

DREAMNASIUM, episode 7: “Antiope in Black,” part 1

[Synthy Dreamnasium theme]

THE MUSE: Dreamnasium. Function: noun. A vast, extra-dimensional space described by benign chaos and the germination of visions, revelations, and tales. “Antiope in Black,” part one.

[Dreamnasium theme continues, then fades out]

[Water dripping far off, everything echoes in her jussst a bit.]

[A slight hissing and mandible clicks are heard every time Meldrick talks.]

MELDRICK: Flint... Antiope Flint... come out. Out.

[Alien footsteps, of a human-sized insectoid alien.]

MELDRICK: One does not like searching this place. One does not like the wet or the stink or-

[A cat meows.]

[Clicky claws as Meldrick picks the cat up.]

[Curious meow.]

MELDRICK: What is it? Cat as food or food for the cat? Cat?

[Flint’s voice seemingly coming from every direction, with echoes.]

FLINT: One chance, Bug. Put down the cat. I mean, unless you *want* me to kill you.

MELDRICK: Disgusting. Safety is one thing, but to live like this? This?

FLINT: You’re not listening. Cat. Down. Now.

[Cat jumping to the ground with a hiss, runs off to the left.]

MELDRICK: Cat is down. Down.

FLINT: What do you want here, Bug?

MELDRICK: That depends. Depends. On who I'm speaking with. With.

FLINT: Here's a thought. You answer what I ask and I keep not killing you.

MELDRICK: I am Meldrick. I work for Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga.

FLINT: And what's Baba want?

MELDRICK: To see you. You.

FLINT: For what?

MELDRICK: A Job. Job.

FLINT: Skip. Baba can do her own jobs.

MELDRICK: (laughs, very alien-sounding) Baba Yaga says you come. Baba says you owe. Owe.

[A beat, then soft footsteps up from the right. Flint's voice stops echoing.]

MELDRICK: Ahh! Did not see you. Good gear. Good camo for here. Disgusting. Dark. Dark.

FLINT: Relax, Bug. I'm coming.

[Cat runs back in from the left, meowing.]

[Plate set down, a small flask pulled out from a cloak and uncorked, water poured into the plate.]

[Cat purrs a little.]

FLINT: That's it 'til I get back. Don't be greedy.

[Cat drinking quickly.]

FLINT: Suit yourself. Let's go.

[Meldrick moves off to the right a few steps.]

FLINT: (harsh laugh) Not that way, idiot. It's a maze down here. You get lost, I am *not* coming for you.

[Meldrick walks back to center, the two of them fade out to the left.]

MELDRICK: Yes, thank you. You.

[A small fire in a fireplace. Slight echo on everyone's lines, the room is big.]

MELDRICK: Sit here. Wait. Wait.

FLINT: Yeah... waiting's not really one of my things.

MELDRICK: Don't be testy. Baba will be here. Here.

FLINT: Skip. You got *any* idea what Clan Alexander would do if they found me here? Why do you think I was hiding?

MELDRICK: Alexander will not find you. Safe here with Clan Shipley. In the bunker. Bunker.

FLINT: *Baba Yaga's* bunker. UGH. No. I'm going.

[She starts out and he blocks her way or puts a claw on her arm.]

MELDRICK: You can't go. Wait. Wait.

FLINT: This is Terra Nova III, bug. I wait too long, I stay open too long, I'm *dead*. Tell Baba to ping my wireless.

MELDRICK: Can't and you know it. Most tech, nearly ALL tech is down since the-

[Heavy door opening across the room, a few footsteps in.]

FLINT: Since the Break, I know. It's a joke. Idiot. Baba's so smart, let *her* fix the tech.

[Door closes.]

BABA YAGA: It's not the tech. I suspect it has to do with the planet's magnetic field shifting. Which could explain why we've not ever been able to contact Terra Primus for help.

FLINT: Hello, Baba.

BABA YAGA: Antiope. You're looking nervous, girl.

FLINT: Don't call me "Antiope". I hate Antiope.

BABA YAGA: As you say. "Flint" it is.

FLINT: So...

BABA YAGA: What, no hugs for auntie Yaga? No gifts?

FLINT: You're still breathing, aren't you?

[Meldrick draws a blade, steps forward.]

BABA YAGA: Stop, Meldrick. We can all be grateful I still draw breath, can't we? She keeps the razorline in the bracelet. No sword unless she touches it, are we clear?

[Blade re-sheathed.]

MELDRICK: As you say. Say.

FLINT: Okay, that was fun. Want to tell me what I'm doing here?

[A few footsteps, Baba pulls out a chair and sits.]

BABA YAGA: Sit with me.

FLINT: (small sigh)

[A few steps, chair pulled out, Flint sits.]

[Something metallic pulled out from a pouch and set on the table.]

BABA YAGA: Know what that is? Never seen one before? It was found on a prisoner after Clan Miller's last incursion. The man wearing it told us he'd taken it off a corpse. A *Xeno* corpse.

[Flint picks up the item, shakes it, there's a small, quiet rattle inside.]

FLINT: Metallic. Fits the hand. Bit of a clocky design. So what? Xeno's get morgued all the time. No one likes 'em. No offense, Bug.

MELDRICK: None taken. Taken.

BABA YAGA: Not this kind of Xeno. This was a Construct. Ever heard of them?

(beat) Doesn't matter. The point is, until three days ago, there were no Constructs on Terra Nova III, dead or alive.

DREAMNASIUM, episode 7: "Antiope in Black," part 1

FLINT: How do *you* know that?

BABA YAGA: I'm Baba Yaga. It's my business to know things. What I *don't* know is how long this Construct was here, what it was doing, and what happened to its partner.

FLINT: You're so sure it had a partner? Okay. So what's some dead Xeno, dead *construct*, got to do with me?

BABA YAGA: Do you know how the world works, Flint? I mean how it *really* works?

[Flint tosses the metallic item back on the table.]

FLINT: (frustrated sigh) The world's run by the clans and whoever has the biggest stick.

BABA YAGA: No. Wrong.

[Baba Yaga raps Flint on the knuckles.]

FLINT: Ow! Hey, are you torqued, old lady?

BABA YAGA: Self-interest, girl. The world is run by self-interest. It's the engine of our society. It's been my meat and potatoes for almost thirty years and it is what connects you to me and to Meldrick here and to this dead Construct. The trick is in telling just how best those interests must be served.

FLINT: (cold laugh) Yep, you're torqued. *You're* the only thing connecting me to whatever that metallic thing is. And I'm cutting you off.

[Chair slides out quickly, Flint on her feet.]

FLINT: We're done here. Thanks for risking my life for nothing.

BABA YAGA: It's not nothing.

FLINT: It is now.

[Flint walks toward the door.]

BABA YAGA: Meldrick.

[Flint is blocked by Meldrick. The blade can be heard coming out.]

FLINT: Baba. Tell this Bug to stop blocking me or he's losing some limbs.

BABA YAGA: You're not leaving. Not yet. You owe me, Flint. For your brother.

FLINT: Every time. Every *single* time. You always bring it down to Cadmus.

BABA YAGA: Was this not our deal? Didn't I save him from the press gangs when you couldn't? Did I not assure he was sent someplace safe?

FLINT: Where even *I* can't find him?

BABA YAGA: Best for you both if only I know. *You* make a lot of enemies.

FLINT: They make *me*.

BABA YAGA: Mmhm. Clan Alexander. A hundred dead flesh gangsters. Rapists, thieves, brutes of many kinds, all seem to bleed out their lives from the cut of your razor line.

FLINT: I'm safer the more people know to steer clear of me.

MELDRICK: And Cadmus? Is he safer? He's just a little boy. He possesses none of your grit, your cold efficiency. You know it's true. True.

FLINT: I promised our parents when they- I clothed him. I fed him. I fed *us*, found *us* shelter. I kept us alive.

BABA YAGA: Until the day you couldn't and you came to me. Flint. If you do this for me, Flint, I swear by my life, I'll send you to see him.

FLINT: I wouldn't even know what to say to him, it's been so long.

BABA YAGA: I'll give you a voice recorder. You'll have plenty of time to think what you want to say while walking.

FLINT: Fine. Whatever. What's the job?

BABA YAGA: This.

[Baba picks the metal device up from the table.]

BABA YAGA: You will deliver it ten clicks west into the Hollow.

FLINT: The *Hollow*? Deliver it where in the Hollow?

BABA YAGA: Oh you'll know. Trust me, you'll know. You drop off the package and get the hell out.

FLINT: Your battery-powered voice recorder will be dead within minutes of entering the Hollow.

BABA YAGA: Uh uh. Not this one. Shielded.

FLINT: Nnh. And you'll give me the bug for backup, yeah?

BABA YAGA: I need him with me.

FLINT: I'd almost think you didn't want me to return from this trip.

BABA YAGA: I firmly believe that if anyone on Terra Primus III can, Flint, it's *you*.

[Alieny rainforest sounds.]

[Flint making her way lightly through the forest.]

[Mechanical click of the voice recorder turned on.]

FLINT: Cadmus. It's... it's Antiope. We haven't spoken in so long, I don't know if you even remember me. The woman who hid you, oversees your safety and needs? Baba Yaga? Well, her name's actually Barbara Yasbeck, but she doesn't know I know that. She sent me on this mission to The Hollow, and told me we'd see each other again after.

FLINT: I hope you understand that I did what I had to to keep you safe. It was the last thing I ever said to mama and papa, that I would protect you. And when I couldn't guarantee that... I had to find someone who could. I guess I don't really even know what to say. So I'm just going to keep talking, because it makes me feel closer to you, and that's *something*. Maybe you'll listen after I get back, and be able to understand.

FLINT: Baba wouldn't send the Bug out here with me, but I guess that makes sense. Why waste a perfectly good xeno when she can send little expendable me? What difference would it make to anyone if something in the Hollow eats me for breakfast? Baba'd just find another disposable cit to manipulate.

[The walking pauses for a moment.]

FLINT: The Hollow is deep and dark. Filled with trees and things twittery and jittery. Someone told me once...mama or papa, I can't remember...that the deep dense flora here are called rainforests. They had them back on Terra Primus, before it ran dry.

[The walking continues.]

FLINT: Had to stop to get my bearings, but I think I'm back on track. I wish I knew what I was looking for. "Oh you'll know", she says, what nonsense is that? Just *tell* me what I'm going to see. Baba *loves* a mystery. Anyway, Terra Primus going dusty is what brought the first settlers to this Altworld.

FLINT: Mama used to say the universe was a wheel, with Terra Primus at the center, and alternate Terras spread along the spokes. Lots and lots of them. Too many to count. Each of them a little like Terra Primus, and a little not. And I guess our grandparents thought this one was as fine a place as any to settle.

FLINT: I'm rambling. I haven't seen you in ages and the first thing I dive into is a history lesson? Has Baba been teaching you? I worry. About a lot of things.

[Just Flint walking for a beat.]

FLINT: It's dark in The Hollow. Darker than anywhere else I've been. I don't *mind* the dark. It's saved our lives more times than you could know. But there are... things out there in the jungle, things no one has ever seen and lived to describe. Bodies turn up from time to time, looking... chewed. That too grim? That's too grim. You're young. I... can't even remember how young. Too young for these details, anyway.

FLINT: Whatever lives in here, *they're* the natives, more than you or I or Baba Yaga will ever be.

[Something skitters off to the side, sounds a little like rocks skipping on a concrete wall.]

[Waking stops, Flint crouches.]

FLINT: (whispering) Did you hear that? Something's out there.

[Draws out her razor line, like a thin wire unspooling.]

FLINT: I've got the razorline, but-

[The rocky skittering grows louder, now sounds like hundreds of rocks skipping on a concrete wall... then stops abruptly.]

FLINT: I'm NOT imagining it, right? The Hollow can play tricks on the mind, *especially* when you're alone. I thought I saw eyes... of a pale yellow. Maybe a flash of a scaled tail-

[The rocky skittering picks up, coming closer, on the left.]

FLINT: They're *herding* me! (suddenly her voice is STEEL) Well they're in for a shock. I don't get scared. I get *cold* inside. And then someone gets *hurt*.

[SNARL as a beast leaps out from the bushes at her, feet rock-skittering across the ground as it rushes her and leaps.]

FLINT: (small exertion noise)

[The razor line whips upward... and juicily SLICES THE BEAST RIGHT IN TWO! One half of its body splats down to Flint's left, the other on the right.]

FLINT: Sliced it right in two. Orange blood. No, too grim. I don't know what to call this other than... a *monster*. Face little more than an excuse for row upon row of jagged teeth. Its scales seem to... mimic the appearance of whatever they touch. Larger than most adult humans... *smarter* than most I've met, too. Also like humans, their hide is no match for the razorline.

[More rock skittering off in the jungle, not too far away.]

FLINT: Well. One down.

[Flint runs off.]

[Alieny rainforest sounds]

[Flint runs up, drops herself down to the ground.]

FLINT: (panting noises while running, then a little while of trying to catch her breath)

[Sound recorder turned on.]

FLINT: (still not fully recovered from the run) Twelve. It's *twelve* now. They're working in twos.

[Two sets of rapid rock skittering and snarls, all in rapid succession, one from the right, one from the left.]

FLINT: (bit of an angry exertion noise this time, she has had ENOUGH)

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[The razorline whips around the stereo field, from center to right, back to center but further off, to left, back to center up front. It makes contact with a monster head on the right and the left, both get cut off and fall to the ground with juicy thuds.]

FLINT: (through gritted teeth) *Fourteen*. If I- (she stops, noticing something) There's something different in the air. Something burned its way through here. Recently.

[She takes a few steps.]

FLINT: Burnt flora around the edges here. There are always fires burning on Terra Nova III, but not like this. It's... directed. Like a path. Down the way to- (stops as she sees...whatever it is)

FLINT: (a little in awe) There it is. Right where Baba Yaga said it would be. It's beautiful. Some kind of tech. Unblemished and unbroken. And... working? I'm going to get closer.

[Flint walks up closer, as she does we can hear something like an idling spaceship engine hum coming from behind a closed door.]

[Sudden rock skittering picks up in the background, moving closer.]

FLINT: Eight meters long, five high? What looks like a door at one end, windows at the other. Some kind of writing on it, but I don't recognize the language.

[Rock skittering coming from all over now, six different sets.]

FLINT: (angry) No, no, no. I just got here. There's too many. Cadmus... I love you.

[The snarls and skittering all over as the monsters attack.]

FLINT: (lots of different exertion noises as she whips the razorline all over)

[The razorline cutting into the monsters, body parts falling, more snarls and running. A talon swipe.]

FLINT: (small cry of pain)

[Another talon swipe.]

FLINT: (okay that one REALLY hurt, all the PAIN AND ANGER) I AM FLINT! FLINT, FLINT, FLINT!

[The razorline whipping about, cutting off pieces of monster, as skittering, roars and snarls overwhelm her.]

[Dreamnasium theme plays.]

THE MUSE: Geoffrey Thorne's "Dreamnasium", episode seven. "Antiope in Black," part one.

Featuring the voice talents of:

Barbra Dillon as Flint

Marte Brengle as Baba Yaga

Philip Weber as Meldrick

and Melissa Autumn Hearne as The Muse

Written by Jeffrey and Susan Bridges, based on the original short story "Antiope in Black" by Geoffrey Thorne

Dreamnasium theme by Vincent Morrison

Music by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com

Directed by Paul Brueggemann

Produced by Pendant Productions

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[Dreamnasium theme fades out.]