

Man Seeking His Soul

(Sumerian Mythology: Gilgamesh)

Mesopotamia was exposed to terrible weather conditions and people suffered while natural influences devastated their land. Floods, droughts and heat waves created conflict and chaos. The environment dictated their habitats and made them vulnerable to the unseen. Their art and tales expressed despair and a fear of the unknown, the unexplainable.

A deep-seated anxiety and fear of gods prompted them to erect monuments and engage into repetitive rituals. They surrendered to their belief system and succumbed to the powers of the heavens. Marduk, their hero-god and offspring of wisdom, observed their discord. He grew tired of their chaos and swiftly declared a new ruling. He destroyed all reigning female deities and erected Babylon, a city of gods, which he filled with his lower counterparts - human beings.

This reign initiated the beginning of a new patriarchal system amongst ancient peoples. And Gilgamesh, two-thirds god and one-third man, became the appointed king and was sent to Uruk to oversee Mesopotamia. The gods showered Gilgamesh with many gifts. He received beauty, wisdom and courage. He reigned as a king and was responsible for many good deeds. He had monuments erected to honor the gods and to welcome their protection.

But life became mundane and he debated his existence on earth. Until one day, when he heard of a man who was compared to him as an equal. They told him, that this man lives amongst animals deep within the forest, and knows their language as well. People call him Enkidu a man of gentle nature. Enkidu finally came to town to meet with the great king. His presence immediately fascinated the whole town. Could it be that he is an equal to the king? Gilgamesh was outraged by these suggestions and challenged Enkidu to defend his honor. Determined to kill this creature, and while fighting him, Gilgamesh came to a sudden arrest. He began to laugh at his own follies. Could it be that he knows this person? A sense of familiarity came over him as if he knew this man for many years. Enkidu and Gilgamesh became inseparable friends. Gilgamesh found renewed courage to undertake projects while saving his town from intruding enemies and monsters. He felt strong and as a leader fought any quarreling foes.

Fond of Gilgamesh, the goddess of love and war, Ishtar, asked him to marry her. But Gilgamesh turned her down, which angered her deeply. She decided to revenge herself and cursed him by taking Enkidu's life.

After Gilgamesh loses his best friend - his brother and soul mate - his true journey begins. His grief at losing Enkidu lets him embark on a path seeking for the secrets of eternal life. This quest shall bring Enkidu back to him.

While he encounters many obstacles, his grief leads him further into the unknown worlds that get him closer to the source of eternal life. He must succeed in his quest and find the essence of immortality for his beloved friend, Enkidu. On his path he meets with the wise man and semi-god, Utnapishtim. He listens to Gilgamesh and tells him of a plant growing on the bottom of the sea. The plant has the power to give him eternal youth and has the sweetest smell and the most beautiful blossom. Gilgamesh listens carefully and decides to journey to this sacred place.

At his arrival, he dives deep down to the ocean's floor, sees the flower, picks it and brings it to the surface. The scent awakens all creatures within its vicinity. Gilgamesh is happy with his find and falls asleep. He leaves the flower unguarded, and thus, the scent also awakened the sleeping sea snake, which quickly follows the trail. There it was - unprotected - ready for her to snatch it away.

When Gilgamesh awakens, in horror he sees a fleeting snake devouring the last bite of this delight. While slithering away, she leaves behind the shell of her old skin and disappears deep into the sea.

Gilgamesh is stunned by his own demise and surrenders to his fate. His journey has come to an end. He reflects upon his pain and grief, yet knows, that the suffering belongs to him alone. In dissolving his illusion, he chooses to return home as he awaits his final destiny - death.

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