

Old Gods of Appalachia
Season 1: Barlo

Episode 5
The Sacrifice

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH, PASTOR'S OFFICE- DAY

CLETUS GARVIN IS IN THE CHURCH'S BACK OFFICE. HE IS READING FROM HIS DARK AND BLASPHEMOUSLY ALTERED BIBLE.

RUBY GARVIN CAN BE HEARD SCREAMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR.

CLETUS IS IMMEDIATELY SHAKEN FROM HIS CONCENTRATION AND BOLTS OUT THE DOOR.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH- CONT.

RUBY IS ON HER KNEES NEAR THE WIDE- OPEN FRONT DOORS, SOBBING, HER APRON PRESSED OVER HER FACE WITH TREMBLING HANDS.

CLETUS

Ruby? What is it? What's-

RUBY KNEELS BESIDE THEIR SECOND OLDEST BOY, **NOAH**, LAYING ON A WHITE SHEET STAINED WITH BLOOD AND SOOT, HALF HIS BLACKENED FACE MELTED AWAY, THE OTHER A BRIGHT PINK DARKENED WITH COAL DUST AND

SOOT. HIS REMAINING EYE STARES UP AT THE RAFTERS, ITS FORMER BRIGHT BLUE NOW EMPTY AND COLD AND BLIND. HE IS DEAD.

CLETUS

(Muttering, disbelieving what is right in front of him) No... Th-that can't be... There's a strike on. Noah wouldn't have crossed a picket line, he's a union man. He wouldn't...

DEWEY HUBBARD (45, BALDING, POT-BELLIED) SLOWLY APPROACHES CLETUS, TWISTING HIS HAT IN HIS HANDS.

DEWEY

P-Pastor?

CLETUS TURNS AND SIMPLY STARES.

DEWEY

He - Noah - he went in to help put out the fire this morning. Most of the men were already out, but a few stayed behind. They were looking for more fires, or anyone who might've got hurt. P-Pinky and Eddie Avery were in there too, but... well, we didn't find them...

CLETUS

Oh.

CLETUS THINKS ON THIS FOR A MOMENT.

VOICES

...Remember our covenant... Your task...

CLETUS GRIMACES. HE LOOKS LIKE HE IS GOING TO VOMIT. HE SHAKES HIS HEAD AND LOOKS AROUND FOR SOMETHING—HIS YOUNGEST SON, **HERSHELL**. HE IS SPOTTED COWERING BEHIND THE PULPIT AND STARING WIDE EYED AT RUBY.

CLETUS

(crooking two fingers) Hershell
Garvin! Come here, boy!

HERSHELL (7, SKINNY, WEARING HIS BROTHER'S HAND-ME-DOWNS THAT HE IS NOT QUITE BIG ENOUGH FOR YET) QUICKLY AND NERVOUSLY RUNS OVER

HERSHELL

Yes, daddy?

CLETUS

(quietly and calmly as he can)
Listen close, son. I need you to go on back to the house and fetch your mother's round mirror from the vanity. And once you got that, get the big box of salt from the pantry.

HERSHELL

(confused) But why, daddy?

CLETUS

(weary, patience thinned to almost nothing) Boy, just do what I said—now go on, git! *(turning to his wife)* Come on baby, lets move him on in. we're blocking the doorway.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH, FROT STEPS- MOMENTS LATER

CLETUS IS AT THE FOOT OF THE CHURCH STEPS. **NOAH** HAS BEEN MOVED FURTHER INSIDE. HE'S PACING.

HERSHELL TROTS UP, BREATHLESS AND SWEATY. HE HOLDS OUT THE ITEMS. HE OPENS HIS MOUTH TO SAY SOMETHING.

CLETUS

Thank you, Hersh. Now go on in and see if your momma needs help with anything.

HERSHELL NODS AND RUNS OFF.

CLETUS GOES UP THE CHURCH STEPS BEHIND HIS SON. HE SETS THE MIRROR ON A SMALL TABLE JUST INSIDE THE CHURCH DOOR, WHICH HOLDS A SMALL PEWTER BOWL OF OIL FOR ANOINTING. HE REPLACES THE BOWL WITH THE MIRROR AND THEN SETS THE BOWL IN THE CENTER OF THE MIRROR. AROUND THE OUTSIDE EDGE OF THE MIRROR, HE CAREFULLY POURS A GENEROUS RING OF SALT. IMMEDIATELY THE VOICES WHICH HAVE BEEN NEAR-CONSTANT AROUND HIM SILENCE AND HE BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH- CONT.

RUBY IS SITTING NEXT TO HER SON'S BODY. **A WOMAN** IS JUST LEAVING, HAVING HANDED RUBY A GLASS OF WATER.

CLETUS WALKS OVER AND KNEELS BY HER SIDE AND GRASPS HER HAND. HE FISHES HIS HANDKERCHIEF FROM HIS POCKET AND GENTLY DABS AT THE TEARS ON HER FACE AS SHE STARES VACANTLY AHEAD.

CLETUS

Ruby? Ruby, honey, look at me.

RUBY

*(Her eyes are swimming in tears
and rimmed red.)*

My sweet Noah... Cletus, our son-
our- he's...

CLETUS

Shh, shh. Hush now. Honey, I want
you to go back to the house and
lie down. Take Hershell and the
girls with you. Robert and Clay
will be done with their chores
soon. Send one of them to tell
Lily Ruth what's happened to her
brother.

RUBY STARTS TO TRY TO PROTEST WEAKLY, BUT **CLETUS** SHAKES HIS HEAD. HE TURNS AND LOOKS AROUND.

CLETUS: HERSHELL! MANDA! VIRGINIA!

HIS THREE YOUNGEST CHILDREN APPEAR BEFORE HIM AND HIS WIFE IN SECONDS. (**MANDA** IS THE YOUNGEST; A 6 YEAR OLD GIRL CLINGING TO HER SISTER'S SKIRT.)

CLETUS

(smiling weakly) Y'all have made me a very proud daddy today with how helpful y'all been around here. I know its been scary and sad for y'all too, so I want y'all to go on home and rest. Y'all done enough this day. Virginia, sugar, go on now and take your momma and the babies home. I'm putting you in charge of them two, and make sure momma gets into bed and stays there, you hear?

CLETUS CUPS VIRGINIA'S TEAR-STREAKED AND PUFFY FACE.

CLETUS HELPS **VIRGINIA** GET **RUBY, HERSHELL, AND MANDA** TO THE FRONT DOOR AND WATCHES FOR A MOMENT AS THEY DESCEND THE STEPS, THEN RETURNS INSIDE.

CLETUS

(In his best Preachin' Voice, speaking to everyone in the church) Listen here family, I need each and every one of you to help me, here. I need all these poor men who was in the mine moved down into the cellar.

(cont'd)

Quick as you can, now! We got
healin' to do, and not just of the
physical! Do you hear me, family?

CONGREGATION

Yes Pastor! / Amen! / Praise Him!
/ etc.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH- CONT.

A BRIEF MONTAGE OF A KIND OF ASSEMBLY-LINE AS THE VICTIMS OF THE
BLAST ARE CARRIED DOWN INTO THE CELLAR VIA THE LARGE TRAPDOOR IN
THE FLOOR.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH CELLAR- CONT.

A SIMPLE RECTANGULAR ROOM THE LENGTH OF THE CHURCH WITH A BARE
DIRT FLOOR. NOTHING INSIDE EXCEPT FOR A FEW FAT CANDLES BURNING
IN IRON SCONCES ALONG THE WALLS. ALONG THE BACK WALL IS A LONG,
LOW ALTAR OF STURDY PINE HAD BEEN PLACED, CARVED AND SANDED AND
POLISHED BY CLETUS HIMSELF. THE PATTERN CARVED DEEP INTO THE
WOOD WAS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FOLLOW WITH THE EYE, TWISTING IN
WHORLS AND SLASHES THAT MAKE YOUR HEAD HURT.

CLETUS STANDS IN FRONT OF THE ALTAR, GIVING OUT ORDERS. A VERY SHARP KITCHEN KNIFE RESTS ON THE RIGHT EDGE OF THE ALTAR. THE AIR IS THICK WITH SMOKE FROM CANDLES AND BURNING HERBS, AND THE HEAT OF TOO MANY BODIES SQUEEZED IN UNDER THE LOW CEILING.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH CELLAR- LATER

ALL THE VICTIMS ARE PRESENT. THE MEN HAVE RETURNED WITH THE LIVESTOCK CLETUS REQUESTED AND STAND IN A RAGGED HALF CIRCLE AROUND THE ALTAR WITH THE SKITTISH ANIMALS. THE REST OF THE CONGREGATION HAS BEEN DISMISSED FROM THE CELLAR.

CLETUS NODS SOLEMNLY AS HE TAKES HIS PLACE BEHIND THE ALTAR AND TURNS TO FACE THE MEN.

CLETUS

Family, we face a difficult task
this day, but with the Lords'
help, we may yet save these men.
Are you ready, brothers, are you
ready? Are you prepared to make
sacrifices on behalf of our own?
Can you do what must be done? Say
Amen!

THE CHORUS OF "AMENS" FILL THE CELLAR. THEY HAVE ALL SEEN PASTOR GARVIN DO MIRACLES BEFORE AND EAGERLY PARTICIPATE.

CLETUS

Amen!

CLETUS REACHES FOR THE KNIFE AND MAKES A QUICK SLASH ON TOP OF LAYERS OF OLD SCARS ON HIS LEFT PALM. CLETUS FLICKS HIS HAND OUT, BLOOD SPATTERING THE ALTAR AND THE MEN ON THE GROUND.

CLETUS

Lord of the night and of the day,
of life and death, we pray: grant
us your aid in our time of need.
Save our brothers and sisters. Let
them be resurrected into the light
of day!

HE REACHES FOR ONE OF THE CHICKENS. BREATHY, GHOSTLY WHISPERING SWIRLS THROUGH GARVIN'S HEAD. BLOOD SPILLS OVER THE ALTAR AND ONTO THE FLOOR, STAINING SHEETS AND SOAKING THE MEN ON THE FLOOR. THE BODIES OF BARLO'S YOUNG ANIMALS FALL LIMP AS THEY ARE SACRIFICED.

CLETUS

Rejoice that you are called to
this great devotion! Children,
offer the wounds, pains and blood
of my left hand! May the Blood and
water wash and strengthen, save
and cleanse and heal our brothers
that they might find home in Your
holy light which opens for all
men!

THE CONGREGATION SWAYS ON THEIR FEET, CHORUSING SOME PARTS BACK TO HIM OR SHOUTING, "AMEN! AMEN, BROTHER CLETUS!" SOME BEGIN SPEAKING IN TONGUES.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH CELLAR- CONT.

DRAMATIC MONTAGE.

THEY PRAY.

THEY WEEP.

BLOOD FLOWS FROM CUT THROATS OF ANIMALS.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH CELLAR- A FEW HOURS LATER

A SILENT AND BLOOD-SPATTERED CELLAR, HOURS LATER. THE RITUALS AND SACRIFICES HAVE FINALLY STOPPED.

NONE OF THE MINERS HAVE STIRRED. THEY ARE DEAD TO A MAN, AS CLETUS HAD KNOWN THEY WOULD BE, BECAUSE THE SALVATION OF THESE MEN WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN THE VOICES HAD FOR BARLO.

SWEATING AND HOARSE, **CLETUS** WIPES HIS HANDS ON A RAG SOMEONE HANDED HIM, AND STEPS AROUND THE ALTAR. WITH THE FEW MEN WHO WERE INVITED TO HELP IN THE RITUAL, THEY LEAVE THE CELLAR.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH- CONT.

THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION IS ASSEMBLED. CLETUS CLIMBS UP FROM THE CELLAR AND SPEAKS FROM THE EDGE OF THE TRAPDOOR, STANDING AMONG THEM.

CLETUS

Family, we have done what we could for our brothers. But sometimes we must accept when the Lord calls a man home and rejoice - for they will face the cleansing fire!

A FEW SCATTERED AND TIRED 'AMENS' ECHO BACK.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH GRAVEYARD- SUNDOWN

THE CONGREGATION STANDS IN FRONT OF SEVEN OPEN GRAVES—SIX STANDARD FOR THE MEN OF BARLO, AND ONE DEEP PIT FOR THE BODIES OF THE THREE SCABS.

CLETUS SAYS THE LORD'S PRAYER AS THE BODIES, WRAPPED IN LINENS SOAKED IN WATER FROM THE CREEK, ARE COVERED IN SALT AND THEN LOWERED INTO THE GRAVES.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. GARVIN HOUSE, BEDROOM- MIDNIGHT

CLETUS QUIETLY CRAWLS INTO BED NEXT TO HIS WIFE. RUBY IS DEEP ASLEEP, AND CLETUS IS NOT FAR BEHIND HER.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE- ONE WEEK LATER, MORNING

CLETUS KNOCKS ON THE DOOR, TREMBLING SLIGHTLY.

ANNIE MESSER (O.S.)

Come in!

CLETUS CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM AS HE STEPS INSIDE.

END