

OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA
A Once-Told Tale: The Wolf Sisters Part One

The birth of a healthy living child is a cause for celebration in most places. The birth of a healthy living child to a living and loving mother, even moreso. But when it's a child that should have never been born, the narrative shifts. When a child's very existence threatens the wealth and social standing of a rich and well-known father because maybe the mother is poor, and not the right shade of white... well, then it becomes a very different story entirely.

It is important to note, however, before we move into this tale that both the babe and mother in this scenario lived. They were never in any real imminent danger and both went on to live long and prosperous and frankly quite boring lives, knowing and loving each other for all their days, so don't y'all worry about that none.

The man they left behind, though... well... let's talk about him.

Juble Tucker owned a good stretch of land with a right nice house on it out in the country near a thriving little town in eastern Tennessee. It wasn't a rich place *yet*, but the railroad had been carving up the foothills for a better part of the decade down there that way and, buddy, Juble Tucker had already cashed in.

A bachelor well into his thirties, Juble had never married. He come close once, but his lady-love had passed in a flu epidemic and Juble never fully recovered from her passing. And while not exactly a recluse, Juble Tucker kept to himself, lived in a fine house outside of Baker's Gap, Tennessee, and from time to time he would employ women from the town or thereabouts to clean and care for his property. It would be one of these women that sets our story into motion.

Juble Tucker would come to hire a beautiful young thing named Dolores to clean his house, tend to his linens and his washing. Now, Dolores's skin and tongue carried notes of distant Mexico and she was a unique and strange beauty in this deeply white little town.

Now, the greater Baker's Gap area is carved up equal by a river and railroad and there are a thousand little hollers and nooks that wind back into the hills and by the river, but the one everybody knows about – but the one they seldom talk about was called the Clutch.

The Clutch was a deep-dipping holler that had been home for more than a little while to a group of women of varying ages and ethnicities. Young, old, white, black, brown, native, and all the mixing in between, there tended to be nine or ten women at a time living in the Clutch. Never any men. Sometimes women came to the area and settled

there a while before finding a more permanent living arrangement or job. And it was through her cousin Naisme that Dolores had come to Tennessee, and she did share the older woman's small house and had been welcomed into that community on a whole and accepting level that she would never know in the town proper.

The Clutch was also a place for women who didn't have no kin or nobody left could go if things went sideways. Now, nobody from Baker's Gap would go live there forfeiting, no! The respectable and lily-white of that fine Tennessee community kept to their own, thank you very much. But it didn't stop folks from seeking a... remedy out that way sometimes. Maybe a throwing of the bones or a bit of a charm. A potion to empty a womb. Private things, things they don't talk about, especially not with us menfolk around.

But the women of the Clutch were a peculiar mix of settled outsider and widowed matriarchs of folks from elsewhere. But it was also common thought that they were all witches and would eat your children if you looked at them wrong in the mercantile, so best keep moving, sister.

Dolores worked for Juble Tucker for four months before he kissed her. Now I want to be clear here, family, Juble Tucker, damaged and eventually doomed man that he was, was also kind and gentle. He minded his boundaries, neither forced nor coerced Dolores into

sharing his home or his bed. He had money and security and he offered it. More than that, he had a lonely heart and she made him happy, so he kept her there, kept her secreted away from the rest of Baker's Gap and from his family who still held their property in Georgia. And Juble was happier than he'd been in years.

And when Dolores told him she was with child, he was over the moon. He had decided he would marry this woman, he would raise this child, hopefully as his son, as his own, and damn the world! He would claim his own way, and if cost him the family money, then well so be it! And this was all well and good and set in the stone of a good man – until Juble Tucker's mother came to call from far and distant Blairsville, Georgia.

Enraged and scandalized that her son would commingle the family bloodline with something other than good Christian white girl, Mavis Tucker raged and threatened and pointed fingers, and if Dolores knew what was good for her she'd get her whore self back to wherever she'd come from before she cut that whelp out of her belly herself! And she'd even gone so far as to brandish a kitchen knife at Dolores's pregnant belly.

And Juble stood mute and petrified as the woman he loved fled his house and back toward the Clutch. He would never see her again.

It took two days for Mavis Tucker to get Juble's uncles to take everything down and to pack Juble off to the family estate back in Blairsville, just until things cooled off. She assured Juble she wouldn't hurt the girl none, she'd just been upset, she'd talk to her, give her some money, but Juble *would not marry* her. And he would not claim *whatever* crawled out of her womb. And just like that, Juble went back to Georgia.

But then his momma called on a 'handyman' who had done work for their family for years. A trusted old army buddy of her late husband, a man who knew how to take care of things. A man who could clean this up and who knew how to be discreet and how not to be seen when he is about his business.

Now by the time Mavis Tucker's man Junior Metcalf was able to find where 'the pregnant girl that worked for Mister Tucker' had lived, well she'd already had the baby. Beautiful, healthy little boy that she named Joaquín after her father. Within days of delivery, the women of the Clutch who had overseen and blessed the child's birthing had smuggled the mother and child from the town, then the county, then the state all the way west to Arkansas where, as we said, they lived out happy and natural lives.

By the time Junior Metcalf did creep into the Clutch that night with his big army knife and his big army surplus bag full of all kinds of nasty things, Dolores and her baby had been gone for two days.

The women of the Clutch, however, were all at home.

Junior had been crouching at the perimeter of the shared yard – the main buildings of the Clutch, you see, were built in a three-quarter circle with a common yard, the fire pit, clotheslines, and other common things of rustic life readily available for all – when he saw the old woman. She looked about 60, or 160, hell he couldn't tell. She was clearly Cherokee. Stood staring blankly at him from about thirty feet away.

“You are too late,” she said, and began to laugh. “Hahahaha too late! Hahahahaha—”
And her laughter grew.

“Too late, silly man!” Called a younger voice from somewhere else. Higher-pitched laughter joined the older woman's croaking cackles. A third voice called something in a language Junior didn't recognize and its voice began to laugh, too.

[The narrator's voice grows increasingly panicked and fearful.]

Junior stumbled back. The voices seemed to be all around him now, at least a half dozen of them, and he felt – strange, disoriented. His feet seemed heavy and his-his breathing

was slow, and he stared down at his feet willing them to move and then when he looked up there was a snarl—

[The narrator's voice is suddenly smooth, calm once again.]

—and jaws closed on his throat.

The next morning, Mavis Tucker was locking up her son's house. She had stepped onto the porch and was turning the key in the lock when she heard someone behind her laugh softly. She turned with a start to find a stout, middle-aged black woman dressed as if to clean the house, holding a canvas bag at the foot of the steps.

“Oh! Heh I-I'm sorry,” Mavis began, “You frightened me. Um—” [speaking louder and slower, as though doubting this woman spoke English] “Mister Juble has gone back to Georgia for a while. He won't need you to clean for at least two weeks.”

The woman stared at Mavis, her eyes glinting playfully, knowingly. She began to smile widely and she offered Mavis the satchel.

[Mavis still speaks in that patronizingly slow and loud manner.] “Um, no honey, I’m sorry, I can’t let you in to clean. Mister Juble is not here. *Do you understand me?*”

The woman offered her the satchel again. Mavis was a little bit scared of this woman. She was bigger than her, for one, so if she wanted to rob her well what could Mavis do? But – mostly it was her eyes. They didn’t look quite right to Mavis.

“W-What’s this?” Mavis reached hesitantly for the bag.

The woman was clearly fighting back giggles at this point and Mavis began to suspect she was being mocked.

“You lost this,” said the woman, and her accent alone was enough to shiver Mavis.

Mavis looked at the bag, recognized the US Army markings that would designate 90% of the possessions a man like Junior Metcalfe would have to his name.

“*Where’d you get this? Did you steal this!*”

“You lost this. We found.” And she giggled and started walking away, her laughter growing.

Mavis watched the woman go and then looked down at what was clearly Junior’s bag. Mavis opened it and looked inside and screamed. The bag contained Junior’s big army knife – oh, and his army ring, too... which was still on the finger of his severed right hand that was also in the bag, along with Junior’s teeth and tongue that rested in the pale desert of that bloodless palm.

Mavis Tucker would see those artifacts of her own failed cruelty in her dreams for years to come. But she’d never return to Baker’s Gap and would die on her own terms the following year.

The magic of vengeance is never a clean thing, though. When Juble’s uncles returned to the Gap on their mother’s instructions to see what had happened to their father’s oldest friend, well they made it all of three days wandering the woods around the Clutch. They had been loud and cloutish fools in white shirts and stupid-looking hats. They had prayed loudly in the road about casting out witches and ‘suffering them not to live’ and they’d even attempted to reach out to the local grand dragon to get some white-hooded help. But even those bloated old bags of coleslaw knew better than to come down to the Clutch.

Either way, the two men were found tied to a tree on their nephew's property, throats torn out, hands chewed off, stinking of animal piss and rot.

Juble Tucker himself returned to Baker's Gap later that year, his heart broken and his soul shamed by his doings. If he'd just stood up to his momma, if he'd married Dolores from the outset – I mean, sure they'd have less money 'cause Momma would have disowned him for sure, but his uncles Sammy and Trip would still be alive, Dolores would be with him, and he'd know his child. He slept in his house for two nights and had dreamed of his love and their son, dreamed of the life they could have had. But the dream he had on the last night there was different.

It started like all the others: him and Dolores and a beautiful boy of about four or five years old walking in a golden-lit yard. Laughing, tossing a ball for the little man, watching him chase it, scooping up his boy and swinging him around... Bliss.

In this version of the dream, however, the skies darkened as he swung his son through the air. The intense musk of animals filled his nose as the growls and howls of wolves broke through the peace of his dream like a clumsy child through spiderwebs. Juble nearly sprung from his bed. He sat up so quickly [chuckle] but family, you know how

dreams work in this place, don't you? They never seem to stay all the way on the other side, now do they?

So Juble made his way to the front door, his sense of smell still ripe with the stench of marked territory and lupine breath. And so there, Juble Tucker found himself standing on his front porch in the edge of dawn mists, staring down six women of six different ages and four different races, naked as the day they were born. And their bodies were of diverse shapes and colors, their hair long to their waists or chopped below the ear – they were not a uniform body of risen dead, they were not the unheard whispers of the women in church, they were not an auxiliary or a hen house or a gaggle. It was clear from the tilt of their heads, the scent in the air, the way their bodies seem to tune to the morning breeze and the fluid indolence in their slightly swaying forms.

Juble knew a pack when he saw one. One by one, they turned their eyes on him. Their change was quick. Juble's death was not.

The magic of vengeance is never a clean thing. The number of animal attacks that spring set a new record; men vanished from railroad jobs, from outside late-night saloons, on their way to and from work, their mauled and half-eaten bodies always delivered to their families' doorsteps within a few days, and there were never any witnesses. Just dead bodies and wolf tracks.

Now, people who would know about these sort of things within the town – that would rather other people not know that they know about said things? – started looking into things. Every small town has people, sometimes elders sometimes not, who know about the things that happen in the black spaces between these mountains. And these people went to the Clutch to see what the women there knew. They found it empty, abandoned: clothes left on lines, food left rotting in stores, beds unslept in.

So this clandestine council of unnamed folk took the steps required of them and a letter was hand-delivered to a tall log building about twelve miles outside of Baker's Gap, a structure that looked part respectable vacation lodge and part mountain fortress with a well-kept plank walkway that spanned up the side of the high hill to the front door. The front porch itself was supported by twelve-foot sturdy columns, each ornately carved with local flora and fauna. The floor of said porch was a constellation of elaborate, whirling lines and geometrical shapes and traps. The light from the front room was warm and a soft bronze. If you were welcome here, this might feel more like home than you'd ever know. If you were unwelcome... well, there's that.

The deed to this property was registered to Pleasant Evenings Enterprises of Tourniquet, West Virginia, but the sign over the door simply read, 'The Walker House.'

Marcy Walker was the first of her sisters to be sent out into the world by her late mama Sheila, to use the considerable nest egg Momma had gathered for them, at first to build her own parlour house, staffing six girls and three boys and doing quite well for herself – until that business with the local magistrate and the railroad man and well after that, things, things had to change – but that’s a story for another time, just not right now.

So Pleasant Evenings, as the first house had been called, shifted purpose and became the Walker House for Wayward Women in Need, and it was exactly what its name said it was. It was a place for a child to be born away from prying church eyes. It was a place for a woman with a dangerous husband or wife to stay while a new life was found for her. It had been the place that young Dolores Jimenéz and eventually her infant son Joaquín had passed through on their way back west, never to be seen in these parts again. And if that were the only part the Walker House had to play in this story, that would be a blessing. But sadly it is not.

You see, Marcie Walker took keen interest in the activities of all women with the true gift in these parts of the mountains; bad attention for a few could and usually would mean bad attention for all. So when the women of the Clutch had begun their blood song on the men of Baker’s Gap, it would only be a matter of time before that song was turned back upon every practicing holler witch in these parts. She understood the women down in the Clutch, though. I mean hell you go without having any kind of

power, at all, having to hide what you have for so long that when you do get to let a little bit out to set something right, well it can be right painful to go back into hiding.

The problem was not that they had become so enamored with becoming wolves, that they had decided to forsake their given forms – that had happened in the past, would happen again – sometimes folks is just born into the wrong shape and need to be able to shift to find home. Being a wolf is a beautiful and deadly thing, all that speed and power – oh, the jaws alone are worth the loss of humanity. To be a wolf is a thing of spring-loaded joy, a black-gummed panting death, of pack and ground, torn tendon blood broken bones and feasting abandon a split and howling sky, but – to be a wolf with the mind of a mortal man or woman... no. No, we-we can't be trusted with that kind of power without being broken by it. Not even the wise women of the Clutch.

No, not even them. So something was gonna have to be done. To get that something done, she'd need help, she couldn't do it by herself. [Sigh.] She could send Melvin to send for Ellie and she could be here by mid-week, she figured. She hated it when this happened, good strong gifts gone bad, but something had been moving lately, that was for sure. She could smell it in the air, almost taste it.

1917 was shaping up to be a hell of a year. If things were already this wild in the spring, what in her momma's name would the summer bring?

[I Cannot Escape The Darkness by Those Poor Bastards]

There is a curse upon my every waking breath,

And I cannot escape the darkness...

Hey, family. How y'all doing? I hope y'all enjoyed this full production version of The Wolf Sisters, Part One. Now this is not the launch of season 2 – let me say that again, *this is not the launch of season 2*. Nor is Build Momma a Coffin season 2; we've had some people be confused about that and want to talk about jumping behind a paywall for season 2 and we are doing no such thing. To be clear, Build Momma a Coffin as we've told you from the get-go if you listen and paid attention, is an exclusive story for Patreon patrons, not to be mistaken for a season 2, which will come and will be free just like season 1 was.

Now, the Wolf Sisters was originally performed on Discord for an audience of a few hundred people crammed into a Discord voice channel just last weekend in late March, here in the year of the plague. Hope everybody is keeping sane and safe in your isolation and you're not going out doing something stupid, trying to go to a Red Lobster that's not open or something. Nobody wants that, the sizzler can wait, y'all, okay, bonanza will still be there.

But we are going to return to the live arena on Discord, which that was fun and we can't really have the sound effects and the ambience that I would like to have but it's a cool and easy way for everybody to access and it was kinda cool. There were some challenges, but I think we got a better handle on it, cramming a few hundred people into a Discord voice channel. But Saturday, April 4th, 2020 the Year of the Plague, we will gather again in congregation to finish this story.

The Walker sisters, y'all. They're here. And if you did the math on those dates, you know what we're right before, you know what comes in the summer of 1917 in our world. And you know where you meet the Walker sisters, so there's some interesting things to examine.

And I'm going to go ahead and announce this now in a recorded format, I announced it on the Discord server, in season 2 when it happens and it will, we're getting closer and closer to making an announcement about season 2, there will be a Walker sisters story arc in season 2. Y'all kind of asked for it, you got it. In fact, if you've not been by the Threadless store lately, uh the same night of the Discord reading we unveiled a Walker sisters t-shirt, which is over at [OldGodsOfAppalachia.Threadless.com](https://www.threads.com) along with our new collection Old Socks of Appalachia, go check those out as well.

Um – this is a hard time. Y'all, we're in unprecedented territory and, uh, things are hard. Two out of the three of the members of this team that produce this show lost their jobs;

I'm still blessed enough to be teaching. And how have y'all responded to this news on social media? You've upped your Patreon pledges, you've bought merch, you've asked us for our PayPal, for the love of god, *thank you*, family. Thank you from the bottoms of our cold, black, slowly pulsating hearts that are actually voids (but don't ask questions about that). Thank you. Look, this is beyond anything we ever imagined. This is not a fandom, this is a family. And we love y'all very very much.

And if you do want to help, Patreon.com/OldGodsOfAppalachia it's where you can become a patron. Build Momma a Coffin is still going; there's a lot of cool stuff to come. So we'll see you all on April 4th over on Discord.

Talk to you soon, family.