

DESCENT THROUGH THE SEVEN GATES, A SELF GUIDED MEDITATION

by Athne Machdane & Leslie Kee, composed fall 2017

INVOCATION OF INANNA AND ERESHKIGAL: Hail Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth. As I stand before the gates of the realm of shadow I join with You on this inward journey. Hail Ereshkigal, Queen of Shadows, I bid Your welcome that I may enter and come to know myself as a being of both light and shadow. I descend into the depths of my own psyche to shed the residue and trappings of life which no longer serve me, to face my own shadows and embrace them with unconditional love, to reconcile my past through the giving and seeking of forgiveness and to affirm the natural cycles of life and death so that I may know immortality. Love and compassion is the water of life I seek, and only within may it be found.

DESCENT THROUGH THE SEVEN GATES: Imagine walking across green fields next to flowing streams under a clear blue sky. You arrive at the base of a hillside strewn with boulders. You see a dark opening just large enough to bend down and enter. As your eyes adjust to the darkness you walk upon a path of gently packed dirt moving downward. The temperature drops and the cavern opens into a large room filled with soft light that reminds you of moonlight. You have found an ancient portal leading into the rich depths of the earth.

The location of this ancient cavern is well known yet it remains a foreboding place and few have the courage to explore its depths. But you feel a gentle yearning to venture deeper into the cavern and only now you feel strengthened by courage, and so you begin to journey further.

As you approach the furthest reaches of this room, you see a heavy wooden door that is shut tightly, and while you stand in front of it, you realize you are wearing very special traveling clothes. Pause for a moment and look at what your clothes look and feel like. Do they emphasize your worldly authority; your physical beauty; that which you desire; do they reflect prestige, wealth, power? Or did you choose them because they are unadorned, modest and understated? Perhaps they are an expression of your identity, artistic interests and creative will?

With confidence you bang on the heavy door before you, and soon a guardian can be heard on the other side. They ask who you are and what your business here is; answer them now in your mind's voice telling them you are here to visit the seven gates.

FIRST GATE: The guardian calls for the symbols of authority that crown you. What might they be? A crown literally? A pen? A gavel? A uniform? Legal credential or title? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical boundaries of one's authority. Here authority over others becomes personal sovereignty.

SECOND GATE: The guardian calls for the items of beauty that adorn you. What might they be? Jewels? Designer fashion? Fine art, music? One's own real, perceived or desired body image? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical definitions of one's beauty. Here outward beauty becomes inner grace.

THIRD GATE: The guardian calls for the seeds of desire that compel you. What might they be? Worldly pleasures? Romantic interest? Career advancement? Intellectual or athletic performance? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical process of creating one's reality. Here latent desire becomes the will to create.

FOURTH GATE: The guardian calls for the trappings of prestige that label you. What might they be? Degree and title? A fancy car? The latest cell phone? One's name on plaques and buildings? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical pursuit of one's station. Here seeking of prestige becomes a sense of duty and service.

FIFTH GATE: The guardian calls for the marks of wealth that measure you. What might they be? A gold ring? Money? A fine house in an upscale neighborhood? Expensive vacations? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical value of one's accumulation. Here material wealth becomes a legacy of community enrichment.

SIXTH GATE: The guardian calls for the instruments of power that enable you. What might they be? A weapon? A wand or scepter? A microphone? A pulpit? Nobility? Holding an elected office? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical results of one's wielding of power. Here worldly power becomes empowerment to lead.

SEVENTH GATE: The guardian calls for the articles of concealment that cover you. What might they be? Special clothing? Evasive speech? Avoidance of the public eye? Non-disclosure agreements? To cross this threshold, offer them forth and reflect upon the natural and ethical presentation of one's true self. Here concealment becomes revelation.

FACING YOUR SHADOW: Having passed through these seven gates of self-introspection you stand naked before you're own shadow - the ever present sibling of your conscious, waking, outward self. Call to and embrace your shadow that you may be made whole.

AFFIRMATION: Seek now the judgement and discernment your shadow offers. Before you are all of the items collected at each of the gates. Reach out, claim and affirm them as evidence and testament to your journey thus far. Testify honestly of their merits and downfalls and rejoice in the solace and rest offered by the shadow. Pause for a moment in this state of absolution - free of intent, action and consequence. Allow the corpse of obstructed modes of thinking and living to die, and in so doing, summon the agents of rebirth.

RETURN: Walk gently, retracing your steps upwards on the dirt path as you ascend to the surface. You pass through each gate as its heavy door swings shut behind you, always looking forward and moving at a comfortable but steady pace. You reach the mouth of the cavern and follow the light to the surface. Pause and let your eyes adjust to the sunlight then step forth onto the fertile ground of the meadow and breathe in the air of renewal and rebirth. Pay attention to how your body feels and how you are changed. Give thanks to your Deity(s), spirit guides, ancestors, departed loved ones and beloved community for their roles in empowering this practice and dedicate the merits generated therein to all sentient beings. **SO MOTE IT BE.**