

## The šumunda grass

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

The *abba* instructed, the *abba* instructed:

When the rain rained, when walls were demolished, when it rained potsherds and fireballs, when one person confronted another defiantly, when there was copulation, he also copulated, when there was kissing, he also kissed. When the rain said: "I will rain," when the wall said: "I will rain (*scribal error for 'demolish' ?*)", when the flood said: "I will sweep everything away" Heaven impregnated, Earth gave birth, she gave birth also to the *šumunda* grass. Earth gave birth, Heaven impregnated, she gave birth also to the *šumunda* grass.

His luxuriant reeds carry fire. They who defied it, who defied it, the *umma* who had survived that day, the *abba* who had survived that day, the chief *gala* priest who had survived that year, whoever had survived the Flood, the *šumunda* grass crushed them with labour, crushed them with labour, made them crouch in the dust.

The *šumunda* grass is a fire carrier, he cannot be tied into bundles, the grass cannot be shifted, the grass cannot be loosened, the grass cannot be loosened. When built into a booth, one moment he stands up, one moment he lies down. Having kindled a fire, he spreads it wide. The *šumunda* grass's habitat is among his bitter waters. He butts about (saying): "I will start, I will start a fire."

He set fire to the base of the E-ana, there he was bound, there he was fettered. When he protested, Inana seized a raven there and set it on top of him. The shepherd abandoned his sheep in their enclosure. Inana seized the raven there.

When the rain had rained, when walls had been demolished, when it rained potsherds and fireballs, when Dumuzid was defied, the rain rained, walls were demolished, the cowpen was demolished, the sheepfold was ripped out, wild flood-waters were hurled against the rivers, wild rains were hurled against the marshes. By the ..... of the Tigris and the Euphrates, of the Tigris and the Euphrates, long grass grew, long grass .....

*5 lines missing*

He tied him into bundles, he shifted him, he ..... *šumunda* grass, the fire-carrier. He bundled up the *šumunda* grass, the fire carrier, bundled up the fire carrier. The launderer who made her garments clean asks her, Inana, the carpenter who gave her the spindle to hold in her hand (asks her), Inana, the potter who fashioned pots and jugs (asks her), Inana. The potter gave her holy drinking vessels, the shepherd brought her his sheep, the shepherd brought her his sheep, he asks her. He brought her all kinds of luxuriant plants, as if it were the harvest.

Her voice reached Heaven, her voice reached Earth, her resounding cry covered the horizon like a garment, was spread over it like a cloth, she hurled fierce winds at the head of the *šumunda* grass (saying): "*Šumunda* grass, your name ..... You shall be a plant ..... You shall be a hateful plant ..... Your name ....."

*approx. 23 lines missing*