

Lightning

One day there were two boys named Ishtar and Belit. Ishtar was short and agile and Belit was very tall and fast. The two boys were best friends. The sun was high in the sky as the boys were digging trenches for the newly invented irrigation systems. It was just them out there working. The day was hot and the dirt was especially dry. The land was flat and there were few trees except the ones far away by the river. The boys were in between the Tigris river and the food fields. Belit was feeling hungry and ready for the end of their shift. He looked toward the city.

“You can just see where the city starts but we are pretty far away,” Belit said to Ishtar.

“Let’s head back so we have time to eat before we must work this afternoon building houses in town”.

Ishtar agreed.

As they started to walk they noticed a change in the air.

“For some reason, I feel like the air is damp even though it is really hot out” noticed Ishtar. “Ya, I think so too”.

All of a sudden on the horizon Belit noticed big dark rain clouds.

He jumped up and down. It hadn’t rained for many months. “Oh!

Oh my Ishtar! Ishtar, LOOK!!!”

Ishtar looked toward the horizon.

“Rain! Rain clouds! We have to tell everyone, Belit”. Ishtar started to run toward the town.

Belit grabbed his arm. “Wait, wait, Ishtar! Look at that thing coming down from the clouds”.

The boys had seen very little rain in their lives. They saw the silver sheets of water coming down in the distance.

“Quick, come Ishtar! We have to tell your sister. She will know what to do”.

The boys ran towards the city. On the way they ran into Ishtar's sister Sicluri and her friend Aruta. Sicluri was nice and she had a smile like her brother's. They also had the same dark reddish skin. Belit thought she was very cute. Aruta was very strong. She worked very hard and didn't get tired quickly.

The boys pointed into the distance and showed them the clouds. "We have to go tell Elder Babati," said Sicluri. Babati was a mythical elder with the power to read minds and knows what's going on ALWAYS.

"Okay then, let's RUN!"

The clouds were rolling in fast.

When they got to Elder Babati's house he and his wife, Elder Nammu, were eating lettuce and figs. What the kids did not know was that Nammu was the mother of Anu, the sky god, and had the power to make a terrifying storm. With their power together they were unstoppable.

"Want some food kids? We have plenty".

Elders got free food in the village and were happy to share with the children.

Ishtar politely said “That's not what we are here for, but thanks for the offer though. There is this unusual thing coming from the clouds and it isn't just rain! Did the gods get mad?” The children looked worried.

“Aw now, chill down youngling,” Elder Babati said in a wise voice. “I see you have seen lightning. Now, let me tell you the story of lightning and thunder”.

All of a sudden there was a loud BOOM!. It sounded like a big clap from the gods. The children jumped.

“Was that Anu clapping?” asked Belit.

“It made my bones rattle,” exclaimed Aruta.

“That is called thunder. Now listen and I will tell you about lightning and thunder”.

“Once upon a time, there was a mom and her little boy. Ninki was the mother and Ugazum was her son. They were out in the

food fields and there were clouds rolling in. It was a normal day.

“Mom, how long until we can go back to the hut?” asked the little boy.

“When you get done with your planting and go get water for your plants” answered the mother.

Her little boy looked tired.

“I understand it's hard to work, but we need the money Ugazum”.

“Ok, mom”.

Back then there was not any irrigation so you had to get water yourself by walking all the way to the river. The walk was long and sometimes hot and carrying water was hard. The river could be scary because of dangerous animals like crocodiles.

“Now back to the story”, Babati said.

“When the young boy was going to the river, he peered up into the sky and saw a storm. There was booming thunder and sharp lightning. He got struck by one of the lighting bolts and fell to the ground. Ugazum was knocked out.

Ugazum had a dream. He dreamt that he was strapped down to a slab of rock and was being slid into a cave that was filled with a light so bright that you couldn't see anything. It was white everywhere. The people that brought him into the cave had leather everywhere that protected them from the light. Ugazum was freed from the slab and a bunch of little fireflies were flying into him and covering him with tattoos.

When he awoke Ugazum tried to stand up. He realized that he had electricity flowing through his fingers and creating a tingling sensation. He found that he could shoot lightning out of his fingertips. He stared at his tattoos.

Ugazum ran back to his hut. His mother was white faced because she thought he surely must be dead. She got him some water and food and he told her the story of the cave and his new power. For the rest of time, the boy had the power to make lightning come out of the sky.

Elder Babati finished the story and the children sat quietly. His wife Elder Nammu had been listening too.

“There is more to the story” she said. The children looked at her with surprise.

“I am the mother of Anu, the sky god, and I asked him permission to bring the storm today to show you children the ways of the rain and thunder and lightning.”

The children were shocked to find out that Elder Nammu was the mother of the sky god.

The old woman continued.

“Now you have seen lightning for yourselves and you can tell your own children about the boy named Ugazum who was tattooed by fireflies and given the power to make lightning.

When it rains, think of the river. When there is lightning, remember Ugazum”.

She picked up the bowl of figs and passed them around. The children watched the rain and listened to the rain and when there was lightning, they all smiled.