

OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA

Season 1 Episode 0: Prologue

Old Gods of Appalachia is a horror anthology podcast and thus may contain material not suitable for all audiences, so listener discretion is advised.

[The Land Unknown by Landon Blood]

I walk these hills, leave these dark valleys,

Where I can't stay in the land unknown

In these hills that I walk so often,

I can feel the wind now on your ghost...

Appalachia. A word stolen from more than one language, it conjures images of the beauty of God's Creation, and the darkness of man's various poverties. The simpler way o' life here bespeaks a time passed of purity and piety, but turn over a stone... you'll find the underbelly of suspicion and clannishness. Folk who live here don't trust easy. There're whole graveyards full of what we've learned about outsiders. And before you judge us as backwood hillbillies or opioid-addicted rednecks, take a minute to understand how we got here. I mean how we really got here.

There are places in this world that humanity was never s'posed to see. Walled in by mountains of burnin' black rock, isolated by a choking canopy o'poison flora, woods where tooth, claw, and hunger still sit atop the food chain. Long before our kind ever set foot in these mountains, when the peaks of the Blue Ridge towered above the stars, and the heart of the plateau still rolled with ridges tough as pine knobs, darkness was brought here in cages made of fear. Our tongues do not have the shape to speak the true names of what

they are... an' that's are, not were. They are hunger, consumption, lust: all the things that settle under the heart and below the ribcage. They are the cancer that will one day eat the edges of this universe, an' leave nothin' in it's place. They are not evil. They are not of Hell or the Christian devil. They simply are.

Now these... Things... came close to consumin' this world before man ever took our first shakin' steps into sunlight, an' the only way they was ever stopped was that a prison that was deep and sound enough was built. In the back corner of a backwater world that nobody would ever miss, a range of mountains was lifted high, and the darkness buried beneath them. Warning beacons and guardians were placed all around that blighted Eden so that no living thing with a reasoning mind and the ability to do harm would ever try to live there, and for thousands of years the barriers held. The darkness was bound and time passed. But winds and weather wore at the walls of the prison until they were shadows of their once towering selves, and then men came to know this land.

Even by the maps they made you can see this place is defined by mostly natural boundaries. The early men knew! Oh they'd come here and hunt, end up being hunted, and not return! The men that would come from the North, and the Eastern shore however would not be so sensible. They would come here as if called. The outcast and the impoverished with nowhere else to go... the opportunists, the frontiersmen... those eager to kill and die for glory or land, these roughneck forebears that gave rise to our bloodlines did not come here by chance. But ya see, we were never meant to be here at all! But our mamaws and papaws took to these hollers, dug in deep and claimed blood and root, tin and bone, fought this land for every inch they managed to take and even with what they gained... they lost.

On the orders of richer men and their machines, they dug into the earth t'find a paycheck. Just wanted to claim a little piece of what they thought was already theirs, but they didn't claim the land, the land claimed them. These are the oldest mountains in the world, and how dare we think we could break the skin of a god and try to dig out its heart without bringing forth blood and darkness. For generations the outside world has looked at us and wondered why we really never climbed out of these hollers, wondered why we do reject outsiders, why we bind ourselves to industries that destroy us, why we drown ourselves in pills and the bliss of ignorance. They see us feed ourselves to the earth like martyrs. They see us dig into the mines, watch our fortunes rise and fall, cave in and burn. They don't understand how short the days are here... how these mountains swallow us in an early darkness. They don't see how little sunlight we actually get, and they don't see the shadows stir, don't hear the lost hymns that haunt these hillsides, don't hear the prayers that rise up in the night... prayers raised to a god on high that fall back down to feed the old gods of Appalachia that sleep below...

Which is fitting. First come, first served.

[I Cannot Escape The Darkness by Those Poor Bastards]

There is a curse upon my every waking breath,

And I cannot escape the darkness...

Hi. I'm Steve Shell, creator of Old Gods of Appalachia. Old Gods of Appalachia is a horror anthology podcast set in an alternate Appalachia. Some names and places may seem familiar, but I promise you they're not the same. However our stories are based on actual

disasters and historical events centered in the Appalachian mountains, specifically the coal fields on the Appalachian plateau. These events, along with traditional mountain lore, ghost stories, and the recollections of a staff of writers all of whom grew up in various regions of Appalachia, are the heart of our show. As a team we write for everyone who knows that behind every small mountain town there lies a legion of nightmares, ghosts, and things that cannot be explained. We grew up in the shadow of these mountains, and the shadow of an industry that continues to exploit and pillage a land and people who offer themselves up again and again as sacrifice. We have seen the shadows stir. We have heard the call in the night. Something is wrong here, and this podcast is our attempt to make sense of it. Our theme song is written and performed by Landon Blood, and our outro music is by Those Poor Bastards. All other sound design by August Finch. Today's narrator was Steve Shell.

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