

## **THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH**

### **INTRODUCTION AND TABLET 1**

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(A chorus enters, reading from the mysterious 13th tablet, believed to be found. This tablet consists of a final address to Gilgamesh on his deathbed, and a recounting of his last words.)

#### **CHORUS:**

What you say will go with you.  
What you say will go with you,  
to the land of death,  
and there, you will declare, "There is death."  
O Gilgamesh, exalted above all,  
The hero of Uruk, the wild bull.  
The floodwave that breaks the stone walls,  
The powerful guardian,  
Mighty above all others.  
Greatest of kings.  
What you say will go with you, to the land of death,  
and there, you will declare, "There is death."  
Fear not, Gilgamesh, for there is death.  
When you see it, you will know it,  
and you will understand.  
May the gods and your companions  
take your hands slowly,  
Gently guiding you towards it.  
Accept it, accept death.  
Speak, Gilgamesh.  
What you say will be written, and what is written will go with you to the land of death,  
"I believed it was here.  
I will know, I will see it.  
I believed it was here.  
I will know, I will see it.  
It is here."  
I saw it, I knew it, I believed it, and I was convinced,  
What I sought was never there.  
But what is spoken is.  
Life is not eternal,  
Life ends.  
What I sought was not here.  
It was not.  
It was noooooooooot...

(The light slowly illuminates the corner of the stage. Gilgamesh stands there, head bowed, frozen in place, staring at the ground as though he has already surrendered. This is the reflection of Gilgamesh in the mind of the narrator who will soon speak. Gilgamesh, now speaking, is the Gilgamesh who will soon travel to the land of death.)

**GILGAMESH:**

I am Gilgamesh.

I sought immortality,  
chasing eternal life.

Now, like my friend Enkidu,  
I lie in death's embrace.

My heart cannot accept this truth.

No one can bear the answers.

Everyone falls in love with their own words.

Everyone becomes a liar.

I am Gilgamesh,

And, like Enkidu, my friend,

I now lie in the arms of death.

I have accepted the truth.

I endure the answer.

Let those who are in love with their own words tell my story.

Let the liars, who have abandoned the truth, speak.

No matter how you rule this world,  
life has an end, like day and night.

Like my friend Enkidu, I lie in death's arms,

I am Gilgamesh,

I am dying.

Write these words down and place them in the tablet chest.

The one who unlocks its bronze key,  
the one who uncovers the secret,  
will see first this:

All the sufferings that Gilgamesh endured.

Now I, Gilgamesh, say this:

"There is death."

I saw it, I believed it.

What I sought was not there.

But what is spoken is.

Life is not eternal.

Life ends.

There is death.

**CHORUS:**

Now we come to the final words of Gilgamesh.

His tomb was found, and what entered the tomb with him.

It was not a serpent.

What entered the tomb with him,

The last thing spoken by his lips.

It was not a serpent.

The last thing spoken by his lips.

It was not a serpent.

(The chorus repeats this line, turning it into a whisper or a hiss, transforming the words into the sound of a snake.)

**CHORUS:**

What entered the tomb with him,

The first story of mankind.

The last tablet, lost, yet unknown to be missing.

(A narrator enters. She is an archaeologist, one of the team that discovered the 13th tablet. The excavation site has been attacked. Though never mentioned, this refers to an ISIS attack. The woman has taken refuge in a cave, holding her own tablet in her hands. Blue light reflects off her face. She has only 75 minutes of battery left. She's trying to send a message to the civilized world from her tablet. We find her in shock, hiding in the cave. She speaks softly, as if murmuring, or perhaps she's typing out what she is saying on the iPad in her hands. Her face is illuminated by the faint blue light.)

**NARRATOR (archeologist):**

We found what didn't exist.

What was never spoken of.

We found it.

The 13th tablet.

Gilgamesh had an ending, and what was said as he died.

Can you believe it? What a discovery.

I saved it. The tablet is with me.

But my own tablet... this one that belongs to now, is damaged.

I cannot send a photo of it.

The earlier records were destroyed when the excavation house exploded.

And so,

I am the one left to tell the story of what is no longer.

Because I am the only one left.

**CHORUS:**

Fire rained from the sky,

And the savages did what they said they would.

The West could no longer remain in the East.

"Leave," they said, from the land of Mesopotamia, whose abundance had long since dried up.

The past is no longer buried here.

You stole it, you locked it in your treasure chests.

What more are you digging for here?

There is no trace of Gilgamesh left in this land.

**NARRATOR:**

Were they savages?

Or were we the arrogant ones?

Was our immortality also Gilgamesh, perhaps?

We chased after him.

We came from afar, set up our excavation camp.

We flew our drones, discovered what was left.

The first night, the excavation site flooded.

We had brought our own deluge.

We were astonished by this.

Now, I have taken refuge in this cave,

Just as I did back then,

With my friends, when they were still alive...

**CHORUS:**

Before fire rained down upon them, and before bullets struck the foreign bodies like spears,

Just as now, they told the legend with shadows on the wall.

**NARRATOR:**

We had come from far away, we were tired, but we rested, just as the epic says.

He came from far away, he was tired, but he rested.

This is how the epic begins, and then it describes his glorious cities.

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## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 2**

(The other corner of the stage lights up, perhaps reflecting Gilgamesh in the narrator's mind. Gilgamesh stands tall on stage, filled with pride. He begins to speak of his city, quoting from the first tablet of the epic. It's as if he is finishing the narrator's thought.)

#### **GILGAMESH:**

The city I built.

The city of Uruk, with its sheep pens and the sacred treasure room of the blessed Eanna.

I built its walls like a woolen ball,

I built them.

I am Gilgamesh.

Climb up onto the walls of Uruk.

Weren't the foundations laid by the seven sages?

No king will ever build their like again.

Look at the walls, like a tangled skein of wool.

No one will ever replicate these battlements.

Look at the stairs, descending deep into the past.

Doesn't the epic tell of the city I built,

and of me, the body shaped, carved, and sculpted by the gods?

#### **CHORUS:**

Two-thirds divine flesh, one-third human.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Doesn't it say that Gilgamesh was different from birth?

#### **CHORUS:**

He was beautiful. In his youth, very beautiful.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

He had a face that struck fear into all beings.

#### **CHORUS:**

He wandered the walls of Uruk.

He held his head high like a wild bull.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Doesn't it say that Gilgamesh was different from birth?

#### **NARRATOR:**

It does, but it also tells of your tyranny.

Doesn't it say, "This wild bull you've created is a mad buffalo, O gods?"

Doesn't it say, "Gilgamesh lets no son with his father,  
no bride with her groom,

no woman with her warrior husband?”  
By day and night, Gilgamesh tyrannizes, terrorizes.  
Doesn't the epic say this too?

**CHORUS:**

Tyrant.  
Oppressor.  
Madman.  
Brutal.

**GILGAMESH:**

Is it me they speak of?

**NARRATOR:**

It is.  
Just as no one knows the state they're in,  
No one truly understands who they are.

**GILGAMESH:**

So I was brought before the gods' complaints.  
So it was ordered that a companion be made for me,  
So that my city might have peace.

**CHORUS:**

Upon hearing this, Aruru took a handful of clay and placed it in the desert.  
From it, she shaped a being,  
As strong as a piece of stone.  
One who had never seen the face of man,  
One who grazed with gazelles,  
And so Enkidu was created.

**CHORUS:**

Drinking from the wilderness springs,  
An encounter with a hunter struck fear in the hunter's heart.

**GILGAMESH:**

Then the hunter came to me.  
I gave him my wisdom.

**NARRATOR** (transitioning gracefully into the role of the harlot who tames Enkidu,  
walking with slow, deliberate movements across the stage):

A harlot will be taken to him,  
She will go to Enkidu,  
She will seduce him.

(Enkidu's figure slowly emerges into the light, standing still, as if waiting for the world to  
acknowledge his existence.)

**ENKIDU:**

And she did as she was told.  
She seduced me.  
She spoke to me of Gilgamesh and of his ancient city.  
In the end, I spoke the words aloud,  
"Take me to him.  
I wish to fight him,  
to change fate,  
I must meet Gilgamesh."

**GILGAMESH:**

Before Enkidu arrived,  
I had dreamt of his coming.  
Dreams, night after night.

**NARRATOR** (first as herself, then adopting the posture of Gilgamesh's mother, Ninsun, standing tall beside him):

He told his dreams to his mother, Ninsun.  
Wise Ninsun said this to her son, Gilgamesh:  
"A great man, a rescuer,  
a companion will come to you.  
And he will never leave you.  
He will remain always at your side."

**GILGAMESH:**

Who knows? Perhaps I will gain a friend.

(The narrator gracefully moves back towards Enkidu's side, returning to her earlier seductive movements.)

**NARRATOR** (now speaking as the harlot, whispering in Enkidu's ear as she circles him):

I spoke to Enkidu of Gilgamesh's dreams,  
While we sat by the water,  
As I caressed him.

**ENKIDU:**

It didn't take long before I left with the harlot for the city.  
Along the way, I heard of Gilgamesh's tyranny,  
His cruelty,  
His madness,  
From every mouth that spoke.

(A soft chime or electronic sound, reminiscent of an email or message notification, is heard on stage. The narrator, drawn by this sound, turns her attention to her tablet.)

**NARRATOR:**

A message has arrived.

My message has been received.

(She reads the message with disappointment, her face a mix of shock and disbelief.)

"Are these true?

Are the things you say real?"

(She lets out a soft, bitter laugh.)

**NARRATOR:**

They don't believe me.

They didn't believe me.

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## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 3**

(The narrator, now overwhelmed by the weight of her isolation, reads the last lines of the message sent from the civilized world. The chorus echoes these words, like a distant plea for help.)

#### **CHORUS:**

Though it takes time, we will rescue you.

Wait.

Though it takes time, we will rescue you.

Wait.

**NARRATOR** (her voice filled with growing despair):

Does it not matter?

The things we have found?

The things we died for?

#### **CHORUS:**

Protect yourself and wait for help.

What you wrote surprises us.

No one has told us anything like this before.

**NARRATOR** (disheartened, speaking with the sadness of being dismissed as a dreamer):

"No one has told us anything like this before."

#### **CHORUS:**

Are the things you wrote true? Are they real?

**NARRATOR** (bitterly repeating the words as if trying to convince herself):

"Are the things I wrote true? Are they real?"

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Only truth and lies speak.

I am Gilgamesh, as real as truth itself.

I am Gilgamesh, the first story of mankind.

Before me was the flood.

#### **NARRATOR:**

Indeed, the flood.

A flood so great

that men believed the kings of old lived for thousands of years.

And because of this,

They thought they must have descended from beings beyond this world.

**CHORUS:**

How foolish humans are, so prone to exaggeration.

**NARRATOR:**

Yet, it all came down to a simple calculation error,  
A misunderstanding of the Mesopotamian number system.

**CHORUS:**

Like that, the same humanity struggles to believe in Gilgamesh's tomb,  
And in what was buried with him.

**GILGAMESH:**

But it wasn't difficult to convince Enkidu of my existence.  
Soon after, they arrived in my city.  
I was preparing to enter the bridal chamber,  
just before the husband,  
to claim his fresh bride.

**CHORUS:**

A man who dares to challenge Gilgamesh,  
A man who rivals the gods,  
Enkidu, the wild bull.  
Enkidu, the mighty warrior.

**ENKIDU:**

The harlot said, "You will love him as you love yourself.  
You are just like him."  
But taming me was not easy.  
Man is born with only his animal instincts.

(The stage is softly illuminated from another side, and the narrator, as the harlot, begins to move again. She gracefully circles Enkidu as she speaks, like a breeze moving through the scene.)

**HARLOT:**

Like Enkidu.  
I became the wind that caressed him.  
I branded him with my lips.  
I inhaled his breath,  
opened my bosom to him,  
taught him the pleasures of womanhood.  
We lay together for six nights.  
When, at last, he sought to return to the animals,  
to those pleasures I had given him,  
the animals turned and fled.

He could no longer keep pace with the wild creatures.  
He wandered back and sat at my feet.  
He had accepted his taming.  
I washed him in the rivers,  
combed his hair,  
rubbed his bronze body with oils,  
and wrapped him in the clothes of a man.  
Whatever covers a man's body,  
enters his soul.  
Once you have tasted human pleasures and accepted taming,  
the wild creature within you ceases its struggle.

**CHORUS:**

He drank bowl after bowl of wine,  
And while Enkidu was being tamed,  
he had no idea he would soon find himself in the darkness of his own soul,  
caught in humanity's greatest fear.

**NARRATOR:**

The missing fragments of the epic,  
The broken pieces of the tablets,  
They were all recovered from his tomb.  
The missing nine lines after the battle between Gilgamesh and Enkidu...

**GILGAMESH** (looking at Enkidu):

What you call cruelty,  
may be the order of the world.  
Crossing the threshold is the easiest part.  
Where your heart rests, I stood and thought deeply.  
It was loneliness that drove me to do these things.

**CHORUS:**

Then he saw he was no longer alone and began to bond with Enkidu.  
For man's days are numbered,  
and all his deeds are nothing but the wind.

**NARRATOR:**

It seems that since time immemorial, mankind has always sought a great adventure.  
Just as I came here.  
What is it that drives a person from one place to another?  
Curiosity, need, or something else?  
When I was sent off from the civilized world,  
just like in the epic,

my loved ones asked me as I left,  
"When will you return?"

**NARRATOR:**

Never.

Perhaps never.

(She is deeply melancholic now, worried whether she will ever be rescued from her present predicament.)

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## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 4**

#### **NARRATOR:**

No one wanted me to leave.

No one wanted me to come here.

The region is dangerous.

Let Gilgamesh's secret remain buried, they said.

But this excavation would change my destiny.

It did change it, as you can see.

I believe Gilgamesh sensed that his destiny, too,  
would be changed in the cedar forests.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Before I left for the cedar forests,

the elders blessed me and gave me their advice.

"Do not rely on the strength of your arm," they said.

They advised me to let Enkidu walk ahead of me.

"May the night bring you good news," they wished me.

La la la la...

What is advice but the regret of those who give it?

#### **ENKIDU:**

But I was impatient.

I was waiting for Gilgamesh to dismiss his people and set out on our journey.

#### **CHORUS:**

What drove them?

Why did they journey to the cedar forest?

Why did they seek a battle with Humbaba?

Man always seeks to take the power of the strong.

Man always desires to break the strength of the mighty.

Man seeks to steal strength from the powerful.

#### **NARRATOR:**

The tale of human heroism has always remained the same since its first telling.

Gilgamesh's journey to the cedar forests,

or my journey here,

Why?

To find.

To search.

**CHORUS:**

It is not so simple.  
Or perhaps,  
the story of humanity has not changed at all.

**NARRATOR:**

It is that simple.  
Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey to the cedar forests,  
Killing Humbaba...

(The narrator curls up in a corner, trembling slightly, overwhelmed with the weight of her discoveries.)

**GILGAMESH** (in the background, his voice still resonating as the narrator trembles):

We had to go, for we wanted to build.  
To build, we needed the cedar forests.  
To conquer, we needed to kill Humbaba.

**NARRATOR:**

See? You are coming to the same point as I am.  
Let me read you the missing lines...  
The entire epic was found intact in Gilgamesh's tomb.

(The lights dim as the chorus hums softly, the weight of destiny pressing down on Gilgamesh and Enkidu as their journey begins.)

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## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 5**

(Narrator, in the role of an archaeologist, comments on the present day from the glowing tablet in her hand. She draws parallels between the Cedar Forest and today's world.)

#### **NARRATOR:**

In the ancient world, people loved to live in cities. The insides of the walls were safe, not the wilderness.

There, serpents would bite, the water would drown.

Death came easy in the wild.

So, the adventure of Gilgamesh and Enkidu with Humbaba in the Cedar Forest was nothing more than eliminating the last man who remained in the wild.

If you ask me, our excavation camp was as safe as an ancient city.

Sometimes, harassing shots would be fired in the dark of night from the hills surrounding us.

One day, those who fired the shots came down among us.

They were like Humbaba from the epic.

Savages who rejected civilization.

We were all afraid, just like Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

(Describing an exciting, victorious moment with lively and spirited narration)

#### **GILGAMESH:**

We were afraid, but we also defeated the "Come and challenge me!" howling Humbaba.

#### **NARRATOR:**

We defeated the Humbaba who called us "fools, old men, idiots, and cowards."

#### **ENKIDU:**

True.

And he also spoke ill of me in a manner I found most displeasing...

The creature who never knew its father,

the child who never suckled at its mother's breast.

#### **NARRATOR:**

As for you, Gilgamesh...

#### **GILGAMESH:**

As for me...

#### **GILGAMESH:**

At first, I was afraid, and my knees buckled.

#### **NARRATOR:**

Fear is like a sharp sword.

It slices through the casing of your soul, and when you want to move, you realize your hands and arms do not respond.

**GILGAMESH:**

I found my courage and entered into a long battle with Humbaba.

**ENKIDU:**

The ground trembled, the sky split, and the mountains caved in on themselves!

**GILGAMESH:**

If we hadn't killed him, his evil would have spread to the earth and sky, and the light would have gone out, never to shine again.

**ENKIDU:**

But we overpowered him.

**GILGAMESH:**

It wasn't easy, but we managed.

**ENKIDU:**

With our sharp axes, we brought down his massive body like a tree.

**GILGAMESH:**

We killed Humbaba.

**ENKIDU:**

We felled his mighty body.

**GILGAMESH:**

We built a raft.

**ENKIDU:**

We got on it.

**GILGAMESH:**

We sailed back to my city, proudly carrying Humbaba's severed head.

**NARRATOR:**

As we were leaving, they took a sacrifice from us.

They killed my beautiful dog that had been guarding the excavation house, and beheaded it.

Like Humbaba's head, my dog's beautiful head floated on a raft.

Now, it drifted on the waters where the Tigris and Euphrates kissed, where we would find the tomb of Gilgamesh.

It was clear what awaited us now.



## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 6**

(The actions take place gradually on the illuminated figure of Gilgamesh.)

#### **NARRATOR:**

Gilgamesh's hair was combed.

His oiled braids were gathered like ripe sheaves of grain behind his head.

A golden sash was tied around his waist.

His crown was placed upon his head.

The goddess Inanna (Ishtar) was mesmerized by his beauty.

(The narrator now prepares to take the stage, portraying the goddess Inanna. Perhaps with an aristocratic gesture, she rises on her side arm, reciting her promises to Gilgamesh with a measured seductiveness.)

#### **NARRATOR/INANNA:**

Come, Gilgamesh, be mine.

Offer me the seeds of your body.

Be my husband.

I will be your wife.

I will drive a chariot made of gold for you.

Its harnesses will be amber.

I will drive the storm instead of great mules.

Enter my palace, perfumed with cedar,

When you enter, all the nobles will kiss your feet,  
and prostrate before you, the glorious man of renown.

Come, Gilgamesh, be mine.

Be my husband, I will be your wife.

#### **ENKIDU:**

Her husband?

Her husband?

Who would want to make a *kadishtu* their wife? (sacred prostitute)

#### **NARRATOR/INANNA:**

What did you say?

I am a goddess.

#### **ENKIDU:**

You are a goddess, but you are a *kadishtu*, a *havintu*.

A sacred prostitute.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

A sacred prostitute.

**ENKIDU:**

Who would want to make a sacred prostitute his wife?

**GILGAMESH:**

Shhh.

I have other reasons to refuse this marriage.

**NARRATOR/INANNA:**

What are they?

**GILGAMESH:**

You are a hearth that does not warm,  
a door that cannot keep out the wind,  
a palace that collapses on its subjects,  
an embroidered quilt that smothers its sleeper,  
a waterskin that spills its contents on the carrier.  
Have you ever loved someone?  
Has anyone ever escaped your snare?

**NARRATOR/INANNA:**

I loved my first love.

**ENKIDU:**

You turned him into a bird.

**INANNA:**

I loved a horse.

**GILGAMESH:**

You condemned him to the whip.

**INANNA:**

I loved a shepherd.

**GILGAMESH:**

You turned him into a wolf.

**INANNA:**

I loved my father's gardener.

**GILGAMESH:**

You turned him into a frog.  
You, who turns your lovers into beasts, should not love me.  
Do not love me.

**NARRATOR/INANNA:**

Father, give me the Bull of Heaven so it may kill Gilgamesh. Let it rain fire on his household.

If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven...  
I will descend to the underworld,  
I will release the dead,  
I will let them consume the living,  
Until the dead outnumber the living.

(The narrator gently steps out of the role of Inanna, soon to speak again in her real identity.)

**NARRATOR:**

Inanna did what she said, if not on that day, then today.  
There are more dead than living on Earth now.  
And the famine her father foresaw is at our doorstep.  
And believe it or not, I too had an Inanna in the civilized world.  
A male Inanna.  
He didn't want me to come here.  
If I had stayed with him and become his wife, he would have turned me into a wolf or a bird or a frog.  
Why wasn't ordinary art history, lecturing enough for me?  
My determination made him angry.  
He wrote a letter slandering me to the head of the excavation.  
The slander he spread was his Bull of Heaven.

**ENKIDU:**

We killed the bull.

**NARRATOR:**

I overcame the slander and came to the excavation. I was there when Gilgamesh's tomb was opened. Everyone died; I survived.

**GILGAMESH:**

We cut the Bull of Heaven into pieces and distributed its meat to all of Uruk.  
It was a sacrifice.

**ENKIDU:**

We took its horns to Inanna; she hung them in her palace.

**GILGAMESH:**

We washed our hands in the waters of the Euphrates.  
We celebrated our heroism.  
After the feast, everyone went to bed and slept.  
Only one who dreamed awoke.  
And then he said to me...  
Then he said to me...

**NARRATOR:**

What followed is not written. But we found it.

(The chorus voices the message that has fallen onto the tablet from the civilized world, as the narrator reads it in horror.)

**CHORUS:**

How do we know this is not just a fairy tale?

Before writing, there was the word.

We will rescue you not for your discoveries,

but because you are human, and we will save you from death, from being killed.

(The incoming message enrages the narrator. In Gilgamesh's story, things have been adapted to the present day.)

**NARRATOR:**

So what has never been mentioned before is irrelevant, huh?

I'd rather die. Because my immortality lies in my discoveries.

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## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 7**

(Continuing from the previous scene, Gilgamesh responds to the narrator.)

#### **ENKIDU:**

Perhaps you, too, have dreamed, as I did.

(The narrator, trapped between dream and reality, speaks as if in conversation with imaginary figures but is filled with anger because of being trapped. She is slowly losing all hope but still resists.)

#### **NARRATOR:**

No.

Even if I'm trapped in a cave, what I've seen is not a dream.

This is a nightmare.

I am in shock.

But no.

The truth is what I want to send to the civilized world with this glowing tablet.

Are the things from the tomb a lie?

I am not dreaming like you.

(The ethereal figures mockingly speak with calm indifference.)

#### **ENKIDU:**

So you don't fear death?

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Do humans no longer fear death?

Or have you found the immortality I could not?

(Enkidu and Gilgamesh laugh.)

#### **NARRATOR:**

What nonsense?

(They gently continue mocking her, now fully composed, as if they are calmly taunting.)

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Have you still not found immortality?

(pause)

What is immortality anyway?

Perhaps a great delusion?

(To the narrator)

You are afraid, aren't you?

#### **NARRATOR:**

I am afraid, but...

**GILGAMESH:**

No buts...

(Looking first at Enkidu, then at Gilgamesh)

**NARRATOR:**

You didn't want to leave either. You didn't want to die.

(Enkidu expresses his personal feelings.)

**ENKIDU:**

I was only afraid of death as a wild creature.

I feared leaving my friend behind in this world, and going while everyone was still here...

As soon as I saw that dream, I knew I would die.

(The narrator calls out to the epic, remembering the story.)

**NARRATOR:**

The gods had gathered in Enkidu's dream.

Great Anu decreed that, because they had slaughtered the Bull of Heaven,  
and killed Humbaba,

one of them had to die.

The god Enlil said,

"If someone must die... let it be Enkidu,"

"Not Gilgamesh."

The god Shamash opposed both.

"Will Enkidu die unjustly?"

Brother? Why had the great gods gathered?

Enkidu innocently asks at the beginning of the narrative.

(The story now arrives at Enkidu's death. It becomes very emotional.)

**GILGAMESH:**

Poor Enkidu,

as he lay on his deathbed in front of me.

**ENKIDU:**

So I will settle in the land of the dead,

passing through the threshold of death.

I will never see my beloved brother again.

(Special note: For some reason, I hear the sound of bells ringing here. Bells that are tolling as if to announce something. For this reason, I have a small goat, with a bell around its neck, climb towards the narrator in the later scenes.)

(Gilgamesh narrates, but now that he knows what the end will be, he is sad.)

**GILGAMESH:**

We reached the great temple, to beg forgiveness from the gods.  
There he saw the temple doors he had carved with his own hands,  
And he spoke to the door as though speaking to a person.  
He was going to leave for the land of the dead,  
But the door he had carved with his ax would remain in this mortal world,  
What a great injustice that was.

**NARRATOR:**

That's how it always is.  
Man leaves, but what his hands created remains.  
The ones for whom the mortals died, live longer.

(If we use the repetition of what the chorus says here, it's as if the voices have become distorted in a recording. You know how when you fast-forward or rewind, the sounds overlap and make the noises that seem out of place in the contemporary world.)

**CHORUS:**

The ones for whom the mortals died, live longer.  
The ones for whom the mortals died, live longer.  
The ones for whom the mortals died, live longer.

**NARRATOR (to Enkidu):**

Your beloved friend will lay you in a wide bed.  
The most beautiful sheets will be spread beneath you.  
He will have the nobles of his kingdom kiss your feet,  
And he will have your people wail in mourning.

(This section contains a part of the epic while also reflecting the narrator's own time, fearing the days she spends trapped here. Gilgamesh is deeply sorrowful.)

**NARRATOR:**

The first day, the second day...

**GILGAMESH:**

He couldn't get up from his place.

**NARRATOR:**

The third day, the fourth day...

**GILGAMESH:**

Nothing changed.

**NARRATOR:**

The fifth day, the sixth day, the seventh day...

**GILGAMESH:**

He grew even sicker.

**ENKIDU:**

I, who had stood by your side through so many dangers,  
Remember me, my friend.  
Do not forget anything I suffered.

**NARRATOR:**

The eighth day, the ninth day, the tenth day passed...

**GILGAMESH:**

He became even worse.

**NARRATOR:**

The eleventh and twelfth days.

**GILGAMESH:**

He sat up in bed.  
He was in agony now.

**ENKIDU:**

There is no cure for my death.  
Like a maddened bull, death will trample me.  
I cried out to you, "Save me, my brother!"

**NARRATOR:**

But Gilgamesh could do nothing.  
Gilgamesh is as if turned to stone by the pain.

**GILGAMESH:**

You and I should never have been separated from each other.

**ENKIDU:**

Death separates everyone from their loved ones.

(A small bell rings. We do not see it, but the narrator notices a little goat with a bell hidden behind the cave wall.)

**NARRATOR:**

Have you also lost your way, just like me?  
Come, little goat.  
Your mother will come and find you soon.

**GILGAMESH:**

Nothing is lost in this life.  
Even if we mortals think we've lost something.

(The stage fades into darkness.)



**GILGAMESH**

**TABLET 8**

(The stage slowly lights up again. Enkidu is lying motionless.)

**NARRATOR:**

I was a farmer's daughter.

The day my mother died, one of our sheep gave birth.

"Look," said my father, "your mother has come back to life as a lamb."

(Standing, lost in thought. She tries to move away from Enkidu's death.)

**GILGAMESH:**

And you believed it.

**NARRATOR:**

I was a child.

**GILGAMESH:**

Then you kept digging, trying to find the truth.

No wonder you have no business with this world.

**NARRATOR:**

Isn't it the same as seeking immortality?

**GILGAMESH:**

(He looks as if to say "No," but knows deep down he is wrong.)

**NARRATOR:**

The little lamb soothed me. I forgot my mourning for my mother.

**GILGAMESH:**

You know that's not true. You stayed with your loss. You had no business with today. You always sought yesterday.

**NARRATOR:**

And yet, you circled the earth like a lioness who had lost her cubs,

You wailed like a woman in mourning.

(A small bell sounds in the distance. Gilgamesh listens.)

**GILGAMESH:**

Look. Yours found its mother.

**GILGAMESH:**

A person tries to forget their pain, even if it's just with a little lamb.

**NARRATOR:**

But, inevitably, your destiny is to search for what is lost.

You must pursue the impossible to keep hope alive.

The lines you wrote in mourning for Enkidu,  
were found completely intact in your tomb.

**GILGAMESH:**

And yet, I cannot call it complete.

Look at me, I cannot leave the side of my friend who can no longer lift his head.

(He looks at the now-dead Enkidu.)

**CHORUS:**

Let the peaks of the mountains weep,  
let the roads mourn for you,  
let the meadows cry like they were your own mother,  
Let the gazelle, lion, jackal, deer, tiger weep for you,  
Let the great Euphrates mourn,  
Night and day, without stopping,  
Let the earth and sky weep for you.

(Gilgamesh is in pain. Perhaps he kneels at the side of the corpse.)

**GILGAMESH:**

Enkidu. My friend. My brother.

The ax I carried in my side.

The strength of my arm.

The sword in its sheath.

The shield before me.

Oh, how we killed the Bull of Heaven together,

How we felled Humbaba in the Cedar Forest...

What is this sleep from which you will never awaken?

You no longer hear me.

**CHORUS:**

How difficult it is to comprehend a chest that no longer rises and falls.

How difficult it is to comprehend a breath that will never return.

Your heart will never beat again,

Your hand will never reach out again.

Your words will never be spoken again.

Your memories will fade,

Your shadow will no longer fall,

Your joy will vanish.

How difficult it is to comprehend death.

**NARRATOR:**

Isn't the hardest part knowing that one day you, too, will die, Gilgamesh?

**GILGAMESH:**

Perhaps.

Well then, tell me first:

What have you lost that made you set out on this journey?

---

## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 9**

*(The orchestra: She waits for an answer from the civilized world with her tablet. It's as if she is in conversation with a thought. She's tired now.)*

#### **NARRATOR:**

What does it matter what I lost? What does it matter why I set out on this journey? I am a mere mortal. An insignificant, mortal being.

*(The stage is hers. She stands in a beautiful light. She stands firmly, only slightly moving the upper part of her body or just her hands. She speaks calmly, as if to distract her mind from the pain of her friend's death.)*

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Hah hah hah, I wasn't expecting to laugh.

But... You know me better than that. You know what I went through after Enkidu's death.

*(The orchestra plays, and here Gilgamesh remembers his sorrow. He is deep in thought again.)*

#### **CHORUS:**

You placed honey in the red bowl,

And oil in the blue bowl.

You offered them to the god Shamash.

*(Gilgamesh, confident, corrects the chorus. He is standing tall again, with a haughty turn of the head, looking only briefly at the chorus. Enkidu is dead, but Gilgamesh is still the great king of Uruk. His thoughts of immortality are beginning to preoccupy him, though he tries to distract his mind from this powerful idea. He is not anxious. This is why he stands motionless. The space around him grows larger.)*

#### **GILGAMESH:**

That was the end of my mourning.

But there was a beginning.

Before I bid my friend farewell to the land of the dead...

*(The narrator, typically concerned with winning, finding, and possessing, is now calm. Her words create ripples, like a stone thrown into water.)*

#### **NARRATOR:**

We never reached that part of the tablets, but we found it.

#### **CHORUS:**

Whatever you find,

you are mortal, and the end of the road awaits you.

(Gilgamesh raises his hand to silence the chorus, thus cutting short their cry for immortality with a single gesture.)

(The orchestra continues. Enkidu's resting place is slowly illuminated again. Enkidu stands like a statue, his feet slightly apart, his arms by his sides, almost like the poses depicted in ancient reliefs. His lips alone move as he speaks.)

**ENKIDU:**

Does it say there exactly how I was buried?

(He is sorrowful, yet still motionless, gazing at Gilgamesh. It's like seeing a loved one in a dream who has died, filled with deep emotions.)

**GILGAMESH:**

Enkidu.

(Standing tall in a beautiful light.)

**ENKIDU:**

What a magnificent burial it was. My farewell to the land of the dead was unforgettable.

(He watches Gilgamesh with admiration and longing, as if mesmerized, like someone in a dream they do not want to end.)

**GILGAMESH:**

Tell us, Enkidu.

(This time, his head moves slightly as if he were not entirely a statue. There's a small sign of life.)

**ENKIDU:**

Weren't you there? Didn't you see what was said?

(Gilgamesh simply looks at him. It's as though he knows it's a dream, and he'll wake up, but he savors the moment and gently watches.)

**NARRATOR:**

Humanity never knew how Enkidu was buried...

Here. In my hand. It's all written.

(Reading as if from the tablet they discovered)

No god of earth or sky had ever seen a burial like this.

The earth split, the sky opened, the gods took Enkidu among them, forgave him. They lifted his shadow from the earth, as quickly as a storm cloud.

The earth would soon turn his bones into a handful of pearls.

Thousands of furious bulls pounded the ground.

That's how the funeral procession howled.

(The orchestra moves with slight movements. The tension of death is beginning to subside, as if trying to relax. The facial muscles loosen, perhaps a slight turn of the head with a small smile...)

**GILGAMESH:**

It seems you've written it all down.  
But humanity does not hear your voice.  
Let's see who you will tell your troubles to?  
To the savages? The demons? To civilization?  
To the shadows on the cave walls... to us?  
Let's see who will show you the way out of here?

(The narrator sits calmly, as sharp and clear as her glowing tablet. Her words land like something falling into water, creating an effect.)

**NARRATOR:**

Whoever showed you the way, Gilgamesh...

(The orchestra hasn't forgotten Enkidu.  
It merely reminds us that every death will eventually be forgotten as Enkidu's burial slips back into shadow... Gilgamesh speaks to the symbolism of Enkidu's death.)

**ENKIDU:**

While I was being entrusted to the gods,  
with a ceremony so magnificent the earth had never seen before...  
poor Gilgamesh, you were already asking about immortality.

(The orchestra continues, while Enkidu slowly fades into darkness. Gilgamesh, powerless, reaches out towards the fading shadow of Enkidu. Just as death cannot be stopped, Enkidu disappears into the shadows.)

**GILGAMESH:**

If only you could give me a sign from the land of the dead...

**CHORUS:**

Would you not have pursued immortality then, Gilgamesh?  
Tell us!  
Would you not have set out on a quest for Utnapishtim,  
who had achieved immortality?  
Tell us!  
Would you not have prayed to the moon god Sin, saying,  
"Deliver me from these fears?"  
Why did you cross so many mountains, deserts, and plains?  
And did you not ask for directions,

from the Scorpion Man and the Scorpion Woman,  
when they asked you, "Why have you come to a place where no one else has ventured?"

(Still addressing the shadowy death where Enkidu has disappeared, Gilgamesh continues speaking.)

**GILGAMESH:**

It wasn't you I was seeking, but immortality.  
I didn't want to die like Enkidu... to descend into his darkness.  
I was searching for immortality.  
My goal was to find Utnapishtim,  
the one who knew the secret.  
And the path to him was dark.

(The narrator repeats softly, as if in a whisper, like the sound of dripping water. She is filled with despair as her hope of rescue fades.)

**NARRATOR:**

It was dark and there was no light.  
It was dark and there was no light.  
It was dark and there was no light.

(A sound is heard, like an email arriving in her inbox. She rushes excitedly to read it.)

**NARRATOR:**

A message has arrived. A message has arrived.  
I must find the strength to see, read, and write a response to this.

**GILGAMESH:**

Now tell us, what do the ones who watch over your civilization say?  
(Looking at the narrator as she focuses on her tablet)  
In this state of yours, you resemble Gilgamesh in the garden of the gods,  
who saw the trees with branches full of pearls and rubies.

(The narrator is stunned as she reads the message, leaving us curious about its content.)

## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 10**

#### **ORCHESTRA:**

The narrator's final hours in the cave. The message that came at the end of the previous part remains hidden for now. Yet, seeing her lying down as if she has lost all hope gives us a sense of desperation.

#### **NARRATOR:**

Time is running out.

(Dripping water is heard, as if it's the measure of nearing the end. The narrator slowly sits up, noticing the rhythmic sound of falling drops.)

There is water in the cave. So, the earth must be hiding its floods deep within.

(Gilgamesh stands at the center of the stage, under a dramatic light. The two are as if suspended in limbo, waiting. The sound of water continues.)

#### **GILGAMESH:**

I would say, "Drink if you're thirsty," but...

You've run out of strength, just like me, chasing after Utnapishtim.

#### **NARRATOR:**

How was it in the epic? (She is exhausted, struggling to remember.)

Why are your cheeks sunken?

Why is your face so drawn?

Why does your heart writhe in despair?

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Utnapishtim's boatman, Urshanabi, asked me these questions.

And I replied...

Why shouldn't my cheeks be sunken, my face so drawn...

Why shouldn't my heart writhe in despair?

#### **ORCHESTRA:**

(Gilgamesh lies back down in his previous position, his gaze fixed on the cave ceiling.)

#### **NARRATOR:**

And then you would recall again, heartbroken, that your beloved friend had returned to the earth and that you, too, would one day be like him... You would die...

#### **GILGAMESH:**

My fate is clear. But what about yours? What does your illuminated tablet from civilization say?

(He emphasizes the word *civilization* with a touch of sarcasm.)

(The narrator speaks sadly, but her final words are resolute, as if she has become part of the epic.)



**NARRATOR:**

Everything is here now. And it will stay here. It won't reach anywhere. It won't see the light of day.

**GILGAMESH:**

That's for the best.

**NARRATOR:**

Is this still Gilgamesh, who is chasing after immortality, saying this? You still have to find Utnapishtim.

**GILGAMESH:**

And he will tell me...

(The stage goes dark, and the sound of the chorus fills the space like thunder, as if a great storm is about to break.)

---

## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 11**

(Dripping water sounds increase in speed... faster and faster... until it roars like thunder.)

#### **CHORUS:**

Flood!

The gods' punishment for humanity.

Flood!

When man becomes too harmful...

Flood!

When mankind's noise and destruction reach the heavens...

Flood!

The end of humanity's adventure on earth.

(The actor who previously played Enkidu now stands at the center of the stage, playing Utnapishtim. Utnapishtim is wise, immortal, having witnessed the fall and rebirth of the world. He is relaxed and has a gentle humor typical of the elderly.)

#### **UTNAPISHTIM:**

He finally found me. He found me.

First, the flood... then, because I saved the creatures, the gods granted me immortality...

And then came Gilgamesh, chasing immortality.

#### **CHORUS:**

Utnapishtim!

#### **UTNAPISHTIM:**

Yes, I told him about the flood first.

He didn't understand. Or perhaps his great mind was too preoccupied with immortality.

He wasn't listening. The flood wasn't new to him, after all. Didn't you introduce him that way? (He mimics the chorus from the opening, reciting Gilgamesh's grand introduction in a flat, indifferent tone.)

The exalted Gilgamesh, the hero of Uruk, the wild bull. The flood wave that breaks stone walls...

#### **NARRATOR:**

The flood wasn't new.

#### **UTNAPISHTIM:**

(To the narrator) Absolutely. (He finishes his interrupted introduction.)

The greatest of all kings.

#### **NARRATOR:**

You, too, were once a king like him.

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

But he looked at me as if to say, “What does that matter now?”

**NARRATOR:**

Because now you were immortal.  
And that’s what he sought.

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

The real question was, how was I any different from him? How had I gained the secret of immortality, like the gods?

**NARRATOR:**

There has always been someone to tell a flood story in human history.  
After you, there would be Noah. And others after him... Every flood would wipe out humanity, and there would always be someone to save the good. A great ark. Take a pair of every animal, save them from the flood.

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

You know, huh!  
My reward for all this effort was immortality. (He feels a touch of pride.)

**NARRATOR:**

The flood story probably went in one of Gilgamesh’s ears and out the other.

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

(Laughing mischievously) Just like the floods that filled the earth. In one ear, out the other.  
What the gods gave to me... Gilgamesh now wanted for himself.

**NARRATOR:**

And you deceived him.  
(He has no shame or regret.)

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

First, I tested him.  
Then, I deceived him.  
I pitied his helplessness.

**CHORUS:**

Descend to the depths of the sea.  
Find the thorny plant.  
If you grasp it,  
Know that immortality is yours.  
(He descended to the depths of the sea.  
He found the thorny plant.  
And as immortality was within his grasp, a serpent stole it from him.)

A snake snatched the thorny plant from Gilgamesh's hands.  
Immortality!)

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

That's exactly what happened.  
Gilgamesh sat and wept like a child.  
I feared his tears might bring another flood upon humanity.

**NARRATOR:**

Poor thing. He thought he had lost immortality just as he had found it.  
This cave is my ark. A ship of stone and earth.  
The flood of this time is war, violence, rains of bullets, bombs!  
Do you see? The story continues, always from where it left off.

**UTNAPISHTIM:**

If only you knew, poor human.  
The story will always continue from where it left off. Whether it's Gilgamesh or you.

---

## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 12**

#### **NARRATOR:**

I think my story ends here. I can neither escape... nor make my voice heard in the world.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Have you come full circle, poor human?

Do you believe that my story was actually your story all along?

What's next?

Words spoken to continue the epic?

Forget it.

As long as humanity's adventure continues, the story will remain the same.

Look at me, Gilgamesh. Did I give up?

How did it continue after that?

#### **ENKIDU:**

You ask too many questions, mighty Gilgamesh.

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Enkidu. I couldn't bear your absence, and the epic has brought you back to me again.

#### **ENKIDU:**

King of Uruk. The mortal chasing immortality.

All your questions, all of them,  
are because you realized you are mortal...

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Because I realized I am mortal...

#### **ENKIDU:**

And the gods gave one final task to the mortal Gilgamesh.

#### **CHORUS:**

There is a tree, Gilgamesh.

It holds up the universe.

From it, you must make a throne

or

a marriage bed for the gods.

At its roots, a serpent resides,

At its top, a bird has nested.

(The sound of wind is heard. Gilgamesh sees the tree.)

#### **GILGAMESH:**

At its roots, a serpent resides,

At its top, a bird has nested.

**NARRATOR:**

The tree they speak of must be a willow, its branches dipping into the waters of the Euphrates. The snake and the bird symbolize the fears and desires of humankind. Don't worry, GILGAMESH. You are fulfilling what the gods have entrusted to you. However, the two branches you have cut fall into a hole that leads to the other world.

**ENKIDU:**

As your servant, I descended to the land of the dead.

I was tasked with retrieving the two branches of the sacred tree that fell here, into the other world.

**GILGAMESH:**

Tell me what you saw and what your condition is in the underworld.

**ENKIDU:**

This body of yours that you cherished, that you couldn't stop gazing upon...

It decays underground like an old garment.

The dead immediately recognized me as a stranger.

They looked at my clean clothes,

They smelled the perfumes I wore.

**GILGAMESH:**

Did you see the dead, ENKIDU?

**CHORUS:**

Did you see the dead, ENKIDU?

Did you see those who died an honorable death?

**ENKIDU:**

I saw them. Those who died in a clean bed are resting peacefully now.

**CHORUS:**

Did you see those who died in battle?

**ENKIDU:**

They are now sleeping in the arms of their mother and father.

**CHORUS:**

Did you see the ones whose bodies were left in the desert?

**ENKIDU:**

Their bodies never leave the shadow of a tree.

**CHORUS:**

Did you see those who died alone?

**ENKIDU:**

They have now reunited with their loved ones.

(Voices of the CHORUS start blending together.)

**CHORUS:**

Did you see those bitten by a snake?  
Those struck by lightning?  
Those drowned by water?  
The little child,  
The one who died in peace,  
Those devoured by illness,  
The dead,  
The dead,  
The dead,  
Did you see the dead?

**GILGAMESH:**

Now all that remains is to face death itself.  
To live in a great story that ends with death.  
Who knows how many times this will be repeated?  
Come, death,  
I believe in your existence.

**NARRATOR:**

No. No, I don't want to die here. I don't want to die in this cave, alone, afraid.  
I don't want to die without sharing the last words, the farewell, of those who have  
emerged from their graves with humanity.

**ENKIDU:**

How much like you they are.  
How much like me they are...

**GILGAMESH:**

They are like us...

---

## **GILGAMESH**

### **TABLET 13**

#### **NARRATOR:**

Soon, you will witness a historic moment.

We are here, where I said, “We found what didn’t exist, what was never spoken of.”

The final tablet is here, now. It has been found.

We are the ones who brought it into the light.

#### **CHORUS:**

The great King of Uruk spent a quiet day.

Like a mortal, he ate and drank.

He listened to those who spoke to him.

He did not grow angry that day.

The affairs of the mortal world seemed insignificant.

There was no need for him to give any commands.

He ascended the walls of Uruk,

Gazed upon the walls, like a tangled skein of wool.

No king would ever build their like again.

Proud of this, he smiled.

Then, suddenly, he collapsed.

There was no trembling of the sky.

No women miscarried in fear.

The sun set gently.

Two-thirds god, one-third man, Gilgamesh was laid in his bed.

No storm blew, no wind howled.

Not a leaf stirred.

But the gods descended to the earth.

#### **GILGAMESH (looking at the gods):**

Did they not say, “Gilgamesh was different from birth”?

How many adventures have I survived?

What is stronger than me?

#### **CHORUS:**

Death!

#### **GILGAMESH:**

It has lifted my feet off the ground.

#### **CHORUS:**

Death!

#### **GILGAMESH:**

Let the gods send a guide for my soul.



So I may find the path to the land of death.  
I had the strength to conquer the world—  
Where is that strength now?

**ENKIDU:**

Death slowly takes that strength from you, Gilgamesh.

**GILGAMESH:**

Come, my friend.  
As the waters of life recede,  
take me to the land of death.

**ENKIDU:**

Do you wish to leave this world?

**GILGAMESH:**

I am afraid.  
I am afraid, Enkidu.  
I do not know what death is.

**ENKIDU:**

You have encountered many unknowns in this life.  
How curious! You feared none of them.

**NARRATOR:**

Because they were all here.  
Everything was in this world.  
But this... this is something you do not know, Gilgamesh.  
Something we do not know.

**GILGAMESH:**

Does it hurt?  
Do you miss the ones you left behind?  
Do your loved ones wait for you?  
Is death a reunion or a separation?  
Is death a burning or a fading away?  
Will I still be king there?  
I see a throne, bathed in light,  
rising on the backs of four beings.

**ENKIDU:**

The throne you see may not be yours.  
Weren't you the one who said,  
"No matter how much you rule this world...  
Life has an end, just like day and night"?

**GILGAMESH:**

I am Gilgamesh,  
and I am dying.

Let forty bulls be sacrificed over me.

Let the sky roar, let the earth split open.

Let the flood waves carry me away like a grain of sand,  
sweeping me into the land of the dead.

Prepare my weapons, let them spew fire at my enemy.

Sharpen my axe, place it at my side.

Let my crown and staff be with me.

Let them know I am Gilgamesh.

Let forty sacrifices be made, a thousand bowls of wine be poured.

Do not leave my feet bare!

Will my beard and hair carry the scents of the great goddesses?

I cannot take the walls of my city, nor my war chariots with me.

Death takes only me.

Everything else is a deception.

Like seeds carried by the wind, spread from word to word.

In the sting of a bee,

In the beak of a bird,

Let my farewell enter my tomb with me,

Without becoming mere dust or words.

Let this stone tablet, inscribed with my words,

Coil like a serpent in my embrace.

Send me off with drums that silence the thunder.

Gilgamesh is dying. Have you heard?

**NARRATOR:**

Humanity never learned of your farewell. But we all know of death.

**GILGAMESH:**

Perhaps I have found what I was looking for now.

Could immortality come after death?

Who knows?

Maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

THE END