

Ninurta and the turtle

(Sumerian text, 3rd Millennium BC, University of Oxford translation, The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature)

Segment A

unknown no. of lines missing

8 lines fragmentary unknown no. of lines missing

Segment B

"At his command your weapon struck me evilly. As I let the divine powers go out of my hand, these divine powers returned to the *abzu*. As I let the divine plan go out of my hand, this divine plan returned to the *abzu*. This tablet of destinies returned to the *abzu*. I was stripped of the divine powers."

Ninurta was stunned at these words of the Anzud chick. Ninmena gave out a wail: "And what about me? These divine powers have not fallen into my hand. I shall not exercise their authority. I shall not live like him in the shrine, in the *abzu*."

Father Enki in the *abzu* knew what had been said.

The Anzud chick took the hero Ninurta by his hand and drew near with him to Enki's place, the *abzu*. The Anzud chick returned Uta-ulu to the *abzu*. The lord was delighted with the hero, Father Enki was delighted with the hero Ninurta.

Lord Nudimmud honoured him duly: "Hero, no god among your brother gods could have acted so. As for the bird which your mighty weapon captured, from now to eternity you will keep your foot placed on its neck. May the great gods give your heroic strength its due. May your father Enlil do whatever you command. May Ninmena not fashion your equal. May no one be as revered as you and no god extend an upraised hand before you. Monthly may your house regularly receive tributes in the shrine, in the *abzu*. May An proclaim your name in the seat of honour."

The hero secretly was not happy with these promises. Where he stood, he darkened and yellowed like a flood-storm. He contemplated great deeds and inwardly he was rebellious. He uttered a word which has no The hero Ninurta set his sights on the whole world. He told no one and inwardly did not

The great lord Enki intuitively grasped the substance of the plan. In the shrine, in the *abzu* he stirred up a dark flood-storm.

By the house the minister Isimud opposed Ninurta. The hero Ninurta refused to come out and raised his hand against the minister Isimud.

Against Ninurta, Enki fashioned a turtle from the clay of the *abzu*. Against him he stationed the turtle at an opening, at the gate of the *abzu*. Enki talked to him near the place of the ambush and brought him to the place where the turtle was. The turtle was able to grab Ninurta's tendon from behind. The hero Ninurta managed to turn back its feet. Enki, as if perplexed, said, "What is this!" He had the turtle scrape the

ground with its claws, had it dig an evil pit. The hero Ninurta fell into it with the turtle. The hero did not know how to get out from The turtle kept on gnawing his feet with its claws.

The great lord Enki said to him: "From, you who set your mind to kill me, who makes big claims -- I cut down, I raise up. You who set your sights on me like this, what has your position seized for you, how? Where has your strength fled? Where is your heroism? In the great mountains you caused destruction, but how will you get out now?"

Ninmena learned of this situation. She ripped the clothes on her body and she "You my plant-eater Enki, who shall I send to you? Men will shake their heads in fear Who shall I send to you? That name is not Enki. That name is Ugugu-that-does-not-pou. You who are death which has no mercy, who shall I send to you?"

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