**ACT 2, scene five: DREAMS AND CONSEQUENCES**

NARR. 1

That night, however, Enkidu dreamed a troubling dream.

The music is jagged; the movement thins,

to one staggering, fleeing shape. A lamp

appears: Gilgamesh holds it. Enkidu,

disoriented, stops in his tracks and howls.

The Witnesses discordantly echo him.

GILGAMESH *(concerned)*

Brother!

The music stops. Enkidu jolts into

consciousness; he is in his bedroom.

ENKIDU

I was at a council meeting. It was a meeting of the gods...

GILGAMESH

Sit. Go on.

Gilgamesh tends to him.

ENKIDU

Picture Enlil, here, at my left. Here, Ea. There, Shamash. Anu, presiding.

GILGAMESH

Tell me.

ENKIDU

It was as if I was not seen, not visible. Anu said, *First Humbaba, and now the Bull of Heaven. One of the two must die.* And Enlil answered, *Let it be Enkidu.*

GILGAMESH

And Shamash?

ENKIDU

He was not listened to. *Daily you go down among them,* Enlil told him, *as if you were one of them; you are not. And they preen and strut and think to vie with us; they shall not. One of the two must die…* And so forth, until Anu solemnized it: *Let it be Enkidu.*

GILGAMESH

Brother, this may have been only a dream.

ENKIDU

Brother, it was pronounced as a sentence. And here comes Death Boy!

As he tries to laugh at this callback to Act 2,

scene one, he goes into a fit of coughing.

GILGAMESH

Then brother, we will appeal it!

ENKIDU *(stumbling to the bed)*

Brother, I fear we cannot.

GILGAMESH

But my brother, why you? Why you, and not me?

ENKIDU *(slumped upon the bed, manfully amused)*

My brother, are you crying?

NARR. 4

How long Enkidu lay on his sickbed, King Gilgamesh could not say. He stayed beside his friend,

who slept in fits and starts. He kept vigil; closing his own eyes, at times, in fits and starts.

NARR. 1

His royal doctors could do nothing.

NARR. 4

How many such fitful sleeps he woke from to find nothing changed, King Gilgamesh could not say. Until—

ENKIDU

I’ve been working on my deathbed curse. Would you like to hear it?

GILGAMESH

Brother, you should save your strength.

ENKIDU

Oh, I have been. I’ve been saving it for my curse.

He may be in bad shape, but he declaims with some ferocity, as music accompanies.

I curse the gate into the forest of the sacred cedars. I curse what, before this judgment of the gods, most weakened me: a gate built by the gods. Crafted of cedar, and of intricate magics, for the invincible Humbaba to cower behind, at his dark heart of the forest’s heart. Until, great gate, I knocked on you with your master’s head, and I left you fallen in a seethe of weeds.

CHORUS

Foul piece of darkness, who set an enchantment on us to make us whimper, to sap the

strength and courage from us, to lay a curse on us that would have killed us.

ENKIDU

But you failed; I lived to curse you, and I curse you.

As for what weakens me now, here, today: wait. You also shall hear from me.

I will save my curse of you for last.

GILGAMESH

The gods tremble, brother.

ENKIDU

Next I curse Shamhat the hierodule, who, before the gate, most weakened me. Who robbed

me of a world: who came to me where I sported with my friends the lion, the gazelle, the camel, the black bear, the water moccasin, the red wolf, the raven, the tree swallow, the grey dove, the deer, and sent them scattering. Who lay with me to drive me from their company, to lose me my home, to unlearn me their speech and their hearts' ease, their free rein of the earth and sky. I curse you, Shamhat.

CHORUS

May the streets be her dwelling-place; a mud wall, and its stench of drunk men’s stale.

ENKIDU

As for the gods who did *this* to me—

Who decreed this mortal weakness: be patient.

CHORUS, WITNESSES

Your turn is coming!

ENKIDU

Next, I curse the hunters who, before the hierodule, most plagued me. The tribe of them who dug pits to catch us; the two who fetched the filthy hierodule —

GILGAMESH *(halting the music)*

Enkidu. Brother. Do you regret so much?

ENKIDU

Perhaps not *regret*, brother. Say that I *rage*.

GILGAMESH

Yet without Shamhat, would we have met? Think what pleasures you might never have known! Fresh bread, steam baths, good wine; the velvet couch we shared, to drink it. The heft of an axe. Of a sword. The lilt of language—do you regret words, brother, these human words you curse with? The words we’ve shared, the vow that made us brothers?

ENKIDU *(finally breaking)*

Gilgamesh. My brother… No. No, of course not. No, you’re right, I, withdraw my curse.

The music resumes, and Enkidu resumes

with it. But he sounds tired and defeated

now, and we hear only fragments of the rest.

I bless Shamhat. Who brought me to you, my brother. Shamhat, may kings and princes lie with you. May they… caress the curls… of your sweet hair… May your… be of gold and lapis lazuli… O Shamhat, who brought me to Gilgamesh…

The Chorus music falls silent with him.

The light of Gilgamesh’s lamp sputters out.

` NARR. 1

Just twice more, Enkidu woke and could still speak.

Enkidu cries out; the lamp is relit.

NARR. 4

In the middle of the night, he told Gilgamesh a dream.

ENKIDU

I was frozen where I stood. He took me in his talons, like an eagle’s. My arms turned to feathers. We dove into the underworld, the house of dust… It was dark, darker than this room, but I could see. There were kings—their crowns tossed onto a junk heap—squatting in the dirt. With the rest of the dead. The high priests, the acolytes. The pure and the meek, who had honored and served the gods—no better off, now, than the gangsters and the godless. Nobody here but nobodies.

CHORUS, WITNESSES

All of us squatting in the same dark. Voiceless, with ragged-feather arms and beaks for mouths. Pecking at the clay…

The lamp sputters; the light shifts.

NARR. 4

The second time, twelve days later, was at the last gleam of his final evening.

ENKIDU

Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH

Brother? Are you—?

ENKIDU

Why wouldn't they let me die in battle? Didn't I deserve to die a warrior?

GILGAMESH

You *have* battled, brother! You *are* a warrior. Nothing can change that.

ENKIDU

I see shadows…

GILGAMESH

Brother!

Enkidu has died. A shadowy dance echoes

the sputter of Gilgamesh's lamp. It goes out;

the dancers continue in darkness; then are

still. A servant brings a fresh lamp. Chorus

plays softly solo.

NARR. 1

All that night, Gilgamesh remained at his dead friend’s side.

Little of what Gilgamesh chants—grief-

stricken, ceremonial, private—is audible.

GILGAMESH *(chanting)*

Mountains we ascended, high into the cedar forest… Land of the mighty Humbaba…

NARR. 4

All night he sang of the heroic deeds of the valiant Enkidu, the great warrior, his friend.

GILGAMESH *(chanting)*

High, high it flew! Smiting the goddess who in her arrogance had wronged us.

NARR. 1

Until the first gleam of day, when he rose, and went before the council of Uruk’s elders.

Lights, bustle: the private, night-time scene

becomes a public, daylit one.

GILGAMESH *(formal and ceremonial)*

Hearken unto me, o elders. It is for my friend, the valiant Enkidu, that I weep. For my brother, who was a brother to the low plains horses and the high prairie panthers; who came into our land of men and became our protector. My brother, who crossed mountains, rivers, forests with me, to take the head of the foul Humbaba, who would have denied us the wood of his cedars—had my friend not stood with me to slay him. Enkidu, who with me slew the Bull of Heaven, sent down from on high to terrorize us. My brother, the valiant Enkidu, the unconquerable Enkidu, who by a *sleep* is taken. By a *sleep,* long and dark and merciless. By a simple, unyielding *nothing*.

NARR. 4

Until grief stopped his voice, and he could speak no more.

Gilgamesh does not move.

NARR. 2

Nor would the passage of that day bring Gilgamesh relief.

NARR. 3

Nor of the days to come: the burial of his friend; the months of mourning.

NARR. 1

Until letting his hair grow long and wild, he went into the desert, wearing only a lion's skin.

The Chorus begins to play again. Gilgamesh

continues to sit motionless, not enacting this,

nor anything else, until the end of the scene.

NARR. 4

An approach which did not heal him.

CHORUS *(speaking, not chanting)*

For if it was for his friend he wept, it was not only for his friend.

NARR. 3

For *When I die,* he thought, *won’t I be bones and dust, like Enkidu?*

GILGAMESH

When I die—why would I be any different? Won’t I be squatting in the same clay, pecking

at the same dirt as Enkidu?

NARR. 1

He took a bowl of carnelian and filled it with honey.

NARR. 2, WITNESSES

A bowl of lapis lazuli; filled it with butter.

CHORUS

He adorned them as the gods required, and set them out in the sun.

NARR. 4, WITNESSES

He lay down to dream.

CHORUS

And in the morning, he woke, and he said:

GILGAMESH

I must go to Utnapishtim, the son of Ubaru-Tuti.

NARR. 2

Utnapishtim, who *was* different; who was *never* brought to dust. For he had been born an

ordinary man; yet somehow—

GILGAMESH

*How*, though?—

NARR. 2

He had become immortal.

NARR. 3, CHORUS, WITNESSES

So Gilgamesh rose.

This is decisive movement, Gilgamesh's first

decisive movement since Enkidu’s death.

NARR. 1

He took his hatchet and his sword.

GILGAMESH

Utnapishtim will know.

CHORUS, WITNESSES

He set out, this hero of heroes, this man greater than all men, on a new quest.

The music persists briefly, to punctuate.

**END OF ACT TWO: INTERMISSION**