

NANNA-SIN, journey to meet the gods
By Barbara Jwanouskos
San Francisco Olympians Festival reading

CAST:

NEIA (NEE-ya) – F, teens, gifted with a metaphysical/divine power
KURI (KOO-ree) – M, teens, NEIA's friend, a trickster who seeks revenge
BASHAA (bah-SHAH) – M, 30-50s, a priest of Nanna-Sin, En Asherah's right hand man
EN ASHERAH (EN AH-sheh-ah)– F, 30-50s, the high priestess of Nanna-Sin

Place: The wilderness, The giparu (temple) in the City of Ur

SCENE ONE:

A secluded place in the wilderness outside the city of Ur.

NEIA

They say that long ago all there was
was darkness
Too thick to see
Too dense to wade through
It felt as though nothingness consumed everything
Covered like a blanket
Until little lights
Cuts within the cloth
Brought us what we thought was never there
Brought us to the light

The warm glow of a fire. Two figures, NEIA and KURI,
barely visible in the shadows, huddle close.

NEIA

A strange glow within the night
Glow from the moon, ever-changing
And from his secret heart
Pouring forth both
Love and Daylight
He leaves us and returns again
Passage of time and passage through
The Unknown
We wander until we find him

She winces and shifts position.

KURI

How is it? Bleeding still?

NEIA

No, not so much.

She straightens her leg. He lifts the blood-soaked, dirty bandage on her ankle. She grimaces.

KURI

You're okay.

NEIA

And you? Your side-

KURI

I'm fine.

NEIA

I saw the blade.

KURI

Yes, but you saw it go in, right?

NEIA

Yes, it went in. I saw it with my own-

KURI

Went past me!

He jumps up, reliving the memory.

NEIA

They didn't get you?

KURI

No, no, I'm too fast, Neia . No one can touch me. Try.

She plays along – reaching for him. He dodges, swirling out of the way.

NEIA

Ah, you are.

KURI

You see? I am too tricky. You're safe with me.

NEIA

We'll see.

KURI

You don't believe me?

NEIA

We have a long journey.

KURI

But you remember our plan?

NEIA

I remember it...

KURI

Are you backing out?

NEIA

Of course not!

KURI

I was just making sure.

He sits next to her. As he does, he winces to himself, hoping she won't notice. But she does.

NEIA

You are hurt. I knew it.

She tends to him. He doesn't fight it.

KURI

It's not bad.

NEIA

You lied to me.

KURI

It's just a scratch. It's the truth, you know – I am too clever for them.

NEIA

But they hurt you.

KURI

This is the least painful thing they did to me. To all of us.

NEIA

We can't think about that now. Let's go over the plan once more. Tell me about the city. What is it like?

KURI

It's more beautiful than anything I've ever seen. Buildings for as far as the eye can see. In fact, when we look over the mountain in the morning, you won't be able to see its end. I'll bet you on that. You can get anything you want in the city: apples as big as your hand, garments finer than a spider's web, drinks that will make you fall into endless slumber. The tower sits high above the rest of them like ants covering the ground.

NEIA

Where is the temple?

KURI

There are temples throughout the city.

NEIA

Yes, but you know the one.

KURI

Yes, yes, I know what you want to hear about – The house of the moon. Of Nanna-Sin. Where the En, the holy ones, live with their flowing robes and finery. Their jewels blinding your eyes like sunlight.

KURI acts out his story. EN ASHERAH and BASHAA enter with a GIRL, bound at the wrists. They are in the temple of Ur – yet as KURI acts the story out, it's as if he and NEIA can see them. The locations combine. KURI's movements sync with either BASHAA or EN ASHERAH.

KURI

That's where En Asherah is. The high priestess. Daughter of the Moon. She and her followers are the only ones in that temple. No outsiders. She is the one that controls all. Whispers in the king's ear – after all the king is her brother. She knows all our secrets. The ones we hope to hide. She knows where we are weak and where we will give up our strength and give it to her. Because she is the one with the power.

EN ASHERAH circles the GIRL, then nods to BASHAA who walks the GIRL off.

KURI stops his act.

KURI

Are you scared?

NEIA

No.

KURI

You don't need to lie.

NEIA

Are you?

KURI

No.

You remember what they took from us?

Do you remember why we're here?

NEIA

I remember.

We will be separate but still connected in the mind.

They lie down to sleep.

KURI

(yawns)

I will find a way in.

NEIA

Everyone will think I'm crazy, but they don't know.

Her voice echoes as the darkness disappears into day.

SCENE TWO: The interrogation.

The Giparu, the temple in the city of Ur. NEIA sits – her wrists bound. BASHAA paces.

BASHAA

Repeat to me again what you saw and why you are here.

NEIA

I don't know.

BASHAA

Useless. Tell me, do you know who I am?

NEIA

I don't know.

BASHAA

You don't know.

NEIA

I told you. I am not from Ur.

BASHAA

And yet, you won't state your origins.

NEIA

It doesn't matter.

BASHAA

Origins always matter. Why are you here?

NEIA

I came to see En Asherah, the Most High. Priestess of the House of Nanna-Sin, Lord Who Conquers the Darkness. The Bull-

BASHAA

Yes, yes, the Bull Who Walks Among the Stars. We all know it. We all recite it from the time we are small. You do realize that you can't simply go into the House of Nanna-Sin. That I couldn't let you have an audience with En Asherah. She is royal, you know. Divine? She does not associate with... commoners such as yourself.

NEIA

She will make an exception.

BASHAA

And why would she do that?

NEIA

Because I know what it's like to have her power.

BASHAA
(sarcastic)

Do you?

NEIA

Yes.

BASHAA

Then prove it.

NEIA shrugs.

BASHAA

Oh, the rope is a hindrance – yes, I understand.

He cuts her ties.

BASHAA

Okay, go!

NEIA hesitates.

BASHAA

Well, now's your chance.

NEIA does nothing.

BASHAA

I thought so.

Now, what am I to do with you?

The disturbance you caused at the gates of the temple agitated a number of people. Let me qualify that by saying that it agitated a number of high born people. And, you see, they have their preferences just like the rest of us. I, myself, hate wine – I know it seems impossible, but there you have it. It seems you, however, have made a number of people here... uncomfortable.

NEIA

I was only singing.

BASHAA

Yes. A hymn, so I'm told.

NEIA

There's nothing wrong with singing a hymn to Father Night.

BASHAA

Well, I'm told that there is.

NEIA

It wasn't blasphemous.

BASHAA

But it wasn't a part of the canon, you see? Meaning you made that hymn up yourself or someone made it up for you.

NEIA

I was given it.

BASHAA

By whom?

NEIA

Nanna-Sin, of course.

BASHAA

Ah, I see...

The problem is, that the families in power believe you wrecked their livestock with your song.

NEIA

The hymn cures sickness and pestilence. It cures people of their illusions. Whatever they are.

BASHAA

By making a herd of cattle suddenly lie down in unison?

NEIA

I can't predict the results. Nanna-Sin lets happen what needs to happen.

BASHAA

There is concern from the families that you were trying to steal their livestock.

NEIA

I don't care about cows.

BASHAA

Don't you?

NEIA

May I ask you something.

BASHAA

I'm sensing that you don't understand the severity of your situation, young lady, the punishment for theft is imprisonment and death.

NEIA

You're a priest of Nanna-Sin, aren't you?

BASHAA

I am. Your point?

NEIA

Why is it that you don't believe my power comes from Him?

BASHAA

Because I have seen too much in my life to believe in legend and fantasy.

NEIA

Then what is the power of Nanna-Sin?

BASHAA

The power of Nanna-Sin is in his eradication of darkness. His journey across the night sky day by day shows and reminds us to be constant and true. That there is a time for everything and that some mysteries we move through in the dark. Alone. And at other times, nothing is revealed to us. Knowledge is not a right or a gift but a constant awareness of the presence of multiple forces binding our lives together.

NEIA

So you've never experienced a message from Nanna-Sin himself?

BASHAA

Nanna-Sin is my guide. Through prayer, dedication to recitation of the sacred hymns, offering service, and selfless sacrifice – that is how Nanna-Sin reveals himself.

NEIA

Have you ever felt a power greater than yourself?

BASHAA is silent for a moment.

In a combined scene, EN ASHERAH escorts the GIRL to her private chamber.

NEIA

You're silent.

BASHAA

I don't know why I thought of it but something came to mind.

EN ASHERAH cuts the ties of the GIRL.

BASHAA

During the morning exultation, there is a moment of within the Harmonious Prayer.

A low humming sound begins to build. EN ASHERAH smooths the GIRL's hair and grabs the back of her neck. EN ASHERAH recites a chant that can't be distinguished.

BASHAA

In this prayer, one day, I sat, finishing the recitation and entered into a state of meditation. Our most dedicated En sometimes reach this state. Where reality and time cannot be distinguished. The world moves by and you are both aware and yet too distant.

EN ASHERAH's hands begin to glow with a strange power. THE GIRL gasps and slumps forward. THEY disappear into the night. The humming stops.

BASHAA

I sang the final tone and in this moment, I felt a rush throughout my body. The tone had seemed to open up a different kind of awareness. My body shook with the power – it was as if standing under a waterfall or doused with a wave of the warmest, most perfect golden light.

NEIA

Yes.

BASHAA studies NEIA.

BASHAA

I've never told anyone about this...

BASHAA

Can you control this... power?

NEIA

Yes.

BASHAA begins to pace, thinking.

NEIA

It is a power of Father Moon. It is his message.

BASHAA

What is it that you want?

NEIA

To be one with Nanna-Sin.

BASHAA laughs.

BASHAA

You can't be serious.

NEIA

The story says that the one that devoted herself completely to Him would meet Him in his nightly palace, aware from death, away from fear, away from all in the safety of the heavens. I know this power. I came here because I know En Asherah will know how to make it possible.

BASHAA

You will be given guest access to the temple. I will tell the guard to escort you to your chambers where you will be given robes. You will need to purify the filth of the city from you. In the House of Nanna-Sin, only the most pure are allowed to enter. Guard!

The GIRL from before – though now strangely zombie-like and in soldier's armor appears.

BASHAA

Bring her to a room. Make sure she is given anything she needs.

GIRL

Master Bashaa, The One Most High has summoned you.

He nods. The GIRL leads NEIA away.

SCENE THREE: En Asherah's Chamber

EN ASHERAH sits stately and languid on a decadent throne.

EN ASHERAH

Who is she?

BASHAA

We don't know, my lady. She says her village is no more.

EN ASHERAH

Could she be from the village in the north?

BASHAA

We were assured there were no survivors.

EN ASHERAH

Still, it is strange...
What did she want.

BASHAA

To be one with Nanna-Sin.
She believes she has a power, my lady.

EN ASHERAH
(scoffs)

A power? And who is she to understand these things? Untrained, impure eyes that invent possibilities.
She is no more powerful than an ant.

BASHAA

Yes, but an ant together with others can build a great mound.

EN ASHERAH

What do you make of her?

BASHAA

She does not lie. Though was reluctant to show her power when pressed.

EN ASHERAH

Do you think she could have-

BASHAA

It's unclear, my lady. She knows the nature of hymns and recitations and is able to point to the mystery beyond. There was something about her that...

EN ASHERAH

What?

BASHAA

Nothing. It's nothing important. My advice, my lady? See her for yourself. She could be a powerful ally in garnering the support of the people.

EN ASHERAH

Then, bring her to me.

BASHAA

My lady, forgive my impropriety, but-

EN ASHERAH

Speak.

BASHAA

She won't break as easily as the others.

EN ASHERAH

Ah, Bashaa... don't you know that I love a good challenge?

BASHAA

Yes, my lady, as you command.

EN ASHERAH exits. BASHAA begins to leave. As he does, he notices something out of the corner of his eye. Suddenly, he grabs KURI out from the shadows.

BASHAA

How much did you hear, boy?

KURI

I didn't hear anything!

BASHAA

Liar!

BASHAA strikes KURI.

BASHAA

You have trespassed in the temple of the gods. You have brought your filth into the sanctuary of the most exalted. Do you know the penalty for such a disgrace?

KURI

No, I promise! I didn't hear anything. I was looking for the kitchen was all. Only because I'd hear of the finery in the great temple. I wanted to see for myself.

BASHAA

Do you think I'm a fool?

BASHAA strikes KURI again. KURI becomes angry.

KURI

Don't hit me again.

Or what?
BASHAA

BASHAA raises his hand. KURI snatches his arm and twists around – putting BASHAA in a hold. He presses, BASHAA winces.

Now hold on a second. Just relax.
BASHAA

Don't tell me what to do. I'll break your arm.
KURI

Okay, okay, I get it. You can let up.
BASHAA

And give you room to escape? Not a chance.
KURI

KURI tightens his grip and takes a dagger out of his pocket, which he holds to BASHAA's throat.

Well, that escalated quickly...
BASHAA

You think I am joking?
KURI

No! No! Not at all – just that- have you thought that maybe just maybe I could be useful?
BASHAA

I should kill you. You have one use to me. Tell me where she is. If you do, you will not die painfully. If you don't-
KURI

Who? En Asherah? You saw where she went-
BASHAA

The girl!
KURI

The girl... Oh... you mean Neia.
BASHAA

Where is she!
KURI

BASHAA

Hey! Just listen to me, okay? I can't talk if I have a knife at my throat. Can you let me talk? I'll tell you where she is. But then what? How will you travel down this hall much less the temple? Huh? Do you think that a boy such as yourself, dressed as you are, will go unscathed, unquestioned through whatever room, whatever inner sanctuary he so desires? Come on...

KURI tightens his grip.

KURI

You will take me through them.

BASHAA

With a knife at my throat and my arm behind my back?

KURI

I will hold the knife at your back. You will lead me.

BASHAA

How comforting.

KURI takes the dagger away BASHAA's throat and puts it at his back.

KURI

Go.

BASHAA

Now, before we go anywhere, I thought I could make you an offer.

KURI

Why should I believe you?

BASHAA

Well, you see, Neia and I spoke. She's being treated as a guest of the temple. I see something in her. Can we speak face to face? I can assure you she's safe.

KURI

Are you an idiot? How can I trust you? You have nothing.

BASHAA

I have something. It could put me to death if the wrong people found out, but I will give it to you freely if you consider my offer.

KURI

Tell me.

BASHAA

Not until we sit face to face and discuss this as men. I need a show of good faith from you too, you know.

KURI lets go of BASHAA's arm. BASHA and KURI sit face to face.

KURI

Okay, we are face to face.

BASHAA

You must have heard some of what was discussed here with En Asherah a second ago.

KURI

You are going to bring Neia to En Asherah to break her.

BASHAA

Not exactly. Has Neia ever described a kind of divine power she has? Have you ever seen it?

KURI

Don't be ridiculous – that kind of thing is for fairytales and kids' stories.

BASHAA

Okay, well, say what you'd like. I get the feeling that you two are close so forgive me if I think you may be withholding from me.

KURI is silent.

BASHAA

There's something that very few realize about En Asherah. She has a power that few have. You've heard about the disappearances around the city, haven't you? How is it described where you're from?

KURI

That the winds of Enlil came to take them as sacrifice into the Other World to keep the balance.

BASHAA

Do you believe it?

KURI

No.

BASHAA

I could use someone like you, you know. I could give you a very lucrative position here. We would need to trust one another.

KURI

I trust no one.

BASHAA

Good. But you can see a mutual benefit to certain alliances, yes?

KURI

Depending on the circumstances.

BASHAA

What if I told you the disappearances were by En Asherah?

KURI

I would not be surprised. People with power always find ways to hoard it.

BASHAA

But what would you do that information?

KURI

I couldn't do anything with it – no one would believe me.

BASHAA

Can I make a prediction about you?

KURI

You can try.

BASHAA

If I had to guess, by your dress and the look of your dagger there, I'd say you are from the north.

KURI

What of it.

BASHAA

If you were from the north, I'm sure you'd have heard by now of the small village that was decimated to ashes. Nothing left. Not a body. Not a soul.

KURI

I've heard of it.

BASHAA

Here's an interesting factoid that few people know – now there are no sources to confirm this, but some say that the emblem on the flags of the invaders to this village was the same that our guards at the temple wear. Have you seen them? It's a crescent moon facing up like the horns of a bull.

KURI

I've seen the symbol before.

BASHAA

Now, say someone were to have born witness to this atrocity – it would put the temple and the government in a very awkward position. I mean one that attacks its own citizens... that's just inhumane.

KURI

It would change the tide of the government.

BASHAA

Yes, exactly, who's to tell where people would give their power and which authority would inspire reassurance. Especially if the head of this power source was suddenly gone.

KURI

I have no interest in politics.

BASHAA

But you do have interest in revenge.

KURI is silent.

BASHAA

We can help each other. I want what you want. But this information – it could kill me if it were to get in the wrong hands. And the information I have on you and Neia...

KURI

It would be as though we never existed.

BASHAA is silent.

BASHAA

I believe your friend. About her power. I think she has something.

KURI

She is different.

BASHAA

Will you trust me?

KURI reaches out his hand and shakes BASHAA's.

BASHAA

We will need to be discreet.

SCENE FOUR: The ritual

The main floor of the giparu. NEIA watches EN ASHERAH perform a ritual which looks like part of a dance. It is mesmerizing. There is a song that accompanies the movements. EN ASHERAH looks to NEIA.

EN ASHERAH

You. Bring me the pitcher of water.

NEIA brings her the pitcher. EN ASHERAH washes her hands. NEIA finds a towel on a nearby table and hands it to EN ASHERAH.

EN ASHERAH

Thank you.
You are new.

NEIA

Yes, my lady.

EN ASHERAH

In training, the correct honorific is Most Exalted One.

NEIA

Yes, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

Do you know why?

NEIA

No, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

Because the En – the high priestess in the temple of Nanna-Sin is considered a Daughter of the Moon himself. She is endowed with his power. There is a direct line that receives this power. The training ensures that the lineage is pure. Do you understand?

NEIA

Yes, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

So, you see, the power is given to the most high. It is divine power. Healing, offerings, sacrifices, prayers, hopes and dreams – these are all offered up through the high priestess. Do you know how the high priestess is selected?

NEIA

No, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

Of all attendants in the House of the Moon, she is the one that shows the most promise. You see, this power is tangible.

NEIA

Yes, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

But not everyone can learn it. It is not meant for everyone.

NEIA

No, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH

Usually the candidate comes from a high born family who has given great wealth to the temple. Though in some cases, exceptions are made. This is not a promise. I don't want you to misunderstand. I am not sure whether you are right to be my apprentice. But I heard you are... special.

NEIA

If I may, Most Exalted One?

EN ASHERAH

Speak.

NEIA

I have only one aspiration, which is to be one with Nanna-Sin.

EN ASHERAH

What you ask is impossible.

NEIA

But – Please, Most Exalted One, the legend says-

EN ASHERAH

Legends lie. They distort the truth and tell people what they want to hear. So. Be truthful with me. What do you want to hear?

NEIA

The great hymns and incantations reveal the power and mystery of Nanna-Sin. With the Most Exalted One's permission, I have felt Nanna-Sin's power and his message. He speaks through me, though I don't know why. Please, I have nothing here. Nothing left. No desire except to serve Him. To be with Him. To live in what I feel because that is the only time I can feel anything close to happiness once more.

EN ASHERAH

What you asking for is a death wish.

NEIA

Some look at the Other World as a place of death, but I know now that if it is full of this power – it would only be greater, more loving, more forgiving, more compassionate on the other side.

EN ASHERAH

Well, what you say is not in accordance with our belief in the Sacred Hymns, where all are judged by him – divided between the punished and the honored. What you say is blasphemy.

NEIA

I only know what I feel, Most Exalted One.

EN ASHERAH considers NEIA.

EN ASHERAH

I may be able to give you what you desire. But first you need to give something to me.

NEIA

What do I have that you can possibly want, Most Exalted One. All I have is what you see before you.

EN ASHERAH

I want to hear your song. The one that made a hundred cattle moving through the market suddenly sit. Let me hear you sing.

NEIA sings a tone – there are no words only notes. The sound is haunting. NEIA's hands begin to glow with a mysterious power. EN ASHERAH's hands glow as well – though not as brightly. EN ASHERAH is shocked.

EN ASHERAH

It can't be...

From a hidden part of the room, BASHAA and KURI watch unseen.

BASHAA

We don't have much time.

KURI

I saw what she did to that girl. She will do the same to Neia.

BASHAA

Wait! We must wait for the right moment. Then, you will take your knife to En Asherah. You must be swift. If you hesitate, you will not get a second chance.

KURI

Okay.

KURI and BASHAA sneak closer to EN ASHERAH and NEIA.

EN ASHERAH

Give me your hand, let me feel the power!

NEIA gives EN ASHERAH her hand – they both are covered in bright light.

EN ASHERAH

He was right! You are more powerful than I could have imagined. But soon this power will be mine.

EN ASHERAH grabs the back of NEIA's neck.

KURI

No!

KURI leaps from the shadows. BASHAA manages to tackle him at the last minute – the knife goes spinning across the temple floor.

NEIA

Kuri!

EN ASHERAH

What's this?

KURI

Traitor! You said you would help me.

KURI struggles with BASHAA who subdues KURI. EN ASHERAH walks to KURI, looking at him with amusement.

BASHAA

He is a spy, my lady.

EN ASHERAH

Well well well.

BASHAA

They are from the north – the village your army decimated. They are its sole survivors.

EN ASHERAH

But not for long.

NEIA

No!

KURI

Save yourself, Neia! Run!

EN ASHERAH

Let him go.

BASHAA lets KURI go. He is immediately stopped by a force emanating from EN ASHERAH.

KURI

Kill me if you must, but one day they will know about you. You are no true Daughter of the Moon. You are a fraud.

EN ASHERAH

Am I? Neia, watch closely – this is the true power of the Nanna-Sin. The transfer of knowledge, the stoppage of time. All parts of the universe the Lord Nanna-Sin controls flowing through me. I can't be stopped. My power only grows and we would be unstoppable if you were to join me, Neia. I could teach you so much. I could not only make you one with the divine – I can make you divine. Able to take what you want when you want it.

EN ASHERAH grabs the back of KURI's neck and absorbs his power, his essence, his being through her touch. As she does this, she laughs, she starts to lose control and both she and EN ASHERAH shake violently.

BASHAA
(to NEIA)

What are you waiting for? Now's your chance!

NEIA begins to glow - emanating a radiant power like none has seen before. The light of which becomes so bright it blinds all and then there is only darkness.

SCENE FIVE: The Other World

In the darkness, everything is still. NEIA looks around her not knowing where she is. The stars begin to twinkle above. Their soft light reveals a long dark fabric covered in stars and planets moving across the night sky.

NEIA

Hello?
Where am I?
Is anyone here?
Kuri?

A being of soft moonlight, NANNA-SIN, neither man nor woman, gently glides onto the stage. They approach a stunned NEIA.

NEIA

You're Nanna-Sin... What is this place?

NANNA-SIN nods. From within their robes, they take out a scissors and hand them to NEIA. They motion to cut the curtain.

NEIA

The fabric – this is the Other World.

She cuts the fabric. NANNA-SIN reaches through and reveals EN ASHERAH, BASHAA, and KURI – time has stopped for them.

NEIA

They are stuck.

NANNA-SIN motions towards KURI. NEIA grabs his hand and pulls him into the Other World. KURI is unconscious.

NEIA

Kuri! Is he dead?

NANNA-SIN shakes their head no. They motion for NEIA to put her hands on his head.

NEIA

Kuri, I don't know if I can help you. This is not a Sacred Chant that they teach in the temple. In the House of the Moon. But I will say it anyway. Because it is right. I hope your soul, your heart is still there to hear it.

(reciting/singing a chant)

*Moon shines its face on your face
You look up in wonder at the gentle light
Healing light that you take in
When you breathe once more
When your heart moves once more
When you smile once more
You are not gone
You are with us here
You who have the power we all do
And I who call you to remember it
Remember it*

KURI coughs and sits up, breathing deeply –gasping for air.

KURI

What is this place?!

Kuri, you're back!

NEIA

NEIA hugs KURI. KURI notices NANNA-SIN.

Uh, Neia...

KURI

NEIA

This is the House of Nanna-Sin. We're here. We made it.

Is there no way back?

KURI

NANNA-SIN motions towards the rip in the curtain.

But wait! I don't want to leave.

NEIA

NANNA-SIN shakes their head no and puts their hand on NEIA's shoulder.

Neia, I don't think it's your time...
We need you back there. I need you.

KURI

NANNA-SIN nods. They grasp gently NEIA behind the neck. NEIA grasps Nanna-Sin similarly. They close their eyes and breathe.

NEIA holds KURI's hand and nods to NANNA-SIN.

NANNA-SIN raises their arms. When they do, the curtain completely falls away and they disappear. NEIA and KURI are back at the palace and time now runs smoothly again.

How did you?

EN ASHERAH

What did you do?

BASHAA

NEIA

The mysteries of the universe are revealed at the right moment for those that listen.

Insolence. I will show you!

EN ASHERAH

EN ASHERAH's hands begin to glow with power. NEIA sings out an otherworldly sound that sounds like nothing before. It shakes the foundation of the temple. EN ASHERAH falls to the ground. NEIA grasps the back of her neck.

NEIA closes her eyes and exhales. EN ASHERAH escapes. She tries to invoke her power, but it is no longer accessible.

NEIA

This is the power of the Moon. Not yours. Not mine. You have been asked to give it back.

EN ASHERAH

No... No!

NEIA

You no longer hold this power.

EN ASHERAH leaps at NEIA, but KURI stands in front of her with the dagger. EN ASHERAH rushes into it.

She backs away, trailing blood.

She runs out of the great temple.

KURI starts to follow her.

NEIA

Let her go.

BASHAA

Though the wounded can heal. They remember the times before they were injured.

NEIA

She can do no more harm.

KURI

You used me.

BASHAA

We used each other. I played the game so that you had a chance. You have a choice now – what will this new world look like now? Will you dismantle the systems that took centuries to erect? Will you do it alone? Who will be on your side?

KURI

We can't trust him.

NEIA

No, but he has seen Nanna-Sin's power now. He has felt it himself. We could build anew. We will need help.

BASHAA bows to her.

BASHAA

You will be our guide, En Neia.

END PLAY.