

OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA

Season 2 Episode 24: Charcoal Suit and All

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

As autumn drew to a close and the winter of 1927 bore down on Baker's Gap, the house that was once called Pleasant Evenings stood a bastion against the cold. It was a much different sort of place than when its doors had opened more than a decade before. The ornately-carved and plushly-upholstered divans in its parlors—pretty to look at and fine for brief entertaining, but too impractical for the needs of the Walker house—had long since been traded for the sort of sturdy, comfy chairs that stand the test of time. The delicate, stained-glass lamps that once set a relaxed mood with a glow of rainbow colors were all gathering dust in the attic. Halls that once rang with music played on the victrola phonograph, shipped all the way from Camden, New York, and the laughter of working girls, gentlemen—and some ladies too—who came discreetly to call on them, now stood quiet, almost meditative in the gathering twilight.

And on most days, Marcie Walker felt all right about that. She did good work here when the women and children she helped find their way to new lives passed through her doors. Most days. But on other days, days like today, when Ellie was up at her place in Esau County, and Melvin had driven Dougie back over the mountain to Boone, and of course, Marcie hadn't been unable to persuade her to stay any longer. Dougie was so stubborn. On days like these, Marcie felt the absence of those other voices sharply.

She missed the music, longed to hear the halls filled with merriment again—she even missed the clients! Well, most of 'em, anyway. Most of their regulars had been nice enough folk, and if they weren't nice, Marcie did not encourage their continued clientele. And if necessary, Tish would discourage it with her shotgun, Marcie thought with a chuckle as she settled into one of those comfy chairs she'd installed in the front parlor with a cup of strong tea and one of the cookies she'd baked for Douggie's visit. It had been a long day, and a cold one. She was tired and sore and feeling the weight of the time, the distance, and the silence that had settled over the house that she had built to fill with music and people and laughter.

Sheila Walker had sent her daughter off with enough money to establish the finest parlor house on the east coast. A place where folks could work in safety and dignity, not just for room and board, but for a fair day's pay. And for a few years there, Marcie had made that dream a reality. Her mama would have been so proud. But that had all changed when Vera Blevins had come knocking at her door and the Railroad Man had come to Baker's Gap.

[The Land Unknown: Hollow Heart version by Landon Blood]

Her cold wind calls

And so I follow

No time to rest these weary bones.

I hear her song

And my heart goes hollow

Best not to walk these woods alone

Best stick to the roads

Stay out of the shadow

Best get on home

Best to leave them ghosts alone...

Baker's Gap, Tennessee—1913.

The Baker's Gap Courthouse, such as it was, was seldom a place for excitement. A low-slung, two-story building on the corner of Varner and Main that served as the legislative and judicial hub of this corner of Johnson County. Baker's Gap never stood much on formality or ceremony when it come to public service. Sheriff retired? Well, give the badge to the oldest or the smartest deputy. Mayor moved away? Flip a coin betwixt the two people wanting the job most, for all anybody cared. So when Judge Norville Craft passed on from the natural coursing of time, the replacement was unsurprisingly easy to find. A retired judge from up around Combe County, North Carolina, had moved down to Baker's Gap to spend his pension and whittle out his golden years in small-town splendor.

Jerry Brotherton was only 55, but he was the sort of man who had glided his way through life based on who his daddy was and who his daddy knowed, and so, an early retirement was almost expected. Jerry had overseen the building of the Swannanoa Tunnel. Had been given a commendation by Governor Zebulon Vance himself. The loss of life in the building of said tunnel had been tremendous, and Vance's further stunt of having a team of convicts pull a locomotive over the gosh-damn mountain had drawn plenty of attention from around the country. The Governor had offered Jerry a job on his staff, so that he might learn the inner workings of the state government. After helping punch a hole through a mountain, surely a run as a state senator wouldn't be that hard!

Jerry never wanted such things though—he'd seen enough, building that tunnel. He'd seen men die. He'd buried the bodies, or at the very least, had them buried—hell, he'd almost been killed out there himself, if it hadn't been for, for... well, that feller from the railroad. Besides that, up close, Zebulon Vance was... well, hell, he was scary. There was something hungry about the man—his handshake was like an iron vice and just as cold. And he talked about what he wanted to accomplish with the fervor you expected from his previous walking life as an Officer in the Confederate Army. He was a man that practically invented holding grudges, he never forgot, he never forgave, but after a whisper in his ear from Jerry's daddy, he let Jerry go.

Jerry ended up the warden of a prison out in the middle of the state for a while, and then later was elected to a judgeship that he sat for about a decade or so—small town nonsense. Land disputes, drunk & disorderlies, nothing bloody or exciting—and that

was fine by Jerry. Round about 1909, he stepped down from the bench and bought himself a little patch of land in a developing town in east Tennessee—down there east of Tipton and south of Paradise called Baker’s Gap. He had a little house and an easy walk to a river or lake for fishing. He had quiet, and he had solitude. Jerry had never married—now, he courted plenty, but none ever stuck around. Jerry wasn’t a bad man, but he was a troubled man. Any woman that shared his bed would whisper about the dreams and night terrors that haunted Jerry Brotherton. Word got around that Jerry Brotherton was not husband material, no matter how rich his family was. So when the only judge outside of Tipton passed on into glory, the town council asked Judge Brotherton if he’d come out of retirement and finish out the year. Mediate some disputes, rubber stamp anything bigger than fishing without a license up to the big courthouse up in Tipton. They’d cut him a little check, and more than that, he’d be doing his community a big favor. Jerry agreed—why the hell not? Fishing and hunting were all well and good, but the Gap was not the big city. And anything that could help him pass the time quietly, and not leave him alone with his, with his... his thoughts, was welcome. He settled into the job and was well-thought-of around the courthouse. And why, when them six months was up, he allowed as he might as well just stay on. The town was more than happy to avoid all the trouble of finding a replacement.

Jerry was about to finish for the day when this whole mess started. Docket was clear, he’d sent his secretary Deborah home and was about to lock up when he heard footsteps coming down the hall. He called out into the corridor without looking, hoping to put off

until tomorrow whichever counselor or clerk might be seeking a signature or asking his opinion on a minor legal matter.

“Hey, I’m done for the day! Barrow? Dallas? Whoever’s clip-clopping down my hall, y’all can just stop right there. Come back in the morning, I got dinner with council people over at Percy’s 6:30, so don’t even come in here!” Jerry snapped his briefcase closed and pulled his jacket off his chair. The footsteps continued. More than one man, it sounded like. He heard their shoes make the transition from the tile in the hallway to the rug in the small outer office where they stopped. He knew they must be standing in the door looking at him, waiting on him to turn around so they could pester him with whatever nonsense they needed at the end of the day.

“Store’s closed y’all, I’m—I’m done for the day. Whatever y’all need, can wa—” His office door clicked shut. The lock turned.

“Oh, Mr. Brotherton! I’m sure the good folk of the council will understand if you took a moment to catch up with an old friend, yes?”

That voice—it couldn’t be. Jerry spun around to see three men standing on the other side of his desk. The one on the right was thick and pale with fuzzy blonde sideburns lining his broad, chiseled jaw. There was a stillness about him that was unsettling. The one on the left was tall and thin and wore tiny, round glasses and a dark brown mustache with a tidy little beard on his chin. He seemed to hang back in a shadow, like

the light of the room didn't quite reach him. Jerry Brotherton did not know either of these men.

The one in the middle, though—him he could never forget. The custom charcoal suit, the dusting of gray at his temples that carried down to the thin salt-and-pepper beard that framed that dazzling tiger-like smile. Jerry Brotherton saw this man in his nightmares at least once a week.

“You—what are you doing here?”

“Mr. Brotherton, as you may recall, I did you a favor some years ago.”

“What? You—you've not aged a day—it's been over 30 years and you've not aged one bit!”

“Mr. Brotherton—”

“I'm over here fatter'n hell with barely three hairs to comb across my head, and you—look at you!”

“Mr. Brotherton, please—”

“No, n-n-n-n no, no, no—you wait just a goddamn minute. You saved my life in that tunnel, and for that, I thank you, I do. But you knew every bad thing that got done on that job, and I don’t even know your name. You walked around that cave like—like you enjoyed it, like you approved of it. You knew where all the bodies were, and you kept me from being one of them. You said I—”

“You’d owe me, yes.”

“And you’re here to collect.”

“I am here to call in your marker, Mr. Brotherton. I seek nothing more than what I’m due.”

“So you’re—so you’re, you’re the devil then? Come to come to take my soul in exchange for sparing my worthless sinner’s life?” Jerry was terrified to the point of tears. He’d been a regular attendee at Rising Creek Baptist since he moved to Baker’s Gap, and he’d sat there: a noble figurehead of respectability, a retired judge, oh my, what a good and honest man. and all the while he carried the guilt of those dead inmates. How God had sought to punish him for it by burying him under the mountain just to have the devil come and delay that judgment.

The Man from the Railroad laughed. It was a laugh that carried with it an elegant cruelty and dripped with malicious amusement. It was the devil's laugh, if ever he'd heard it.

“Really, Jerry—can I call you Jerry? Yes, I think I will. Really, Jerry, do you think that the world is that simple? You think the Christian devil tromps about the tracks, bargaining for the souls of weak-spined, moon-faced, spoiled man-children? Do you? Do you think the being that had the delusional hubris to try to overthrow the rule of his own omnipotent creator would take five minutes out of his day to push your miserable bag of viscera out of the way of a falling rock? Do you think that the forces that run this universe give ‘two hoots from a barn owl,’ as your paw paw might say, about your worthless soul? Please, Jerry, even if the devil you’re talking about was real, I think we both know he’d be able to carry you off to tarnation with very little effort as is.”

“So you—you ain’t, you ain’t the devil?” Jerry stammered, tears brimming in his eyes.

“No, Jerry, I am not. I am from the Railroad. We are much more efficient in bringing hell to you.” The tall one by the door laughed at this, and the man in the charcoal suit smiled back at him. “Mr. Erskine, if you’d bring the car around, I believe Jerry here is going to show us where the travelers and tramps shack up at night, as well as where the men who are looking for day work assemble on the morn.”

“Why? What does any of that have to do with me?”

“All part of your repayment plan, my old friend! The railroad has jobs to offer one and all. We’ll need bodies for what I’m planning, and you have always done such excellent work providing those. Come, now, let us go. Ever onward, ever forward, yes?”

And thus, they had gone forth from the courthouse and out to the tracks and yards, where the folks who lived their lives hopping from boxcar to boxcar dwelt in makeshift camps and in the corners of warehouses where the local bulls turned a blind eye. Jerry watched in amazement as the man from his days at the tunnel spoke and sold a bill of goods to every huddled mass of folks they found. He promised jobs, he promised purpose, he promised fulfillment, and making this country a better place by working on the railroad. At the start, they regarded him with suspicion. Some even tried to run, but them other two men made sure that nobody got too far. Jerry’d been right about them—there was something downright weird about the both of them, but by the end of the man’s pitch, though, people would be nodding and shaking his hand, accepting one of the black-edged business cards he gave them. They bore a simple monogram—R, with two sets of tracks crossed elegantly behind it.

“Hold tight to that, friend—you’ll need it when the time comes to prove that you’ve been personally invited by yours truly to be a part of this exciting new venture.”

“Oh, what line did you say you were with again?” asked a short, ratty man with a nose that had been broken multiple times as he shook the handsome man’s hand and accepted his card.

“Why, my friend, as I told you before, I am from the railroad. Now who is hungry? My associates have picnic baskets full of sandwiches and po-ta-to salad, just over there by our vehicle. We must nurture these bodies if they are to work hard for the railroad, yes?” The man crooned as he ruffled a young boy’s hair who smiled and headed over to get his supper. The Man from the Railroad stretched his arms and walked back over to Jerry, dusting his hands off as if finishing up a job well done.

“Easy as that, my friend. We’ll return in the morning and repeat the show for the men looking for day labor, and we’ll bring breakfast. It will be a delight! Now, Jerry, as I recall, you were quite the patron of the ladies of the evening, were you not?”

“Uh, I, um, I-I-I did frequent an establishment or two in my day... what are you implying sir?”

“No judgment, my friend! I just know an expert when I see one, and I’d have you play to your strengths in this venture. So where can a man wet his, mm.... *whistle* around these parts? My boys and I surely could blow off some *steam*, so to speak.”

“Now, I done slowed down some in my old age, but I keep my ear to the ground... th-th- there’s—matter of fact, there’s a house that just opened up a little while back out in the Gap. Big, big, old, nice place, from what I hear. Moved down from, um, from West Virginia way a year or so back. Pleasant Evenings, they call it.” [Chuckles]

[Chuckles] “Pleasant Evenings, indeed, yes? Well, my old friend, I think if you can take us there tomorrow night, we might be able to call our account closed, and we’ll be even steven. How does that sound?”

Jerry couldn’t believe it, and pretty much didn’t. “Now, wait a minute—I owe you for saving my life, and you show up after 30-some-odd years, and I pay you back by showing you where the train hoppers in my town are holed up, and then going ’bout with the ladies out in the Gap? Well, shit yeah, son! I may throw my back out, but that beats what I thought was gonna happen!” [chuckles]

“My friend, you are not prepared for the night we will share together. But yes, you have my word that will be the last thing I require of you.”

Vera Blevins could not believe it—her luck had actually held for once! She made it the whole train ride from Hazel County up in Virginia to the train station in Baker’s Gap Tennessee. She held her breath when they stopped in Paradise—for all the tales she’d heard about that wild town, she fully would have believed that if somebody sinister had come on there looking for her. But no, she met no trouble there. She thought about

riding on to Tipton—she knew a girl or two out that way, and there was always trade in that dirty little city, but if there was trouble on her trail, it was best she got far enough away from the bigger towns and at least get somewhere she knew. So, she stuck with her plan, changed trains, and about mid-afternoon, rolled into Baker’s Gap.

Standing on that platform again was a little bit unreal for Vera Blevins. Her whole life, she wanted to escape this tiny little town—now she found this might be the only safe place for her. A smile and an empty promise of a date that would never come got her a ride out to Big Gap Road. When she saw the house, she couldn’t believe it—it was like a castle or a fortress, but it felt warm and somehow right that she come here. Even in death, Aggie Norris had not steered her wrong, and if this was a working house, well, hell—she’d sign up right now.

She walked up to the big porch with its high columns and huge front door. She was poised to knock, when a voice stopped her in her tracks. “Girl, hang on right there, not one more step, you hear me?” A girl with long, red hair and striking blue eyes was leaning over the railings up the veranda above the main porch. In her hands, she held her hair twined around her fingers, in the process of braiding it. “What you need, shug? What you doing out here? A-are you expected? Were you invite—where are my manners! Stay there, I’ll be right down!”

Before long, the heavy front door to the house opened, and the girl who had called to her was making her way across the porch and down the front steps to greet her. She

finished braiding her long fire-colored hair and dropped it down her back. “If you’re looking for work, uh, Marcie’s in the back—she’s the one to talk to.” The girl’s eyes seemed to drink Vera in—not in a predatory or scary way, just real interested. She held out a hand. “My name’s Ellie. I’m Marcie’s sister. What’s your name?” But before Vera could answer, a massive panther of a tuxedo tomcat bounded down from out of nowhere, entwined around her legs.

“Vesper, there you are! Come here, my shoo-shoo—” Ellie Walker made kissing noises at the cat, who was a large and noble exemplar of his kind, with a huge head and a sweet, leonine face. The beast trotted over to what was clearly his person and allowed himself to be scooped up, lovingly.

“Uh, I’m Vera Blevins. June Norris gave me this address. She said her mama kept up with someone who lived here, uh—her mama’s name was—”

“Agnes,” Ellie supplied, a touch of sadness glinting in those big, blue eyes. “Yes. You knew her? Come on in—you need to talk to Marcie.”

Shortly thereafter, Vera Blevins found herself seated in the warm and cozy kitchen on the first floor of Pleasant Evenings with coffee and biscuits on the table as she told her story to Marcie and Ellie Walker. She explained about the pig thing at McQueen’s, and her flight to the Norris Farm, and the creatures that had followed her there.

“Then, June said that her mamaw had buried jars in the yard? And for some reason, that kept whatever those things were from finding us? Oh, Mr. Norris didn’t seem to like June talking about Aggie’s mommy—he said she was the one that got her working.”

Marcie chuckled softly. “Kevin never did like Mama, and Mama didn’t like him. She trusted him, but never liked him.”

Vera blinked. “Wait, Aggie was—”

“Our sister,” finished Ellie. “And it’s good to hear they’re doing well. Kevin don’t never write, and June doesn’t know about us or what this place is—it’s for her own good, really.”

“But why—” Vera began, but Ellie smiled softly and reached across the table to cover Vera’s hand with hers.

“Tell me true, Vera Blevins: those things you claim you saw—did they...” she looked to her sister, and Marcie nodded, stifling a grin. “Did they end up in the tool shed or the outhouse?”

Vera snorted. “Oh, they tore the good hell out of that outhouse! Kept punching through the walls and busting up the seat, splattering that mess everywhere.”

The Walker Sisters laughed hard and loud at that. “That was mama’s favorite,” Marcie cackled through her tears of laughter.

They talked into the evening—the sisters deftly avoiding certain questions and answering others they were sure that Vera would be followed. “Things like that can be deterred, even bargained with, but if you took something from them...”

“It’s just a fancy pocket watch—I’d give it back, if they’d leave me alone.”

“Too late for that, darling,” said Ellie. “Why don’t you get settled into one of the rooms up on the top floor? Vespertilio will show you where. Those ain’t working rooms, and are private—shouldn’t nobody bother you up there.”

“V-Vesper who?” Vera asked, puzzled.

The giant tuxie cat unfurled himself from Ellie’s lap and walked over to the stairs, looking back over his shoulder, his eyes clearly asking if Vera was coming or not.

“Vespertilio. It’s—it’s latin for ‘bat.’ He’s a smart boy—just follow him, now. Get!”

“And keep that pocket watch out of sight—don’t go messing with it now,” called Marcie as Vera reluctantly followed the cat up the stairs.

“Did you see those marks on her hand, Marce?” Ellie asked after Vera was out of earshot.

Marcie sighed heavily. “Yeah, she’s touched it. It’s got a hold of her, all right. Probably some form of curse or protection spell.”

“Should we take it from her?”

“No, that’ll probably just make it worse. We’ll try to see to that later tonight, if trouble don’t come knocking first.”

They had stopped roughly a mile from the new parlor house out in the Gap, this Pleasant Evenings, on the Man from the Railroad’s command. He’d sat bolt upright as they drew near the final turn and ordered Mr. Erskine to pull over. They proceeded on foot down the winding backbone of big Gap road for 20 minutes or so. Then they crested a hill, and the house and its greater environs came into full view.

The house, which had originally been a hunting lodge for a northern family of some means, had fallen to auction when the family’s fortunes took a turn. It had been renovated by its new owners and expanded into what looked like a mountain paradise. It was a solid, sprawling place constructed of heavy stone and thick logs. A high porch was topped with a higher veranda with a third floor even above that. The thick columns supporting the front porch were carved with animals, plants, and flowers native to the

region. The front windows featured fancy glass, and the thick doors were banded with cold iron. It was a striking sight, poised on a small hill with its backside set into the hillside behind it, as if it were a natural feature of the mountain.

The Railroad Man peered about with wide and hungry eyes. “Jerry, my boy, where have you brought us? How did one such as you ever find a place such as this? No, don’t answer that—I’d rather revel in the mystery of your completely undeserved and rather unnerving privilege.” The man knelt, as he had in the Swannanoa Tunnel all those years ago, and ran his finger through the rich dirt of the road and tasted it. But this time, he quickly spat it out.

[Hissing, spitting noises] “PAH. Oh, *spicy*—oh, my. [spits] Ff-FAH. This place is *old*. The alignments of water and earth—there, where the creek and the stone converge, and the way the house butts up against the hill—that’s no accident, either. Look at how the foundation is laid—not to block the flow, but to redirect it. There are lines of power that have laid under this place that are older than your sponsors, and they’ve been artfully rearranged to protect those that dwell in yon parlor house.”

The tall, burnt shadow of Mr. Erskine stepped forward, his hands raised palms turned out, as if measuring or feeling his way along an invisible wall. “Impressive, yes, well-built and well-laid. But every wall has its cracks; every barricade its hand holds. We shall see how she holds up under a little pressure. Nightfall will be her true test, it will.”

“The hell, you are saying!?” blurted Mr. White. “What, we wait until the daylight is all, and then we end up splashing around in a scheisse house again!?” He began to stride purposefully up the path to the house. “Nah, we go in, we get the girl. If anyone gets in our way, well, that’s just—”

There was a crack and the smell of burning hair as Mr. White was picked up into the air and hurled backwards, ass over teakettle, landing a solid 20 feet behind his comrades. But before anyone could do so much as laugh, a woman’s voice, strong and clear, rang out from the high front porch.

“Evening, y’all. I’m not sure what y’all are getting into out here, but we’re not open just yet. And I wouldn’t suggest trying to barge in here outside of business hours, either, as I see you already found out. Oh, Judge Brotherton, is that you?”

Jerry ducked behind Mr. Erskine and pulled his hat down low. “Ain’t no need in hiding, Your Honor—though I have to admit I find myself questioning your choice in companions this evening.” The Man from the Railroad looked up at the tall woman on the porch, took in her broad shoulders and stout jawline, saw that she wore men’s britches, a tan work shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and hunting boots that had seen their share of use. He peered above her to the windows and caught glimpses of others peeking down to see what the commotion was about.

Finally, he called up to all of them, waving to the two that did not flee from the windows when seen. “Good evening, ladies,” the man called, throwing a little wave to the onlookers upstairs. “Sorry to come calling so early in the evening, but we’re looking for a friend of ours—a Miss Blevins.”

The woman shifted as she looked him up and down, casting her eyes from him to White then to Erskine. She shook her head a little. “You’ll find no one here who calls you friend, stranger—though you come with one we know, we know you not, and this door remains closed. So says I, and so would say my mama, if she was here. Now do us all a favor and take whatever mischief you have in mind on up the road. This isn’t a place for the likes of you.”

The Railroad Man’s face settled into his best impression of someone who hates to be a bother, but is going to anyway, as he went on, “Nonetheless—Miss Walker, is it? Yes, Miss Walker, Miss Marcia Walker. Oh, is that West Virginia I smell on you, Miss Walker? That fallow earth roundabout... Tourniquet, yes? Lots of rail laid through that dead little town. Terrible place—you did well by getting out. Shame about your mama, though. She laid her share of rail herself, yes?”

“Stranger, you’ll do well to keep my mama’s name out of your mouth, if you do wish to keep the teeth and tongue that sit within it.”

“My condolences on her passing, but you seem to be carrying on the family traditions admirably, I must say. Now, Miss Walker, we know Miss Blevins is hiding inside your place of business, and now, I’m assuming, under your protection, yes? Think about it, Miss Walker—you’re a businesswoman, yes? This is business—plain and simple.”

“Stranger, you’ll do well to remember where you stand. You have knocked, we have answered. Now get on.”

The man’s eyebrows went up as the weight and power of Marcie Walker’s words settled across the air between them. “Oh, I see! We’re going to do this by the book, then—or by what you learned at your mama’s knee—I know a lot of y’all don’t put much stock in book learnin’ ’round here. Very well, then, Miss Walker.” the Man from the Railroad straightened his tie and cleared his throat and spoke with a voice that carried the weight of work and sweat and men dying—a voice that knew its purpose and set to it like a hammer on a spike.

“I come now, by rights of the old compact, Marcia Walker, holder of this house, to speak plain words and give you fair warning: you harbor a thief who has stolen from her betters, and as such, are complicit in her crime. But seeing that you are a formidable practitioner and an owner of property, I would offer you an opportunity to save yourself—to spare your laborers, your blood, and that pretty little thing in the yellow dress that you so love. Give us Vera Blevins and the stolen goods she has brought to your hearth, or by night shall we visit upon ye such a reckoning that all that you’ve built

will be burned to ash and blackened bones. All that you fear will become truth. And those that you cherish will be butchered and devoured before you.”

“Twice now have you knocked,” Marcie spat, “twice are you refused. Take your haints and your guide and be gone, as none of y’all are welcome here.”

The man grinned fiercely. “Oooh, I like your spark, Miss Walker, I do indeed. Twice have I asked and twice have you answered. A third time I will ask at sundown—should we find the girl outside your wards with her ill-gotten gains in hand, I will accept her life as weregild, and we shall pass into the night and be gone. If she is not, then I will instead accept that as insult, and all that you love will be carried away.”

The sound of a window being thrown open drew all eyes upwards, where a girl in a lovely yellow dress stared down the barrel of a rifle, aimed squarely at the man in the charcoal suit’s heart.

“Y’all heard the lady, get out of our yard. Now.”

“Well, then—see you when the light dies, my good witch. Let us go hence, boys. We have a merry band to gather and work to do. Ever forward, ever onward, mnyyessss?”

[I Cannot Escape the Darkness by Those Poor Bastards]

There is a curse upon my every waking breath,

And I cannot escape the darkness...

Well, hey there, family. Oh my, oh my, I've done it again, haven't I? Left you hanging in the middle of the action. Well, don't worry, family, there's one more installment to find out the true heart of the matter when it comes to the incident with the Railroad Man and the Local Magistrate there at Pleasant Evenings in 1913. I'm going to be totally honest with you, fam, we thought we could tell y'all this story in one episode. But then we realized there's a whole other story about Miss Marcie Walker that—it needs its own room to breathe, and I think you're going to appreciate it when you join us next time. And you are going to join us next time, aren't you? Of course you are.

Family, I want to thank everybody who has completed their social media ritual in the past little bit. We have broken some social media milestones, and I'm not going to name them by number because they just end up sounding weird and obsolete like they do when you listen to stuff in season one, if you're just now catching up with us, but thank you so much for joining us on Twitter, Facebook, in the Facebook group, over on the Discord—you can find links to all of those at oldgodsofappalachia.com, and you can also find a link to our Patreon where you can help us keep the home fires burning, help us keep the interdimensional portals open, help us keep those roots digging their way through the cold, black earth, all the way down to where the darkness dwells, and tickles

your toes and gives you a free full-size Snickers bar—I don't make the rules, forces of elder darkness do what they're gonna do, and that's how they do—full-size Snickers, maybe a Mars bar if you're of my generation, I don't know. Either way, we appreciate the support over at patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia. There are some sweet new merch designs that will be coming in the summertime as they start creeping into those warmer months, you can find a link to our merch store over on oldgodsofappalachia.com. We are a tee public affiliate—if you see our merch anywhere else other than teepublic or someplace we pointed you to personally, it's bootleg. We've been having some bootleg issues lately, but please don't support those bots—support the folks that help bring the darkness to your door every other week.

Old Gods of Appalachia is a production of DeepNerd Media. Our intro music is by our brother Landon Blood, and our outro music is by Those Poor Bastards. Today's story was written by Steve Shell and Cam Collins and was produced and narrated by Steve Shell. The voice of Judge Jerry Brotherton was Corey “The Buttercream Dream” Forrester and, as always, the voice of the Railroad Man was Yuri Lowenthal. See you soon, family. See you real soon.