

Gilgamesh: Tablet V

They stood there marveling at the forest; gazing at the lofty cedars,
They were awed at the forest's entrance.

Where Humbaba came and went there was a track,
The path was straight and the way well-trodden.

They saw the Mountain of Cedar,
Seat of the Gods and Goddesses' Throne.

The face of the Mountain the Cedar proffered its abundance,
Its shade was sweet and full of delight.

Thick tangled was the thorn; the forest a shrouding canopy,
Plentiful and aromatic the cedar, Ballukku-trees twisted into the sky.

They approached the magnificent Gate of the Forest,
The two friends threw their weight against its door to no avail.

A He bellowed again; a bellow full of terror,
B The Guardian of the Forest bellowed throughout the land.
B The God of the Forest, was a deluge,
A He thundered like the God of the Storm.

At once dirks were drawn from their silver mounts,
From the scabbards at their sides, blades were released.

Axes were smeared with oil,
Hatchet and dirk in hand for battle.

One after the other the two heroes went forward,
They stole into the forest as quiet as thieves.

They could hear the heartbeat of Humbaba,
They could smell the smoke from his lungs.

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

"My friend, Humbaba expects there to be **a** hero,
One-to-one combat is what he knows.

Two garments, however are stronger than one,
'Even a glaci-slope, two climbing can conquer.

Two strands of rope are stronger than one,
'A three-ply rope is not easily broken'.

Two lions are stronger than one,
'Even a mighty lion, two cubs can overcome'.

We have come to a place where a man shouldn't dare enter,
Let us set our weapons in the gate of Humbaba!"

**At this breach, a tempest's onslaught was the ferocious Humbaba,
Like the God of the Storm he came howling with rage through the wood:**

"Let fools take counsel, Gilgamesh, with the rude and brutish!
Why have you come here into my presence?

Come Enkidu, you spawn of a fish, who knew no father,
Hatchling of terrapin and turtle, who sucked no mother's milk!

In your youth I watched you, but near you I went not,
Would your life have been better spent filling my belly?

Now in treachery you bring before me Gilgamesh,
You stand there, Enkidu, like a warlike stranger!

I will slit the throat and gullet of Gilgamesh,
I will feed his flesh to the locust bird, ravaging eagle and vulture!"

Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak, saying to Enkidu:

"My friend, Humbaba's features have changed:

Though boldly we came up to his lair to defeat him,
Yet my heart will not quickly dispatch of this creature.

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

"Why, my friend, do you speak like a weakling?
With your spineless words you make me despondent.

No, my friend, but one is our task,
'The copper is already pouring into the mold!'

Now is not the time to stoke the furnace for an hour.
Now is not the time to rack the coals for an hour.

Now is the time to send the deluge,
Now is the time to crack the whip!

Don't draw back,
Don't make a retreat.

Make your blow heavy,
Make your blow mighty!"

Gilgamesh smote the ground and Humbaba faced him head on:

At the heels of their feet the earth burst asunder,
They shattered; they whirled into pieces Mounts Sirion and Lebanon.

Black became the clouds of white,
Raining down on them came death, like a mist.

Shamash roused against Humbaba the mighty gale-winds,
South Wind, North Wind, East Wind and West Wind.

Blast, Counterblast, Typhoon, Hurricane and Tempest,
Devil Wind, Frost-Wind, Gale and Tornado.

There rose thirteen winds and the face of Humbaba darkened,
He could not charge forwards, he could not kick backwards.

The weapons of Gilgamesh then reached Humbaba, in a plea for his life said Humbaba to Gilgamesh:

"You are so young, Gilgamesh, your mother just bore you,
But indeed you are the offspring of Wild-Cow Ninsun!

By Shamash's command the mountains you flattened,
O, Offshoot Sprung from Uruk's Midst, Gilgamesh the King!

O, Gilgamesh, a dead man cannot be useful,
A servant must stay alive for his lord in order to do his duty.

Spare my life, O Gilgamesh, Uruk's Guardian,
Let me dwell here for you in the Forest of Cedars!

Trees, as many as you command, will I guard for you; myrtle, fir,
and juniper.
Timber to be the pride of your palace!"

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

"Do not listen, my friend, to Humbaba's words,
Ignore his supplications for mercy."

Humbaba opened his mouth to speak, saying to Enkidu:

**"You are experienced in the ways of my forest; the ways also
you know of the arts of speech:**

I should have picked you up and hanged you from a sapling at the
way unto the forest,
I should have fed your flesh to the locust bird, ravaging eagle or
vulture.

Now, Enkidu, my release lies with you,
Tell Gilgamesh to spare me my life!"

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

A "My friend, Humbaba who guards the Forest of Cedar,
B Finish him, slay him, do away with his power!
A Humbaba who guards the Forest of Cedar,
B Finish him, slay him, do away with his power before
Enlil the foremost hears what we do!

The great gods will take against us in anger,
Enlil in Nippur, Shamash in Larsa and Sippar.

Establish for ever a fame that endures,
How Gilgamesh slew ferocious Humbaba!"

**Humbaba heard what Enkidu was saying, he lifted his head and opened his mouth to speak,
saying to Enkidu:**

"There you sit before him like a shepherd,
Like his hireling doing his bidding.

Now, Enkidu, my release lies with you,
Tell Gilgamesh to spare me my life!

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

- A "My friend, Humbaba who guards the Forest of Cedar,
- B Finish him, slay him, do away with his power!
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Establish for ever a fame that endures,
How Gilgamesh slew ferocious Humbaba!"

Humbaba heard once again the traitorous words of Enkidu and his heart hardened, he opened his mouth in rage and bitterly cursed them:

"May the pair of them not grow old,
Besides Gilgamesh his friend, none shall bury Enkidu!"

Enkidu opened his mouth to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:

"My friend, I speak to you but you do not hear me,
While the curses still linger in the air, let them return to his
mouth!"

Said Gilgamesh to him, to Enkidu:

"Now, my friend, we must impose our victory:

The Auras slip away in the thicket,
The Auras slip away, their radiance grows dim."

Said Enkidu to him, to Gilgamesh:

"My friend, 'Catch a bird and where go its chicks?'
Let us look for the Auras later, as the chicks run here and there in
the thicket!

Smite him,
Slay his servant alongside him!"

Gilgamesh heard the word of his companion:

He took up the axe in his hand,
He drew forth the dirk from his belt.

Gilgamesh struck the great Humbaba in the neck; his friend Enkidu gave encouragement:

- A The great beast staggered as he fell,
 - B For two leagues afar the ravines did run with his blood.
- A Humbaba, The Guardian, he smote to the ground,
 - B For two leagues afar the forest heard his cry.

With the demise of the demon, so went the Aura's power,
The woods he emptied of the odylic force.

- A He slew the ogre; the Forest's Guardian,
 - B At whose yell were sundered the peaks of Sirion and Lebanon,
 - B At whose yell the mountains did quake; the hillsides did tremble.
- A He slew the ogre; the Cedar's Guardian,
 - B At whose death the broken hills uncovered their treasures,
 - B At whose death the Seven Auras were found, the war-net of two talent's weight, and the dirk of eight.

A load of ten talents he took up,
He went down to trample the forest.

He discovered the secret abode of the gods:

Gilgamesh felled the trees,
Enkidu chose the timber.

The Wild-Born knew how to give counsel, he said to his friend:

"By your strength alone you slew the guardian:

What can bring you dishonor?
Lay low the Forest of Cedar.

Seek out for me a lofty cedar,
Find for me one whose crown is high as the heavens!

- A I will make a door of a reed-length's breadth;
- B Let it not have a pivot,
- B Let it travel in the door-jamb.
- A Its side will be a cubit, a reed-length its breadth;
- B Let no stranger draw near it,
- B Let a god have love for it.
- A To the house of Enlil the Euphrates shall bear it;
- B Let the folk of Nippur rejoice over it,
- B Let the god Enlil delight in it!

They bound together a raft; they laid the cedar on it:

Enkidu was helmsman surveying the spoils of battle,
Gilgamesh carried the head of Humbaba.

