

Old Gods of Appalachia
Season 1: Barlo

Episode 2:
The Schoolhouse

FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN ROAD- EVENING

RIGHT WHERE EPISODE 1 ENDED

SARAH JUMPS BACK AS THE STUMBLING, BURNING **THING THAT IS NOT DADDY** FALLS TO ITS KNEES IN AN EFFORT TO GRAB HER. THE THING IS SLOW AND OBVIOUSLY DYING - THE FIRE THAT SEEMED TO COME FROM WITHIN IT IS CLEARLY CONSUMING IT.

NOT PINKY

(Sounding almost like the real pinky) B-Babygirl, You gotta help me babygirl - they won't let me - you gotta come with me, they won't let me come 'til you... 'til you come with me...

NOT PINKY'S BACK GOES RIGID, AS IF SOME UNSEEN HAND PICKED IT UP BY THE SCRUFF. THE INVISIBLE FORCE SLAMS IT INTO THE ROAD. BITS OF **NOT PINKY** SPLATTER THE GROUND AND SARAH'S FEET. **NOT PINKY** GURGLES AS ITS BODY IS GROUND INTO THE GRAVEL, PULPING IT TO BLACKENED VISCOUS GORE. ITS SKIN BREAKS AND THE COOKED TISSUE LIQUIFIES.

SARAH STARES HORRIFIED, THEN RUNS OFF THE MAIN ROAD AND INTO THE MESS OF WILDFLOWERS AND BRAMBLES THAT LINE THE HILLSIDE. THERE ARE NO ROADSIDE FLOWERS, THERE IS NO CUT GRASS OR CULTIVATED GREENERY. JUST ROUGH, UNKEMPT WEEDS TANGLED WITH STICKY VINES AND BRIARS.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS, NEAR THE SLOPE OF THE ROADSIDE- CONTINUOUS

AS SHE RUNS, **SARAH** FALLS HARD AND TUMBLES THE REST OF THE WAY DOWN. SHE STOPS AT THE BASE AND SCRAMBLES TO HER FEET, CAUGHT IN A MOMENT OF HURT, SHOCK, AND PAIN, SUCKING AIR AND WAITING FOR THE PAIN TO REALLY KICK IN.

SARAH LOOKS AROUND. SHE IS WAIST DEEP IN TALL GRASS AND CATTAILS. STAGNANT WATER AND MUD COAT MOST OF HER LOWER HALF NOW.

OVER HER SHOULDER AT THE TOP OF THE HILL IS THE DIM SILHOUETTE OF **NOT PINKY**.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS, DEEP AMONG THE DARK TREES- CONTINUOUS

WITHOUT LOOKING BACK, **SARAH** STARTS MAKING HER WAY THROUGH THE WOODS AND BRUSH- FAT STEMMED PLANTS WITH SPIKY THORNS GRAB AND TEAR HER SKIN. SHE MAKES HER WAY THROUGH THE SUFFOCATING GREENERY UNTIL IT SEEMS SHE CAN GO NO FURTHER.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS, SMALL CLEARING- CONTINUOUS

THERE IS A TINY BREAK IN THE FOLIAGE- A BARE PATCH AT THE BASE OF AN OLD, GNARLED TREE. **SARAH** COLLAPSES INTO A BALL AMONG THE THICK ROOTS. SHE FINALLY BEGINS TO CRY REAL, HOT TEARS OF FEAR AND SHAME AND LOSS. SHE LOOKS AROUND FOR A WAY OUT.

SUDDENLY, SHE WHIPS HER HEAD IN THE DIRECTION SHE CAME FROM. HER NOSTRILS FLARE AS SHE CATCHES THE SMELL OF BURNING SKIN AND HAIR. SHE GAGS. THE WOODS AROUND HER ARE DEAD SILENT.

[UNNATURAL, RASPING BREATHING.]

SARAH JUMPS TO HER FEET AND WHIPS AROUND.

NOT UNCLE EDDIE (62) RISES FROM BEHIND A STAND OF CATTAILS. HIS WORK UNIFORM IS SMOLDERING AND HANGING OFF HIM IN STRIPS. HIS SCORCHED CHEST CAVITY WHEEZES WITH THE WET SUCK OF SMOKE-FILLED BREATH. WHERE HIS RIGHT EYE SHOULD BE IS A PULSING, DEAD ORANGE LIGHT.

SARAH

U-uncle Eddie?

NOT UNCLE EDDIE

Sarah, your Daddy's hurt real bad
little lady... you need to come with
me so I can-

[ANIMALISTIC GROWLS AND SNARLS COME FROM ALL AROUND THEM]

NOT UNCLE EDDIE'S FACE FREEZES AND HE SHAKES HIS HEAD LIKE HE IS
TRYING TO CLEAR IT. THE EMBER IN HIS EYE SOCKET GUTTERS.

UNCLE EDDIE

Sarah... run girl.. they done seen
you, they got your scent, they got
your Daddy and Mommy and they want
me... me to get you-

BLOOD SURGES UP **UNCLE EDDIE'S** THROAT AND OUT OF HIS BURNED
MOUTH. HE SPITS A GOUT OF IT ONTO THE GROUND.

HIS UNIFORM BURNS HOTTER NOW, THE FLAMES GROWING BIGGER AND
BRIGHTER, SMOKE BILLOWING. THE ORANGE EMBER IN HIS EYE SOCKET
DIES OUT FOR A MOMENT.

UNCLE EDDIE

I said *RUN GIRL!*

THE ORANGE LIGHT BLAZES BACK TO LIFE AND **NOT UNCLE EDDIE'S** MOUTH STRETCHES WIDE AS HE REACHES FOR HER, ALL BLACK TEETH AND SCORCHED GUM, SKIN CHARRING AS THE FLAMES AND DARKNESS INTENSIFY INSIDE ITS BODY.

SARAH SCREAMS AND COWERS AGAINST THE TREE, ARMS OUT COVERING HER FACE.

SARAH

No! Please, Uncle Eddie, it's me!
Come back! Please!

SOMETHING ENORMOUS BURSTS THROUGH THE BRUSH, CHUFFING AND GROWLING. **NOT UNCLE EDDIE** NEARLY HAS HIS FINGERS AROUND SARAH'S THROAT.

THE LARGEST BEAR SARAH HAS EVER SEEN TACKLES **NOT UNCLE EDDIE** TO THE GROUND AND TEARS HIM INTO AS MANY PIECES AS POSSIBLE.

[BEAR ROARS, A MAN'S AGONIZED SHOUTS.]

NOT UNCLE EDDIE SCREAMS, TRYING TO PUSH ITS HANDS INTO THE BEAR'S FACE AND EYES. SOON THERE IS NOTHING OF UNCLE EDDIE'S BODY LEFT.

[SILENCE.]

THE BEAR SITS UP. ITS MUZZLE IS SMEARED WITH THE SAME WET BLACK ASH THAT COVERED THE FRONT ROOM AT SARAH'S OLD HOUSE. IT LOOKS HER DEAD IN THE EYE AND GIVES A LOUD GRUNT.

THE BEAR'S FEATURES MELT INTO THE GREEN AROUND IT, LOOKING AT FIRST AS IF IT WERE MADE OF THE WEEDS LIKE A BEAR STATUE MADE OUT OF CATTAILS AND BUSH, AND THEN IT IS SIMPLY GONE.

SARAH, EXHAUSTED, HUNGRY, AND AT LAST TRULY SCARED, WHIMPERS SOFTLY AND FAINTS.

FADE TO:

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- THE NEXT DAY

OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLHOUSE THERE ARE SCREAMS: VOICES RAISED IN ALARM AND DISTRESS. THERE IS THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS AND SPLINTERING WOOD. DIM FLICKERING FIRELIGHT FLASHES ACROSS THE FLOOR THROUGH THE WINDOWS.

SARAH WAKES. THE DIRT AND BLOOD HAS BEEN CLEANED FROM HER BODY. SHE IS LAYING ON THE FLOOR ON AN OLD QUILT, RIGHT IN FRONT OF MISS ANNIE'S DESK. SARAH'S HEAD IS IN **MISS ANNIE'S** LAP AND SHE IS STROKING HER HAIR.

MISS ANNIE'S FACE IS OUT OF FRAME.

[**MISS ANNIE** GENTLY HUMMING AMAZING GRACE.]

SARAH IS TOO EXHAUSTED TO WONDER HOW SHE GOT HERE. AS SHE LAYS THERE, HER EYES ROAM THE ROOM, TAKING IN ALL THE FAMILIAR SIGHTS: THE BLACKBOARDS, THE ERASERS, THE ROWS OF WOODEN DESKS AND CHAIRS. COMFORT. SHE RELAXES IN THE FAMILIAR, SAFE SPACE.

MISS ANNIE STOPS STROKING HER HAIR AND HUMMING.

SARAH'S NOSE WRINKLES AT THE SMELL OF BURNING FLESH.

MISS ANNIE'S HANDS ARE TREMBLING AS SHE PULLS SARAH UP AND CLOSE TO HER. HER FACE IS STILL HIDDEN.

MISS ANNIE

*[Her voice somehow wrong.
Whispering.]* It'll all be over
soon honey... just close your eyes...

SARAH TURNS HER HEAD AND SEES THROUGH THE WINDOW THE THROG OF BURNED MEN MISSING LIMBS AND FACES. ILL-FITTING SCAB UNIFORMS BURNED INTO THEIR BODIES, AS THE 51 NON-UNION MINERS BURNED ALIVE IN OLD NUMBER SEVEN TAKE THEIR VENGEANCE ON THE TOWN OF BARLOW, BURNING EVERY BUILDING THEY CAN FIND.

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

EXT. BARLO, TOWN SQUARE- CONTINUOUS

[CUTSCENES/MONTAGE OF BUILDINGS BEING BURNED DOWN, BURNING MEN CRAWLING OVER THEM. BURNED MEN CHASING THOSE STILL ALIVE. A WOMAN SCREAMING AS ONE OF THEM TEARS INTO HER THROAT WITH ITS TEETH. BODIES LITTER THE SQUARE.]

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- CONTINUOUS

SARAH

Miss Annie... Those things outside...
what-

MISS ANNIE IS CRYING NOW - OR IS IT LAUGHING?

THE SCHOOLHOUSE SHUDDERS AS THE FLOOR BEGINS TO CRACK AND SPLIT.

SARAH JUMPS, STILL WRAPPED IN MISS ANNIE'S EMBRACE.

WINDOWS SHATTER INWARD. SEVERAL BURNED MEN THROW THEIR SMOLDERING SELVES INTO THE SIDES OF THE SCHOOL. SHE BEGINS TO SQUIRM.

SARAH

Ouch, you're squeezing too hard!
Please, let me—

SARAH PUSHES HERSELF FREE OF MISS ANNIE'S GRIP. SHE LEAPS TO HER FEET AND TURNS TO FACE HER TEACHER.

MISS ANNIE IS A BURNED THING AS WELL, JUST LIKE PINKY AND UNCLE EDDIE WERE. THE SKIN FROM HER FOREHEAD AND DOWN HER CHEEKS IS TORN. THE EYES ARE MISSING, THE SOCKETS CAUTERIZED.

SARAH

No no no no no!

SARAH SCREAMS AND BOLTS TO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM, TRYING TO PUT AS MANY DESKS AND CHAIRS BETWEEN HER AND WHAT USED TO BE HER TEACHER.

NOT MISS ANNIE ROARS IN RAGE AS SHE SCRAMBLES TO HER FEET. SHE WHIPS HER HEAD ABOUT, A BLIND THING SEARCHING FOR ITS PREY, REACHING FOR SARAH AVERY WITH SCENT AND TOUCH RATHER THAN SIGHT.

SARAH

(Sobbing uncontrollably) Miss
Annie, please!

NOT MISS ANNIE TOSSES OBSTACLES OUT OF HER WAY AS IF THE DESKS AND CHAIRS WEIGH NOTHING. SHE LUNGES AT **SARAH**, BUT SHE JUMPS BACK WITH ANOTHER SCREAM- JUST OUT OF REACH.

A PORTION OF THE ROOF CAVES IN AS THE THINGS OUTSIDE CONTINUED THEIR ASSAULT, DETERMINED TO BRING THE WHOLE BUILDING DOWN. ONE OF THE SUPPORT BEAMS CRASHES BETWEEN MISS ANNIE AND SARAH.

THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE CEILING, A WIDE BEAM OF LATE SUMMER AFTERNOON SUNLIGHT WASHES OVER SARAH'S SKIN, CASTING HER IN GOLD. SHE LOOKS UP AND SEES THE THICK CANOPY OF TREES THAT ARCH HIGH OVER THE SCHOOL AND THE TOWN. SHE SEES THE GREEN. SHE SEES THE WOODS THAT WAS HERE BEFORE BARLOW OR THE MINE WERE EVER HERE. A PECULIAR PEACE AND FEELING OF SAFETY VISIBLY WASHES OVER HER. SHE PRAYS AND PLEADS TO THE GREEN.

SARAH

Please... Take it back, you can have
it back - they're not doing right
by it, anyway, please...

THE LIGHT FALTERS.

MISS ANNIE HEAVES AND CHUFFS, SEEKING A WAY TO GET TO SARAH.

THROUGH THE HOLE BOVE, HEAVY CLOUDS MOVE ACROSS THE SUN. A BREEZE BECOMES A WIND AND BLOWS COLD. SARAH SHIVERS.

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE- CONTINUOUS

THINGS CRAWLING ALL OVER THE SCHOOLHOUSE, TRYING TO BRING IT
DOWN.

THE THINGS HESITATE.

SUDDENLY, IT BEGINS TO RAIN HARD. A NEAR-TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR.

THE THINGS ALL BEGIN TO SCREAM AND WRITHE.

CUT BACK TO:

CUT IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- CONTINUOUS

MISS ANNIE WAILS AND DIVES TOWARDS SARAH. SHE LANDS RIGHT
BENEATH THE NEW SKYLIGHT. SHE FALLS, HISSING AND SCREAMING UNDER
THE WEIGHT OF A THUNDERSTORM.

[THE HISS OF RAIN, THE ROLL OF THUNDER.]

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

EXT. BARLO TOWN SQUARE- CONTINUOUS

THE STORM HOWLS.

BLACK, SOOTY WATER FLOWS OVER BURNING CORPSES AS THEY HOWL BACK AND WRITHE STIFFLY IN PAIN.

THE BODIES ANIMATED BY FIRE AND HATE STIFFEN AND COOL. ALL THE FIRE THAT HAD BEEN BLAZING A MOMENT BEFORE IS REDUCED TO WEAK TENDRILS OF PALE SMOKE THROUGH THE SHEETS OF RAIN.

THE THINGS SCREAM IN UNISON.

[INHUMAN ROARS.]

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- CONTINUOUS, TWILIGHT

SARAH STARES AT THE STIFF CORPSE OF MISS ANNIE.

THE SUNSET SEEMS TO GROW DIMMER. THROUGH THE HOLES IN THE ROOF AND HAZE OF THE RAIN, SARAH SEES VAGUE SHADOWS OF GREAT BLACK BIRDS TRYING TO TAKE FLIGHT AND ESCAPE THE RAIN.

GREAT DARK WINGS ARE CAST SIDEWAYS TO AND FRO AS THE WIND AND THE WATER BATTER THE BIRDS BACK TO EARTH.

SARAH JUMPS BACK WHEN ONE STRIKES THE FRONT STEPS OF THE SCHOOL. IT BOUNCES INTO THE NEARBY MUD WHERE ITS FORM DISSOLVES LIKE INK, MELTING BACK INTO THE MUCK. MORE AND MORE OF THESE DARK SHAPES FALL TO EARTH.

THE BODIES OF THE SONS OF BARLOW SLOWLY CRUMBLE LIKE ASH, JUST AS THE MOON FULLY RISES.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE- DAYBREAK

THE SUN RISES ON THE ONLY BUILDING STILL REMAINING OF BARLO.

FADE OUT

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- CONTINUOUS

SARAH IS HUDDLED UNDER A SOOT-STAINED QUILT, CURLED INTO HERSELF IN THE CORNER. SHE SLEEPS DEEPLY, BUT RESTLESSLY. A LIGHT BREEZE RUSTLES THE HAIRS THAT HAVE LONG SINCE COME UNDONE FROM HER BRAIDS. SHE GRIMACES AND TURNS, WHIMPERING. HER HEAD TOSSES SIDE TO SIDE WITH NIGHTMARE VISIONS THAT PLAY ACROSS HER EYELIDS IN AN ENDLESS PROCESSION.

CUT TO:

CUT IN:

VARIOUS- MONTAGE OF PREVIOUS SCENES

JUMP CUTS: FLASHING SNIPPETS OF HER NIGHTMARES

CAROL ANNE SWINGING FROM THE TREE BRANCH, PURPLE AND BLOATED.

SNAPPING, SNARLING, DROOLING JAWS OF BLOOD-SPATTERED AND BLACK-FURRED BEASTS.

SCREAMS ECHOING THROUGH THE WOODS AS **SARAH** SPRINTS THROUGH THE BLACK WOODS.

PINKY AND ED AVERY'S BODIES BURNING AND WRITHING AND STUMBLING TOWARD SARAH, ARMS OUTSTRETCHED.

ED AVERY'S FACE CONTORTING AS HE TAKES OVER HIS OWN BODY FOR THE LAST TIME.

THE STRANGE, UNEARTHLY MASS OF A BEAR MADE OF VINES AS IT ROARS-MAW DRIPPING WITH BLACK BLOOD AND CHARRED FLESH.

THE IMAGES FADE TO BLACK AND HER WORDS ECHO THROUGH THE DARK:

SARAH (O.S.)

*Take it back! You can have it all
back!*

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE- MORNING

SUNLIGHT FILTERS THROUGH THE GREEN OVERHEAD, DAPPLING **SARAH** IN EARLY MORNING LIGHT. THE LIGHT SHIFTS AND SEEMS TO CONCENTRATE ON HER FACE AND OVER HER HEART. THE LIGHT TAKES ON AN ALMOST GREEN TINT.

SARAH SITS BOLT UPRIGHT, STILL ASLEEP. SHE GETS TO HER FEET AND HER BODY MOVES AUTOMATICALLY TOWARD ONE OF THE FEW DESKS THAT ARE STILL STANDING. HER FACE IS STILL SLACK IN SLEEP, BUT HER EYES DART RAPIDLY BENEATH HER EYELIDS.

A COMPOSITION BOOK AND A PENCIL LAY ATOP THE DESK. THE BOOK IS WATERLOGGED AND SOOT-SMEARED. THROUGH THE GRIME THE NAME DANIEL CALLOWAY CAN STILL BE SEEN WRITTEN ACROSS THE COVER. SHE OPENS IT TO A BLANK PAGE AND BEGINS TO WRITE.

THE VOICE OF **THE WITCH QUEEN** ECHOES AROUND HER. **SARAH**, STILL SLEEPING, RECORDS THE WORDS. NOT IN HER OWN HAND, BUT THE PENMANSHIP OF A WOMAN MUCH OLDER.

[AS **THE WITCH QUEEN** SPEAKS THE ANCIENT SPELL THROUGH SARAH'S DREAMS, THE IMAGE OF SARAH SLEEP-WRITING FADES IN AND OUT BETWEEN CUTSCENES OF THE GREEN RETAKING WHAT REMAINS OF BARLO.]

SARAH/DAUGHTER DOOLEY

Let there be Green...

*Let there be thickened trees and
unshorn grass. Choking weeds and
hand-harrowing brambles.*

*Let there be honey venom flowers
and sap-sticky vines that will not
break. Let there be kudzu with
suffocating canopy, light
swallowing gorges, the dark places
where sunlight goes to be cinders.*

*Let them rapture and extrude, let
them come roaring forth, bursting
tember and cornerstone proving
that we have built nothing of
permanence here.*

*Winter chained them to old locust
trees, let them be food for the
dark wet tongue of the shifting
mountain.*

*Let them scream as fissures grind
their black scabs together to
become blood brothers with the God
of fire and soot that they have
worshipped with paystubs like
altars, families as burnt
offerings.*

*Let them split their throats
crying, 'elahi, elahi, lama
shabaqtani...' And receive only
silence in return.*

*Let us finally admit we were
digging graves this whole time and
what we were burning was the
daylight promised to those we
called precious, and baby, and
little man.*

(cont'd)

*Let us confess that tomorrow's
never mattered to us, that
promises were enough, that it was
good enough for you, will be good
enough for them, even when there
is no good left...*

*Enough. Let us throw sizzling
sticks of dynamite down howling
black shafts, let the place where
knees truly learn to bend blacken
and ripple like the sea floor.*

*Let the monstrous dome throats
finally choke, let these temples
fall because their God is dead,
had been dying for decades.*

*Let us mourn him properly now.
They do not need our darkness to
burn any more. So let us end this.*

*Let there be Green. Great looming
swathes of endless breathing
mouths. Let them sing of our
absence.*

*Let the cities go dark for the
lack of our smolder and let the
stars find these mountains as they
were made: whole, Green, and
blessedly... empty.*

[SARAH'S HAND DROPS THE PENCIL. THE PAGES ARE FULL OF SCRAWLING, DELICATE SCRIPT MUCH TOO MATURE FOR A GIRL OF TEN. HER EYES CEASE THEIR ENDLESS MOVEMENT. HER SLEEPING BODY RETURNS TO THE CORNER AND LAYS ITSELF DOWN. FINALLY, SHE IS STILL AND DRIFTS INTO DEEP AND DREAMLESS SLEEP.]

END