

GILGAMESH!

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Dedicated to
Jackson "Gilgamesh" Connor

Sample file



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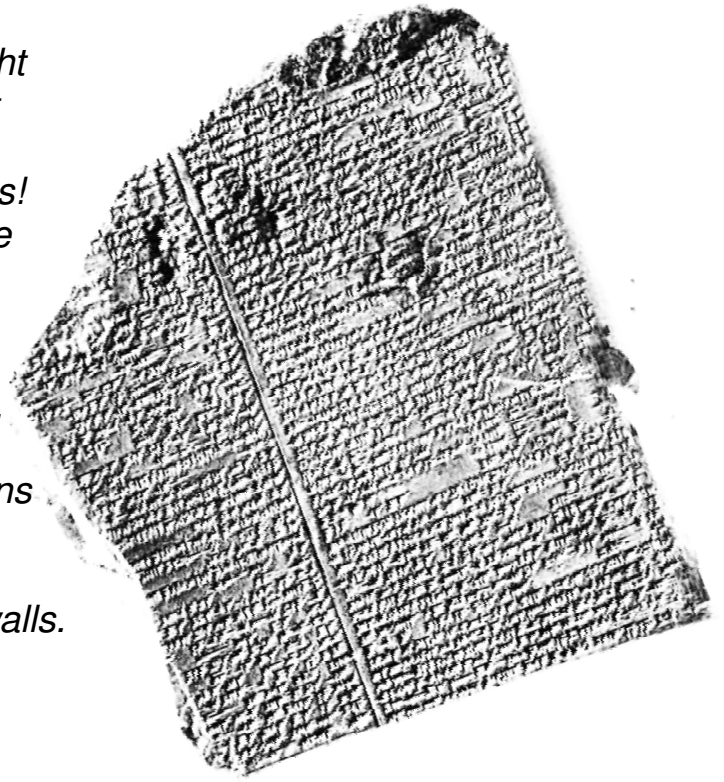
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O Moon-god, hear my cry! With thy pure light
Oh, take my spirit through that awful night
That hovers o'er the long-forgotten years,
To sing Accadia's songs and weep her tears!
'Twas thus I prayed, when lo! my spirit rose
On fleecy clouds, enwrapt in soft repose;
And I beheld beneath me nations glide
In swift succession by, in all their pride:
The earth was filled with cities of mankind,
And empires fell beneath a summer wind.
The soil and clay walked forth upon the plains
In forms of life, and every atom gains
A place in man or breathes in animals;
And flesh and blood and bones become the walls.

--Ishtar and Izdubar

translated by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton



"GILGAMESH IS THE STORY OF A HERO'S JOURNEY; ONE MIGHT SAY THAT IT IS THE MOTHER OF ALL HEROES' JOURNEYS, WITH ITS HUGE UNINHIBITED MYTHIC PRESENCES MOVING THROUGH A LANDSCAPE OF DREAM."

~STEPHEN MITCHELL

Turn your watch, turn your watch back,
About a hundred thousand years...
I'll meet you by the third pyramid.
I'll meet you by the third pyramid.
Ah come on, that's what I want.
We'll meet in Mesopotamia.
-The B-52's, "Mesopotamia"

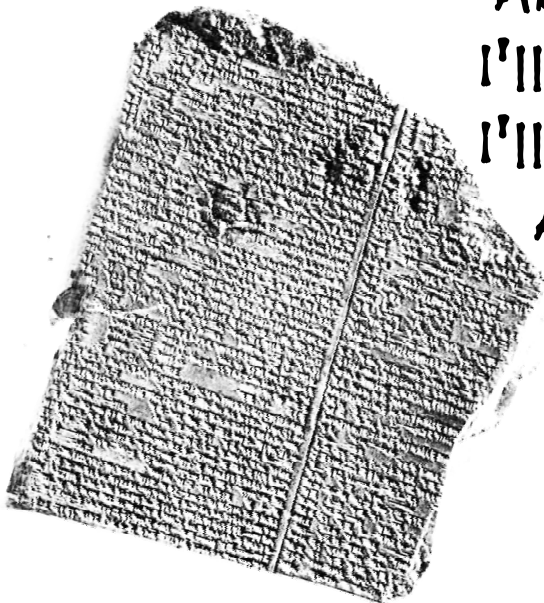
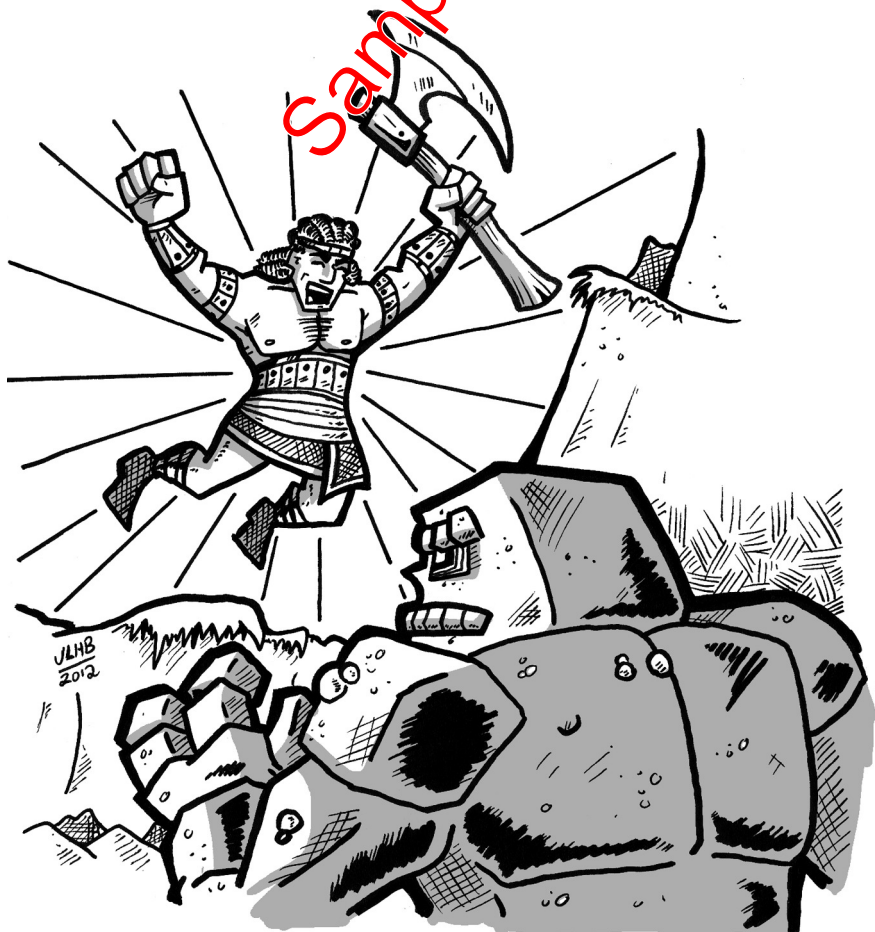


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INTRODUCTION

*And lo! grand Uruk in her glorious days
Lies at my feet. I see a wondrous maze
Of vistas, groups, and clustering columns round,
Within, without the palace;--from the ground
Of outer staircases, massive, grand,
Stretch to the portals where the pillars stand.
A thousand carved columns reaching high
To silver rafters in an azure sky,
And palaces and temples round it rise
With lofty turrets glowing to the skies.*

--Ishtar and Izdubar, translated by Leonidas Le Cenci Hamilton

Uruk--mighty, high-wall'd Uruk!--was the first great city in the history of human civilization. In 3400 BC, a time when most human settlements were comprised of little more than a few tents clustered together, Uruk covered 2.1 square miles. By 2900 BCE, between 50,000 and 80,000 people lived within its walls. No city would rival its size until the days of the Roman Empire.

The historical Gilgamesh was a king of Uruk who lived circa 2750 BCE. Little is known about the historical Gilgamesh, but he was a powerful enough ruler that people told stories about him. Over the years the legend of Gilgamesh grew, first among the Sumerians, and then the Akkadians, and finally the Babylonians. Around 1700 BCE the Babylonian scribe Sin-leqi-unninni revised and edited the different versions of the story to create what we now know as the *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

The Epic of Gilgamesh was the blockbuster hit of the ancient Middle East. When the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal decided to build the world's first great library in Nineveh--in a time long before the invention of the printing press, when texts were inscribed on clay tablets--his staff collected at least 35 copies of *Gilgamesh*. The epic seemed safe, preserved for all time in Ashurbanipal's

library, but empires rise and fall, and in 612 BC Nineveh was leveled by an invading army. *Gilgamesh* was lost for centuries. It was not recovered until 1850 CE, and not deciphered until 1857.

The story is still incomplete; the clay tablets were shattered long ago, and the pieces must be reassembled like jigsaw puzzles. Only about 2/3 of the 11 tablets that make up the story have been located and pieced together. Despite these gaps, the story is largely coherent and, remarkably, still speaks to basic human themes like friendship, mourning, and the fear of death.

This adventure draws on different translations of the existing text in order to recapture the feel of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Please keep in mind, though, that this is in no way a scholarly work. Liberties have been taken. In the original story, for instance, Gilgamesh goes alone on his quest for immortality. In this adventure, he takes along a group of fellow heroes. Elements of the story have been removed, and new ones have been added, in order to make it flow better as a game. The goal is to preserve the essence of *Gilgamesh*, so that your gaming group can reinterpret this great story in a modern context.

