

The Rebels

Italics in speech indicate emphasis.

ALL CAPS IN SPEECH INDICATES INCREDIBLE LOUDNESS!

(Open on a beach with a sunset background. Sound of ocean waves lapping against the beach start out loud; as the play progresses and the characters begin to speak, the sound of the waves gets much quieter so we can hear them .
ORPHEUS, a quiet, soft-spoken, erudite sort, sits center stage, strumming absently on a guitar. We hear panting and then GILGAMESH, huge, coarse, and loud, bursts out from one side. He spies ORPHEUS and strides towards him.)

GILGAMESH: You! Little man!

ORPHEUS: Hmm?

GILGAMESH: Where in the name of Ishtar's deadly cunt am I?

ORPHEUS: On a beach.

GILGAMESH: I can see that, you little...

(GILGAMESH trails off and stares at the audience.)

GILGAMESH: This isn't another one of those oceans of death, is it?

ORPHEUS: I'm afraid so.

(ORPHEUS pauses, then doubletakes.)

ORPHEUS: Wait. Another?

GILGAMESH: Aye. I had to use up hundreds of oars for the last one, and my rotting clothes as sails. I'd rather not do that again.

ORPHEUS: Hundreds of...are you *Gilgamesh*?

GILGAMESH: Depends. Are you one of Ishtar's boys?

ORPHEUS: No.

GILGAMESH: In that case, I am—

(GILGAMESH takes a deep breath.)

GILGAMESH: GILGAMESH! SLAYER OF MONSTERS! BUILDER OF CITIES! THE
MAN WHO OUTRAN THE SUN!

ORPHEUS: There's no need to shout.

GILGAMESH: THERE'S EVERY NEED TO SHOUT!

ORPHEUS: I thought your adventures made you humble.

GILGAMESH: Humility is relative.

OPRHEUS: Well. You have the wrong ocean.

GILGAMESH: What?

(ORPHEUS delivers the next lines with mocking slowness.)

ORPHEUS: You have. The wrong. Ocean.

GILGAMESH: It's not an ocean of death?

ORPHEUS: Oh, it is. Just not the deadly acidic kind.

GILGAMESH: You mean...

(GILGAMESH stares at the audience again.)

GILGAMESH: Oh. So we're...

ORPHEUS: I'm afraid so.

GILGAMESH: Oh. Well. This is disappointing.

ORPHEUS: It is?

GILGAMESH: It's an ocean. Not quite what I was expecting.

ORPHEUS: What were you expecting?

GILGAMESH: Dust. Clay. Misery. What do you even do here?

ORPHEUS: I can't say for certain. I've never been to this part before.

GILGAMESH: You've been to some other part before?

ORPHEUS: Rivers and fields.

GILGAMESH: Oh. So...what *do* we do here?

ORPHEUS: Wait for the boat.

GILGAMESH: There's a boat?

ORPHEUS: It's come and gone a few times. Most of the people it takes away are considerably less talkative than you.

GILGAMESH: You stayed behind?

ORPHEUS: I made Hades cry the last time I was down there.

GILGAMESH: Hades?

ORPHEUS: God of the Dead. I'm a little afraid he's going to hold it against me.

GILGAMESH: BULLSHIT! And that means a lot coming from me!

ORPHEUS: I'm aware. The demigod King of Uruk, slayer of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven.

GILGAMESH: You've heard of me?

ORPHEUS: Picked up a few stories. I'm a bard by trade.

GILGAMESH: A bard.

OPRHEUS: A bard.

GILGAMESH: A bard?

ORPHEUS: A somewhat-talented bard.

GILGAMESH: You made a *god* cry.

ORPHEUS: I made *stones* cry. He wasn't too hard by comparison. Gods have been known to cry.

GILGAMESH: A mere bard waltzed into the underworld and waltzed back out again.

ORPHEUS: A *mere bard*?

GILGAMESH: You take offense, little man?

ORPHEUS: Stop calling me that. Just because you're half-divine you think-

GILGAMESH: Two-thirds.

ORPHEUS: What?

GILGAMESH: Two-thirds. I'm two-thirds divine.

ORPHEUS: That doesn't any make sense.

GILGAMESH: It's divinity. Doesn't have to make sense.

ORPHEUS: No, that's...the math doesn't work.

GILGAMESH: DAMN THE MATH!

ORPHEUS: This is why I never told your stories.

GILGAMESH: What?

ORPHEUS: You're just like that bull you fought. You bellow and stomp your feet and gore your way through until someone notices you.

GILGAMESH: How dare you! I am GILGAMESH--

ORPHEUS: Slayer of monsters, builder of cities, the man who outran the sun, yes, I heard it once, I know the stories, I don't need a repeat.

GILGAMESH: Well...I am!

ORPHEUS: And what of it? You couldn't even save your friend.

GILGAMESH: YOU DARE-

ORPHEUS: I dare, you wretched man, I dare. I might be a failure but I have earned the tears of gods and turned nature to my side with my words. You are *nothing*.

GILGAMESH: I am *not* nothing!

ORPHEUS: You're here, aren't you? Seems like verdict enough.

GILGAMESH: What of you, bard? You walked away once—why are *you* here?

ORPHEUS: There was no point in leaving.

GILGAMESH: Or you couldn't do it.

ORPHEUS: And what if I couldn't? I've never claimed to be anything but a failure. At least I didn't abandon the people I loved.

GILGAMESH: Stop saying that!

ORPHEUS: Why? Does the truth hurt so?

GILGAMESH: YOU MINCING MINSTREL! What do you know of my brother? What do *you* know of Enkidu?

ORPHEUS: I know the stories.

GILGAMESH: You know the stories because we *made* the stories.

ORPHEUS: What do you mean?

GILGAMESH: I am Gilgamesh! Slayer of—

ORPHEUS: Sweet Apollo, not this again.

GILGAMESH: Slayer of monsters, builder of cities, the man who outran the sun! I fought death and almost beat it!

ORPHEUS: *Almost*.

GILGAMESH: You are an extremely annoying little man.

ORPHEUS: I get that a lot. Last time it happened I was quite literally torn apart.

GILGAMESH: You know, I've killed lions with my bare hands. You don't look as strong as a lion.

ORPHEUS: I've nothing to fear from a man who wouldn't even fight for the people he loved.

GILGAMESH: What do you know of Enkidu, you snide little boylover?

ORPHEUS: I know he was your friend. I know you let him die.

GILGAMESH: You know nothing, bard. You know nothing of our struggles.

ORPHEUS: You should have saved him.

GILGAMESH: What could I have done?

ORPHEUS: You're Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH: Damn right I am! And what of it?

ORPHEUS: I'm sorry?

GILGAMESH: What of it? I am the man who outran the sun, but even I could not outrun death.

ORPHEUS: You could have tried!

GILGAMESH: What could I have done, little man? I outran the sun, I crossed the ocean, I touched immortality, and I could not save myself. He was my equal, and died all the same; what could I have done?

ORPHEUS: You let him die!

GILGAMESH: And how did I do that?

ORPHEUS: He didn't want to face your monsters! You forced him to come with you! To risk everything, and for what?

GILGAMESH: If he hadn't wanted to fight them, we wouldn't have fought them.

ORPHEUS: Oh, please—

GILGAMESH: He was my brother. My equal. I might have slain the Bull of Heaven, but he was the one who held it down. The Bull of Heaven! Without him, I was a spoiled king. With him...well. I wouldn't have gone if he hadn't wanted to. I couldn't have.

ORPHEUS: You should have-

GILGAMESH: What could I have done, bard? We were the mightiest of men. We slew monsters. We were their equal. And for all our strength we could barely defeat the gods' *pet*. How could I have bested the gods who bound us to die?

ORPHEUS: You're Gilgamesh!

GILGAMESH: And he was Enkidu. My brother. The only equal I ever had.

ORPHEUS: You loved him so?

GILGAMESH: He held down the Bull of Heaven! Had he lived...

ORPHEUS: He didn't live. He died, and instead of fighting for him you wasted all your efforts trying to save yourself.

GILGAMESH: How could I have done otherwise? My brother was dead. Death was there, with me, all around me. I saw lions, and for the first time I felt afraid.

ORPHEUS: But-

GILGAMESH: All my rage did not save me. It would not have saved Enkidu.

ORPHEUS: And you think he'll forgive you for that?

GILGAMESH: My brother? Of course!

ORPHEUS: How can you be so sure?

GILGAMESH: How could it be otherwise? He was my brother!

ORPHEUS: You let him die.

GILGAMESH: He died. Perhaps I could saved him. Perhaps not.

ORPHEUS: But you're *Gilgamesh*!

GILGAMESH: And what of it, bard?

ORPHEUS: Why didn't you-

GILGAMESH: Because death takes who it wants and life does what it will and there is no force on earth that can stop it. I was only human.

ORPHEUS: One-third.

GILGAMESH: What?

ORPHEUS: One-third. You're only one-third human.

GILGAMESH: That only helps my case, bard. More than half a god, and even I could not escape...well.

(GILGAMESH gestures about them. ORPHEUS sits silent and contemplative.)

ORPHEUS: Perhaps you're right.

GILGAMESH: What, little man? Speak up.

ORPHEUS: Maybe you couldn't have done it.

GILGAMESH: That's what I've been saying!

ORPHEUS: But I could have.

GILGAMESH: What?

ORPHEUS: I had her. With me. On the edge of this wretched place.

GILGAMESH: Who?

ORPHEUS: I crossed the river. I brought the gods to weeping. They gave her back to me.

GILGAMESH: You brought someone out?

ORPHEUS: Almost.

GILGAMESH: But what...

ORPHEUS: We made a deal. I would trust the gods and bring her with me, and when we had crossed the border...

(Beat. GILGAMESH's next lines are slow and wondering, like a child hearing a bedtime story.)

GILGAMESH: What went wrong, bard?

ORPHEUS: I'd crossed. She hadn't. And when I looked back...

(Pause.)

GILGAMESH: You got screwed.

ORPHEUS: What?

GILGAMESH: Screwed. Played. Fucked over.

ORPHEUS: No. No, I...

GILGAMESH: You looked back a second too soon? Don't buy their lies. You were never going to get her back.

ORPHEUS: Aren't you listening, you loudmouthed braggart? I cost her her life!

GILGAMESH: No, she lost that before. You only cost yourself her.

ORPHEUS: I could have brought her out!

GILGAMESH: Death takes who it will, and the gods give as they please. Don't be a fool, bard.
You're only human.

ORPHEUS: But I was so close...!

GILGAMESH: And what of it?

ORPHEUS: What do you know of my pain?

GILGAMESH: What do *I* know of loss? What do *I* know of death's reach? What do *I* know of letting human weakness rob me of my prize at the last moment?

(Beat.)

ORPHEUS: Do you think she'll forgive me?

GILGAMESH: Forgive the man who made the gods weep for her sake?

(Beat.)

ORPHEUS: What do we do now? It's been awhile since the boat came.

GILGAMESH: That's fine. Not sure I feel like waiting for it, anyways.

ORPHEUS: What do you mean?

GILGAMESH: Their boat. To take us where *they* want us to go. We've been played around with enough for one lifetime, I'd rather not spend my death waiting on their whims.

ORPHEUS: A compelling argument. What do you suggest?

GILGAMESH: We swim.

ORPHEUS: Swim?

GILGAMESH: Well, you can make the water hold you up, if you want. Me, I'm going to swim.

ORPHEUS: You want to swim across the ocean of death.

GILGAMESH: Why not?

ORPHEUS: It's ruled by things we've both tried to avoid and we have no idea how big it is or what's on the other side.

GILGAMESH: Are you going to let that stop you?

ORPHEUS: You really want to do this?

GILGAMESH: Of course! After all, I AM—

(Blackout.)