

DREAMNASIUM, episode 3: “The Dame Wore a Tesseract,” part 1

[Synthy Dreamnasium theme]

THE MUSE: Dreamnasium. Function: noun. A state of mind, marked by abstraction or release from consensual reality. “The Dame Wore a Tesseract,” part 1.

[Dreamnasium theme continues, then fades out]

[Weird, spacey, futuristic. Like jumbled streams of code.]

[Soft, indistinct voices echoing about.]

VOICE 1: [too soft to hear] Preparing to slide... Agents, brace for flux.

VOICE 2: [too soft to hear] There's an analog for you, Grey.

VOICE 3: [too soft to hear] Damn it. I'm living off the land. Again.

VOICE 4: [too soft to hear] Just remember the trigger, Agent. Don't get lost.

VOICE 3: [too soft to hear] Twilight time. I know. It's always Twilight time.

[Noir-ish music.]

[Beach noises - gulls, waves, lazy dock bells making the occasional clang. This blends into the sounds of small crowd of beachgoers enjoying the sun up and down the shore.]

GRAY: [V.O.] It was a silver, misty day in the Angelic City. The kind of day where hot clouds, blowing in from the West, get rhubarb from the cold breezes sliding down from the North. You can taste sea salt in the air all the way to downtown. You can feel the clammy all over your skin like a sweat you never sweated.

[The sound of the beach diminishes to be overtaken by the noise of the City.]

GRAY: [V.O.] This weather ain't good for nobody. It's like the world can't make up its mind. People get stupid in this weather- cheat on their wives, leave their husbands, rob the local bank, put a couple slugs in that noisy neighbor who just won't shut the hell up. Yeah. Long as this lasts the town's in for a bumpy time. Bad for most, I guess, but damned good for business. My business. My name's Gray. I... look into things.

[The office window closing, muffling the exterior noise. It's still there but very much in the background.]

THE DAME: Mr. Gray? Are you listening?

GRAY: [V.O.] To be honest, I wasn't. I was thinking to spend this ugly silver day holed up in the office, just me, some black coffee, and the racing form. But the Dame walked in and put the kibosh on all of that.

GRAY: (a little confused) Sorry. Sorry, Miss. Guess I drifted a little.

GRAY: [V.O.] The truth of the matter is no one could be bored by *this* dame. She looked right out of the society pages. Somebody had poured her into the cherry red, skintight number that was barely holding her together. Matching heels as high as you want, with nails and coiffure in the same blood red. If dull was a country, the dame was from the moon.

THE DAME: Just how many people tell you their life's in danger in a day, anyway?

GRAY: More than you'd think.

THE DAME: Do you snooze on *them* too? Somebody wants to kill me!

GRAY: Well, we can't have that, can we? Why don't you lay out the whats and whys and we can-

[Deep footsteps coming down the hall, from behind a door to the right.]

GRAY: (sotto) Cheese it.

THE DAME: What? What's wrong?

GRAY: (sotto) Keep it down, I said.

THE DAME: (sotto) Why?

GRAY: Someone's coming. They're being damned quiet about it too.

THE DAME: (sotto) Oh, God. They found me. They're, they're coming for me.

GRAY: (sotto) Out the window. Fire escape. Now.

[Gray and the Dame moving quickly around the office.]

THE DAME: (sotto) In these heels?! Are you crazy?

[The deep footsteps stop just outside the door to the right. Knocking on the door.]

[Closet door opening.]

GRAY: (sotto) Fine. Closet. Now!

[Footsteps into the closet.]

THE DAME: (aah!)

[Closet door closing just as the office door opens on the right.]

GRAY: Can I help you, sir?

BUTCH: Are you Harris Gray?

GRAY: That's the name on the door. Who wants to know?

[Heavy footsteps over, sound of a tommy gun being pressed into Gray's head.]

BUTCH: Me and my little buddy, that's who.

GRAY: Wow. With buddies like these...

BUTCH: Go ahead, keep with the wisecracks. You'll be whistling out the side of your neck. Get it?

GRAY: Hard to miss.

[Butch moves a few steps away.]

BUTCH: Got a message for you.

GRAY: Something simple, no doubt.

[Butch runs those few steps back and hits Gray in the jaw with his fist.]

GRAY: (ugh)

[Butch moves a few steps back again.]

BUTCH: What did I say about the smart guy stuff? (beat) The boss wants to see you.

GRAY: (genuinely confused) Great. And the boss is...?

BUTCH: Maxie Sparks. (beat) Nothing, huh? I tell the boys back home I work for Maxie now and they're *all* over me. 'Cause he's like mythic or somethin'. *You?* Don't even blink.

GRAY: Never heard of him.

BUTCH: Yeah, well, he's heard of you. And he wants to see you.

GRAY: Well I guess I better be seen, then.

BUTCH: Believe it, flatfoot. Two o'clock at the Chateau Noir. Don't be late or, y'know, you will be. Late, that is. (chuckles) Now *that's* funny.

[Butch walks back out the door, closing it behind him. His footsteps recede out of earshot down the hall under the next few lines.]

[The closet door opens the dame steps out.]

THE DAME: Wow. You saved me.

[She grabs Gray and plants a big smooch on him.]

GRAY: (being kissed) Okay. Okay. That's very nice. Let's not get hysterical, okay?

THE DAME: Sorry. I'm sorry. But that was SO close.

[Some of the weird sounds and voices from the opening, VERY soft.]

GRAY: (distracted) Yeah, yeah... skin of our teeth...

THE DAME: You really think they work for Maxie Sparks?

GRAY: (distracted) Pr- pretty sure... yeah...

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THE DAME: Mr. Gray? Are you all right?

GRAY: (distracted) What are you talking about?

THE DAME: Nothing. I just- I've never had anyone look at me that way before.

GRAY: (distracted) Like... like what?

THE DAME: Like you... like you recognize me? And I sort of feel the same, but...we've never met. Before today, I mean. Have we?

GRAY: [V.O.] The truth was I *did* remember her. Or did I? Looking at her my head was all of a sudden filled with people... an old warhorse of a guy with handlebar 'stache, some skirt who looked like a cross between Vivienne Leigh and a punch in the neck, whatever that means. Some kind of... flying car, like out of the funny papers. And the Dame's face too, but blurry... strange... and *somebody* saying my name.

[The odd sounds rise for a second and then switch off instantly.]

THE DAME: Mr. Gray?

GRAY: (recovering) Sorry. Sorry. Dunno what came over- I'm fine. I'm good. Come on. Let's get out of here.

THE DAME: Where are we going?

GRAY: You want me on your case, don't you?

THE DAME: Well, yes, I did, but, if Maxie Sparks is involved, shouldn't we go to the police?

GRAY: If you wanted the cops, you wouldn't have come to me in the first place.

THE DAME: Hm. Fair point.

GRAY: Somebody trying to kill you *and* that bruiser making a house call on me in the same day. That don't add up.

THE DAME: Coincidence?

GRAY: Yeah, I don't like coincidences. Don't believe in 'em for one thing. So, we take a drive, you tell your story, I clear my head.

THE DAME: And your meeting? What about that?

GRAY: Well that's *my* problem. But I've got a nasty feeling solving *your* case will get me the goods on the Maxie Sparks situation, one way or another.

THE DAME: (sexy, intrigued) All right then. Let's take a drive.

[Interior noises of Gray's old-timey car as they drive.]

GRAY: [V.O.] Turns out the drive was up the coast, straight up the Pacifica railway, past the movie star bungalows and beaches so crystal white you'd think they were made of glass. Even with all that cloud cover over everything it was still postcard day. My head did get clear and I was looking at the Dame, dead on, maybe for the first time.

THE DAME: Mm, I love looking out at the ocean.

GRAY: As long as you keep one eye on the road, doll.

GRAY: [V.O.] She let her hair down so it could take the breeze and brother, it did. Billowing out behind her like Chinese banners. She was smiling, head tossed back like she didn't have a care in the world. Which was odd, when you think about it because...

GRAY: People are trying to kill you?

THE DAME: Yes. No. I don't know. I just know I'm in danger. I've been followed, you see. Men in dark suits with dark cars.

GRAY: The same as the guy from today?

THE DAME: Well, I didn't exactly see them, now did I, Mr. Gray? But his voice. Could have been the one making the calls...?

GRAY: Calls. Who's on the line?

THE DAME: I don't know. They ring me at all hours, threaten to hurt or kill me if I don't give them what they want.

GRAY: Which is?

THE DAME: Well, I- no. No, I better let Dr. B tell you.

GRAY: Huh. And who's Dr. B, when he's at home?

THE DAME: Dr. Adam Belanoff. My employer. That's his house just ahead.

GRAY: Looks more like a castle.

THE DAME: (amused) There's even a moat.

GRAY: Eccentric and rich, eh? Good. He can afford to pay me.

[The car turns onto a dirt drive, stops, shuts off.]

THE DAME: And... we're here.

GRAY: Trusting soul, your Doctor.

THE DAME: How's that?

GRAY: No gate. No fence. Just a hedge at the property line.

THE DAME: Oh, uh, this place has been in his family for generations.

[A few birds, breeze, etc.]

[Car doors open, they both step out, doors close.]

[They walk a few steps, across a moat with water running underneath it, up to the door.]

GRAY: What kind of doctor is this guy, anyway?

THE DAME: Not the going-to kind, if that's what you mean. He does experiments.

GRAY: Yeah, I'll bet he does. And what is it you do while the Doc's experimenting? No offense but you don't strike me as the lab coat type.

THE DAME: Oh, I might surprise you, Mr. Gray... but, to answer your question, I'm Dr. Belanoff's research assistant. And that's *all*, Mr. Gray. All.

GRAY: If you say so.

THE DAME: I do. Shall we?

[Footsteps stop.]

GRAY: (wary) Huh. Door's open.

[The big, heavy wood door creaks open further.]

[Footsteps moving into the house]

THE DAME: Doctor? Doctor B.? I'm back. I brought help.

GRAY: (tense, shushing) Easy, sister. Let the professionals handle things.

[Gun withdrawn from holster.]

[Gray walks past her, moves off into the house, walks around for a few moments, sounds of him stepping on glass, bumping into broken furniture and other debris.]

GRAY: (calling from further off in the house) Okay. Place looks clear.

[Re-holsters his gun as the dame walks over to him, a little glass under her footsteps too.]

THE DAME: Oh my gosh. Is it a break in?

GRAY: Broken mirrors and china. Busted up ottoman. Every drawer emptied onto the floor. It ain't a scout jamboree.

THE DAME: All right, all right. This kind of thing is new to me.

GRAY: Well, whatever they were looking for, they didn't find it.

THE DAME: How do you know that?

GRAY: This kind of damage doesn't come from a search. This is somebody's frustration let loose on the knickknacks.

THE DAME: Oh, no. Doctor B! He was *here* when I left.

GRAY: Well that's not good.

THE DAME: You don't- you think they hurt him?

GRAY: Until I get the full story out of you, I don't know... what... (distracted) I don't know what to-

[The odd sounds and echoing voices are back, a little louder, this time.]

THE DAME: Mr. Gray? You've got that look again.

GRAY: (he's got a migraine) What the hell? Yeah, yeah. Fine. Why don't you go check the place out, see if the Doc's hiding in some nook somewhere.

THE DAME: Are you sure you're up to this?

GRAY: (holding it together) Yeah, yeah, fine. Just go, okay? I'll see if the party boys left anything like a clue around here.

THE DAME: Okay. If you're sure.

GRAY: (a good fake) I'm sure, I'm sure. Please go.

[The dame moves off into the background, and then we hear her footsteps from another room.]

[The odd sounds and voices are louder but still too muddled to make out anything beyond the words we heard before.]

GRAY: [V.O.] I *wasn't* sure. I wasn't sure about anything. I let the Dame's looks turn my head, coming up here on smile and a vague notion of a sob story. And the weird sounds in my head today, like a dream or the kind of drunken splices of memory you get after a three day bender. Flashes of good times and bad times and none of it makes any sense and, all of sudden, I REALLY needed to find-

[Gray takes a few steps, picks up a heavy old-time phone receiver, and is met with a dial tone.]

GRAY: A phone.

[Dials the 0 for operator on the rotary phone.]

[A short ring through the receiver.]

OPERATOR: Operator. Do you want the director, Agent Gray?

GRAY: (unsure) "Agent?" "Director?" What are you talking about, lady? I just dialed zero.

OPERATOR: Oh, dear. It's just what they expected. Hold on, Agent. I'm putting you through right now.

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[A switch heard over the line, then suddenly soft static from the receiver, which fuzzies up the voice coming from it.]

[Receiver static continues under the entire scene until the phone is hung up.]

DYSON: [on phone] Gray? Damn it, man. What the hell's going on?

GRAY: Who is this?

DYSON: [on phone] (annoyed) It's Dyson. Wipe those cobwebs away, Agent. We have a situation.

GRAY: I don't care for your tone, *Dyson*. What the hell kind of screwball twist is this? Who are you people?

DYSON: [on phone] Harris Gray, I want you to listen closely– "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

GRAY: (grunt as if a massive headache just hit) Ow, oh god, ow, my head... Director Dyson...? Is that you?

DYSON: [on phone] It is. And I'm sorry about the brain ache. Trigger codes can sometimes hurt a bit. State your name and occupation.

GRAY: Harris Gray. Private Invest- (stops beat) No. Cleaner. I'm... a Field Agent for the Altworld Organization.

DYSON: [on phone] Which is?

GRAY: Cleaners move from reality to reality by inhabiting the bodies of their counterparts in the billions of variations of Earth throughout the multiverse.

DYSON: [on phone] Which is accomplished how?

GRAY: (struggling a little) We mix our... ou quanta? Quanta... with any compatible body we find there. Usually, we take over the version of ourselves that exists in the new world. We get their whole life, all their memories... (it's coming back) Sometimes you wind up in someone else's body and things can get little scrambled. So-

DYSON: [on phone] That'll do, Gray. You're verified. Now, is Agent Maguane with you?

[A beat of Gray listening to the dame moving around, opening doors and drawers, etc.]

GRAY: Maybe, yeah. I got a good candidate nearby. But, if she got the same brain scramble I did...

DYSON: [on phone] Give her the trigger and get her on the clock. You've got to get this thing under control fast.

GRAY: Let's hear it.

DYSON: [on phone] You're in a blank, Gray.

GRAY: A...? I'm sorry. I'm trying. It's taking while for the fog to lift. What's a blank?

DYSON: [on phone] A Blank is an Alt world that's invisible to the Furies.

GRAY: Furies. Right. And those are...

DYSON: [on phone] (sighs) Shape-shifting aliens who grind Alt Realities into submission. The Enemy, Gray. They're the enemy of everything.

GRAY: (remembering) Yes! Got it! Furies! Of course. (beat) I hate them, right?

DYSON: You do, in fact, hate them.

GRAY: Well, if the Furies can't even see these blanks, then this one's totally safe, right?

DYSON: From the Furies *themselves*, yes. But not from their agents. Not from Rogues.

GRAY: I'm not liking the direction this is going.

[The Dame's footsteps and such finally stop.]

DYSON: Altworld Org uses blanks for safe houses, clandestine research facilities... anything we don't want the Furies getting wind of. One of our own, Dr. Adam Belanoff, rezzed into that blank to complete work on a new piece of top secret tech.

GRAY: Powerful, I'm guessing?

DYSON: If a technology that allows you to bring a working magical weapon into a science-based universe sounds powerfu? Then yes.

GRAY: So, you think there are Rogues here, they got wind of what Belanoff's up to and they pinched him.

DYSON: If I'm understanding the local lingo, yes, that's exactly what we think. You and Maguane need to find him, and fast. Get him, his notes and his tech back. If the Furies or the Rogues get their hands on Belanoff tech before we do-

GRAY: I get the gist.

[Papers being moved around, shuffled through, etc.]

[Footsteps approach from the hall, enter.]

THE DAME: About time. Who were you talking to down there?

GRAY: A friend. Forgot I was supposed to call him earlier.

THE DAME: Nothing deadly, I hope.

GRAY: Nah. He wanted advice on a gift for his wife. Perfume.

THE DAME: Oh sweet. And he expects *you* to help with that?

GRAY: We're close.

THE DAME: What did you tell him?

GRAY: I said I'd always been partial to... "Twilight Time".

THE DAME: (grunt as if a massive headache just hit) Ow, oh... whoa... what the hell? My head...I'm- Agent Gray? Is that you?

GRAY: In the borrowed flesh.

THE DAME: UGH... my head is killing me...

GRAY: Sorry. It's the trigger phrase. The wakeup call hurts sometimes. You okay?

[The Dame's demeanor changes. Gone is the sultry, replaced with a tougher, harder edge to her voice.]

THE DAME: (recovering)...yeah... yeah... I'm good but-

[The Dame takes a few steps.]

THE DAME: You have got to be kidding me with these heels. And this *body*? Have you *seen* this?

GRAY: Hard to miss, kid.

THE DAME: Kid? I don't think a kid should even be allowed to look at something like... *me*.

GRAY: Roll with it; we're on the clock.

THE DAME: So, I'm guessing we're in deep again.

GRAY: You don't know the half of it. What's with all the paperwork?

THE DAME: I'm guessing... Dr. Belanoff notes?

[A paper being picked up.]

GRAY: Equations. Formulas. What's all this supposed to be?

THE DAME: Maybe an egg timer?

GRAY: Yeah, this is gibberish to me. Maybe the tech-heads at HQ can make sense of it all.

[More papers being picked up.]

THE DAME: Uh, see if there are any other, uh, shoes in the closet, will you? My feet are killing me.

[Pair of shoes picked up.]

GRAY: Uhh, how about these?

THE DAME: Nothing over two inches, Gray. Come on.

[A few footsteps, closet opening.]

[He looks through the closet as she continues picking up papers.]

[Another pair of shoes picked up.]

GRAY: Uh, black pumps?

THE DAME: Bingo.

GRAY: Great. Okay. We're leaving. Bring the paperwork.

THE DAME: Where to now?

GRAY: We still don't have Belanoff and I don't want to keep Maxie Sparks waiting. Got a gut feeling Maxie's the crux.

THE DAME: You're in charge, Gray.

[Car driving interior sounds again.]

GRAY: [V.O.] But I *wasn't* in charge. I was just treading water in the ocean waiting for the storm to come in. My brain was still Swiss cheese and Maguane's was scrapple. As we cut across town, I filled her in on my talk with Director Dyson.

THE DAME: So uh... what's a Rogue again?

GRAY: Ex-Cleaners. (beat) Uh, *we're* Cleaners. Agents of the Alt-World Organization.

THE DAME: Yeah yeah, that part I remember. I'm fuzzy, I'm not THAT fuzzy.

GRAY: Every once in a while we lose one of ours to the other side or, worse, they just go into business for themselves.

THE DAME: Why would anybody ever quit *this* job? What would compare to jumping into a new universe every week?

GRAY: That's just it. We get to see the multiverse. We get to go places and do things most people can't even dream about. It's heady. Sometimes people give in to the temptation to take something or kill someone because... none of it seems real anymore.

THE DAME: Or... maybe they get hooked on the rush.

GRAY: Or that.

THE DAME: So... the director says we're dealing with Furies but you think Rogues? Why?

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GRAY: Think about it. This place is a blank. The Furies can't even SEE it. But, Rogues... they're *us*. Used to be. An ex-cleaner might know about this place. *Somebody* was tailing Belanoff. *Somebody* was threatening you— or— Belanoff assistant.

THE DAME: Figures I don't have an analogue here. You luck out with this version of yourself, and I get this... *dame*. (beat) Okay. So, it's Roges, not Furies. What does that get us?

GRAY: (really cheesed off) Dead, if we're not careful. Furies are monsters but they're basically magpies. They just steal everything they can and move on, mostly. Cleaners and Rogues? Murder at first sight.

THE DAME: That almost sounds *personal*, Gray. Something you're not telling me?

GRAY: My ex-partner's one of them. You've probably heard of her. (beat) Chasis Verdant.

THE DAME: Wait. No way. Chasis Verdant is an academy *legend*. Multiple honors, crack shot, master tactician, most completed missions, most successful-

GRAY: (irritated) All right, I get it, you've heard of her.

THE DAME: Her name's on the memorial wall. Figured she was killed in the line.

GRAY: The multiverse isn't that lucky. But she's dead to *me*.

[Dreamnasium theme plays.]

THE MUSE: Geoffrey Thorne's “Dreamnasium”, episode three. “The Dame Wore a Tesseract,” part one.

Featuring the voice talents of:

Pete Milan as Harris Gray

Kristen Bays as the Dame

Jessie Moore as Dyson

Philip Weber as Butch

Darian Lindle as the Operator

Susan Bridges as Maguane

and Melissa Autumn Hearne as The Muse

Written by Jeffrey & Susan Bridges, based on the original short story "The Dame Wore a Tesseract" by Geoffrey Thorne

Dreamnasium theme by Vincent Morrison

Music by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com

Directed by Dave Morgan

Produced by Pendant Productions

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[Dreamnasium theme fades out.]