



GILGAMESH: PART I

THE ARRIVAL OF ENKIDU

CAST

MAN ONE	<i>Citizen of Uruk</i>
MAN TWO	<i>Citizen of Uruk</i>
MAN THREE	<i>Citizen of Uruk</i>
GILGAMESH	<i>King of Uruk</i>
NINSUN	<i>Goddess Mother of Gilgamesh</i>
EA	<i>God of Wisdom</i>
SHAMASH	<i>God of the Sun</i>
ADAD	<i>God of the Wind</i>
ANU	<i>Father of the Gods</i>
ARURU	<i>Mother Goddess</i>
SHAMHAT	<i>Priestess to Ishtar</i>
ENKIDU	<i>Beastlike Man</i>

MAN ONE: Tell us who built the massive walls of Uruk—those that shine out like copper for all men to see.

MAN TWO: Who built the golden ziggurat—the temple of Anu and Ishtar?

MAN THREE: What mighty man of fame could do such things?

MAN ONE: It was Gilgamesh! Gilgamesh, that's who!

MAN TWO: Gilgamesh! No other human being could have done such feats.

MAN THREE: At first he was a tyrant to us, his people. But then he became a hero.

MAN ONE: All men must learn humility—one way or another.

MAN TWO: Gilgamesh learned it through his adventures.

MAN THREE: Because he *thought* about what he had seen in far-off lands, he came to know the things that make a person wise.

MAN ONE: He went on a quest to learn how a man might avoid death.

MAN TWO: Instead he returned having learned how to live.

MAN THREE: When he returned to Uruk, he engraved his thoughts upon the stone tablets that still hang on the strong walls of our city.

MAN ONE: He wanted *his* knowledge to help his people improve their lives.

MAN TWO: And because of this, he was counted wise among rulers.

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MAN THREE: Now read what Gilgamesh has chiseled into stone. Hear his deeds.

MAN ONE: Read what lessons he learned about living—and dying.

MAN TWO: Read his adventures, so that you, too, may soak up a bit of his wisdom.

NARRATOR: When Gilgamesh was born, he was made two-thirds god and one-third man. His mother was the wise goddess Ninsun, and his father was the mortal king of Uruk, Lugalbanda. Before his birth the gods gathered and blessed Gilgamesh with great power.

NINSUN: My son, Gilgamesh, is about to enter the world. How can you gods bless him?

SHAMASH: I, Shamash, God of the Sun, will give Gilgamesh beauty—manly beauty!

ADAD: I, Adad, God of Storms, will give him great courage—manly courage!

EA: I, Ea, the God of Wisdom, will give him the greatest gift—the ability to learn from his mistakes.

SHAMASH: That's it? You're not going to give him a *real* power?

EA: Wisdom is the greatest power of all!

ADAD: Wisdom can't wrestle men to the ground and decapitate monsters.

EA: Just watch! You'll see. Gilgamesh will be the wisest of men.

ADAD: (*scoffing*) Wisdom doesn't make you a hero! Brute force does!

EA: I guess we will just have to see, won't we?

NINSUN: I thank you, my fellow gods, for blessing my son. But in spite of all these blessings, my heart is sad. Gilgamesh is not a god. He is two-thirds god and one-third mortal. And do you know what that means?

SHAMASH: Math is not your strong suit.

NINSUN: In spite of all my efforts, my son—my glorious son—must one day die. (*sigh*) But let him be born all the same. Perhaps he can find a way to overcome death!

NARRATOR: So Gilgamesh was born and quickly grew to the glory of manhood. When he was a young king, he was as willful and fearsome as a wild bull—a supreme wrestler and warrior, who ruled his people with an iron fist.

MAN ONE: Sire, there are some grumblings among the people.

GILGAMESH: What is it now? More complaining? Do you know what I did to the last of my subjects who came to me complaining?

MAN ONE: Yes, golden one. Their bones are bleached white on the city walls. But I don't bring *my* complaints, of course. Other citizens are...concerned.

GILGAMESH: About what?

MAN ONE: They—not me—say that you are too hard on your people.

GILGAMESH: How so?

MAN ONE: You take half their sons to work on the walls of the city, and the other half you send out to die in battle.

GILGAMESH: See? I'm being generous! I still leave them a third half of their sons.

MAN ONE: (*sigh*) You have your mother's skill for math, golden one.

GILGAMESH: Dying to make my name even greater is the highest honor a man can have!

MAN ONE: Of course. Of course. But they say you dishonor their women, too—taking their daughters and wives as your own.

GILGAMESH: Are these women not in my kingdom? If so, they belong to me!

MAN ONE: (*passionately*) It is not right! It is not wise! (*catching himself*) I mean, that's what these complainers say anyway.

GILGAMESH: (*angrily*) I am king! I decide what is right and wise!

MAN ONE: Please, golden one.

GILGAMESH: (*roaring*) I have spoken!

NARRATOR: So the nobles of Uruk, receiving no justice from their young king, called out to the gods with mournful prayers.

EA: Fellow gods, something must be done about Gilgamesh. He is not a shepherd of his people like a leader should be. He does not respect his people.

ADAD: So what? He is the best warrior that has ever lived. He knows no fear! As god of wind, I gave him that skill!

EA: Yes, he is a blowhard, just like you. He has no fear, but he also has no respect for tradition! He uses the sacred drum however he wishes and calls out the army on a whim.

SHAMASH: But look at the mighty city he has created! As god of the sun, I especially like how shiny it is.

EA: Yes, a city that he forces his people to build up day after day. They are practically slaves. He does whatever he wants even though it hurts others.

SHAMASH: But you have to admit, those good looks I gave him have made him a hit with the ladies.

EA: A hit? He takes whatever woman he wants, even if she is another man's wife. He is a beast, and he will meet a beast-like end if he is not stopped.

NARRATOR: The nobles of Uruk continued to call out to the gods, complaining about their wild, impetuous king. So finally Anu, the Father of the Gods, decided that Gilgamesh must be stopped.

ANU: Mother Goddess! Goddess of Creation!

ARURU: Yes, Anu?

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ANU: You created Gilgamesh, but he has become a tyrant that no man can stop!

ARURU: Of course! He is perfection perfected. I made him like a god, but I lopped off a third—just to be safe.

ANU: You did your job too well! Here is your next task—make an equal opponent for Gilgamesh, a being strong enough to contend with him—stormy heart against stormy heart. Then the city of Uruk will at last know peace.

ARURU: A being who can contend with Gilgamesh? That is a tall order!

ANU: Then use me as your inspiration. Pattern your creation after me. Then he will be truly great.

ARURU: Hmmmm.

NARRATOR: So Aruru conceived of a being in her mind, much like the gods. She dipped her hands in water and pinched off a bit of clay. She let it fall down into the wilderness.

ARURU: Enkidu you will be called. More beast than man you will be. You will have the virtues of the god of war.

NARRATOR: Enkidu's hair was long like a woman's, and his body was covered in matted fur like the god of cattle. He squatted and hunched along the ground like an animal.

ENKIDU: Ah-roooooo!

ANU: You made *that* in my image? It's so ugly.

ARURU: Ugly, but strong. He alone can challenge Gilgamesh.

NARRATOR: Enkidu knew nothing of mankind, nor did he know man's ways. He did not cultivate the ground but lived like a beast. He ate grass on the hills like the gazelle and lurked with wild things at the watering hole. He loved the beasts of the field and felt perfectly contented in their presence.

But little did Enkidu know that the gods had plans for him. He would have to go the world of men and challenge its mightiest king.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Gilgamesh a tyrant to his people?
2. Is Ea, the God of Wisdom, correct—is being able to learn from your mistakes a powerful weapon? Explain.
3. What do you think will happen when Enkidu challenges Gilgamesh?