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Book I of the Epic of Gilgamesh introduces Gilgamesh, the King of Uruk, a demigod that is two-thirds god and one-third human. Gilgamesh is described as powerful, but arrogant, one that has become a tyrant that kills sons and takes newlywed brides from their husbands. The people beg the gods to humble him. The God Anu answers the prayers and orders the God Anuru to make another hero to humble Gilgamesh. Anuru creates a beast-like man Enkidu out of clay, who is sent into the wild and lives and acts like the wild beasts that surround Uruk. After complaints from a trapper, Gilgamesh sends a priestess of Ishtar named Shamhat to seduce him. Shamhat approaches Enkidu, and she seduces him for a week, making him more human, which scares away the animals that he befriended. Shamhat then promises to introduce him to Gilgamesh, who had seen Enkidu in a dream.

Book II has Shamhat bring Enkidu to a village of shepherds, where they help Enkidu become more human and give him bread, in exchange for helping them out. One day, one of the villagers tells is going to a wedding and how Gilgamesh takes the bride's virginity as his birthright. Enkidu is outraged and vows to challenge him. Once in Uruk, Enkidu stops Gilgamesh from trying to take the bride for himself, provoking a fight between them. Once they finish fighting, they become friends.

Book III has Gilgamesh want to go into the cedar forest to slay Humbaba. Enkidu gets upset and explains that Humbaba is a monster and that it and the forest itself is blessed by the god Enlil and begs Gilgamesh not to. Gilgamesh encourages him to join him so that they can become heroes to the people. Gilgamesh then goes to the gate and exclaims to his people the feat he is to perform. The elders warn him that it is a bad idea, but Gilgamesh uses the opportunity to further encourage Enkidu. They then get new weapons and then visit Ninsun, Gilgamesh's mother, who prays and asks Enkidu to guide him. The elders also ask Enkidu to protect Gilgamesh and guide him, as he knows the forest better than him. With that, Enkidu relents and tells Gilgamesh to follow him to the cedar forest.

Book IV has Gilgamesh and Enkidu traveling toward the cedar forest. Gilgamesh sleeps and has a nightmare, which Enkidu assures is a good omen, stating that Humbaba will fall to them with the help of the god Shamash. This happens four more times. When they reach the end of the cedar forest, they hear Humbaba nearby. Gilgamesh calls for Shamash's help, and Shamash urges them to attack Humbaba before he gets stronger by going deeper into the forest.

Book V has Gilgamesh and Enkidu track Humbaba. Enkidu is frightened and wants to turn back, but Gilgamesh encourages him to fight alongside him. When they see Humbaba, Gilgamesh becomes terrified, but Enkidu encourages him this time. Humbaba charges at them, Gilgamesh panics, but Enkidu calms him down again. Shamash helps them by sending his divine winds, and Gilgamesh presses his knife at Humbaba's neck. Humbaba pleads for mercy, but Enkidu encourages Gilgamesh to kill him since he's lying. Humbaba warns them of the consequences that could occur due to being in Enlil's domain, but Enkidu further encourages him to do so before Enlil notices. Humbaba becomes enraged and curses Enkidu to die a gruesome death while Gilgamesh becomes heartbroken. Gilgamesh falters a bit, but ends up

beheading Humbaba and making a raft, planning to take the head and the cedar and build a gate in Enlil's temple to honor them.