

READ IT
GILGAMESH



Adapted by
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with Brennemann Elementary
Author's Apprentice Students

Illustrated by
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Flip this book
to Act It!

Suggestions for Actors

- Begin by reading the script at least two times without any action, just focusing on the text.
- Discuss simple actions or gestures that can be incorporated to help show the action of the script.
- Designate a stage area and an audience area.
- Try acting it out multiple times on stage, incorporating the actions and gestures.
- While acting it out, make sure to hold books at chest level so that faces can be seen and make sure to always face the audience.
- Use a loud, strong voice that can be heard by everyone on stage and in the audience.
- Pay close attention to the other actors and listen to the story being told.
- Repetition is the key to a successful performance. The more rehearsal, the better the performance will be. Rehearse as many times as possible!
- Be kind and respectful to the audience.
- Remind the audience that they should be quiet and respectful to the play.
- When performing, remember to tell the story and have a great time.
- When in rehearsal or in performance, always be ready to play your part!

Suggestions for the Audience

- To be a member of the Audience is to be Audient (listening).
- Find your seat promptly, get comfortable, then turn your full attention to the stage.
- Pretend that everyone is not pretending. Forget that you are in a room watching a play.
- Look and listen as if you are in the scene with the actor yet have no lines.
- If something is genuinely funny, laugh.
- Show warm appreciation to the actors when they finish.

Gilgamesh: List of Characters

Characters (in order of appearance)



Gilgamesh (King of Uruk)



Various citizens of Uruk (male & female)



Shamhat (dancer)



Anu (King of gods)



Aruru (Anu's wife, Queen of All Things)



Enkidu (wild man and bff of Gilgamesh)



Trapper (trapper who discovers Enkidu)



Trapper's mother



Seven Sages (wise men & women of Uruk)



Ninsun (cow goddess and mother of Gilgamesh)



Shamash (Sun goddess and mentor of Gilgamesh)



Humbaba (Guardian and Mother of the Cedar Forest)



Ishtar (goddess of love scorned by Gilgamesh)



The Doctor



Scorpion Lady (guardian of the Path of the Sun)



The Dark



Shiduri (wise old goddess by the Waters of Death)



Ur-Shanabi (ferryman of Waters of Death)



Uta-napishti (immortal survivor of the Deluge)



The Wife (other immortal survivor of the Deluge)

Settings (in order of appearance)

- City of Uruk
- Gilgamesh's throne room
- A forest near Uruk
- Ninsun's temple
- Cedar Forest
- Kingdom of Heaven
- Enkidu's chamber
- End of the World – Twin Mountains where the Sun rises and Sets
- Path of the Sun
- Forest of Jewels
- Beach of the Waters of Death
- Waters of Death
- Hut of Uta-Napishti (on shores of Waters of Death)
- A lake just outside of Uruk



The Throne of Gilgamesh King of Uruk

Act 1

PRELUDE

A lake outside the gates of Uruk. A serpent slithers away holding a plant between its fangs. Gigamesh screams as he stands before the gods.



NOOOOO! This cannot be! I have forgotten you gods and goddesses in my quest to know the deep, but now I call on you for help. I MUST bring back this secret to the people of Uruk! Please, Ishtar, Goddess of Love, you did love me once: will you not gaze upon me with love again and give me what I want?



Gilgamesh, you must look within.



NO! I beg YOU, Shamash, Goddess of the Sun, can you not shine your light into the darkness of my heart now, so that I may have what I seek?



Gilgamesh, you must shine your own light now.



NO! Anu, KING of the Gods, I implore YOU to help me know the way!



Gilgamesh, you already know the way.



NOOOO! You are my last hope Aruru, Queen of All Things. Please, Aruru, I plead with you, please give me what I seek...



What you seek stands right before you Gilgamesh...

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Inside the walls of the great city of Uruk.



Seeing deep into the past, we go back in time 5,000 years to a vast river valley in a kingdom called Uruk. Uruk's King will one day see deeper than any man before or after him, but for now he fails to see the pain and suffering of his people. Now he is shouting from his lonesome throne atop the highest tower.



Build another tower! Make it high enough so that I may see the faces of the gods!



He sees only what could be, and fails to see what is.



Build another tower.



Tell another story.



Sing another song.



Dance another dance.



We love our King.



He surpasses all others in beauty and strength and wisdom.



He is one part man, two parts god.



He is a very good King.



Yet we grow weary.



Weary of the constant work.



Weary of the constant activity.



Weary of the constant fighting in Uruk.



Our hearts call out for a peaceful life!



A peaceful life!



Dance another dance!

Shamhat the Dancing Girl twirls onto the stage. She dances, then collapses.



Gilgamesh! He tramples through our city like the mightiest of bulls! The son of King Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh is strong to perfection. The son of wild cow goddess Ninsun, Gilgamesh is awesome to perfection. He has made our city great and full of life and art. But the bull that is Uruk's King Gilgamesh tramples the people beneath his feet. We are being crushed! We build and fight and dance all day and all night. Hear our pleas, Anu, king of all gods. Anu!



Joining her cries. Anu! Anu! Anu!

Hearing their cries, Anu rises.



I would strike Gilgamesh where he stands. Aruru, my wife, Queen of All Things: is there another way?

Aruru smiles and nods and begins to sing. All in Uruk sleep. She looks into Gilgamesh's heart.



He is lonely! Perhaps a friend will help him see more clearly. From clay and bark and stone and leaves, I will fashion a rough man...



Enkidu enters and stands before Aruru.



I will call you Enkidu: wild where Gilgamesh is tame, but his equal in every way. Go now, Enkidu, and run with the animals of the forest. *Enkidu runs away.*

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Deep in the mountain forest.



The wild man, Enkidu, the equal of Gilgamesh lives in the mountain forests with the animals. He knows no man, nor the ways of man. He runs with the gazelle and speaks to the animals. He loves and cares for them and destroys the traps and nets placed in the forest by Trapper.



Enter Trapper. Seeing another of his traps has been destroyed. Again? Another trap destroyed? I must know what is destroying my traps before my family starves.



Enter Enkidu. He drinks at the watering hole. Trapper jumps up when he sees him. They stare at one another and then Enkidu runs away. Trapper runs home.



Mother! I saw what is destroying the traps! A wild man: strong as a god, fast as a gazelle, friend to all animals.



Go to the city of Uruk, son. Seek council with the wisest man in all the world, Gilgamesh, King of Uruk. He will know what to do with this wild man.



Back in the Kingdom of Uruk's lonely throne room.
Meanwhile, Gilgamesh dreams of having a friend. His thoughts are interrupted by Trapper.



The wild man is strong as a god and faster than a gazelle!
Shamhat the dancing girl twirls across the stage. Gilgamesh watches her.



Perhaps this wild man can be tamed and taught not to break your traps.



Stops dancing. I will charm him with song and dance and tell him stories of Uruk and the Great King Gilgamesh.



So it shall be done. *Turning to the city.* Keep working! Make Uruk's wall even higher!

ACT 1, SCENE 3



Days later, deep in the mountain forest, Shamhat stands by the watering hole. Shamhat sings and dances and notices she is being watched.



Enter Enkidu.



Call him Enkidu. His name is Enkidu...



Enkidu. *He comes and sits at her feet. Time passes.* For seven days and nights now, you have sat at my feet hearing stories of Uruk and learning our dances and our language.



My heart and mind are full of the ways of man. *Animals enter.*



My animal friends... they run away in fear. What has happened? Why do my animal friends run from the sight of me? You are no longer a beast of the forest, Enkidu. Come with me to Uruk and meet our king Gilgamesh.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Outside the gates of Uruk.



On the long mountain road to Uruk, Shamhat tells Enkidu of the wonders of the city. At last they stand outside its gates.



Tell me more of this great city, Shamhat.



Living in Uruk is a dream and a nightmare, a blessing and a curse. For our king is good and bad. He has wonderful ideas that make Uruk the greatest place on earth, but he drives us so hard that we are at the point of breaking. Our spirits and bodies are nearly crushed beneath the weight of Gilgamesh's ever expanding desires.

Becoming enraged upon hearing this, Enkidu runs into the city.
GILGAMESH!



Gilgamesh appears, frantically searching for the source of the call.
Who called me? Have I angered the gods?



GILGAMESH!!



Who is this? Who dares call the King in this way?



I am Enkidu! Strong and mighty! Clever and kind! Once the protector of animals, now the protector of Uruk.





I AM THE PROTECTOR OF URUK!

Silence, followed by a brutal fight which neither Gilgamesh nor Enkidu can win.



You are destined to be Uruk's great king, and I am destined...



...To be my friend. *They laugh together. Shamhat watches.*



Our King was lonely. Perhaps he will see deeper into our hearts now that he has a friend.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

In the throne room as the sun rises.



While Gilgamesh and Enkidu talk late into the night... the people of Uruk rest. They rest and in the morning, as the sun rises over the great city, the people continue to rest, for Gilgamesh is too busy talking with his new friend to shout out any commands.



This plan will not work, Gilgamesh! Now that I have a friend, I do not wish to lose you. I beg you, reconsider this.



Alone I never would have considered such a thing Enkidu. But with you by my side I know that anything is possible. And this is something I have wanted for so long.



Let us seek the council of the Seven Sages, Gilgamesh. Surely the wisest women and men in the city will be able to change your mind.



To offstage. Summon the Seven Sages! The Seven Sages enter.



How may we serve King Gilgamesh?



Gilgamesh wishes to build a tower for Shamash, goddess of the sun.



I wish to build this tower of cedar wood. *The Seven Sages gasp.*



That's right — CEDAR. He plans for us to enter the Cedar Forest and take the tallest tree. He imagines we will LIVE to return to Uruk.



But Humbaba guards the Cedar Forest!



Humbaba's roar is a flood!



Her mouth is fire!



Her breath is death!



She can hear rustling in her forest one hundred leagues away!



Who would go into this forest?



Who among even the gods can defeat Humbaba?



WHO? Why Gilgamesh and Enkidu, that's who! Together, we two are unbeatable!



But why do this thing, Gilgamesh?



For the glory of Uruk. Because Cedar wood is beautiful and indestructible. So that Gilgamesh and Enkidu will LIVE FOREVER in the stories people tell.



He is young and his heart carries him off.



Do not put your trust in your vast strength alone.



Keep a sharp eye out.



Make each blow count.



Let Enkidu lead the way.



Let Enkidu protect his friend.



Let Enkidu go ahead of you for he knows the way and the forest.



Now go speak to your mother.

ACT 1, SCENE 6

Gilgamesh and Enkidu go to the Egalmah Temple. To the wise, all-knowing wild cow goddess queen Ninsun.



Ninsun, my mother... I must travel a great distance to the Cedar Forest and face fighting such as I have not known! Until

I return carrying the head of Humbaba as my trophy, I beg you to speak with the sun goddess Shamash on my behalf. Shamash hates Humbaba and may offer her assistance. When I return, I will raise a temple to Shamash higher than any in the world!

He exits.



It is true that Shamash hates the monster, Humbaba. I will call upon Shamash the sun goddess, but it will cost me dearly to do so... *She begins her ritual.* Watch over him Shamash! No matter how long he is gone, watch over him day and night!

Shamash casts her beams upon Ninsun. Ninsun screams and writhes in pain. Then she returns to speak with Enkidu.



What has happened to you, Ninsun? Why are you burned?



I have done what I must to protect my son. Enkidu the mighty, you are not of my womb, but from this day forward you will be my son. Go as brothers go to face the fierce and terrible Humbaba, Guardian of the Cedar Forest. Her roar is a flood, her mouth is fire, her breath is death. But go as brothers go and do what can't be done.

Act 2

ACT 2, SCENE 1

In the palace armory.



The palace armory is across the city from Ninsun's temple, but Gilgamesh is there in the blink of an eye. As he pushes open the heavy wooden doors, his eyes and ears burn from the smell of weapons being forged. His eyes catch a flash of light in the far corner of the room.



What is it? An axe? I saw this axe once in a dream. *He cuts his finger when he touches the blade. Then he grips the handle.*



Humbaba, Humbaba, Humbaba...



I see you've chosen a weapon. Not that weapons will help us much against Humbaba.



This axe called to me Enkidu. It has tasted my blood but now it demands the blood of Humbaba. I know we will not fail.



I don't hear any spears calling me, so I suppose this one will do.



Perhaps your ears are deaf to spears, my brother, for I can hear your spear calling out for the blood of Humbaba.



Let's hope Humbaba doesn't hear these noisy weapons until they have pierced her black heart and severed her hateful head from her venomous body. *The two laugh as they leave the armory and head to the gates of Uruk.* You are King, but I beg you to let ME lead the way. I know the road to the Cedar Forest and have seen the face of Humbaba.



Lead the way, Enkidu, for I would follow YOU anywhere!

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Three days later on the road to the Cedar Forest.



Enkidu leads the way and the road to the Cedar Forest is long indeed. They have walked for three days and nights and in this time have covered more ground than most could cover in six weeks, but now they are road weary and ready for rest. They look to the setting sun.



We must not forget an offering to Shamash: to ask for messages in our dreams as we journey, and for help when we face Humbaba.



For signs from our dreams, I will fill this bowl with water. Next I will make a ring of flour around the bowl. *He performs the ritual and then falls asleep.*



I will come from the sky to drink from the bowl for it is terribly hot to be the sun. As I linger so near to the earth, I will bring dreams that hold messages of the days to come.



And I will put up a tent to protect my friend while he sleeps and then make a larger ring of flour around that tent. *He falls asleep.*



When I have quenched my thirst, and snacked upon the small circle of flour, I will then feast upon the larger circle. My eyes will not miss Gilgamesh at its center and I will be reminded of my promise to protect him.



Waking. Enkidu, where are you? Have you brushed against me? Has a god passed by? Why do I tremble with cold and with fright?



Just a dream Gilgamesh.



Yes. In the dream a fly landed on my brow. When I reached up to brush it away, I saw before me a looming mountain that had not stood there before. The Mountain trembled and shook and then fell down upon me.



This is a good dream Gilgamesh. The mountain is Humbaba and she will fall just like the mountain in your dream. And look! Now there is a fly upon your brow.



Brushing away the fly. Perhaps what you say is true.



For three more days they travel and then take their rest, each performing the same ritual with the bowl of water and the small and large rings of flour. And as the moon hangs heavily in the sky like a fruit about to drop from a tree, Gilgamesh bolts awake from another dream.



Enkidu, where are you? Have you brushed against me? Has a god passed by? Why do I tremble with cold and with fright?



Just a dream Gilgamesh.



A spider crawled across my hand. When I raised my hand to shake it, I saw a great eagle with the head of a lion. It swooped down, spitting fire at me from its ferocious mouth. But then a woman made of gold appeared. She raised her hand into the clouds and yanked this creature out before it could strike me. She broke its wings and threw it to the ground.



This is a better dream Gilgamesh. The creature is Humbaba and the golden woman is Shamash. She is telling you that though Humbaba be terrible, Shamash will protect you like the golden woman in your dream. And look! A spider is crawling on your hand!



Shaking it off. I think what you say is true.



For three MORE days they travel and then take their rest, performing again the same ritual. The moon is full and looks down on them like a great eye, seeing all. Gilgamesh bolts awake from another dream.



Enkidu, where are you? Have you brushed against me? Has a god passed by? Why do I tremble with cold and with fright?



Just a dream Gilgamesh.



A black bird landed on my shoulder. When I turned to look into its eyes, I saw a great bull charging at me. It spit fire and pinned me beneath its horns. But then the woman made of gold appeared. She wrapped her hand around the bull's horns and tossed it aside like a rag doll. She knelt at my side and gave me a sip of water.



This is the best dream Gilgamesh. The bull is Humbaba and the golden woman is Shamash. She is telling you that Humbaba will come at you like a bull spitting fire and the battle will be close, but when you feel down and without hope, Shamash will protect you. And just like the golden woman in your dream, she gives you water as thanks for the offerings you have given her. And look! A black bird has landed upon your shoulder!



I KNOW WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE!

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Days later at the edge of the Cedar Forest.



Gilgamesh is still smiling when they reach the edge of the Cedar Forest, but that smile falters when he looks up to see

the dizzying height of the trees that grow there. Humbaba is even bigger than her children, the trees.



Aside. What was I thinking, coming here to slay such a mountainous creature?



Humbaba stands now at the heart of the forest, wearing only one of her seven veils of protection. You must go now, before she can add another veil. Even I will not be able to defeat her when she wears all seven. *Gilgamesh remains frozen with fear.*



We must go, brother. *Enkidu pushes him into the forest. There is a loud snap.*

Hearing the twig snap, Humbaba races in and prepares to strike. She stops when she recognizes the two friends.



I know you! Gilgamesh the King, part man and part god. And Enkidu the wild creature of the forest, made by Aruru, now tamed by the looks of you. I do not wish to harm either of you. I will forgive your intrusion but you must leave my forest at once!



Shamash!



I summon the Seven Winds: North, South, East, West, Tornado, Hurricane, Typhoon! Bind the creature Humbaba so that Gilgamesh and Enkidu may strike!
The winds roar around Humbaba, binding her like ropes. She drops to her knees. Gilgamesh raises his axe.



I beg you for the sake of my children, spare my life. Do not strike King Gilgamesh! Do not strike!



Don't listen to her Gilgamesh, she will tear you to bits when she is loose. There is no turning back now.



Please, Enkidu! For my children, please, spare my life! Without me, there is no one to protect them... *Suddenly her eyes fill with understanding.* YOU! GILGAMESH! You are here to take my children! You are here to take the Cedar Trees! *She begins to break free from the winds that bind her.*



Strike now, Gilgamesh, or it will be too late! *He brings down the axe. Humbaba falls. Enkidu stabs her in the heart with the spear and then Gilgamesh brings down the axe again severing her head. The winds drift away and Gilgamesh holds up the head like a trophy.*



Aside. What have I done? The hatred in her eyes has burned my soul. She was a mother protecting her children. I should have left her alone. It should not have come to this. And why? For glory?



Joining Gilgamesh. We will live forever in the stories that are told my brother.



I am King and I do what must be done for the glory and good of Uruk. To the tallest tree in MY cedar forest!

ACT 2, SCENE 4

In the heart of the Cedar Forest.



The tallest tree stands in the very heart of the Cedar Forest.



Use your axe. I think it should take only a few of your mighty blows.



Raising the axe. For Glory and for the Chance of Immortality!



Counting the blows. One! Two! Three! Four!



Stand back Enkidu! You're too close! *As the great tree falls it cuts his arm.*



Just a scratch.

Suddenly both are filled with an unexplained horror. Thunder, lightning, the sky darkens. They stare at one another.



Just a cloud passing. Nothing more.



Just a scratch bleeding. Nothing more.



To Uruk!



To Uruk!

Act 3

ACT 3, SCENE 1

In the city of Uruk.



What is this commotion? What awakens the goddess of love from her sweet slumber upon fluffy pink tipped clouds? Why do the people of Uruk roar so loud?



(from his balcony, roaring to the crowd) We bring you the head of Humbaba!



Gilgamesh! Never have I seen him so beautiful as he is now, standing on his balcony like a god before his people! *She flies to stand before him on the balcony.*



I—



Do not speak, beautiful King of Uruk, but listen to what I have to tell you. I am Ishtar, goddess of love, and I will have you as my own. When you are my beloved, you will ride a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold pulled by the fiercest lions. You will come home to a house of cedar and even the doorway and footstool shall kiss your splendid feet. All will bow low to you and bring you tributes every hour of every day. Your life will be one of luxury and beauty and you will know no sorrow of pain. Marry me, beautiful King Gilgamesh, and all of this shall be yours.



I have all of THIS. Why should I wish to have Ishtar?



Excuse me?



Why should I wish to have Ishtar, she who has had so many before me? She who takes a husband and casts him aside when she grows bored? She who has turned her former husbands to beasts of the forests and dwarves? WHY should I wish to have Ishtar when I have a city and a friend that truly love me?



Ooooo! *She screams and follows her scream up to the heavens.*

ACT 3, SCENE 2

In the Kingdom of Heaven.



FATHER! FAAATHERRRR!!! FATHER! I come to the Kingdom of Heaven to tell you that you *must* kill Gilgamesh. Give to me the Bull of Heaven so that I may watch it trample every last bit of life from his hateful body!



Now Ishtar, can it be so bad? What has happened, my beautiful daughter?



There, there, sweet Ishtar, beautiful daughter. Leave these terrible thoughts behind and sing sweet songs of love. This hatred takes your beauty and makes it horrible to gaze upon.



Father, Mother! I demand the Bull of Heaven be set loose upon Uruk.



This is not possible my dearest daughter. The Bull of Heaven would destroy the city.



There would be drought and famine at once and the people we love would not survive.



I want the Bull of Heaven Father. I demand it!



Please, Ishtar, do not ask this of me.



Do not do this Ishtar.



If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven, then I will travel to the Underworld, the Land of the Dead. I will open the gates of the Underworld so that the dead may walk the earth and devour all the living. *Her parents gasp as Ishtar storms off.*



Waste no time, my wife. Make preparations below in Uruk. I have no choice but to give her the Bull of Heaven.



I will save as many of Uruk's citizens as I can. Our daughter has grown cruel and sees nothing but her own desires. She is ruled by her anger now. So much like her Uncle Enlil...

ACT 3, SCENE 3

Enter Ishtar with the Bull of Heaven.



Petting and admiring the Bull. Horns made of lapis lazuli, slick red fur, a ring as golden as the sun through your nostrils, my Bull of Heaven spits and spews and bucks. Oh goody! *She leads the bull by the nose ring to Uruk, where the citizens have gathered.* Where the Bull of Heaven steps...



Crops wither and die!



Where the Bull of Heaven drinks...



The river runs dry!



All who cross the path of the Bull of Heaven...



Running, screaming in terror. DIE! DIE! DIE!



Looking from his tower. What is this?



Ishtar has released the Bull of Heaven. With your permission Gilgamesh, I will lead the troops and destroy it.



So it shall be done!



The Bull of Heaven stomps a hoof...



And the ground opens up and swallows one hundred soldiers!



The Bull of Heaven stomps another hoof...



And the ground opens up and swallows another hundred soldiers!



The Bull of Heaven stomps another hoof...



And the ground opens up and swallows another hundred soldiers!



The Bull of Heaven stomps its last hoof... *Enkidu falls but Gilgamesh is there and catches him just in time.*



ENKIDU! Take my hand brother!



Thanks.



Now, get on the back of the bull Enkidu! Hold it by its horns and I will slit its terrible throat.



The Bull of Heaven charges...

Enkidu jumps on.



I've got it by the horns!



My sword is ready!



NOOOOOOOOOOO!

The bull falls and Gilgamesh and Enkidu exit. Ishtar runs to the gods.



OOOOooooo!!!



What is it now Ishtar, my daughter?



The Bull of Heaven was pet to all of us. Gilgamesh has dishonored every god by slaying our noble creature. Gilgamesh must die!



Ishtar, it is your anger at Gilgamesh that caused the death of the Bull of Heaven. I am disappointed in you daughter. Whenever we act in anger, there is a terrible price to pay. It is your fault that the Bull of Heaven has been killed, but it is both Enkidu and Gilgamesh who have done the killing. One of them will die. You want it to be Gilgamesh, so let it be Enkidu. I made him and I will take him.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

Nighttime in Enkidu's chamber.



The fires celebrating the death of the Bull of Heaven have died and Gilgamesh and Enkidu are sleeping, each in his own chamber, each dreaming his own dream. Enkidu awakes in the darkest hours and cries out. It is just a moment before Gilgamesh is at his side.



What is it brother?



A terrible dream: the gods did sit in counsel and decided that I must die! I do not want to die, Gilgamesh! Not yet! I want to live! I want to share in more adventures with you!



It was nothing more than a dream Enkidu. That is all. Now go back to sleep and dream of better things more worthy of my brother and my friend.



Wincing as his arm brushes against the bedsheet. OUCH!



Holding a candle to the arm and speaking to himself. Where the cedar tree has scratched it, the wound is weeping and seems to be growing rather than healing. His arm is rotting before my eyes.



What is it Gilgamesh? Did I hear you say something?



That was just the wind, dear friend. Now rest. *Calling off stage.* Bring me a doctor at once!



How may I serve your majesty?



I command you to heal him!



Shaking his head after examining Enkidu's arm. There is nothing I can do for him. His fate is in the hands of the gods now, King Gilgamesh.



For seven days and seven nights Gilgamesh sits by his friend's side, praying that his life be spared. But his prayers fall on deaf ears. On the seventh night, as the moon hangs over Uruk looking to Gilgamesh like a chariot come to carry his brother away, Enkidu gasps for breath and rises up from his pillow.



I wanted to die in battle! Where is the glory in a death like this? *He dies.*



NOOO!

ACT 3, SCENE 5



Bring him back to me!



It is three long days and nights of bitter weeping and the tearing out of his hair before Gilgamesh releases his friend's body from his grasp.



Please!



Finally, he lets the men and women who tend the dead come and prepare Enkidu for burial.



Let a statue be made in his honor. Let it be made of solid gold

adorned with lapis lazuli and precious stones. Enkidu will stand in the halls of Uruk forever!



He recalls a tale he heard told as a boy: the tale of Uta-Napishti, the only man granted immortality by the gods.



I do not wish to die like you my friend.



He weeps and cries until his heart is nearly empty and all that remains is his own desire to live forever.



There is nothing left for me here. I know what I must do.

Act 4

ACT 4, SCENE 1

Gilgamesh stands at the base of the Twin Mountains. Night is falling.



It has been one hundred and fifty-three days and nights, wandering the desert, each step bringing here to the end of the world where the Twin Mountains stand. *Gazing at the mountains.* Their roots are the gates to the Underworld. Their tops support the fabric of Heaven. And between them is the path of the sun. Enkidu, my brother, if only you were here by my side! Digging wells where none have been before and feeding on the flesh of the lions I fought so that I might eat their flesh and wear their skins to survive. *He collapses in exhaustion.*



Who dares rest on the skirts of these Twin Mountains?



What is this terrible beast before me — part woman, part scorpion?



I am the Guardian of the path between the mountains, the path of the sun. Now answer me! Who dares to cross the desert to rest upon the skirts of these Mountains?



Gilgamesh. King of Uruk.



You cannot be Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, for he is one part man and two parts god and beautiful and powerful to look upon. You are a skinny creature, terrible to look upon.



But King Gilgamesh, nonetheless. My hair is matted, I wear the skins of lions, and my bones show themselves from lack of

good food. But I am King Gilgamesh of Uruk. I have wandered and survived this dreadful desert for one hundred and fifty-three days and nights, so that I may pass through these mountains. Oh horrible Scorpion-Woman, I shall pass!



I see you are Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, for no other would be so bold. But the Twin Mountains stand at the end of the world and no man has ever passed between them.



Then I shall be the first to do so.



But it is a dreadful path and you'll never survive, for between these mountains lies the path of the sun. And even though the sun does follow this path, the sun's light does not. The path is total blackness. Such darkness would make a mortal man insane to look upon.



I am no ordinary mortal man.



True. But even if you could pass through the utter darkness that lies between these mountains, you would have to find the end before the sun sets. You'd have no more time than the sunrise to the sunset and the path is long and winding as well as dark.



Why would I have but a day to pass?



When the sun does set, it goes to rest between these mountains, filling the pass with fire.



I will take this chance. I will risk my life for the chance at immortality.



You are seeking Uta-Napishti! You are seeking immortality!



Yes.



Though I should not, I shall let you pass. Perhaps Gilgamesh will see and know the deep that is forever.

ACT 4, SCENE 2



The next morning. The scorpion woman gently shakes Gilgamesh awake. You have slept through the night. Now it is time, Gilgamesh who seeks to know the deep.



Thank you for your kindness. I am ready.



Wait until the sun peeks out from the horizon and then step into the pass...



Stepping in. There is complete and utter blackness.



He raises his hand to his face and sees nothing. He puts one foot in front of the other, moving as quickly as he dares. He can feel when his foot starts to stray from the path and knows with a horrible certainty...



What will befall me, should I stray from the path, will be far worse than death.



There are times when he hears a whisper of wind.



Or is it the dead whispering to me from the Underworld?



He wants to scream, for his throat is so full of fear that it seems as if he will choke on it if he does not let it escape. But he senses that something dwells in this pass that he should not awaken.



One foot in front of the other. Hands out stretched. Quick and careful steps.



The first hour in blackness passes. The dark is dense and there is no light. He can see neither forward nor back.



One foot in front of the other. Careful but quick. Do not scream.



The dark grows cold and seems to be coming to life around him.



There are more sounds like whispers and sometimes a scratching, like claws along a stonewall. *His steps grow quicker.*



Another hour passes and another and another and another. The dead call to him, begging him to stray from the path so that they may feed upon his flesh.



And I know that I am being followed.



He hears the ragged breath of the creature, hears it claws dragging on the ground.



Faster steps. Do not stray from the path.



Another hour and another and another. “Gilgamesh,” they call. “Come to us!”



The hot breath of the creature on my neck.



Another hour and another and another. Now the dead are screaming, “Gilgamesh!”



The creature occasionally reaches out to touch me, toying with its prey before it moves in for the kill.



The final hour. The dead have grown frantic with their desire to feed on living flesh. “Gilgamesh! Come to us!” They beg and plead. The creature breathes hot and heavy on his heels.



Faster! Is that light?



The creature is almost upon him and he knows that the next time he feels its long sharp claws will be when they wrap around his neck and squeeze the life out of him.



Run! Is that light?



The dark is now hot and heavy as the sun prepares to enter the pass.



Screaming. IS THAT LIGHT?!?



Gilgamesh!

He falls to the ground on the other side of the mountain pass.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

In the Garden of The Gods amid a glittering forest of jewels.



This Forest of Jewels on the other side of the mountain pass is so beautiful. For seven days and night, I have drunk from the diamond pool and eaten the magical fruits. I am revived and ready to continue my journey.



Is that a LIVING man stepping from the Forest of Jewels onto the beach of the Land of the In Between? Does he dare come to the tavern of Shiduri, goddess of the In Between? Does he not know my tavern is kept for the gods and for the dead trying to find their way to the Underworld, not for the living? He looks dangerous with his sunken cheeks and hollow eyes, his matted hair, and dirty lion skins. *She runs into her tavern and bolts the door.*



Why do you run from me? I am Gilgamesh, King of Uruk. I have killed Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. I traveled the path of the sun. Can you not offer me simple kindness and courtesy?



How can you be Gilgamesh, King of Uruk? He is beautiful to look upon. You look as if you are wasting away. And you don't smell much better.



Why should my cheeks not be sunken, my eyes not be hollow? Why should my hair not be matted? Why should I not dress in the skins of a lion? I have lost my dearest friend and brother, the wild man Enkidu. I have wandered the wild mourning him and seeking my own immortality.



Only Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, would be so bold. *She unbolts the door.* Immortality is only for the gods.



For the gods and for Uta-Napishti.



There is only one way to Uta-Napishti and that is across the Waters of Death.



Then I will cross those waters! *He runs to the waters.*



NO! Do not touch those waters. To touch them is to turn to stone. There is only one way across the Waters of Death and that is on the ferry steered by Ur-Shanabi and his Stone Ones.



Where can I find this Ur-Shanabi and his Stone Ones?



Pointing. He is there. *A fog rolls in.*



I see him, there, through the fog, surrounded by seven pillars. The Stone Ones! I will destroy them all and force Ur-Shanabi to take me on his ferry to Uta-Napishti. *He draws his axe and swings, reducing the Stone Ones to rubble.* You will take me across the waters of death on your ferry Ur-Shanabi!



Who commands Ur-Shanabi, ferryman of the dead? Last time I checked, it was only the gods could command me and by the looks of you fella, you are no god.



I am Gilgamesh, King of Uruk.



HA! You're no king. Gilgamesh is beautiful and powerful. You're a skinny man with hollow eyes and matted hair. Nothing but skin and bones in a lion's skin. HA! You're king of nothing, you are!



Why should my cheeks not be sunken, my eyes not be hollow? Why should my hair not be matted? Why should I not dress in the skins of a lion? I have lost my dearest friend and

brother, the wild man Enkidu. I have wandered the wild mourning him and seeking my own immortality.



Only Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, would be so bold. But immortality is not for you. And King or no King, you will not cross these waters.



Ur-Shanabi, ferryman of the dead, I command you to take me across the Waters of Death!



And I command you to pick up those thousands of pieces of rocks that was my Stone Ones and make them whole again.



What?



My ferry don't run without the Stone Ones, Gilgamesh made of Flesh. The Stone Ones were like statues when on the land, but when they was on the water — they could whirl about like seven great propellers carrying this ferry across the Waters of Death.



What have I done? *He kicks and shouts and storms about.*



Gilgamesh, made of flesh, is you quite finished?



I guess I am finished. I will never find Uta-Napishti.



It is not likely, but it may be possible... If you're as great as all those stories they tell. Take that axe of yours and do something good with it for once. Go down to the forest and cut yourself three-hundred punting poles, each fitting into the next, each 5 rods long. You'll need every last one of them to push your way across these hateful waters.



It is done. *Gilgamesh goes to the forest and returns with the poles.*



Mind you, don't let a drop of this here water touch you or you'll be a Stone One. No more Gilgamesh made of Flesh, just Gilgamesh made of Stone.

ACT 4, SCENE 4

Hours later on the Waters of Death.



These waters are so deep, I am almost out of punting poles.



Don't let that water touch your skin.



Are we almost there?



Not even close!



But this is the last—



Watch out! *He pulls Gilgamesh back as a wave reaches up and Gilgamesh loses the last pole.*



What now? There are no more poles!



I knew you'd be the end of me just as soon as I spied you. You killed my Stone Ones and now we're stranded in the Waters of Death. We'll drift until we die of thirst if we're lucky. If we're not so lucky, this ferry will capsize and we'll turn to stone and sink into the deep. And if we're really UN-lucky...



If we're really unlucky, what then? What could be worse than the deaths you speak of?



Eyes wide, pointing. THAT could be worse than the deaths I spoke of, Gilgamesh made of flesh. That could be much worse!



What can that be? So big and moving so quickly?



Hold tight! It's rearing its evil head!



It is the very color of sickness and death and smells of the grave! It's opening its hideous mouth! What is that sound?



That is the sound of the screams of the thousands of lost souls it has devoured in the Waters of Death. Hold on for dear life!



We need a sail! The winds are picking up and could blow us to the other side.



Got no sail, got no mast, Gilgamesh made of Flesh.



I will not give up so easily. *He jumps to the helm of the ship and holds his body strong against the winds rising.* My body will be the mast and my lion skins will be the sail. Now steer this ferry, Ur-Shanabi!



To the shore of Uta-Napishti!

Act 5

ACT 5, SCENE 1

Across the Waters of Death at the hut of Uta-Napishti and The Wife as the sun is setting.



Ur-Shanabi! Old friend! Who have you brought with you?



I am Gilgamesh, King of Uruk.



How can you be Gilgamesh, King of Uruk? Word of Gilgamesh's strength and beauty has travelled even to the ends of the earth. You cannot be this man. Your cheeks are sunken and your eyes are hollow. Your hair is matted and you dress in lion's skins. You cannot be Gilgamesh!



He sighs and grudgingly tells his story. Why should my cheeks not be sunken, my eyes not be hollow? Why should my hair not be matted? Why should I not dress in the skins of a lion? I have lost my dearest friend and brother, the wild man Enkidu. I have wandered the wild mourning him and seeking my own immortality.



You should not have brought him to me, Ur-Shanabi. *Ur-Shanabi sighs and sprawls out in the ferry for a nap. Uta-Napishti leaves the shore and walks to his hut. Gilgamesh follows.*



From inside the hut. Dinner soon!



We have visitors.



Oooo! You know I do love visitors, Uta. And there's plenty in the pot. *She enters and then looks Gilgamesh deep in the eyes.*

Mmm hmm. Tell him what he needs to know, Uta. I'll fetch the boy some beans.



Why did you not attack me when you got off the ferry? I know it was your plan to force me to tell you the secret of immortality.



I am unsure. A voice within me stayed my hand upon the sight of you.



Hmm. You have changed, Gilgamesh. Outside and inside. You'll understand, but not tonight. Enjoy your beans and I will tell you the story of how my good wife and I became the only immortal human beings.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

Gilgamesh sits at the feet of Uta-Napishti and the Wife.



We were ready when the gods washed the earth clean of man.



We were as ready as we could be, but you must tell further back, Uta. You must start at the beginning, Uta.



So far back, Wife?



From the beginning, Uta.



Three gods made man: Anu, Enlil, and Ea. They were brothers and it is told that they made man to serve them.



Men always seem to need someone to serve them. Is it because they are so mighty or because they are too weak to serve themselves?



These three gods ruled from three thrones: Anu from the heavens, Ea from the sea, and Enlil from the mountains of the earth. Perhaps it was because he was too close to man (ruling from his throne on the Earth), but Enlil grew tired of their noise.



He grew tired of their noise? He grew selfish and he grew prideful and he grew hateful. Enlil would rather have heard the sound of his own breath than the laughter of children playing or the sighs of lovers or a baby's first cry.



That is another interpretation, Wife. If I may continue?



You may continue, Uta, but watch your words for this is an important tale you tell.



For whatever the reason, Enlil grew to hate man and as his hatred grew so did his desire for their destruction. It was not long before he imagined the earth wiped clean of all men, women, and children.



And when something is thought of long enough, it eventually is given voice. And when something is given voice long enough, it eventually is given action.



And so it was with Enlil's hatred of mankind. He shared his plans with Anu and Ea, but they did not wish to see mankind destroyed. It was Ea that came to us.



I was in the garden. It was a beautiful garden we had, full of herbs and flowers, fruits and vegetables. That morning the smell of lavender was heavy and the bees buzzed happily. I could hear my grandchildren playing on the other side of the wall that Uta had built around our little garden. And then I heard something else: from inside the wall, I heard a voice

calling to me. It was Ea and he told me of Enlil's terrible plan. I don't know how it was that I was the one to hear that voice when no one else did. He told me that we should build a boat big enough to hold all of our family and all of our animals and all of our seeds. I wept to imagine it, all of us locked up in a giant boat while the world washed away around us.



That is how I found her, head pressed against the garden wall, weeping. She revealed to me all that Ea had shared. We gathered our sons and daughters and their sons and daughters and we all set to work, building a boat that was seven stories high and filling it with all of the things of this world we could gather.



It was just as I had managed to get a hive of bees onto the boat that there was a crash of thunder loud enough to split your ears from your head. The sky churned and turned a gray so deep it was nearly black. And then the rain began coming down like stones thrown by angry boys playing at war. Those first drops stung me harder than any bee. And what happened next stung me hardest of all. We left the door open as long as we could, in hopes that others would come. But that rain was coming down so hard I think folks must have just thought it best to wait it out and by then it was too late.



She wouldn't let me close the door until the water was so high it was sloshing into the boat. When we did finally close it, the life we had once known was gone forever. The thud of that great door sealed our fate and we all knew it. The babies wailed and the animals howled and the insects buzzed. Even the plants wilted while the rest of us wept for the loss of all of the earth's creatures. Eventually the water rose high enough to carry the boat away and as we rocked and pitched on the stormy waters, we wondered if even we would be spared the wrath of Enlil.



But we *were* spared and after seven days and seven nights of downpour the sun returned to the sky. We finally dared to leave the confines of our great boat. It wasn't until I felt the hot sun on my face that I knew we would make it. I gathered the others near me and I spoke from my heart.



She has a good heart. The Wife said to us:



We are the last of mankind and we must go forth understanding that this life we have is so very precious. It is made more precious by the love we share. Our love for each other and for the earth and all of its creature will guide us from this day forward.



I think Enlil must have heard her words carried on the wind and they shamed him.



What do you mean?

The Wife rises and takes the uneaten plate of beans. Gilgamesh stands with Uta-Napishti, gazing at the sea.



She has a good heart. It wasn't long after my Wife spoke from her heart to us, that we sent three birds out to see if they could find land. The Dove and the Sparrow returned that evening, but the Raven did not. The Raven had found dry land you see. We looked out over that seemingly endless water that should have filled us with fear, but we knew then that we would find land again. It was just moments later that the light in the sky shifted and our great boat was boarded by Enlil himself.



What did you do?



I'll tell you what we didn't do. We didn't bow to him — Enlil,

destroyer of man. We stared at him long and hard and finally it was he who looked out over the seemingly endless sea. He said to us, 'You will find land in three days time and you will carry on the life of man.' Then he went to the Wife. He placed his hand upon her shoulder and she turned and hissed at him. Like a snake she said, "You are not fit to touch the likes of me Enlil." He bowed his head in shame at what he had done to the world. When she spoke out against him, I ran to her side, thinking he'd strike her down. Instead he extended his open hands to each of us and said, 'Forgive me.' Without a thought, for we could see he was sincere, we each took one of his hands. There was warmth and then the understanding that we had become god-like in that we would grow no older and never know death. Then he was gone. I have not seen him since.



So it is Enlil's touch that granted you immortality?



Popping out of the hut. It was his touch and his regret and our ability to forgive him and more than you'll ever know, Gilgamesh. This gift you seek — it is not the gift you want.



But I want to live forever!



Then first you must simply *LIVE*.



You are not living Gilgamesh. You have spent your whole life wanting more than what you see and never seeing or appreciating what is right in front of you. It was not until you met Enkidu that you really cared for another living soul. Now that Enkidu is gone, you continue looking for what is beyond your reach and not noticing what is within it.



I don't understand, Uta-Napishti. I just want to live forever. I just want to know how to be immortal like you.



Let's see if you can defeat sleep and then maybe we can discuss defeating death. Stay awake for seven days and seven nights and then we'll speak some more. *Uta-Napishti joins his wife in the door of the hut. They close the door behind them and leave Gilgamesh staring at the lapping waves, his ears full of their endless rhythm.*

ACT 5, SCENE 3

Seven days later Gilgamesh wakes to find seven loaves of bread. Bolting up. I dozed but for a second!



I baked you a loaf of bread for each day that sleep kept you.



There are seven loaves Gilgamesh. You slept for seven days.



Understanding. How can I defeat death when I cannot even defeat sleep?



It is time for you to return to Uruk, Gilgamesh. Ur-Shanabi will prepare you for the journey and see you safely there. Ur-Shanabi! *He enters.* You should not have brought this traveler to our door, Ur-Shanabi, old friend. You therefore must see him back to Uruk. Prepare him for the journey. Give him clean garments fit for a man of his status. Keep him safe in your travels and return him to his throne in Uruk.



It is done.



He has come so far. Should we not give him something for his troubles?



I cannot give you immortality, but I can give you back your youth. In the floor of this ocean there is a plant, spiky with thorns. If you can take this plant and eat of it, your youth will be restored. *Gilgamesh ties rocks to his ankles and then bounds into the sea. He emerges with the Plant of Life.*



To Uruk!

ACT 5, SCENE 4

Weeks later an exhausted Gilgamesh is finally at the gates of Uruk.



I am so weary from my journey and want to be strong when I present the Plant of Life to my people. I will rest here for the night and greet them at dawn's first light. *Gilgamesh sleeps with the Plant of Life by his side.*



Wake now Gilgamesh, for the sun is rising over Uruk.



He reaches to pick up the plant. As his fingers brush the thorns he hears a faint rustle in the grass.



Just then, a cool black snake slithers over the stone that holds the precious plant and before Gilgamesh can blink an eye, it has devoured the plant, thorns and all.



Gilgamesh stares in disbelief as the snake sheds its old skin and then travels on, young again.



No! No! NO! NOOOOO! *He falls to the ground in defeat. He is surrounded by the Gods & Goddesses, Uta-Napishti, and the Wife.* NOOOOO! This cannot be! I have forgotten you gods and goddesses in my quest to know the deep, but now I call on you for help. I MUST bring back this secret to the

people of Uruk! Please, Ishtar, Goddess of Love, you did love me once. Will you not gaze upon me with love again and give me what I want?



Gilgamesh, you must look within.



NO! I beg YOU, Shamash, Goddess of the Sun, can you not shine your light into the darkness of my heart now, so that I may have what I seek?



Gilgamesh, you must shine your own light now.



NO! Anu, KING of the Gods, I implore YOU to help me know the way!



Gilgamesh, you already know the way.



NOOOO! You are my last hope Aruru, Queen of All Things. Please, Aruru, I plead with you, please give me what I seek...



What you seek stands right before you Gilgamesh...



Gilgamesh, you must simply LIVE.



You are not living Gilgamesh. You have spent your whole life wanting more than what you see and never seeing or appreciating what is right in front of you. It was not until you met Enkidu that you really cared for another living soul. Now that Enkidu is gone, you continue looking for what is beyond your reach and not noticing what is within it.



And here, from the shore of this cool and crystal-clear, beautiful lake he SEES the golden walls spanning the glorious city of Uruk.



It is a beautiful city.



He catches his own reflection in the lake's glassy surface. Gilgamesh, made of flesh and bone and blood.



Though certainly touched by time, still strong and still beautiful.



As he walks to the city's gate he delights in the sweetness of the birdsong, the blueness of the sky, and the warmth of the golden sun against his skin.



It is all so beautiful.



When the city gates open before him...



And he beholds all of his people,



Stopping their work...



As they realize their King has returned,



His breath catches...



And his heart swells.



My people.



Gilgamesh returns! Our King is returned! Hail Gilgamesh.
Hail King of Uruk!

*He opens his arms wide to them and it feels as if they are all
within his reach.*



*To himself. All of this, within my reach. To the people of Uruk.
I traveled far and I saw the deep.*

THE END