapis lazuli is a stone believed to promote creative self-expression and communication. The fact that the double strand of beads falls at her breast emphasizes the ways Inanna *nourishes* her people in activating their own clear thoughts and expressions.

The breastplate covering her heart chakra can be seen as an activator of this center of wisdom. It both highlights the heart as well as protects it. All that she has acquired as the Goddess of Love is further enhanced by this breastplate, which broadcasts her heart wisdom. The gold bracelet is a symbol of her wealth and the jewels she has acquired in this life. It is also a symbol of unity, the circle that connects us—a representation of unity consciousness.

The measuring rod and line relate to the ways in which Inanna physically supports her people through surveying the land for its areas of abundance. Similar to the staff of a wizard, the measuring rod and line help Inanna alchemically transmute and create. Finally, Inanna's royal robe is symbolic of her cloak of protection. It is also a part of her majestic beauty.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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Its seven pleats convey a significant message about the sacred number seven and the way this number is woven into the tapestry of the initiate's journey.

Inanna must relinquish these seven royal items as she passes through each gate—a profound teaching about letting go of attachment. Each gate presents an opportunity for Inanna and, by connection, the readers of her myths, to examine the corresponding chakra in order to assess any wounding therein, and to bring healing to the area.

Wounding in your chakras can accumulate over time and is connected to your karmic issues. As such, what is built up in your chakras may be lifetimes old. By stripping away an item, Inanna is, in effect, purifying her wounds. She is symbolically releasing whatever had accumulated therein and, as such, is purifying her chakras. This process enlightens us, allowing us to shift toward a higher vibration—the very thing necessary for rebirth.

Every time we deepen our healing, we replace the lower vibrational frequencies that were associated with wounding with the higher vibrations of peace, acceptance, and empowerment. Whenever we surrender to anything, there is an element of faith that is necessary. As Inanna releases her *me*, she surrenders to the laws of the underworld, and demonstrates a faith in herself. Indeed, even stripped naked, she is still equipped with this embodied assurance in herself.

### Resurrection As Historical Precedent

Ostensibly, as she tells Neti upon arriving at the underworld, the purpose for Inanna's visit is to attend the funeral of her sister's husband, Gugalanna. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*,<sup>24</sup> we learn that although it was Gilgamesh who killed Gugalanna, Inanna indirectly had a hand in his death as well by creating a situation in which Gugalanna and Gilgamesh face off. We will explore

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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this further in Gate Seven, but her involvement explains Ereshkigal's anger toward her sister. We can imagine she also envies Inanna's freedom to move about in the great above.

Ereshkigal, now a widow, has been confined to the underworld in darkness, but Inanna possesses the freedom to connect with others and build relationships, to celebrate her sexuality, and to express herself openly. As her sister, Ereshkigal can also be seen as an aspect of Inanna's own self, with whom she has lost touch.

Ereshkigal hangs Inanna, crucified on a nail, like Christ. Significantly, she is granted resurrection after three days and three nights. This noteworthy timeframe becomes perpetuated in later archetypal myths of descent and rebirth, including Christ's own death and resurrection. These details highlight how influential goddess culture has been on Christianity.

Two of Inanna's father figures refuse to help her, demonstrating their own fear of confronting the inner realms and the Death Mysteries. But Enki's role in Inanna's resurrection connects her with the power of alchemy. Enki is a master of magic and known for his alchemical powers. Transmutation is a necessary part of resurrection or ascension. Because he is an alchemist, Enki's role here signifies that we possess all we need to transform into beings of higher vibration who can ultimately transcend. In addition, when Enki creates the *kurgarra* and *galatur* to help free Inanna, he mirrors and thereby showcases the power of his granddaughter's liminality.

The *kurgarra* and *galatur* are sexless beings who defy definition, and like Inanna herself, they embody the liminal. This is significant and highlights a message about resurrection, including all transformations which renew us; we must move beyond limitation to get there. Because the *kurgarra* and *galatur* transcend binaries, they are the perfect beings to negotiate the space between life and death. Equipped with the food of life and the water of life, they represent matter and spirit, respectively. Enki

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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tells them to enter the underworld as flies. As insects that hover near the dead, these seemingly inconsequential beings live between the worlds and are actually restorers of life, underscoring the sacredness of all beings.

The flies are told to emulate Ereshkigal's labor pains when they find her. This is a known therapeutic practice. In clinical settings, we hold space for our clients to express their pain, to sit in that space together, and mirror back their process. It is as if Enki is prescribing the very healing interventions we use as psychotherapists today. As Inanna's sister-self, Ereshkigal's labor pains connect her to Inanna's rebirth. She is also grieving the death of her husband, highlighting the circle of life, death, and rebirth that are all aspects of transition; one begets the other. When the flies repeat Ereshkigal's suffering back to her, she is finally encouraged to have compassion for herself.

In Inanna's journey, she had to let go of her attachments and fully surrender in order to transform, but she also had to accept her process and have faith in the journey. This is a central tenet in freeing the self from the cycle of karma. Even if her hand in Gugalanna's death was indirect, Inanna needed to reconcile the karmic debt of that experience. She does this by entering the underworld herself.

She begins by stating her wish to attend Gugalanna's funeral, but instead attends her own as she is put to death by his widow. She does not simply sit in the world above, taking no action to redeem her mistake. Instead, even if unconsciously at first, she purifies her negative action of indirectly harming him by honoring the dead with her visit and taking on suffering herself. Even Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, is not immune to the law of karma. She innately knows her role in Gugalana's death needs to be balanced, and she tackles it through facing her own shadow.

Ultimately, Inanna's descent teaches us that through courage; the willingness to go through one's initiation with faith and acceptance; the

release of attachments; and compassion, we, too, can symbolically resurrect ourselves to become whole.

### **INTERSECTION: UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN CHALLENGES THROUGH THE GODDESS OF LOVE**

#### *Inanna's Call to Spirit: Countering a Loss of Faith*

Anyone who has experienced their own version of a descent certainly knows how awful it can feel. The experience often leads to an erosion of faith, causing us to question everything. This can lead us to lose hope as our trust in ourselves and Source—or God, Goddess, the All That Is, whatever term resonates most for you—dissolves before our eyes. When we lose hope, we can begin to leak power energetically, literally becoming disempowered. Do you suddenly doubt everything you once held as true? Does your situation feel unfair and like a cruel act by the Cosmos? From that place of abjection, it is crucial to look for ways in which the experience is aligned with your highest good.

Seeing your trials as an initiation can help. Although this perspective is challenging when you are right in the middle of it, doing so is empowering. Finding a deeper meaning in the experience can reconnect you with faith. This kind of existential crisis or dark night of the soul may present as any number of challenging experiences or recurrent themes in your life such as betrayal, public shame, being called crazy, being blamed for hurting others, being scapegoated, having your truths or creative expressions taken or claimed by another, experiencing body image struggles or an eating disorder, addiction, unrequited love or loss of love, death of a loved one, financial challenges, or generally not being able to make ends meet. It may present as a traumatic diagnosis or an inability to conceive.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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It is common to feel as though every ounce of stability has disappeared. You may feel like you are free-falling into the great abyss. When you encounter these types of experiences, seeing them as “gates” in your initiatory process can help you negotiate them with greater ease and grace.

The call to Spirit is when you cast your eyes up from the depths where you have fallen, or actively approached, to understand and feel bolstered by the more profound meaning you can discern. In so doing, you transcend the pain. This call to Spirit often sets in motion an entire paradigm shift that leads to a spiritual awakening and totally alters our reality.

### Adopting an Initiate’s Mindset

Sure, you may be thinking, this sounds good in theory, but how do you actually adopt the mindset of an initiate? Well, for starters, if you are reading this book, you are someone who longs to understand the truth and to engage in the adventure of life as a way to evolve your soul. You can imagine yourself like Inanna, who embraces the challenge of her descent and gets comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Hold the intention that you, too, will go through your own metamorphosis and be born anew, progressively equipped as you emerge with new awareness into the laws of being and reality. Call upon Inanna to guide you. With her resurrection, Inanna is even more powerful and knowledgeable. She becomes a fully initiated high priestess—a conqueror of the underworld. She is here to help you through the same journey.

This type of journey into the underworld can feel like your life has fallen apart, and yet it may be precisely what is needed most to heal what has been keeping you from living fully in the now. Let us turn our attention to ways you can transcend your own analogous obstacle, so it becomes a strength.

### Minding Our Memories: Understanding and Clearing our Chakras

The process of remembering begins with a decision. Let yourself go there. Have you always felt like you are here to do something special and to leave an impact? Could this be the process through which, like Inanna, you step into your wholeness? Symbolically, initiation is the experience of remembering your true purpose.

At this point, it is worth acknowledging the notion of harmonic resonance as it relates to the seven gates and the chakras. Inanna's descent illustrates that her own transformation impacts the whole, as we will see in Gate Seven, where she eventually ascends. The phenomenon of harmonic resonance is woven into the tapestry of the universe. It is about the relationship between entities. What is done to one directly affects the other. Therefore, when you reconcile your karma and move toward liberation, it has an impact on the world at large.

In the myth, Inanna's removal of a garment at each gate is an act of releasing that which is no longer in harmony with the self—a release of attachments that we often acquire on the physical plane. This emotional or mental release shifts the vibrational resonance of the corresponding chakra and can be seen as a teaching she is offering about ascension. In purifying our energy centers and raising our own vibration, we too can ready ourselves for ascension. The higher our energetic vibration, the easier it is for us to align with Spirit and move beyond the attachments of the physical world toward spiritual liberation.

Because chakras contain memory, when we interface with these various chakras through our own process, past-life memories may surface. Some of what is being released, therefore, might not even be from this lifetime. Allow yourself to remember your soul's mission through exploring the feelings and memories that emerge as you encounter each gate. This

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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process will allow you to access greater balance and wholeness. Clearing our chakras so that each one vibrates at the frequency intended aligns us with Source. This shift in our own frequency is always a necessary step in our ascension process. When Inanna passes through the seven gates and lets go of what she was holding onto, the outdated aspects of her die away, allowing her to resurrect—to be reborn into wholeness.

The initiation process includes clearing these energy centers and releasing the attachments therein. In some cases, that will mean the release of potential trauma stored in the body from many lifetimes. Whatever pushback you may have received for being who you are—an agent of change—and doing what you do, in this or other lifetimes, you now have the opportunity to release it.

While it might feel challenging to clear the wounds that have long been stored within, it helps to relate to it as coming up to come out, rather than coming up to re-injure. You must prepare yourself not to get caught in the pull of the emotional pain as it makes its way up and through you. Instead, bear witness to it as a gift of grace.

For example, imagine you are clearing a long-held fear of getting into trouble for doing something wrong. Perhaps in a past life, you were one of the many individuals who were considered a witch or heretic and endured persecution for it. Today, you find yourself in a situation at work wherein you forgot to do something that was expected, and you are reprimanded. It is simply a gentle reprimand, but you feel it so intensely that there is a sensation in your stomach of being gripped by fear. In this scenario, your felt experience far exceeds the actual situation. See it for what it is, an opportunity to meet your long-held fear with the grace of understanding so you can find your footing, recalibrate, and begin to release it.

This process will not necessarily happen in a neat and sequential order from the first chakra to the seventh. Think about each gate we encounter

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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in your descent as corresponding to a chakra in need of balancing. Go to the appendix in the back of the book and explore the chakra chart to see which chakra requires attention. You will have a felt sense of recognition upon reading about each, and it will help you understand the relationship between your own process and the corresponding chakra.

In the course of our journey together, I will illustrate how each of Inanna's myths relates to a particular chakra in each chapter. However, this is meant as a template to help guide your own process. Everyone will have their own individual experience with it, and each gate will refer to your individually corresponding chakra. Imagine your healing process as a breaking up of old scar tissue which gives you access to greater freedom to stretch into who you have come here to be. In the physical body, when scar tissue in muscle is reduced, the area has more flexibility and can move with more ease. In the process of your healing, awakening, and initiation, you may start at the top layer of the symbolic scar tissue and progress toward the bottom layer.

The process of transformation is unique to you. But it will become easier as you go. The initial breaking up of scar tissue, which can be conceptualized as your defense mechanisms, is often the most uncomfortable. Again, this is not a linear process, but the entry point is located where the most work needs to be done. It is not for the faint of heart. To succeed, you need to find your most courageous, unapologetic nature. What is so compelling about this paradigm is how each healing begets a deeper one beneath it, as the thick scar tissue gradually dissolves.

While some of us may have more injury than others in certain centers, this framework encourages a holistic and thorough transformation.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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### How Do I Know It's an Initiation?

Holding the perspective of our own life as a heroine's journey can embolden our resolve to process the work that needs to be done. It begins with embarkation, picks up speed and intensity as we navigate the journey, and follows its flow into a return. There are helpers and guides along the way and, ultimately, it is about an inner learning. The journey leads us to finally see for ourselves how powerful, courageous, and masterful we are. The journey itself affords this understanding, allowing us to remember who we really are. This is our initiation.

Let us now explore the ways we might arrive at this healing. The spiritual interventions outlined here are geared toward the specific chakras Inanna works through as she confronts each individual gate. Your own process might follow a different order, but working through and balancing all seven chakras will be necessary. By making these connections clear, you will be able to correlate your own experiences as they intersect with each corresponding chakra. Reorient the sequence as it feels right to you.

In this first myth, Inanna's call to Spirit is related to the seventh chakra, the crown. The crown chakra is the connection with one's higher self and Source. Spiritual challenges such as a lack of faith or trust in oneself or Source often appear in the seventh chakra. The call to Spirit helps you develop the ability to have faith in yourself and to be in connection with the Divine, so you may walk a life aligned with your true purpose.

Faith is like a passcode, a vibration that unlocks the connection to Source. Faith not only keeps hope alive, but it helps you feel empowered and grants you access to the strength to move through your process with grace. Let Inanna be your inspiration and allow her to help initiate you into your own power. You are beginning to remember your own Divinity and connect to yourself as the sacred being you are.

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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Keep your heart open to the emerging transformation by engaging in these practices. When you consciously choose to work with Inanna, you will experience shifts in your life. Get ready, have courage and faith, and embrace your journey back to wholeness.

### HEALING INTERVENTION

When you have gone through your own descent and have been forced to give up some your symbolic earthly possessions, such as stability or abundance, initially you might feel disconnected from joy. You might even find yourself resentful of what you have had to let go of. But remember, a call to Spirit is connected to the seventh chakra and is an invitation to develop faith. If you have gone, or are going, through your own descent, have faith that this journey is in service of your highest good.

Let faith also help dissolve resentment, which is the most significant barrier to joy. So, we must begin the process of restoring faith to transmute this negative emotion. Inanna's descent to the Great Below was a choice she made. Importantly, as you will see in Gate Seven, she does not harbor resentment for what she loses or for the challenge she goes through. Instead, she finds a way to turn her experience into a strength that supports the All.

Faith grants you access to a larger perspective, which allows you entry into the state of acceptance. Acceptance is an understanding that all things you encounter ultimately support your evolution, even if it takes a while for you to get there. Sometimes even traumatic experiences can inform our path and guide us toward who we really are by helping us see the strength, power, and resiliency that lies within us.

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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### Spirit Summons: Preparing Your Ritual

Having faith in your process, your descent—your unique journey to the underworld—dissolves resistance and allows acceptance. Get really honest with yourself. Are there aspects of your descent in which you feel unsupported, alone, abandoned? Do you blame yourself for your seeming inability to heal, or for allowing this situation to continue to take up space in your heart and mind? If so, then it is time to release these feelings and allow faith to help you come into acceptance. A lack of faith can make your process far more challenging by making it easier to get caught up in the suffering.

Like attracts like. Lower energy frequency attracts and aligns with lower energy frequency. Conversely, faith restores your inner strength, bolstering you so you are less susceptible to the suffering that can accompany change. We have all experienced some version of a loss of faith in our lives, and the feeling can stay with us for a long time. This is an area where ritual is very useful. The ritual below is a simple but powerful way to reconnect you with faith that will empower you.

Ritual and ceremony are incredibly effective methods for taking inventory of what is in your heart and ready to be upgraded. These sacred tools allow you to make conscious what may be unconsciously influencing your life in a way that may no longer align with you. By using ritual, you become your own healer, your own therapist. Ritual can be advantageous in delivering quick and lasting results. It places the individual in the driver's seat, allowing access to the ability to transform yourself in the here and now.

There are many ways to participate in ritual. Some rituals are elaborate, conducted to create the sacred space to alchemize, such as vows meant

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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to sanctify the union of marriage. Others are less obvious but still set the conditions to cultivate a desired outcome. For example, you might engage in a morning exercise routine to achieve a state of clarity and balance.

To begin your own ritual, call upon your gift of imagination and envision yourself engaging in the art of ceremony, in any form from the past, honoring that which resonates for you. If you feel a particular and compelling recognition upon reading about rituals, you may have used these practices regularly in a past life. There is no right or wrong way to perform a ritual. It is all about intention. Intention is the most powerful aspect of spiritual practice.

Times when the veils between the worlds are thinnest are particularly opportune for ritual. During the eight high holidays in the calendar year, the portals between the higher realms and our own world are more open. These include the fall and spring equinoxes; the winter and summer solstices; and the significant dates of November 1, February 2, May 1, and August 1. But full moons and new moons are powerful times as well. Your own birthday and the anniversary of a loved one's transition can also be powerful. Any time is a good time.

Creating an altar is also a useful way to stay in contact with the Goddess, the Divine Mother, the sacred feminine, and any other high-level beings—like Inanna—to whom you are drawn. Altars offer a sacred bridge between the body and spirit.

You can create an altar anywhere in your home and place on it whatever resonates in your heart. Ask your heart and your own Divine team to instruct you as to what you might want to include on your altar. Your Divine team may include Inanna, your guides, angels, or any higher-dimensional beings.

Altars need not occupy a large space and can even have multiple purposes. Your altar can be designed on the top of a bookcase or chest. You

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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can place anything on it that moves you: stones, crystals, candles, a small dish for offerings—your gifts to the Divine such as sage or sweetgrass—and pictures or statues of a being or deity with whom you feel connected. You might include images of loved ones or a talisman of significance.

Some people include representations of the four elements on their altar, such as a candle for fire, incense or a feather for air, a chalice for water, and a small bowl of sand or a plant or fresh flower to represent the Earth. You do not need an altar to perform a ritual, but it can be a helpful organizing principle.

### RITUAL FOR RESTORING FAITH

Items required: A quiet space where you can be alone; a candle; a sage bundle or smudge stick; and a crystal that represents a clearing stone to you.

You can create an altar or an altar-like space inside or outside. This may even be a straightforward circle on the ground. Whether or not you are including a representation of the four elements of earth, air, fire, or water, consciously bring in the fifth element of Spirit by bringing your own Spirit of openheartedness into this ceremony.

Call in the power of the seven directions, starting with the east, then the south, west, north, below, center and above in this order. This can be repeated at the beginning of every ritual, if the process resonates with you. Repeat the following prayer three times:

May Inanna assist me in accessing faith on every level, so I  
accept my process and feel supported, protected, and guided.  
May she help me heal my seventh chakra.

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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**STEP 1.** Now that you have settled into your quiet space, take a seat and close your eyes. Imagine yourself walking through a beautiful archway that leads to a corridor. This corridor is lit with candles hanging from the walls on both sides. As you walk down the corridor you feel yourself bathed in the light of the candles. You come to a staircase, which you descend. There are seven stairs and with each step feel yourself getting closer to your own spiritual core. The last step leads you to a strong sense of grounded safety. You have arrived at the level of your spiritual core.

**STEP 2.** Notice that there is a fire burning in the middle of the room you have just stepped into, with pillows on the ground around the fire. You take a seat on one of the pillows and invite in your sacred guides. This includes Inanna, and all the beings that you wish to be present to support you with this ritual. Watch them arrive, one by one, and take seats around the circle. As soon as all have arrived, ask for their Divine assistance in restoring your faith so you may access a deep, conscious acceptance of your present situation.

**STEP 3.** With these allies present in your sacred circle, call up the situation, person, or experience in which you have lost faith. Please note that for some people, the process of recalling such an event can be re-traumatizing. If this is the case, simply speak a brief description of the situation aloud such as “the death of my mother.” Your felt sense of safety is of the utmost importance, so ensure you take care of yourself and engage with this exercise *only* at the level that maintains this felt sense of safety.

If you do feel safe calling up the experience, notice if you feel resentment about it that leads to a felt sense of disconnection from Source. See the situation clearly in your mind’s eye. Hold it and allow yourself to feel the

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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emotion that accompanies it. With this feeling of discomfort present, open your eyes and light the candle. As you light it, say aloud, “As I light this candle, I enable its flame to transmute anything blocking my faith into the vibration of acceptance.”

Bring your awareness to the flame itself. Watch it and let it carry you. Be right in the space of the flame and only the flame while allowing the feelings of resentment to be present as your gaze rests upon the light. Take a few moments to observe the flame and allow it to take you wherever it takes you. You have aligned your consciousness with the wish to transform anything eroding your faith. The flame serves as the portal to this process.

While inside the flame, simply observe. Do images appear? Is the flame growing or shrinking? Is it moving, dancing, swaying, or is it fixed? Ask the beings you have called in for this ritual if there are any messages the transmuting flame has for you. Take in those messages. Absorb the transforming energy of the element of fire. Merge with its energy.

**STEP 4.** Close your eyes now and address the beings you called in for support while positioning your left hand over your heart and placing your right hand, palm outward at your side. Say the following aloud:

Please [insert name of the being you called on; for example, Inanna], I ask that you Divinely assist me in extracting all cords of attachment that connect me to [state the situation, experience, or person] now and from the roots. Please burn these cords with their roots in St. Germaine’s<sup>25</sup> violet flame of ascension, to be transmuted into pure, pink, loving light and poured into the Earth, to help the Earth to heal. Please fill in the holes where the roots were within me and within all who are connected to this situation. Fill in these holes

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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with universal healing energy, emerald green light, gold light, and the highest vibration of love so we are all perfectly whole and pure.

**STEP 5.** Take the sage or smudge stick and light it with the candle flame. Encircle your whole body with the smoke. Put out the smudge stick. Lie down next to the candle and take the crystal that you have chosen and place it on the ground just above the top of your head at your seventh chakra. Allow your consciousness to come into your crown chakra and the crystal next to it. Feel it. Now ask the being you have called in to assist you in connecting you with the energy of faith. State out loud, “I am connected, supported, guided, and held. I embody faith on every level.”

**STEP 6.** While still lying down, bring both hands to your heart and call forth the spacious, open state of faith and acceptance. Out loud, ask the following of your higher self:

Please make conscious a deep understanding of the ways in which this experience or person has helped me to evolve. Allow me to see with perfect clarity the direct process by which this (traumatic) experience has allowed me to see who I am and the power I possess. Please help me gain access to this understanding now so that I have unconditional faith in myself and Source.

Allow your higher self to speak to you. You may receive insights immediately, but the insights may also come in a few days or through the dream state, so if you do not hear or see anything clearly yet, trust your higher self to find the perfect time and medium to communicate this new

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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information to you. The answers will be revealed and lead you to a genuine acceptance of this situation.

**STEP 7.** Give thanks to your courageous self for the bravery of this ritual and also to the beings, including Inanna, who joined you in your circle. Lay down some sage from your smudge stick and the crystal you used, in the spot where you were sitting. Leave it there for a few hours to be fully received. Close the ritual by stating:

I walk in faith, feeling supported on every level. It is so. It is so. It is so.

### AND NOW THE REAL STORY BEGINS

Mantra to support process: I am a fully actualized heroine of my own story.

This powerful ritual has set you up to be able to rewrite your story from a place of empowerment. Rewriting your story will help you to see your experience from a truly holistic perspective. Now is the time to evaluate your own life and consider how best you can recast yourself as the heroine you are.

This is one of the gifts that Inanna offers through her own descent. Think about the ways in which you are similar to her. How are you consciously and intentionally engaged with all that shows up in life with courage, confidence, skill, and discernment? What are some of the gates you have encountered, and what emerged as you moved through those?

Prepare yourself to write in your sacred journal about the experience that you would describe as your descent. Before you begin, consider what you feel has completely leveled you, whether you have just been through it or are in the midst of it now. Have you been dealing with chronic illness?

## THE WAY OF INANNA

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Are you grieving the death of a loved one? Have you gone through a divorce or the ending of a significant relationship? Have you lost your job? Are you dealing with an addiction? Does it feel like nothing is working? Do you feel like you have fallen so far out of touch with yourself that you are in the underworld, the dark place of fear, the Great Below?

On page one, title the story, “My Heroine’s Journey.” Think about the story of your own descent, with you as the heroine who understands her story from the lens of initiation. If your life is your own journey that emulates that of Inanna, how does it follow the theme of the heroine’s journey—the departure, the initiation, the return? This descent is a process you are going through that has the capacity to lead you toward empowerment, mastery, meaning, and healing.

Remember that there are always helpers in such a journey. Take a minute to think about who those helpers are in your life. Let yourself see them.

If you have been guided to this book, chances are you have experienced a descent. However, if you have yet to begin yours, this chapter will help prepare you, and you can come back to it with the insights you gain from the following chapters. Allow Inanna’s process to provide you with a map of what it might look like and how best to navigate it.

However, if you have already gone through a descent, contextualizing it in very practical terms in your journal can help you make sense of it. Ask yourself the following questions to help position you to reframe the story anew: How did your descent begin? What led to it? What steps did you take to surrender into it? How has it made you feel? Where does this feeling show up in your body? How has your life changed as a result of it? What are the things you had to let go? Do you feel yourself being judged, as Inanna was by the judges of the underworld?

## Gate One: The Call to Spirit

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While writing, consider how your process has been an initiation, filled with tests to enhance and deepen your skill. Were you forced to give something up? Did you confront self-doubt? What do the next steps look like as you prepare to heal? What is the gift in the process? Once you have explored these questions, note your responses in your journal.

Now go back to page one of your journal and read it aloud, through to the end, to see how you have just transformed your old story into one of empowerment and successfully moved through your own heroine's journey. Congratulations! Celebrate your bravery and willingness to grow. Allow this shift inside to help you hold a wide lens in your life always, to see how everything has a sacred purpose and teaching in this holy curriculum. Let your seventh chakra heal and enable you to have faith in yourself.

By first restoring your faith in yourself, you are poised to perform as the heroine of your own life. Understanding your story as an initiation marks you as brave, courageous, and capable of actualizing your dreams. The ritual supports the faith needed to cast yourself as the unapologetic heroine you are. You will see, as we approach the next gate, how embodying this role permits and promotes further evolution.

You are now ready to go deeper. You have the context to understand your experience and you have brought balancing, clearing, and transformation to your seventh chakra. At the next gate, we will explore healing ancestral relationships and will see how Inanna masters the ability to negotiate generational wounds and transform them. As a heroine, you are capable of this very same level of mastery.

**End of Excerpt**

*The Way of Inanna: A Heroine's Guide to Living Unapologetically* is a wonderful summation of the myths of Inanna and a how-to guidebook for living her mysteries. As Zelazo weaves these myths she illuminates the way forward for all of us.

— **William Henry**, ascension scholar, art historian, and author

*This book is a magical journey through myth, personal discovery, and transformative ritual using the ancient wisdom legends of the Goddess Inanna. Deeply insightful, the author, as a psychotherapist, historian, and mesmerizing storyteller, brings Inanna's trials and tribulations to life. Along the way she gives us tools, revelations, and rituals for our own healing and transformation.*

— **Tricia McCannon**, author of *Return of the Divine Sophia* and *The Angelic Origins of the Soul*



## MYTH MADE MANIFEST

Over 4000 years ago in ancient Sumer, some of the first mythographers inscribed the stories and myths of the Goddess Inanna on clay tablets in cuneiform. These incredible findings were unearthed, and the fragments were painstakingly pieced together and translated.

What they discovered were the ways Inanna was heralded as a goddess who embodies polarities: impatient and deliberate, an attentive lover and fierce warrior, connected to fertility as well as death—making her an accessible, relatable, and inspiring representation of the Divine Feminine as she stands in her power and multidimensionality. *The Way of Inanna: A Heroine's Guide to Living Unapologetically* is a field guide to heart-centered living through the wisdom of the Sumerian Goddess of Love.

Each chapter deconstructs sacred narratives in which the Goddess navigates the seven gates of her soul's journey from awakening to ascension. More than a simple retelling, the book is myth made manifest in which Inanna becomes a means to accessing our own ascension and alchemical magic within our modern, contemporary context.

With a combined psychotherapeutic and spiritual approach, author Seana Zelazo offers rituals and practices to help readers connect directly with Inanna. From harnessing your sensual energy to reclaiming the generative capacity of the Divine Feminine and identifying and amplifying your life's purpose, you will discover the ways Inanna's process is your own.

