



Artwork: *Standard of Ur*, Mosaic, British Museum, London, c. 2550 BCE, photo: Michael Greenhalgh

From the Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablets II and III

(3rd-century BCE Sumerian epic poem)

Translated by Maureen Gallery Kovacs
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He splashed his shaggy body with water,
and rubbed himself with oil, and turned into a human.
He put on some clothing and became like a warrior!
He took up his weapon and chased lions so that the shepherds could eat
He routed the wolves, and chased the lions.
With Enkidu as their guard, the herders could lie down.
A wakeful man, a singular youth, he was twice as tall as normal men. . .

Gilgamesh, do not put your trust in just your vast strength,
but keep a sharp eye out, make each blow strike its mark!
'The one who goes on ahead saves the comrade.'
'The one who knows the route protects his friend.'
Let Enkidu go ahead of you;
he knows the road to the Cedar Forest,
he has seen fighting, has experienced battle.