

## OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA

Season 3, Episode 31: Season Three Prologue

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

O Appalachia

O homeplace and hearth

O prison and pride

We invoke your name this night with both Love and Fear.

When your rolling shoulders swallow the setting sun

O Mother

It is that fear that moves both heart and tongue

To draw tight curtains so that we might let the darker hours pass unseen.

We hear you call in the deepest night.

We hear you call to us in voices that

belong to our dead and gone.

And we know better, but we follow you into

The darkened woods all the same.

Bramble and briar tearing at our clothes and skin

Trying to save us from ourselves,

But we push on,

Hoping to find somebody who knows our name

And can show us the way out.

O labyrinth of promised prosperity

Kept by kings who would feed us to their

own indiscretions,

No golden thread for us to follow through the

dread halls built on the corpse of our mother

that wind deeper and darker until

we meet much worse than minotaurs in the middle.

And none of us have even come close to building wings.

We see you,  
O Fallen-tree father lit by a half moon  
parroting broken prayers  
At an altar you never meant to build.  
But you did.  
O bent-back brother  
Fresh from the Underneath,  
Full sooted from head to toe,  
Lungs full of tomorrow's fresh hell,  
And a voice choked with the rasp  
of good money sliding down the chute.  
Eager to move on to greener grass  
& higher hopes, but found that the company  
owned so much more than just the town.  
Set guards on your family and  
paid you in scrip and bloodied mouths,  
showed you how much worse it could be,  
until you found your words,  
but more importantly your guns.  
And then you spake forth with a fire that  
your will would be done on earth as it was in  
Harlan just like you did back on Blair Mountain  
& in Matewan & in Paint and Cabin Creeks  
And however many other hollers  
that nobody bothered to put up a plaque for.  
No entry in the museum for the bodies they never found.

O Fire and Forge  
Hard hearted hammer that shapes  
& breaks us on the anvil of a god  
that no one really remembers so  
we make do with what we're told.

O sweet soil blessed for battle and burial  
We bleed and kill and die for you  
even though you were never ours to begin with.  
And if this dark and bloodied ground  
asks you for just a little bit more  
You give it.  
You give it all.  
You give your last  
Until you have nothing.  
Are nothing.  
Hollowed out and waiting to be filled,  
Waiting for the dark to find you.

[ “The Land Unknown (The Pound of Flesh Verses)” by Landon Blood ]

*These old hills call  
For the blood of my body  
A pound of flesh for a ton of coal  
So down I go  
Into a dark hell waiting  
Where lungs turn black and hearts grow cold*

*And I’ll take to the hills and run from the devil  
Into the dying sun  
Something wicked my way comes  
And tread soft, my friend, into these shadows  
Where the old ones roam  
For in these hills we die alone*

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith,  
giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

— 1 Timothy, 4:1

“Invincible. Abashed the Devil stood, and felt how awful goodness is...”

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Beneath a new moon in the deepest woods between Harlan, Kentucky, and the Virginia line, a boy presses through the darkest night of the year in search of answers. He clutches what he thought would be his granny’s old Bible to his chest. When he rescued it from their house before the bank nailed the door shut and cast him to the wind, he’d expected to find answers inside. He wasn’t much interested in the good news of the gospel within, but in the tangled roots and spidery lines of a family tree that adorned the inside cover — a place where an orphaned boy might learn the names of his folks, kept from him these many years for reasons unexplained. Instead he’d found a list of other names, and in the pages beyond found a testament of a different kind that had explained why he had never known his people, why no one would give him work, why the good folks that had helped so many others had turned their backs on him. A record of hard truths that had brought him here, to speak with those who might be willing to barter with one such as him.

In the furthest reaches of West Virginia, there is a rock — a rock mighty and tall and set on the edge of the only known naturally occurring lake in a place where the coal just don’t... act right. In this place, that sweet black diamond comes out of the earth all soft and hot, and if you try to burn it, well you might as well buy the devil a birthday present and kiss your behind goodbye. For there is a strangeness to the land here. The Rock and the men who live there seem to dance to a different tune and answer to neither man nor God, h’aint nor Thing. This is not a place for outsiders, and you’d do well to keep on moving, friend. If the Men of the Rock seek you out, pray that the Green or the Dark hide you well, for their purpose is their own and is usually not for others to know.

When you are a girl born ‘neath a moonless sky to a father whose very seed bore the taint of what sleeps beneath the grave and a mother who was naught but a cold spot in a house so grand and haunted that even the ghosts stayed away, darkness is all that you know. Some might say you were forged and honed rather than raised, a sacrificial dagger to be worn on your daddy’s belt and drawn when his will need be imposed upon the world. You know what it means to stand in the deep places and see your daddy call forth those who have been Hollowed. You have borne

witness to the purging of the light in the eyes of men as they are twisted into new shapes to suit your family's ends.

You have come to love the finer things, and why not? You have earned them with every threat whispered in the halls of Industry and Government and every spine you ever snapped in the hill towns and hollers. You have slept the sleep of the cold and soulless and have been visited in dreams by those who would promise you ascension, rebirth and supremacy. Why shouldn't you have all the pretty dresses and glittering rings? Why shouldn't you have fine mirrors and combs to adorn your hair fashioned from the bones of those you have conquered in his name? Your daddy founded an empire on coal and bones and blood, tearing down mountains and carving whole civilizations out of the wilderness like some wraith-skinned god.

Bless your daddy. Bless him well and anoint his head and his hands and his feet in tears. Bless him and adorn his brow in dead roses. Bless his sightless eyes that watch over us all. Bless his ever-bleeding throat as he rests inside his fine black box hung in the sight of Those Who Sleep Beneath. May he forever hold their favor just as you hold his. Let the sheep organize and squawk about the power of their union, then watch them scatter when the Hollow Men come to call. Let them wage their little wars and kill their own so their blood might feed the hungry earth of the mountain they sold themselves to. Let the bean counters tremble at your eldest brother's name, and let the men in the mines cower at your middle brother's ghost as they grind themselves to gray dust beneath the skin of the world. Those wise enough and quick enough to have survived to become old men know that the Barrow to truly be feared is old E.P.'s baby girl. Yes, sir. Precious as a pearl, prideful as a peacock, pretty as a picture.

And in the far reaches of a forgotten place we cannot and will not name, a prince has reclaimed his amber crown and seeks those who would serve his court. Once again his great shadow moves through the deepest and coldest places, where the sun don't never quite reach and the mountain breeze always carries an edge of frost. He waits for those who would seek his counsel, those who would pay him homage. He is, after all, the very best at waiting.

There are those who choose and those who are chosen by the darkness. By smoke or by blood, by fire or by blade, they make their way into the lost places, seeking to be found. They turn to the

dusk, for the dawn has failed them. In this season, we'll carry their stories, and those of many others. For the dark has power that the green won't show. So as above, so below, family.

[ "As Above, So Below" by Landon Blood ]

*When the fire don't burn  
And the grass don't grow  
And the good folks turn  
From where the bad folk go*

*Either seeking power  
Or by the lot of birth  
They find their way  
Beneath the cold dark earth*

*So what can you do  
When help never comes  
When the beast speaks true  
But your people stay mum?*

*The dark has power that the green won't show  
'Cause as above, so below*

Well, hey there, family, and welcome, welcome, welcome one and all to Season Three of Old Gods of Appalachia: As Above, So Below. I hope y'all are ready, because we're gonna be journeying deep into the stories of those who have chosen darkness, who have chosen to walk within the shadow of the mountain, and have shunned or been shunned by the light of the Green and whatever else might be out there. We're gonna take y'all to some places we've never been, and you might see a familiar face pop up here or there in the darkness. I guess you're just gonna have to listen and find out.

And, family, this season it will be ever more important that you complete your social media ritual, so head on over to [oldgodsofappalachia.com](http://oldgodsofappalachia.com), where you will find links to our Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, the Discord server, so you can keep up with all our special

announcements. We're gonna be popping up with some really fantastic things this season, and you wanna make sure you stay ahead of the curve of finding out when they're coming.

And we want to thank everybody who's stuck with us on our Patreon. You literally keep our lights on. I know we say that all the time, but it is true. You have changed our lives, and we hope we can give back to you and make these stories and this journey into the inner dark as special for you as it's gonna be for us. If you would like to properly bind yourself to the family, head on over to [patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia](https://patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia). You can get all your episodes ad-free and a day early, as well as exclusive access to storylines such as Build Mama a Coffin, Black Mouthed Dog, Door Under the Floor, special little things like Steve Reads and Cam Reads, and all kinds of neat little features and access to Discord live events. All for very reasonable sums to be tossed into the collection plate. [Patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia](https://patreon.com/oldgodsofappalachia).

Old Gods of Appalachia is a production of DeepNerd Media and is distributed by Rusty Quill. Our intro and outro music is by Landon Blood. Today's prologue was written and performed by Steve Shell. Talk to you soon, family. Talk to you real soon.

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