

Ancient FanFiction Gilgamesh Part One by Hannah Neves

Gilgamesh's eyes widened in surprise when a burly man stepped out of the crowd before him and directly into his path.

He was headed to a wedding feast, to whisk off another man's bride to his palace. Like all the others, she would be back with her husband the next day, after Gilgamesh had had enough of her. Nobody had ever said a word in protest. He was their king, an almost divine being that could kill a man in seconds. Nobody dared to dispute him.

As he sized up the man's appearance, Gilgamesh's expression changed from surprise to distaste. There was no denying that the man was handsome. His skin was olive-toned and smooth, and perfectly matched his curly dark hair. He held himself with confidence, a kind of assurance that Gilgamesh rarely saw in other men. Still, Gilgamesh couldn't help but notice that the man was dressed in rags.

He could tell there had been an effort to make the man presentable, though he couldn't say it had been particularly successful. His tunic was clean, but Gilgamesh could see a slightly darker patch of fabric sewn over a tear on his sleeve, and the loose threads hanging from the bottom betrayed its hasty construction. His boots were caked with dirt and grass, as if he had just come back from a trek in the woods.

For a moment, Gilgamesh did not know what to do. He had never, *never* been disrespected in such a way. He was used to people scurrying out of the way as soon as they caught sight of him. What had just happened was almost unthinkable.

"Who are you?" the king growled. He felt anger burn within as he stared at the man, who stared back at him with a fierce expression.

"I am Enkidu," the man responded, his voice smooth and loud. Even in his torn clothes, he commanded authority. "I am here to challenge you, *Your Majesty*."

His words were dripping in sarcasm, and Gilgamesh balked at his insolence. Stunned murmurs arose in the crowd which had been following Enkidu through the streets of the city. A dark-haired woman that stood behind Enkidu gasped and looked at him in shock. She raised her hand to clutch his shoulder, almost as if trying to pull him back.

"You dare challenge *me*?" Gilgamesh asked, his voice low with fury, "The king of Uruk, son of Ninsun?"

"Yes," Enkidu responded, his voice now lacking any mockery. He stepped forward, taking only a moment to cast a regretful glance at the woman at his back before shaking off her hand. "For too long, you have ruled your people unjustly. You have intimidated them into submission, and the gods have sent me to put you in your place."

Gilgamesh did not even think. His hand formed into a fist and he swung it towards Enkidu's face before the man could even finish speaking. He expected to take the shorter man by surprise, but Enkidu raised his forearm and swatted the fist away. Not one to be dissuaded,

Gilgamesh took a step forward and used the momentum to swing at Enkidu's uncovered abdomen. Instead of blocking the hit, Enkidu took a large step backwards, completely evading the king's fist. Enkidu grinned at the king, whose eyes were wide in bloodlust, "Plan to land a hit?"

Gilgamesh let out a roar and thrust himself at Enkidu. Enkidu was prepared, and he flipped the king over as they tumbled into the ground. He landed on top of Gilgamesh and threw a punch of his own, which met his opponent's nose with a sickening crack. Enkidu's eyes sparkled with mirth as they tussled, and Gilgamesh realized that the man was having *fun*. That made him even angrier, and he used his elbow to strike him in the throat. Enkidu fell to the hard ground, and it was Gilgamesh's turn to smirk. Enkidu was able to recover quickly enough to block a low punch and once again flipped Gilgamesh over, causing the king's hair to come loose from its leather tie. They rolled over each other in a tangle of arms and legs, causing the crowd to split to avoid them.

It was a sight to behold. Both men were amazing wrestlers and were able to match each other punch for punch. They knocked over posts as they travelled through the cobbled streets of the city, wreaking damage to buildings and food carts. For the first time, Gilgamesh was evenly matched. When he would normally spar, a powerful strike was enough to fell an opponent. Fighting Enkidu, he had to consider his moves carefully, which he had never felt the need to do before.

As he became more involved in the brawl, Gilgamesh became less and less angry. Instead, he began to feel excitement, the same delight that Enkidu had shown throughout their fight. It felt exhilarating, to roll around in the dirt with this man who had not been intimidated by him, who matched his every blow.

It was a moment of carelessness on Enkidu's part that ended the fight. For a moment, Enkidu lowered his arms to try and grab Gilgamesh's midriff to push him off. The king took this opportunity to punch him at the side of the throat, causing Enkidu to lose his grip and fall against the ground. Gilgamesh raised himself above his opponent and with a swift move pressed his knee against the side of Enkidu's throat.

"Yield?" the king asked, his breaths coming in fast puffs. Enkidu let out a pained laugh and clutched his throat. "I yield."

Gilgamesh stood and lowered his hand to Enkidu, who looked at him gratefully and hoisted himself up. He looked at the man before him, his shirt ripped to pieces and grime covering every inch of his body, and smiled, "That was quite the fight you put up."

"I almost had you," Enkidu responded, his face stuck in a strange state between annoyance and a smile, "you were just lucky."

"Oh, really?" the king laughed. By then, any animosity he may have held against Enkidu disappeared, "Well, I look forward to testing that theory in the future."

Gilgamesh stepped forward and pressed a kiss against Enkidu's cheek, his arm resting against the man's shoulder. When he pulled away, Enkidu smiled, his eyes glimmering with excitement. "Me, too."

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Summarize what inspired the story. (The Epic of Gilgamesh is the oldest written epic story featuring...

What inspired me to write this story was (the lack of academic acknowledgement of the underlying romantic relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidusomething along those lines)

Articles and resources

Read the Epic of Gilgamesh

here: <https://uruk-warka.dk/Gilgamish/The%20Epic%20of%20Gilgamesh.pdf>

The Epic of Gilgamesh podcast: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08m474r>

Homophobia: A Modern Sickness:

<https://medium.com/@DmitriMehlhorn/homophobia-a-modern-sickness-c>

How to Read "Gilgamesh", New Yorker article:

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/10/14/how-to-read-gilgamesh>

When Heroes Love, book about the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu by Susan Ackerman: <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/when-heroes-love/9780231132602>

Images used in the video:

Dur-Sharrukin Statue:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hero_lion_Dur-Sharrukin_Louvre_AO19862.jpg

Information about the statue:

<https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/hero-overpowering-lion>

Cup depicting a nude hero:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cup_with_Nude_Hero,_Bulls_and_Lions,_Tell_Agrab,_Shara_Temple,_Jamdat_Nasr_to_Early_Dynastic_period,_3000-2600_BC,_gypsum_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC07461.JPG

Neo-Assyrian seal depicting Gilgamesh and Enkidu, (photo by Lucas):

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ancientartpodcast/15846708369>

Chalcolithic leather shoe from ancient Armenia:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chalcolithic_leather_shoe_from_Areni-1_cave.jpg

Seal of Queen Puabi depicting her at a banquet, British Museum:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Nic%27s_events_-_British_Museum_with_Cory_and_Mary,_6_Sep_2007_-_185.jpg

Sumerian standing worshipper women statue, The Met:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/329080>

Modern statue of wrestler at Hort Center:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wrestlers_Hort_Center.JPG

Hellenistic wrestlers bronze figure, from Walter Museum:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greek_-_Wrestlers_-_Walters_54742.jpg

Statue of two men fighting: <https://www.peakpx.com/13798/statue-of-2-men-fighting>