

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

By

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THE EVIL OF NOTHING

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THE EVIL OF NOTHING

CAST: 4 Women, 3 Men

GILGAMESH	25, who also portrays himself as a little boy
ISHTAR	35, drugged up Goddess of Love and War
CHORUS	All actors, when they aren't portraying specific characters in a scene
ENKIDU	25, hairy wild man and Gilgamesh's lover
SHAMHAT	30, Ishtar's temple harlot
LUGULBANDA	50, vampire king and Gilgamesh's dad
NINSUN	45, Queen of Uruk, Gilgamesh's mom
KILLER	40, female town killer

TIME: 2,700 B.C.

PLACE: A bare stage indicating different locations in or near the city of Uruk, Mesopotamia

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

A high wall inside Uruk. There is a heavy night fog. GILGAMESH is asleep on a huge pillow. The CHORUS enters, holding long wooden staffs sharpened at one end.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Ishtar, Goddess of Love and War, beautiful, magnificent, all powerful.

ISHTAR. *(ISHTAR enters from the Chorus, smoking pot.)* Yes! That part of this narration I can hear again; beautiful, magnificent, beautiful, all powerful, beautiful. But crap. Feeling good never lasts. The city of Uruk, Mesopotamia, 2,700 B.C. or B.C.E. or whatever politically correct. Just the beginning, okay? The beginning of fearful mortals. A story of fatal love that somehow slipped through. Almost forgotten in a time hard to remember, hallucinating or not. Yet, it happens, though we'd like it forgotten, a myth, a lie. The first urban legend. It's about a bunch of other stuff too. Drugs, sex, babies. Not much changes, does it?

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* When you are born, you shall be Gilgamesh.

ISHTAR. One part god, three parts man.

ENKIDU. *(ENKIDU enters from the Chorus. He howls and jumps.)* My king. My friend. My brother.

GILGAMESH. *(Suddenly wakes up.)* Who?

ISHTAR. A nightmare of the dark. An evil that doesn't belong. An illusion.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Illusion.

ENKIDU. I'm all that? I don't feel scary. *(Exits into the Chorus.)*

ISHTAR. What's your name, three parts man?

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GILGAMESH. Three parts god. Gilgamesh. I shall be king immortal.

ISHTAR. Well . . .

GILGAMESH. And I shall love.

ISHTAR. Me, as it is meant to be.

GILGAMESH. Gilgamesh of Uruk, ruler of the people of all the land, the Earth, the stars, the universe, and what's beyond.

ISHTAR. Quite a lot for one sentence, pretty boy.

ENKIDU. *(Enters jumping from the Chorus.)* You shall rule over me.

GILGAMESH. Everybody.

ISHTAR. The creature frightens everybody. Don't look. It'll turn you into a pillar of salt.

ENKIDU. Creepy. I'm nobody I'd want to be around. *(Exits into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. My dad shall be a vampire. Weird. That's Dad for ya. I shall be born of Goddess Queen Ninsun.

ISHTAR. All men wish their mom was a goddess like me. I get goose bumps thinking of me.

GILGAMESH. I shall build this famed city, the impenetrable walls never to fall, dazzling in the sunlight, casting fearsome shadows by the moon. The people shall be in awe of their might.

ISHTAR. Impenetrable like all walls to keep out things we're afraid of and to be torn down one day by another man and vanish.

GILGAMESH. Every direction you look, you'll see what is mine.

ISHTAR. Sand. It blows in your eyes. It gets in your mouth, and you spit for days. Uh, your name again, lovely?

ENKIDU. *(Enters from the Chorus.)* Adored Gilgamesh.

ISHTAR. You aren't here.

ENKIDU. I look like I'm here.

ISHTAR. Get out.

ENKIDU. All right. But I could've sworn I was here. *(Exits into the Chorus, as SHAMHAT enters from it, weaving closely around Gilgamesh.)*

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* When you are born you shall be —

SHAMHAT. Gilgamesh, the most handsome. Gilgamesh, the virile. All hail gorgeous Gilgamesh, king.

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GILGAMESH. Yes, Shamhat knows me. She knows who I am.

ISHTAR. Shamhat knows a lot of men.

ENKIDU. *(Entering from the Chorus.)* She knew me.

GILGAMESH. Shamhat sure gets around

SHAMHAT. I do my best.

ISHTAR. Frightening hair, wild man. Die, creature.

ENKIDU. Because of my hair? *(Exits into the Chorus.)*

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* When you are born--

SHAMHAT. Be happy, Gilgamesh. On Earth there is hatred, intolerance, bondage. Enjoy your life. You may not be here tomorrow.

GILGAMESH. Life sure doesn't last long.

SHAMHAT. And leave some of your riches to me. Put that in your will, Gilgamesh.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* When you are born, Gilgamesh —

SHAMHAT. Wrap yourself in love with the warm, naked body of a woman.

ENKIDU. *(Enters from the Chorus.)* The warm, naked body of —

ISHTAR. Why are you still here?

ENKIDU. Beats me. But here I am.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* No, you're not.

ENKIDU. No one likes me. I don't get this dream stuff. *(Exits into the Chorus.)*

SHAMHAT. Be happy with a woman. Live and breathe her in. This should be the journey of every living man before his death from all the evil in this land.

GILGAMESH. But I shall be King Gilgamesh to make my own journey.

ENKIDU. *(Enters from the Chorus.)* With me, Enkidu.

ISHTAR. Don't I have any powers left?

GILGAMESH. You have a funny name, Enkidu.

ISHTAR. Kiss Ishtar. Make love to Ishtar.

GILGAMESH. As king I get to choose, don't I. I mean, I'll be a king, right? Kings do whatever they damn choose.

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CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* When you are born, you shall —

ENKIDU. You shall love —

SHAMHAT. You shall forget everything that is sinful and be at peace, king, among the world's thieves and haters, king. Be more exalted than any king, king.

ENKIDU. You are going to love —

ISHTAR. — me.

SHAMHAT. You shall always return to the simple tranquility of man and woman, having home, family, babies, so many diapers. What is clean and natural before the gods. There is nothing more.

ISHTAR. Nothing.

ENKIDU. And you'll love —

ISHTAR. Get back in here!

ENKIDU. This is really confusing. *(Enkidu, Ishtar, and Shamhat exit into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. Nothing more?

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Nothing.

GILGAMESH. Theatrical. *(Lays his head on the pillow and closes his eyes. He opens them in a jolt.)* When I am born I shall love. I was dreaming. Or not. Diapers?

SCENE 2

At a magnificent altar inside Ishtar's temple in Uruk. There are large vases of magic ointments and entrails. There are lightning, thunder, and sounds of rain in the night. Shamhat stands at the altar. LUGULBANDA enters from the Chorus, wearing a sword and carrying a bag of gold. Shamhat bows.

LUGULBANDA. I've come to pray to Ishtar. Hurry your mistress up, Shamhat.

SHAMHAT. My king. *(She bows and exits into the Chorus.)*

LUGULBANDA. A lousy night to come for a prophesy. I'm cold. I wouldn't have to wait, if I was praying to a male god. But give a goddess a

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little power. (*Blinding lightning and roaring thunder strike. He draws his sword.*) My heart! (*Ishtar enters from the Chorus smoking pot.*)

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) Ishtar, Queen of Heaven, most radiant of all.

ISHTAR. Ah, listen to that.

LUGULBANDA. Vanity of women. A rich offering of gold for you, oh, wise one. (*He bows and places gold at the altar.*) I've come, wondrous goddess, to see my future.

ISHTAR. You've been king a thousand years. Isn't that future enough?

LUGULBANDA. A thousand three hundred years, 27 days, and 11 hours.

ISHTAR. Vanity of men.

LUGULBANDA. My Queen Ninsun had a dream. Wouldn't tell me what. Then I had a dream and couldn't tell her. Why can't things be simpler? She said you would have answers.

ISHTAR. You may not want to hear, King Lugul . . . uh —

LUGULBANDA. Lugulbanda. It's more for the missus. You know women. Let it be good. Soothe her nerves.

ISHTAR. It'll take more than gold to help with that. (*Takes goat entrails from a vase and drops them onto the altar. Smoke rises from them. She moves her hands over them.*) Ai ya ya ya eeee! Tell me your dreams.

LUGULBANDA. The one in bed with the queen? You wouldn't believe what I did.

ISHTAR. I'm sure I wouldn't.

LUGULBANDA. Just tell me my future. (*Flashing his sword.*) You know, big in the hunt, big in war, big in women.

ISHTAR. Fantasies of men are worse than women's. (*Praying.*) Come, spirits. Give me sight. (*Only Ishtar sees Enkidu enter from the Chorus.*) By the gods, wrong sight! (*Enkidu exits into the Chorus.*) Where the hell was I? Oh, yeah. You dreamed of death.

LUGULBANDA. You saw it too? Barbecue more goat entrails. I need a happy ending.

ISHTAR. It's your son.

LUGULBANDA. Don't have one. Gods, we tried! A thousand three hundred years, 27 days, and 11 hours of herbs, potions, different positions. Does this sex thing in this age ever work to cause a baby?

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ISHTAR. Your son shall wear your crown. Have a slight aberration with a male. We can't start that. An easy fix.

LUGULBANDA. Aberration with what?

ISHTAR. A male. Man.

LUGULBANDA. A mailman? How does a mailman get involved?

ISHTAR. Whatever it is, you have a son, you die.

LUGULBANDA. *(Swinging his sword.)* I'm the vampire kind. I shall live forever. It's the start of everything. No one knows why stuff works yet or why it doesn't.

ISHTAR. Vampires maybe can be killed, sort of, I think, possibly. Yes.

LUGULBANDA. You have impaired visions while you're high. Look again, or I'll bite you!

ISHTAR. All men want to bite me. *(Glancing at the entrails on the altar.)* Nope. It's the end of you. Your son is king.

LUGULBANDA. Where the hell does he come from?

ISHTAR. The usual, but no one's sure yet what the usual is. *(Enkidu enters from the Chorus. Only Ishtar sees him.)* You're sure as hell not the usual! *(Enkidu exits into the Chorus.)*

LUGULBANDA. Can't you see anything clearly?

ISHTAR. I see everything clearly. I see your son being born full-grown. That would be hard on any woman. He speaks.

GILGAMESH. *(Enters from the Chorus.)* Gilgamesh King. *(He exits into the Chorus.)*

LUGULBANDA. *(Brandishing his sword.)* A trick. You're playing your games with me. I want my gold back.

ISHTAR. Just try with your stubby sword. You're having a hot looking son who'll be the death of you, like all fathers have begun complaining about in this age.

LUGULBANDA. *(Swinging his sword.)* I'll kill the queen, if she gives birth to him. I'll slay him.

ISHTAR. A Mesopotamian tragedy to the finish.

LUGULBANDA. You gods with your lies to make everyone fear you.

ISHTAR. Be careful what you say. Why did we gods create you and humankind? Nothing ever works. Get out, King Lulubindi.

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LUGULBANDA. Lugulbanda! Great Vampire King Lugulbanda. *(He exits into the Chorus.)*

ISHTAR. *(Shouting.)* And I hate your name. Get something easier to pronounce.

SCENE 3

Lightning. The night's rain and thunder are heard outside Lugulbanda's palace of tall columns. Lugulbanda enters, chasing NINSUN from the Chorus.

NINSUN. My husband, please. Stay back. What's wrong?

LUGULBANDA. *(Grabbing her.)* Are you big with child, Ninsun, a baby, a son?

NINSUN. You'd kill me if I were and rip open my womb.

LUGULBANDA. Well, we'd know for sure then. Wait. Why would you think I'd do that and tear out your beating heart to eat if you had a son?

NINSUN. No reason. Relax. You don't need to rip out any of my body parts.

LUGULBANDA. I went to Ishtar's temple like you asked me.

NINSUN. She said I was pregnant? That goddess bitch. What do we need gods for? Always telling us how to live and be miserable.

LUGULBANDA. She said she hated my name.

NINSUN. Well, it is a little long. Maybe civilization will discover simpler ones.

LUGULBANDA. I'm not changing my name to please civilization.

NINSUN. No, dear. Lugul . . . uh is a great name.

LUGULBANDA. Ishtar said we're to have a son. Does something weird with the mailman. I die. He's king. You'll breathe your last if you have a strange son like that.

NINSUN. My dream!

LUGULBANDA. And mine.

NINSUN. I couldn't tell you.

LUGULBANDA. I couldn't tell anybody something as bizarre and abnormal as that.

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NINSUN. No baby here. Unless . . . Was Shamhat the temple harlot, prostitute, whore there? I wouldn't trust either of those sluts near you. They've had eyes for you for centuries.

LUGULBANDA. I'm irresistible, but I've done nothing wrong.

NINSUN. I know when you lie. Your eyes are shifty, and your lower lip quivers.

LUGULBANDA. My lower lip is not quivering. Don't be angry, my dark beauty.

NINSUN. How dare you darken me.

LUGULBANDA. Please, my light-skinned lovely. *(He kisses her neck.)*

NINSUN. Quit nibbling on my neck like a vampire.

LUGULBANDA. Maybe we're simply having an anxiety attack. Carnal knowledge is still a puzzle in this era. Everyone wonders if having sex causes planets to misalign or worse. Maybe we never knew how to have sex, whatever it's for.

NINSUN. Because you were too busy causing planets to misalign with somebody else. But if we weren't exhausted having sex for over a thousand years —

LUGULBANDA. Problem solved. Oh, life! Oh, sex! Still, there were our dreams.

NINSUN. Dreams are silly. I had a dream, where you were naked and purple and blowing bubbles out your —

LUGULBANDA. We can't have sex and what it may or may not do ever again. I'll have a wall built to separate us in the palace. We'll never be able to touch, kiss, or get naked together again.

NINSUN. Like that was ever satisfying me.

LUGULBANDA. Baby Wildcat, don't be cruel.

NINSUN. Don't baby Wildcat me, with your don't get pregnant and have a strange son or else.

LUGULBANDA. You're beautiful, when fire shoots out your orifices. Kiss me. *(He kisses her again and again.)*

NINSUN. Don't. No. Never. Stop it. Do you hear me? I said . . . Oh, yes. I'm sorry I hurt you. Love me. Love me like a red-eyed vampire!

LUGULBANDA. Forever. Purr in my ear, tiger Wildcow.

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CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex.

NINSUN. What was that?

LUGULBANDA. Our thunder. Rrrrrr. *(They exit into the Chorus, as Ishtar enters from it.)*

ISHTAR. As it should be. The only rrrrrr around this neck of the woods.

SCENE 4

Morning on top of the palace parapet. KILLER enters from the Chorus. Ninsun is heard screaming somewhere.

KILLER. What the shit's that? *(Ninsun enters from the Chorus, carrying a huge baby wrapped in a blanket. She screams. Killer bows.)* My . . . my queen. Nice day. You sum . . . summoned me?

NINSUN. Where the hell have you been, Killer?

KILLER. Outside the palace gates, Majesty. It took some convincing the guards to let me in, knowing my profession.

NINSUN. I have a son. A son!

KILLER. Congratulations?

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Gilgamesh, your son.

NINSUN. *(To Chorus.)* Shut up. I know who he is. Don't remind me. He's growing bigger by the minute, Killer. It was a difficult birth. He was full-grown. That happens only in a circus, with a bearded lady. The king said this wouldn't occur after he got his son of a bitching wall built.

KILLER. Well, you know walls.

NINSUN. And we were having sex the right way all along. How were we to know it made babies?

KILLER. Well, you know sex.

NINSUN. *(She screams.)* The kid just got bigger. I told the king I was gaining weight to be a wrestler and win prize money to help pay to build his foolish wall. He bought the idea. Then today, plop. It takes just one plop. The king will kill me for this plop.

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KILLER. Well, you know plops.

NINSUN. Has he told you to murder me? Do you have a dagger ready to strike? Tell me the truth, or I'll kill you, Killer.

KILLER. Your guards took my daggers. All of them. I'm not here to murder you. The king hasn't asked me yet.

NINSUN. Maybe this is a large daughter. I always wanted a baby girl. *(She looks under the baby's blanket then shows Killer.)* You look, Killer. Does this mean it's truly, honestly a boy?

KILLER. I think that cinches it.

NINSUN. I could have it cut off. I'd then be telling the king the truth that he has a daughter.

KILLER. Or a high tenor.

NINSUN. *(She screams.)* The baby grew again. What'll I do? Help me, Killer. I should've never married. I should've become a lesbian.

KILLER. There's no such thing. Maybe in a weird foreign country. Women marry men here, for only gods know why. I got married, caught him cheating, stabbed him forty times. The bright spot was I discovered my life's calling.

NINSUN. Perhaps Lugul . . . the king won't notice I've lost weight. Perhaps I should hide the baby for 20 years. Perhaps —

KILLER. Majesty, I could murder whoever you wish.

NINSUN. Is that all you ever think of, Killer? Of course, kill someone. It's your job.

KILLER. Poisoning, drowning, strangling, hanging, knifing?

NINSUN. They sound painful.

KILLER. No pain, no gain. You don't have to be there. The king, your son, or both. It'll be a surprise.

NINSUN. People weren't created to do hideous, bloody things to each other, were we?

KILLER. I do what I'm talented at. What else is worth living for?

NINSUN. Shamhat gave me the evil eye to make me have this kid, because I told her she'd die if she ever laid her grubby hands on the king. That whore.

KILLER. Well, you know whores.

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CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* The king returns from the hunt.

NINSUN. *(To Chorus.)* Son of a bitch. You frightened me. *(To Killer.)* Take the baby. Kill him. Don't kill the sweet tyke. I'll pay good money. You'll raise him well, Killer. *(They struggle to pass the blanketed baby back and forth.)*

KILLER. He's gained 20 pounds. I can barely lift him. I'll be caught.

NINSUN. I can't be. Kill him. No, don't.

KILLER. Take him. He's your son.

NINSUN. Only by birth. Kill him, or hide him quickly.

KILLER. Damn, he's too big to hide. He'll be heard or smelled. I think he just let loose with a big one.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* The king!

NINSUN. *(To Chorus.)* We know, okay? *(To Killer.)* Throw him over the parapet. Maybe he'll survive. Things we don't want in life always manage to hang around.

KILLER. Majesty, help me.

NINSUN. Hurry. Quick.

KILLER. *(Strains to throw blanketed baby over the parapet. He finally falls. An eagle screech is heard.)* By the gods, an eagle has swooped and caught your baby. It almost killed the damn bird.

NINSUN. *(Shouting to the eagle.)* Care for him, eagle bird. I don't want to ever see him again.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* King Lug . . . uh . . . The king. *(Lugulbanda enters from the Chorus, carrying bow and arrows. He wears a large-brimmed hat to protect him from the sun. Killer bows.)*

LUGULBANDA. A rotten day at the hunt. The sun fried my vampire skin. And I couldn't slaughter anything to extinction. *(Noticing Killer.)* You can understand that.

KILLER. I can indeed, Majesty.

LUGULBANDA. Look. In the sky. It's a bird. Let me kill it. *(He raises his bow to shoot. Ninsun stops him.)*

NINSUN. No! I protect endangered species.

LUGULBANDA. Damn it. What the crap is it carrying? It's huge.

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NINSUN. A baby eagle.

KILLER. In a baby eagle blanket.

NINSUN. They're big when they're born. Then they shrink.

LUGULBANDA. A stupid bird. I should banish eagles. Why are you here, Killer?

NINSUN. Uh . . . She and I go to the gym together.

LUGULBANDA. You should go to the gym with your own kind.

KILLER. I have a hard time finding my own kind.

LUGULBANDA. I meant the queen.

NINSUN. Leave us, Killer.

KILLER. *(Bows and exits into the Chorus.)*

LUGULBANDA. *(Clutches Ninsun.)* Baby, baby. I'm aching for you. Have you lost weight?

NINSUN. Just gas.

LUGULBANDA. Sweet baboo. Let me kiss that big lady wrestler's belly. *(Trying to take off her robe.)*

NINSUN. Naughty king. Leave my royal robe alone. Nah, nah, nah.

LUGULBANDA. I need you now. Rip off your robe royal.

NINSUN. I have a royal headache. I'm wearied and worn. More gas. Uhhhhh.

LUGULBANDA. Women always do this when they're tired of their husband or are having an affair or are having a —

NINSUN. Sickness. Women have begun that in this age. I'm getting dizzy. I'm going to faint. I'm bitchy. Oh!

LUGULBANDA. I'm going to start a tradition of having more than one wife. I can leave you then to your whining and gas.

NINSUN. *(Crying.)* You're making me cry, Lugul . . . Go away. You don't love me.

LUGULBANDA. I return from a long, hard day of trying to kill every living creature, and this is what I get. I'm going to my stables to be with my horses. Horse shit is better than this. *(Lugulbanda exits into the Chorus.)*

NINSUN. *(Stops crying.)* No more son, and I live. Enjoy your horse shit.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Horse shit!

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SCENE 5

Morning in the palace horse stables, with troughs, curry combs, brushes, and hoof picks. The Chorus whinnies like horses. Lugulbanda enters from the Chorus and sucks in the air.

LUGULBANDA. Ahh. The smells of stables, horse sweat, and shit in the air. Not like a female frustrating me. I'm king. I should ban everything women do but make men happy.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Gilgamesh!
(Gilgamesh enters from the Chorus, happily tumbling as a little boy to Lugulbanda's feet. Lugulbanda screams. Gilgamesh screams then speaks.)

GILGAMESH. Daddy.

LUGULBANDA. Who the hell are you

GILGAMESH. Mommy?

LUGULBANDA. You're scaring the horses. Guards, throw this madman out. *(The Chorus points its staffs at Gilgamesh and advances on him.)*

GILGAMESH. Are you my mommy?

CHORUS. No, we're not your mommy.

LUGULBANDA. Seize him. *(Gilgamesh playfully runs from them.)*

GILGAMESH. "Seize him." I like this game. I like it better than my eagle mommy's game. She kept throwing me out of her nest to make me fly. It hurt.

LUGULBANDA. You! The huge baby eaglet the eagle was straining to fly off with earlier.

GILGAMESH. I never grew any feathers. Is this how puberty begins?

LUGULBANDA. I saw you in the stinking vapors at Ishtar's altar.

GILGAMESH. Didn't have much of a childhood, no friends, no toys. Ate worms and played with eagle poop. Never eat worms.

LUGULBANDA. You're Gilgamesh! *(Enkidu enters, jumping from the Chorus. Ishtar then enters from the Chorus. Gilgamesh and Lugulbanda don't see them.)*

ENKIDU. My Gilgamesh.

ISHTAR. You don't exist.

ENKIDU. Where'd I go? *(He exits into the Chorus.)*

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ISHTAR. *My Gilgamesh. (She exits into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. I'm Gilgamesh, Mommy.

LUGULBANDA. I'm not Mommy.

GILGAMESH. Daddy?

LUGULBANDA. Hell, no.

GILGAMESH. I don't look like an eagle, do I?

LUGULBANDA. I will kill you. *(He grabs a staff from the Chorus and goes after Gilgamesh.)*

GILGAMESH. "I will kill you. I will kill you." Play with me. Fun. *(Gilgamesh runs. Lugulbanda chases him.)*

LUGULBANDA. Quit running.

GILGAMESH. I love you, Mommy/Daddy.

LUGULBANDA. No. Stop. I'm out of breath. *(Lugulbanda pauses.)*

GILGAMESH. Play. I'll let you hit me this time.

LUGULBANDA. Promise? I'll just shove this spear through you, that's all. *(Lugulbanda viciously lunges at Gilgamesh again and again, missing him.)*

GILGAMESH. Just kidding. I know you don't want to hurt me, Mommy/Daddy.

LUGULBANDA. Yes, I do. You're not my son.

GILGAMESH. I must be somebody's. I had a dream.

LUGULBANDA. Another dream? What is this, a therapy session?

GILGAMESH. It was a good one. I became king.

LUGULBANDA. I'm going to ban dreams. You're not becoming king.

GILGAMESH. You don't love me.

LUGULBANDA. *(Giving Gilgamesh some coins.)* Here. Take a few coins. Get drunk, and get laid. That'll make you feel loved. But use some protection.

GILGAMESH. Wear a helmet?

LUGULBANDA. Oh, for the gods' sake. Go to Shamhat, the temple harlot. She'll know what to do.

GILGAMESH. Is she my mommy/daddy?

LUGULBANDA. You'll find out. Now leave and never return.

GILGAMESH. I'm sad and lonely. Doesn't anyone want me? I'm leaving and never coming back. Hear me? Goodbye. *(He exits into the Chorus.)*

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

LUGULBANDA. Mesopotamian music to my ears.

SCENE 6

Ninsun's palace bedroom, with a large, awesome bed. Ninsun lays in bed sleeping. Lugulbanda enters quietly from the Chorus. He raises a dagger over Ninsun. The Chorus strikes the butts of its staffs on the floor.

CHORUS. King Lugul . . . uh . . . Great king of —

LUGULBANDA. *(To Chorus.)* Shhh! This is one time I didn't want to be announced.

CHORUS. *(Softly.)* — of Uruk.

NINSUN. *(Waking up.)* Husband! Put away that dagger. Someone could get hurt, Lugul . . .

LUGULBANDA. Lugulbanda! Ninsun, you lied. Our son is alive. Alive! *(Gilgamesh happily tumbles as a little boy from the Chorus, grabbing Lugulbanda's leg.)*

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Gilgamesh! *(Enkidu and Ishtar enter from the Chorus. No one sees them. Enkidu jumps and whoops.)*

ISHTAR. You're going to ruin it for everybody.

ENKIDU. Why is it me who causes problems?

ISHTAR. Leave and never return! *(She chases him.)*

ENKIDU. Does everyone have nightmares of not being wanted? *(He and Ishtar exit into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. Mommy/Daddy, I was only fooling. I would never leave you.

NINSUN. We have no son.

LUGULBANDA. And I'm about to have no wife.

NINSUN. You're the one who got me pregnant, no doubt by that stupid sex thing. I should be killing you.

LUGULBANDA. After I murder you. *(To Gilgamesh.)* Let go of my leg.

GILGAMESH. "Let go, let go. Murder. Stupid sex." *(Lugulbanda slashes the dagger at Gilgamesh, who catches Lugulbanda's arm before he is hit.)*

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

You're fun. (*Grabbing the dagger.*) My turn. (*He swings it at Lugulbanda.*)

LUGULBANDA. I'm a vampire, boy. You can't kill me. Can you? Give me that. Kids don't play with daggers. Didn't your parents teach you anything?

NINSUN. I had our son thrown from the top of the palace to his blood splatting death. He's dead. Dead.

LUGULBANDA. Then who the hell is he?

GILGAMESH. Who the hell is she?

LUGULBANDA. Some idiot eagle saved his ass. But no bird's saving yours. (*Lugulbanda goes after Ninsun. She runs.*)

NINSUN. Help me, someone.

GILGAMESH. (*Playfully running.*) "Help me, someone."

LUGULBANDA. (*Stopping, out of breath.*) It should be easier for a damn vampire to kill you both.

GILGAMESH. "Die. Save me." Kill the eagle. You make me laugh. (*Gilgamesh grabs Lugulbanda's leg.*)

NINSUN. Give me that dagger, boy. My husband is too old for this. (*Gilgamesh gives her the dagger. She swings it at him. He circles Lugulbanda's leg to avoid it.*) Stand still, kid.

LUGULBANDA. Don't cut me!

GILGAMESH. Love this game, Mommy/Daddy. (*Ninsun tires of slashing at Gilgamesh.*) I remember you now. You helped drop me to Mommy/Daddy Eagle.

NINSUN. Babies don't remember things like that. Stop remembering.

GILGAMESH. If mommy/daddies treat their sons like this, it could cause me a wide assortment of abandonment issues.

LUGULBANDA. You're not our son, so go have a wide assortment of whatever with someone else.

NINSUN. My mommy/daddies never abandoned me.

LUGULBANDA. Would you please —

NINSUN. But I had an uncle who loved me way too much.

LUGULBANDA. Ninsun! This isn't a confessional. Look, kid, we wish you luck. Go. Our borders are closed to you foreigners.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

NINSUN. Go search for your parents. They'll be sad if you don't. Maybe Egypt. Lots of parents there. Fantastic sightseeing. I can hear them calling for you now.

GILGAMESH. I don't hear anybody. I want to stay here playing I will kill you. Do mommy/daddies always want their children to leave them?

LUGULBANDA. Yes. If you don't leave us, I'll have to kill you and Ninsun for real. You don't want that, do you?

GILGAMESH. I don't think so. Do I get to choose? I'm not sure. Why?

LUGULBANDA. Because there are some people who should definitely die.

GILGAMESH. Why?

LUGULBANDA. It's how it's done. Everyone's always pissed off at everyone else with a wide range of excuses to spill blood everywhere.

GILGAMESH. Why?

LUGULBANDA. Stop asking why. Ninsun, help me, damn it. He's your son.

GILGAMESH. Hers?

NINSUN. His.

GILGAMESH. Do I have two mommy/daddies?

NINSUN. Everyone has two. I think. Don't you think, husband?

GILGAMESH. Don't I get to choose?

LUGULBANDA. And stop asking to choose everything. Killing him would be simpler. Give me the godsdamn dagger and hold him.

GILGAMESH. Catch me. Come find me. I'll hide. Count to ten. (*He happily runs and exits into the Chorus.*)

NINSUN. Now what?

LUGULBANDA. Give me that dagger. Christ! I have to do everything. I'll kill him and then I'm going to —

NINSUN. No, you don't. No dagger. Who's Christ?

SCENE 7

Morning at a magnificent altar inside Ishtar's temple. There are large vases of magic ointments and entrails. Shammat stands at the altar. Gilgamesh tumbles as the little boy from the Chorus.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

GILGAMESH. Mommy/Daddies, where are you? Find me. Here I am.

SHAMHAT. You're hot. (*Ishtar, smoking pot, enters from the Chorus.*)

ISHTAR. Hold onto your libido. I'll toss someone your way.

GILGAMESH. (*Unsure about the women.*) Mommy/Daddies? (*Ninsun and Lugulbanda enter from the Chorus. Both hold daggers and carrying offerings. Lugulbanda wears a large brimmed hat, protecting him from the sun. Shamhat bows.*)

NINSUN. (*Bowing.*) Holy Ishtar, save me. The king is trying to murder me.

LUGULBANDA. (*Bowing.*) Protect me, great goddess. She's the cause of this kid trying to kill me.

GILGAMESH. Are you all my mommy/daddies? This'll be fantastic!

NINSUN. An offering of gold for you, sacred Ishtar. I throw myself on your protection. (*Ninsun and Lugulbanda, protecting themselves with their daggers from each other, place offerings at the altar.*)

LUGULBANDA. Blessed, glorious goddess, here are two. And some drugs on the side. Read the goat entrails again. Maybe you missed something. Stay back, kid.

GILGAMESH. Anyone want to play?

SHAMHAT. I do.

ISHTAR. Shamhat, keep your hands to yourself. Gilgamesh, leave.

LUGULBANDA. Listen to wondrous Ishtar.

NINSUN. What her heavenly being says goes, like you.

GILGAMESH. Nobody ever wants me around. I'm going then. You'll never see me again. Goodbye forever. I said it'll be forever. Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye. (*Exits into the Chorus. Ninsun puts another gold offering at the altar.*)

NINSUN. While we're at it, this gold to banish Shamhat to the middle of the desert, where she'll have no man to love, shrivel, and die.

SHAMHAT. No man has trouble finding me.

NINSUN. She cursed us to have sex.

SHAMHAT. I never had that problem.

ISHTAR. I need a drug overdose.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) Overdose!

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

ISHTAR. Everyone silent! Quiet. I'll read the entrails one last time, because I am a gracious goddess. But that's it. You'll ask for no more.

LUGULBANDA. Okay, okay. Just leave the mailman out of it.

ISHTAR. *(Takes goat entrails from a vase. Drops them on the altar. Smoke rises from them. She moves her hands over them.)* Ai, ya, ya, ya, eeeee! Let me see. Give me sight. I see. Yes. No, I saw that for someone else yesterday. *(Praying.)* Open heavens or the underworld. Give me visions true in the whirl of life of what's to be. Speak to me, your miraculous, dazzling Goddess Ishtar. Yes, I like that. Let your voices sing or sting. The spirits are taking form and approach. *(The temple darkens. The Chorus whistles like the wind.)*

NINSUN. I don't want to be here, husband. Let someone write it down and show it to us at the palace.

ISHTAR. Stay! You asked for this.

NINSUN. I'll keep my eyes closed.

LUGULBANDA. Hold me, Ninsun, dearest.

SHAMHAT. Aren't you romantic?

ISHTAR. Everyone just shut up for once and listen. Nearer, spirits, closer. They stand before us and speak. Hear them?

LUGULBANDA. Could they talk a bit louder?

ISHTAR. Shh. They say . . . Ohhh. Ahhhhh.

NINSUN. Oh, ah, what?

ISHTAR. They say . . .

LUGULBANDA. What, amazing Goddess?

ISHTAR. Ssssssss!

NINSUN. Sssss?

ISHTAR. Ha! *(Gilgamesh happily enters, tumbling from the Chorus. The temple becomes bright again. The wind stops.)*

GILGAMESH. Mommy/Daddies!

ISHTAR. The spirits have spoken. Gilgamesh is your son.

LUGULBANDA. Aw, fuck.

NINSUN. What was that you said?

LUGULBANDA. A new word I just invented. You don't want to know.

GILGAMESH. There's no place like home. Mommy/Daddies! *(Hugging Ninsun and Lugulbanda.)*

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

LUGULBANDA. I'm dead. Nail my coffin shut.

GILGAMESH. I'll protect you. I love you. I'm going to be king.

LUGULBANDA. Dig my grave now. Dear, dear Ishtar, let me send him to another place. Cappadocia. Jerusalem. You'll love Jerusalem, kid. Peaceful, quiet. The circumcision rites hurt slightly, but they'll make a manly man out of you.

ISHTAR. Send Gilgamesh away. He'll return. It's the prophesy.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* The prophesy.

LUGULBANDA. *(Raising his dagger.)* I ban all prophesies.

ISHTAR. It can't be stopped.

GILGAMESH. I love it. I'll always be with you, Mommy/Daddies.

ENKIDU. *(Enters from the Chorus. Only Ishtar sees him. He roars then speaks.)* And with me.

ISHTAR. *(To Enkidu.)* Don't you ever go away?

ENKIDU. Is it my problem? *(He exits into the Chorus.)*

NINSUN. Be a good son, Gilgamesh, and flee.

LUGULBANDA. If you stay, you'll die.

ISHTAR. The prince shall stay.

SHAMHAT. Oh, yes, stay.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* Stay.

GILGAMESH. Sounds like I'm staying.

LUGULBANDA. I'll give you gold and diamonds, if you go as far as possible from me.

NINSUN. I'll triple that.

LUGULBANDA. You love me, Ninsun.

NINSUN. I've always loved you, though you want my death today.

GILGAMESH. What about me?

LUGULBANDA. We'd like your death today too.

GILGAMESH. You don't love me. I can tell. I hate you, Mommy/Daddies.

LUGULBANDA. Hating parents is normal, if it gets you outta here.

GILGAMESH. I spit on you. *(He spits at Ninsun and Lugulbanda.)*

NINSUN. That's what parents are for, my sweet. Spit all you want.

GILGAMESH. I could kill you.

LUGULBANDA. This isn't going in the right direction. Just spit.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

KILLER. *(Entering from the Chorus and bowing.)* Somebody need me to kill anybody?

LUGULBANDA. No one asked you to just show up. Get out.

GILGAMESH. You're the one who threw me over the palace wall.

KILLER. It's my line of work.

LUGULBANDA. Then throw him over the wall again, and don't come back.

GILGAMESH. My mommy/daddies don't love me.

KILLER. That causes children to have horrible stress, constipation. I killed both mine for being too cold.

LUGULBANDA. No one asked. Help. Fuck.

KILLER. My bowels were tied up for weeks.

ISHTAR. King Lug . . . uh. Ninsun, take the prince home with you now.

GILGAMESH. Please send me to a nice foster home to play with a bunch of toys and no worms.

SHAMHAT. I'll be your foster home, with plenty of toys you can play with.

ISHTAR. No, you won't.

GILGAMESH. I don't want to ever see these mommy/daddies again.

LUGULBANDA. Love your attitude.

NINSUN. Spoken like a true son.

KILLER. Just give me the word. My fees are reasonable.

LUGULBANDA. You're nothing but a shameless killer. Get out.

NINSUN. Go away, Killer.

KILLER. Just trying to make an honest living, Majesties. My life isn't easy washing blood stains out of my clothes all the time.

LUGULBANDA. *(Furious.)* I'll bite you. No, I don't want you around me for eternity. I'll gut you like a fish. *(He takes his dagger after her.)*

KILLER. Goddess, Queen, stop His Majesty. *(She grabs a staff from the Chorus to defend herself. Gilgamesh struggles with her.)*

GILGAMESH. I'll save you, Mommy/Daddy. *(Lugulbanda rushes at Killer but stabs himself in the heart with the staff she and Gilgamesh hold.)*

(They pull the spear out. Lugulbanda falls. His hat drops from his head.)

LUGULBANDA. Godsdamn, son of a bitching fuck. That hurt.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

KILLER. It was an accident. I didn't know it was sharp.

LUGULBANDA. I can't die, right, sweet, kind Ishtar? I'm a vampire.

ISHTAR. I think, maybe daylight and a wooden spear in your heart could end it for a vampire. Only guessing. Who knows?

NINSUN. But, my love, there's no blood.

LUGULBANDA. I'm a vampire, woman. Of course, there's no dumb blood.

NINSUN. This is your fault, Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH. I hate my mommy/daddy and sort of want him dead. But I don't want him not able to play.

NINSUN. Sons always cause parents grief these days. A good therapist would've seen this coming.

GILGAMESH. Say you're sorry, Killer. It'll make him feel better.

KILLER. I'm sorry, Majesty.

LUGULBANDA. How the shit does that help?

KILLER. I think the king is right. I should leave. *(She bows and exits into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. I tried to stop it. You can't blame your own child.

ISHTAR. It's the prophesy.

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* The prophesy.

GILGAMESH. I hate the prophesy. I wish I wasn't born or Mommy/Daddy Eagle hadn't caught me.

NINSUN. We wish that too, dear.

SHAMHAT. There, there, sweet prince. Let me comfort you.

ISHTAR. *(Stopping Shamhat.)* Shamhat, you want something driven through your heart, if you have one?

NINSUN. We'll have the most magnificent funeral for you, my precious. The best your money can buy.

LUGULBANDA. I die and have to pay for it too? Who invented that?

NINSUN. We must hurry to arrange everything. Flowers, incense, dancing, and a big after-funeral feast. *(Ninsun, Ishtar, and Shamhat exit into the Chorus.)*

GILGAMESH. I don't like this. *(Enkidu enters from the Chorus. He jumps and roars. Gilgamesh sees him.)*

ENKIDU. This is about it for life. Messy.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

GILGAMESH. You're a dream, aren't you?

ENKIDU. You use that line on everyone?

GILGAMESH. What can I do, Mommy/Daddy?

LUGULBANDA. Leave me to die before it gets any worse. Arggh!

SCENE 8

Morning in the palace throne room. There are a huge throne and a much smaller one. Gilgamesh and Ninsun enter from the Chorus. He wears an extravagant crown; she wears a modest one. The Chorus strikes the butts of its staffs on the floor.

CHORUS. King Lugul . . . uh . . . the other king is dead. Long live King Gilgamesh. Long live King Gilgamesh. Long live King Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH. *(Sits on the huge throne and interacts with the Chorus throughout the scene. Ninsun sits on the small throne.)* Yes! Excellent. Proclaim it again.

CHORUS. The last king is dead. Long live King Gilgamesh. Long live King Gilgamesh. Long live King Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH. Now shout it on your knees. No. Prostrate yourselves.

NINSUN. Gilgamesh! You're going too far with your power.

GILGAMESH. Rulers are supposed to go too far with power. That's why I rule. You are my loyal subjects. Is everyone loyal?

CHORUS. *(Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.)* We are loyal, king.

GILGAMESH. And love me?

CHORUS. We love you, king.

GILGAMESH. Good choice. I'll have you sign a loyalty oath later. I don't like people who don't love me.

NINSUN. My gods! You need to get married right away and have babies. It'll calm you, wear you down as it should be.

GILGAMESH. Wives and babies complain too much. I'll be alone as king. I can raise a lot of hell and not go to prison. I send some other guy there to take my place.

NINSUN. What is happening to you?

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

GILGAMESH. Don't know. But it sure as hell beats that other guy in prison.

NINSUN. We'll have your royal wedding tomorrow. No, today.

GILGAMESH. I shall become a god. Make Uruk great again. I shall have a bigger temple than Ishtar. Start building.

NINSUN. You're going mad. The gods will turn against you.

GILGAMESH. I've had you and a vampire in the family. The gods didn't say anything about that. No one can stop me. I'm King Gilgamesh.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) King Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH. I love the smell of fear in the throne room.

NINSUN. Thank heavens my husband invented beer before he died. I need a brew.

GILGAMESH. Go to Jerusalem. Maybe they'll have circumcision rites for you. If you stay here, you'll pay Killer to spear me like Lugul . . .

Mommy/Daddy, dead king.

NINSUN. I would never think such a thing.

GILGAMESH. Well, I'm too big for Killer to throw me over the wall.

NINSUN. If I weren't queen, I'd —

GILGAMESH. Be me? No one can be me. Only me. Me. Palace coup. The queen wants to overthrow me. Treason. Guards, arrest her. Stop the steal.

NINSUN. (*The Chorus seizes Ninsun.*) Get your hands off me. Help!

GILGAMESH. Throw her in the dungeon. Hang her for not obeying. How can anyone not obey me?

NINSUN. Gilgamesh!

GILGAMESH. Only water and moldy bread to eat. Plus some worms.

NINSUN. Please!

GILGAMESH. No perfumes or your skin whitener

NINSUN. Not that. No. Someone, save me.

GILGAMESH. Enough. Release her. It's just a king joke. Everyone laugh.

NINSUN. (*The Chorus releases her and laughs.*) What's so funny? Where's that beer? Gilgamesh, it is your duty to quickly get marr —

GILGAMESH. I don't have to quickly anything. My people quickly praise me. Show her quickly.

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

CHORUS. (*Quickly striking the butts of its staffs on the floor and quickly speaking.*) We praise you, the greatest king ever.

GILGAMESH. My people know me well. Announce my leaving.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) Greatest king ever Gilgamesh is leaving.

GILGAMESH. Cool. Again.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) Greatest king ever Gilgamesh is leaving.

GILGAMESH. Lovable me. (*He exits into the Chorus.*)

NINSUN. Bartender!

SCENE 9

Later at the altar inside Ishtar's temple. There are large vases of magic ointments and entrails. Ishtar, slightly high on pot, hits at Killer as they enter with Shamhat from the Chorus.

ISHTAR. You brought all this down on us. Gilgamesh is driving everyone crazy.

KILLER. Not my fault, Goddess. I think King Gilgamesh signaled and the spear just stabbed Lugul . . . the dead king by itself.

ISHTAR. Gilgamesh despises everyone. He abhors me. Me! Resplendent, holy Queen of Heaven.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) Resplendent. Holy.

ISHTAR. (*To Chorus.*) Yes. He has no right.

CHORUS. (*Striking the butts of its staffs on the floor.*) No right.

SHAMHAT. I thought I stood a chance with him.

KILLER. And me.

ISHTAR, SHAMHAT, CHORUS. You?

KILLER. I may be a killer, but I have my charms.

ISHTAR. Shamhat. Your charms. Why didn't I have this vision before? I promised you somebody, dear Shamhat. You must promise to keep your disgusting, filthy hands off Gilgamesh, if I give you a man as handsome as he.

SHAMHAT. As handsome?

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

ISHTAR. As strong and virile. Your word on it.

SHAMHAT. You give me that, I swear completely, utterly, totally.

ISHTAR. Before he came to this world, Gilgamesh had that dream.

KILLER. How'd he do that?

ISHTAR. It's risky, quite dangerous, but he keeps appearing to me.

Shamhat, go to the watering pool in the hills. Enkidu comes at dusk with the animals. He's wild, needs a haircut, and should never live. Do with him what you like, then bring Enkidu to Gilgamesh.

SHAMHAT. I get a wild man with a name like that?

ISHTAR. You've had wild men before and couldn't remember their names. I'll see that Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight to prove who is mightiest. Enkidu's savageness shall defeat Gilgamesh. If the king lives, I shall heal my dream boy, and he'll love me. If Enkidu dies, it's as it should be.

KILLER. Can I go too? There could be a wild man for me with a better name.

ISHTAR. Killer, leave us!

KILLER. Just a thought. *(She bows and exits into the Chorus.)*

ISHTAR. Shamhat dear, before you bring Enkidu to Gilgamesh — *(She laughs.)* This shall be exquisite. I'm a genius as well as beautiful, divine, and brilliant. Tell Enkidu this . . .

SCENE 10

Dusk at a small pool of water in the hills. The water babbles. The Chorus makes sounds of wolves, owls, and falcons. Enkidu enters from the Chorus and goes to the water to drink. Shamhat enters from the Chorus. Enkidu is frightened of her and instantly moves away.

SHAMHAT. Don't be afraid. I'll stay over here while you drink.

Understand? *(Enkidu carefully approaches the water. He keeps an eye on Shamhat while he drinks.)* You're Enkidu? I'm Shamhat, the sensuous and servant of Goddess Ishtar. You don't speak? You're handsome, much more than anyone would expect with a name and hair like yours. Do you know what I am? A voluptuous woman. If you think you're wild, wait till I show you my civilizing clutch. You'll never want to go back to hanging

THE EVIL OF NOTHING

around a bunch of animals. Let me touch you, big boy. I won't hurt you. My warm hands merely want to caress your adorable, delicious body. (*She tries to touch him. He runs away, then returns.*) No man runs away from me and neither are you, Enkidu. Come to Shamhat, an intoxicating female. Here, tiger. (*She hums a gentle song. Enkidu approaches. She carefully, softly touches him. He starts to pull away, then stays.*) You like my touch, my whisper, my smell. What man doesn't?

ENKIDU. Wow!

SHAMHAT. You speak. I'm an unimaginable woman. (*Trilling.*)

Llllllllllllll.

ENKIDU. Wow!

SHAMHAT. I see a soft, inviting bed of tall grass there. Let's lie down and hear more wows from you, darling, strong Enkidu. (*She slips her arm around him.*)

ENKIDU. Wow! Wow! Wow! (*They exit into the Chorus, which strikes the butts of its staves on the floor.*)

CHORUS. Wow!

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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