

M Y T H O S First 10 Pages

Episode 1  
"The Vessel"

by

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**TEASER**

EXT. VALLEY - ANTARCTICA - DAY (1911)

A GLACIER thousands of feet high towers above a white valley where a dozen CREWMEN pull a rope through a pulley hanging over a cavernous PIT. The SUMMER SUN won't set for another six weeks. Nearby, an icy blue river carves its way to the sea where the anchored expedition SHIP *Curiosity* sits frozen.

FIRST MATE

Heave! Heave! Put your backs into  
it, you dogs!

From the depths of the pit emerges the black dome of a 12-foot-long, 4-foot-wide FOSSILIZED COCOON. The crewmen wrap straps around the cocoon and hoist it onto a sled. Among the men is DANIEL MARSH (32), a ruggedly handsome explorer.

DANIEL

Easy now. Easy, lads. Alright,  
that's it. Take her.

With the cocoon on the sled, Daniel turns to give the thumbs up to a an older man watching from an outcrop.

EXT. OUTCROP - ANTARCTICA - SAME

This is Professor HENRY MARSH (50s) beaming with pride. He is Daniel's father. At his makeshift desk are charts tracking the Earth's magnetosphere and a crude diagram of the cocoon beside ANCIENT GLYPHS.

Standing apart, their Danish Captain, MALTHE KNUTSEN (45) shows more interest in packing a tobacco pipe than the scientific discovery of a lifetime.

OLD CASTRO (60s), another seaman, trudges through the snow with a smile and a steaming metal kettle. He speaks with a Haitian Creole accent.

CASTRO

Coffee, Commandant? Professor?

Henry takes a mug from the man and nods his thanks.

HENRY

Thank you, Mr. Castro.

Castro approaches Knutsen, but is waved away. Knutsen mutters to no one in particular.

KNUTSEN

Not so long ago, treasure was  
shiny.

Henry ignores Knutsen, watching with eager anticipation as the crew pulls the cocoon safely away from the cave. Once it's secure, Henry sees Daniel marching up to the outcrop. He gets up to greet him.

EXT. HILLSIDE - ANTARCTICA - SAME

Henry meets Daniel halfway. They stop a few paces from one another.

DANIEL

Not bad for a day's work, eh, old  
man?

Henry laughs and puts his arm around his son.

AESTHER (V.O.)

Grandfather--

Daniel and Henry turn in fright.

INT. STUDY - HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - NIGHT - (1928)

Henry (70s) jolts awake. His skin is thin and graying; purple sludge pumps through varicose veins. It's been seventeen years, but he looks even older. He sits in an armchair. His study is filled with bookshelves, blackboards and all the accouterments of a tenured professor of physics.

AESTHER

--Your guests have all arrived.

Henry turns and sees AESTHER MARSH (29), his grand-daughter and caretaker.

INT. DINING ROOM - HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry enters the room suspicious of everyone there-- GRADUATE STUDENTS, other PROFESSORS, the dean. They CLAP. Henry takes his seat at the head of the table. Aesther shyly journeys around the room filling glasses. DEAN WILLIS GENTRY stands at the opposite end with a glass raised.

DEAN

Henry, we all know it's been a geologic epoch since you've given a formal lecture, but I think I speak for the entire department when I say that your theorems will keep students occupied for generations to come...

THOMAS ARMITAGE (26), a grad student, whispers something to Aesther. Aesther smiles, and shakes her head.

DEAN (CONT'D)

... and I know if Daniel were alive, he'd be very proud of his father. Whether or not your hypotheses can ever be proven, this university owes you a debt of gratitude.

The rest of the room gives a round of "Hear, hear." The Dean raises his glass high.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Cheers to Professor Henry Marsh, the smartest man I know.

Dean takes a sip of his drink. The professor looks at everyone in the room with disdain as they clink glasses.

INT. HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - LATER

The house is empty of guests. A grandfather clock strikes 4:00 am. The only sounds are the rustling of papers from Henry's study, then a low demonic VOICE chanting in an extinct language, then the sound of a STRUGGLE.

EXT. HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

GUNSHOTS and a blood-curdling SCREAM.

EXT. HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - MORNING

Night gives way to day. Thomas carries an armful of books up to the house and knocks on the door. No answer.

THOMAS

Hello?

Thomas attempts to open the door. It's unlocked. He peeks inside.

INT. FOYER - HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - MORNING

The house is dark. The only noise is chalk SCRIBBLING on a blackboard.

THOMAS  
Professor Marsh? Aesther?

Thomas ventures inside.

INT. HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Thomas makes his way down the hall, opening curtains along the way.

THOMAS  
I brought you some Franck, Bohr,  
Faraday... Aesther?

He hears the SCRATCHING of chalk in the study and places the books on an entryway table.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
I can hear you in there. Professor  
Marsh?

Thomas peeks inside Henry's study.

INT. STUDY - HENRY MARSH'S HOUSE - MORNING

Thomas finds Aesther scribbling equations on the blackboard.

THOMAS  
Aesther?

She doesn't respond. Thomas approaches her. As he does, he sees Henry's body on the floor. The face has been riddled with bullets. He gasps and turns to Aesther. She doesn't stop computing. He approaches cautiously.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Aesther, we need to get you to a  
hospital.

Aesther stops writing for a moment.

AESTHER  
I'm not finished.

Aesther goes back to the equations.

CREDITS.

**ACT ONE**

INT/EXT. OVER WHITE

A scratchy blues song performed by Robert Johnson plays softly on a PHONOGRAPH, drowned out by moans and the occasional scream.

INT. TREATMENT HALL - SANITARIUM - DAY (1929)

A white cloth covers the eyes of a seizing woman biting down on a wooden peg. It is Aesther. Her arms and legs strain against the bed's straps.

Gentle bespectacled DOCTOR MURRAY (50s) pulls an empty syringe from Aesther's skin, hands it to NURSE ESCHER (40s), then removes the cloth from Aesther's eyes. An ORDERLY holds her head still.

The doctor opens each of Aesther's eyes manually to examine them rolling backward. He motions for the nurse to give him another syringe. She hands it to him delicately. Then the doctor punctures Aesther's skin with the needle and injects a cloudy liquid labeled METRAZOL.

Aesther seizes again.

INT. HYDRO-THERAPY WARD - SANITARIUM - DAY

ORDERLIES pour buckets of ice water into metal tubs with thrashing screaming WOMEN inside.

Aesther shivers quietly in her own tub, her hands cuffed to each side. NURSE MEYER (30s) pours a bucket of ice water over her head.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - SANITARIUM - DAY

Aesther is strapped to a rickety wooden chair facing a powerful and erratic strobe light.

She foams at the mouth.

Doctor Murray takes studious notes behind thick, black-tinted goggles.

INT. LOUNGE - SANITARIUM - DAY

The phonograph plays music. Aesther jots notes in the margins of *The Chemical History of a Candle* by Michael Faraday as other patients wander around.

She appears gaunt and withdrawn but not noticeably insane.

INT. AESTHER'S ROOM - SANITARIUM - NIGHT

Aesther sleeps sweetly as sporadic moans of madness echo from other patients' rooms.

INT. TREATMENT HALL - SANITARIUM - DAY

Aesther is injected with metrazol.

INT. HYDRO-THERAPY WARD - SANITARIUM - DAY

Aesther is drenched. Nearby, a teenage girl, IRIS (16) goes into a violent cold shock that draws Nurse Meyer's attention.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - SANITARIUM - DAY

The strobe flashes, Aesther seizes. Dr. Murray observes.

INT. LOUNGE - SANITARIUM - DAY

The phonograph plays. A few patients sway to the beat. Most don't do anything. Aesther jots notes in the margins of *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* by Rene Descartes. A tiny PAPER MITE scampers across the page. Aesther watches the tiny insect intently.

Meanwhile, the teenage patient, Iris, walks backwards around the room without looking where she's going. She occasionally kicks someone's foot or steps on toes. Finally she finds a seat across from Aesther.

Aesther attempts to ignore her, but the girl addresses her.

IRIS

Ngathf lgan'hagw heyl'r uhlthtc  
hfan'wlgm iulgn'ph.

Aesther ignores her. Iris adds...

IRIS (CONT'D)

G'nimoc se'.

AESTHER

Sorry, I don't speak jabberwock.

Without another word, the girl stands up, walks backward to a large mirror and faces it.

IRIS

Ngathf lgan'hagw heyl'r uhluthc...

As Aesther's attention turns to her book-- CRASH. Iris smashes her head into the mirror. CRASH! Again and again. Blood cascades from Iris' scalp. Orderlies run to subdue her. She screams and fights back.

IRIS (CONT'D)

G'nimoc se'! G'nimoc se'!

Aesther doesn't watch as Iris is hauled away.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - SANITARIUM - DAY

Thomas Armitage paces around the room. He finds the strobe light and flicks it on. He grimaces at the effect and quickly turns it back off. Behind him, an orderly ushers Aesther into the room. Thomas turns around and hurries over to greet her.

THOMAS

Aesther! My God, it is you, look at you... Jesus, what have they done?!

Aesther looks around the room confused.

AESTHER

Where's Dr. Murray?

Thomas scoffs.

THOMAS

Never mind. You're safe now. I'm having you transferred to Miskatonic.

Aesther shakes her head.

AESTHER

You shouldn't be here, Tom.

THOMAS

I shouldn't be here? I hope you've packed your things.

AESTHER

No...



THOMAS

It was a manner of speech. I know you don't own anything.

AESTHER

No, Thomas, I'm not going.

THOMAS

Aesther, I will not stand idly by while you rot--

AESTHER

Tom--

THOMAS

I will rescue you from this place.

Aesther walks to the window. She looks out, then down. She finds a DEAD FLY in the sill.

AESTHER

If I said I wanted to stay, would you believe me that I was mad?

Thomas steps behind her and takes her hand in his.

THOMAS

Perhaps you are mad, but this isn't the place for you. There's a facility four blocks off campus designed for men and women of your stature.

Their eyes meet. Aesther smiles. But something changes and it quickly fades. She pulls her hand free and walks away to Thomas' chagrin.

AESTHER

My *stature*? I'm the bastard sire of a dead explorer and his Jewess mistress, Thomas. You're incredibly sweet, but the treatments here are working. I'm seeing the world as it really is.

Thomas is skeptical.

THOMAS

So you remember the night of the incident, then.

AESTHER

I've accepted what happened.

Thomas approaches her.

THOMAS  
 "Accepted?" That doesn't sound  
 scientific. The young woman I know  
 would never "accept" such a story  
 at face value.

AESTHER  
 Tom.

Thomas touches Aesther's cheek gently.

THOMAS  
 I need you to trust me.

He grabs her wrists.

AESTHER  
 No.

Thomas pulls gently.

THOMAS  
 Aesther, I'm trying to help you.

Aesther tries to pull away but Thomas holds tight.

AESTHER  
 NO!

Thomas pulls on Aesther's arm. She yanks back.

THOMAS  
 Aesther!

Aesther collapses and shuffles to a corner screaming "no"  
 over and over.

AESTHER  
 NONONONONONONO--

Thomas is left angry and confused.

INT. LABORATORY - SANITARIUM - DAY

Dr. Murray is icy cold and careful, dissecting and analyzing  
 a brain under a large magnifying glass. Nurse Escher assists.

DR. MURRAY  
 Spruhen.

The nurse squeezes some fresh saline onto the pinkish grey mass. Thomas bursts into Dr. Murray's office.

DR. MURRAY (CONT'D)  
Did she agree to the transfer?

THOMAS  
You know damn well she didn't.

DR. MURRAY  
Then I'm sorry you came this far  
for nothing.

Murray's demeanor betrays nothing. Thomas sneers.

THOMAS  
Do you enjoy it? Abusing, debasing  
these women?

DR. MURRAY  
Mr. Armitage, I am a scientist. I  
leave abuse and debasement to the  
inscrutable minds of academia.  
(to the nurse)  
Spruhen.

The nurse sprays more onto the dead brain as the doctor makes an incision along the cortex.

THOMAS  
Perhaps you're a pervert.

Dr. Murray successfully severs the brain in two. One side looks fairly healthy. The other is deformed.

DR. MURRAY  
If you're trying to get a rise out  
of me, Mr. Armitage, I assure you,  
I'm quite immune.  
(to the nurse)  
Krug.

The nurse provides Murray with a jar. He places the healthy half of the brain inside.

THOMAS  
What you're doing is barbaric.  
Savage. These women need real care.  
Modern care. Not medieval torture.

Murray picks apart the sick half of the brain in front of him.

DR. MURRAY

These women, may I remind you, are  
murderesses, Mr. Armitage...  
including your friend, Ms. Marsh.  
The path to righteousness is not an  
easy one, nor would I have it be.  
Krug.

Nurse Escher provides Dr. Murray with another jar. He pulls  
the sick tissue from the walls of the brain and places them  
in the jar.

THOMAS

I thought you were a doctor, not a  
judge.

DR. MURRAY

(To the nurse)  
Spruhen.  
(to Thomas)  
Within these walls, Mr. Armitage, I  
am God.

Thomas sneers.

THOMAS

We shall see about that.

He turns to leave. Dr. Murray wipes off his hands with a  
towel that Nurse Escher offers him.

DR. MURRAY

(to Nurse Escher)  
Where are my glasses?

She points to them on his forehead.

DR. MURRAY (CONT'D)

Ah. Vielen Dank.

Dr. Murray returns to his brain.

INT. AESTHER'S ROOM - SANITARIUM - DAY

Aesther wakes up to see Iris staring down at her.

AESTHER

What do you want?

Without a word, Iris spits in Aesther's face and walks away.

INT. HALL - SANITARIUM - DAY

Aesther is shaken as she's strapped into the medical bed. Murray proceeds to inject Aesther with metrazol. She seizes.

INT. LOUNGE - SANITARIUM - DAY

As Aesther reads quietly, Iris is wheeled into the room in a "CRIB," a wooden coffin-sized lobster trap. The girl has calmed down and is turned away, but her breathing is labored and raspy, loud enough for Aesther to hear.

Aesther can't ignore Iris any more. She puts her book down and approaches the crib. Before she gets there, a nurse cuts her off. Nurse Simon (23) is new, younger than the other nurses, and more unsure of herself.

NURSE SIMON

What are you doing?

Aesther gestures to Iris.

AESTHER

She sounds like she's wheezing.

NURSE SIMON

She's fine. Sit down and mind yourself.

Aesther nods and sits back down. When she looks at the crib she's surprised to see Iris staring straight back at her with a terrible smile. She's especially frightening now with the fresh wounds in her face.

Iris rolls her eyes backwards and chants the same incantation over and over.

IRIS

Ngathf lgan'hagw heyl'r uhlthtc  
hfan'wlgm iulgn'ph Ngathf lgan'hagw  
heyl'r uhlthtc hfan'wlgm iulgn'ph  
Ngathf lgan'hagw heyl'r uhlthtc  
hfan'wlgm iulgn'ph...

As Iris chants, Aesther writes the gibberish in the margins of her book:

NGATHF LGAN HAGW HEYLR UHLTHC

Aesther notices she's accidentally smashed a dust mite.