

Old Gods of Appalachia
Season 1: Barlo

Episode 10
You Ready To Go Home?

FADE IN:

INT. BARLO SCHOOLHOUSE- MORNING

MORNING AFTER THE NIGHT OF THE BURNING DEAD

SARAH IS ROUGHLY AWOKEN FROM HER STRANGE AND DEEP DEAMING AS A **MAN** SCOOPS HER UP IN HIS ARMS. HE SWIFTLY BEGINS RO CARRY HER OUT, PAST THE CHARRED REMAINS OF **MISS ANNIE**.

MAN

In here! Found another one! Still
breathin'!

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. BARLO TOWN SDQUARE- CONT.

A LARGE GROUP OF **MEN AND WOMEN** HAVE DESCENDED ON THE HUSK OF BARLO LIKE BENEVOLENT SCAVENGERS.

MEN AND **WOMEN** COAX **CHILDREN** AND OTHER **SURVIVORS** FROM HIDING PLACES.

WOMEN BRING **SURVIVORS** BLANKETS AND WATER AND SOUP AND BANDAGES.

THE KIND AND BLESSED FOLK OF HIS UNDYING AND UNENDING GRACE HANDING OUT COFFEE AND JESUS.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. JACOB COUNTY KY, THE HOME- SUNDAY MORNING

NOVEMBER 1917

THE HOME IS A MASSIVE STONE AND WOOD BEHEMOTH THAT STANDS ON A WIDE SWATH OF LAND, TENDED TO BY THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO LIVED THERE. THE ORCHARD ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE PROPERTY IS BARE AND ITS CROP IS SAD AND MEALY.

A SMALL PENTECOSTAL CHAPEL SITS ON THE SAME PROPERTY, ON THE EASTERN SIDE, LESS THAN 100 YARDS AWAY FROM THE HOME.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. THE HOME CHAPEL- CONT.

ELDER HENRY, THE MINISTER WHO RUNS THE HOME, STANDS AT THE PULPIT, OR AS MUCH AS HIS TWISTED BACK ALLOWS. HE IS WEARING A LONG ROBE WITH A MONK'S HOOD TO HIDE HIS DISFIGURED FORM, A DEPARTURE FROM PENTECOSTAL TRADITION. IT ENTIRELY HIDES HIS BODY AND FACE.

HIS ARMS ARE HELD OUT IN BENEDICTION.

ELDER HENRY

(soft voice rasping) And the
church said Amen. Bless you.

BROTHER CARSON (52) AND SISTER DARLENE (47) ARE SITTING IN THE
FRONT ROW. BEHIND THEM SIT TWO FULL ROWS OF **ORPHANS. SARAH AVERY**
SITS AMONG THEM, NEXT TO THE AISLE.

BROTHER CARSON/ SISTER DARLENE

Amen, Elder. Praise the Lord!

ELDER HENRY LEAVES THE PULPIT AND LIMPS DOWN THE AISLE. HE
DRIFTS TOO CLOSE TO **SARAH**, WHO SHIES AWAY FROM HIM SLIGHTLY AND
NOTICES A SCAR-COVERED HAND PEEK FROM UNDER A SLEEVE FOR A
MOMENT.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. CHAPEL- LATE MORNING

BROTHER CARSON AND SISTER DARLENE ARE CHATTING WITH OTHER
CONGREGANTS AS THEY CORRAL THE **CHILDREN** OUT OF THE CHAPEL.

SARAH AVERY STANDS SLIGHTLY APART FROM THE REST OF THE CHILDREN.

VELMA MULLINS (11) (O.S)

I heard, he'd been a miner once,
like a hundred years ago.

SARAH SPINS TO LOOK AT **VELMA**, WHO WAS SUDDENLY RIGHT BEHIND HER.

SARAH

Huh?

VELMA

Elder Henry, of course. I seen how
you 'bout jumped clear out your
own skin when he walked past.

SARAH

Oh. Okay.

VELMA HOLDS HER HAND OUT TO SHAKE **SARAH'S**.

VELMA

My name's Velma Mullins. I'm
eleven years old. Been stuck here
for nigh on a year now. What's
your name?

SARAH EYES THE GIRL'S HAND WARILY. SHE DOESN'T ANSWER. AFTER AN AWKWARD MOMENT, **VELMA** DROPS HER HAND.

SARAH

Where'd you hear that? About Elder Henry?

VELMA BRIGHTENS AS SHE LEANS IN CLOSER.

VELMA

Oh, that's not all i knows. at the end of his minin' days, there was a gas explosion had disfigured his face and blown him backwards! nearly blew him to *bits*.

One time, I even swear I caught him with his hood down! Looked like half-cooked pork butt.

SARAH ROLLS HER EYES.

SISTER DARLENE

Come on, little ones! Straight back to the Home now, no dawdlin'!

THE CHILDREN FOLLOW BROTHER CARSON AND SISTER DARLENE IN A LOOSE PACK. SARAH AND VELMA LAG AWAY FROM THE GROUP, SIDE BY SIDE.

SARAH

I don't know about all that, but I sure don't like the way he makes a room feels.

VELMA

I don't think anyone does, really.
(beat) Hey, you wanna race?

SARAH'S FACE BRIGHTENS. AND SUDDENLY SHE AND **VELMA** ARE OFF LIKE ROCKETS, LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TOWARD THE HOME, **BROTHER CARSON** CALLING AFTER THEM.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. THE HOME, GIRLS' DORMITORY- BEDTIME

AT NIGHT, THE HOME IS DARK AND OMINOUS. THE STONE HALLWAYS BENEATH THE MAIN FLOOR CREEP LIKE A GREAT SERPENTINE BEAST SLIDING DEEPER INTO THE EARTH. CANDLELIT SCONCES CAST IRON-CLAD SHADOWS. FLOORS SEEM TO SWALLOW FOOTPRINTS IN THEIR DUST, LEAVING NO EVIDENCE OF ANYONE COMING OR GOING. SOME DOORS, OLD WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES - OPEN SILENT AS THE NIGHTTIME WIND, AND OTHERS ARE SO CREAKY AND CRANKY THAT THEY SEEM TO SCREAM LIKE DAMNATION.

THE CHILDREN ARE SEPARATED BY GENDER INTO TWO LARGE DORMITORIES. THE GIRLS' IS A LONG, REPURPOSED SECOND-FLOOR BALLROOM WITH COTS LINING OPPOSITE WALLS. IT IS DRAFTY AND CHILLY, THE ONLY ILLUMINATION BEING EACH GIRL'S BEDSIDE CANDLE.

SARAH IS GETTING INTO BED. **VELMA** APPEARS WITH ALL HER BELONGINGS. SHE LOOKS SLIGHTLY PLEADINGLY AT THE OTHER GIRL.

VELMA

You don't mind that I sleep her,
do ya? Now that we's friends and
all?

SARAH

I don't see why not. A girl named
Nora was sleeping there, but I
haven't seen her since dinner last
night.

VELMA

Oh yeah! I heard Brother Carson
telling Patty and Susanna earlier
that she done got adopted and that
the family had been so excited to
have her that they took her right
in the night without any chance to
say any goodbyes.

VELMA DUMPS ALL HER BELONGINGS ONTO THE FLOOR AND KICKS THEM BENEATH THE BED BEFORE CLIMBING INTO IT.

SARAH

Seems kinda odd, don't it? I don't remember any grownups coming by lately, do you?

VELMA

Well, I guess not, but then again, I really wasn't all that familiar with that Nora girl. Did she come here with you?

SARAH

No, I'm from Barlo. I think she was from somewhere Virginia way. Her folks died of the 'fluenza or something like that.

VELMA

Seems like people been real keen to find themselves a little girl lately.

SARAH

What you mean?

VELMA

Nora ain't the first one to up and leave us without much goodbyin'. About four other girls been adopted like that in the past month too. Fiona Beasley was one of em, I know that. She'd promised me she wouldn't leave here unless we got adopted together, but one morning I wake up and she was just... gone.

VELMA LOOKS DOWN, SAD. **SARAH** TAKES HER WORDS IN, SOMETHING BEGINNING TO COME TOGETHER IN HER MIND.

ONE OF THE GRAY LADIES WALKS IN, CARRYING A LARGE OIL LAMP. ALL THE OTHER **GIRLS** SCURRY TO GET BELOW THEIR COVERS BEFORE SHE PASSES THEM. THE THREE GRAY LADIES ARE THE NIGHT WATCH OF THE HOME. NEVER SEEN IN THE DAYLIGHT HOURS OR WORKING OUTSIDE, THEY ARE IMPOSSIBLY OLD AND TALL. THIR SKIN HAS A PAPERY GRAY PALL THAT SEEMS TO ABSORB ALL LIGHT. EACH OF THEM WEAR A HIGH-COLLARED BLACK DRESS AND SPEAK VERY LITTLE.

GRAY LADY

Lights out, my babies. Everyone wrapped snug in bed?

SARAH AND **VELMA** FOLLOW SUIT, QUICKLY PULLING THEIR BLANKETS UP AND ROLLING OVER. **SARAH** BRINGS HERS UP TIGHTLY TO JUST BELOW HER EYES.

THE GRAY LADY TAKES HER TIME WALKING THE LENGTH OF THE MIDDLE AISLE. **SARAH** TRACKS HER EVERY STEP THROUGH HALF-CLOSED EYES. ON HER RETURN TRIP DOWN THE AISLE, **THE GRAY LADY** STOPS AT THE FOOT OF SARAH'S BED. **SARAH** HOLDS HER BREATH.

THE GRAY LADY SLOWLY WALKS BETWEEN SARAH AND VELMA'S BEDS, AND SWIFTLY EXTINGUISHES THE CANDLE ON THE BEDSIDE TABLE. SHE RESUMES HER COURSE AND FINALLY LEAVES THE ROOM. THE LATCH ON THE DOOR ECHOES AS IT CLICKS HOME BEHIND HER.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

IN. THE HOME, GIRLS' DORMITORY- MORNING

THE MORNING BELL SOUNDS FROM THE HALLWAY, WAKING **SARAH** FROM A RESTLESS NIGHT'S SLEEP. SHE ROLLS OVER AND FINDS VELMA'S BED EMPTY. NOT ONLY EMPTY, BUT HER THINGS ARE ALL GONE FROM UNDERNEATH AND THE LINENS HAVE BEEN STRIPPED.

SARAH SITS UP, PERPLEXED, AND SCANS THE FACES OF THE OTHER SLEEPY GIRLS TUMBLING OUT OF BED. VELMA IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. THE HOME, DINING ROOM- MORNING (A BIT LATER)

SARAH SITS AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE WITH THE OTHER ORPHAN GIRLS AND BOYS. **SISTER DARLENE** AND **BROTHER CARSON** SIT AT EITHER END OF THE LONG BANQUET TABLE.

SARAH

Sister Darlene, have you seen
Velma this morning? She wasn't in
bed when we woke up.

SISTER DARLENE

You mean little miss Mullins? As a
matter of fact, I have! After a
conversation at church yesterday,
I got her a job over in Jenkins,
and had to go start right away.
She left just 'fore dawn to catch
her train.

SARAH IS DISTURBED BY THIS, BUT KEEPS IT TO HERSELF. INSTEAD,
SHE STARES AT HER HALF-EATEN BREAKFAST AND TRIES TO EAT A BIT
MORE, BUT FINDS SHE CANNOT.

SARAH

(Quietly, to herself) That's it.
Time to go.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. THE HOME, GIRLS' DORMITORY- NIGHT

SARAH LAYS ASLEEP IN BED, QUILT TUCKED SNUG BENEATH HER CHIN. ALL THE CANDLES HAVE BEEN SNUFFED. **THE GRAY LADY** WALKS BY, COMPLETING HER HEADCOUNT FOR THE EVENING. THE DOOR'S LATCH ONCE AGAIN ECHOES LOUDLY THROUGH THE ROOM AS THE GRAY LADY CLOSES IT BEHIND HER.

SARAH'S EYES SNAP OPEN. SHE TAKES A QUICK LOOK AROUND THE ROOM TO CHECK NO ONE IS WATCHING, AND THROWS THE COVERS OFF.

AS SILENTLY AND FAST AS SHE CAN, **SARAH** CHANGES INTO TRAVELING CLOTHES. SHE GRABS HER KNAPSACK FROM BENEATH HER BED. SHE CHECKS ITS CONTENTS IN THE STREAMING MOONLIGHT, REVEALING SPARE CLOTHING ITEMS AND SEVERAL SMALL PARCELS OF JERKY, DRIED APPLES, AND THE LIKE.

SARAH TIPTOES DOWN THE AISLE. ALL THE OTHER GIRLS ARE EITHER ALREADY ASLEEP OR PRETENDING. SHE APPROACHES THE DOOR AND TAKES A FEW DEEP, STEADYING BREATHS. PUTTING HER EAR AGAINST THE DOOR, **SARAH** LISTENS.

[THE SOUND OF HEELS CLACKING AGAINST STONE STEADILY DECREASES]

AS SILENTLY AS SHE POSSIBLY CAN, SARAH TURNS THE KNOB AND PULLS THE DOOR OPEN A HAIR.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. THE HOME, HALLWAY- CONT.

THROUGH THE TINY CRACK, **SARAH** WATCHES **TWO GRAY LADIES** TURN THE CORNER AT THE END OF THE HALL AND OUT OF SIGHT.

SARAH, ON HIGH ALERT, QUICKLY MOVES THROUGH THE WINDING, SLANTED CORRIDORS, MAKING HER WAY DOWN TO THE BACK OF THE HOME.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. THE HOME, REAR COURTYARD- CONT.

THE CART STANDS ALREADY LOADED WITH BOXES WRAPPED IN CLEAN WHITE PAPER; BUSHELS OF APPLES, JUGS OF CIDER, AND OTHER SUNDRIES.

SARAH SQUEEZES INTO THE NIGHT FROM THE CRACKED-OPEN BACK KITCHEN DOOR. SHE MAKES A BEELINE FOR THE CART AND SLIPS INSIDE. SHE CURLS UP AND UNDER AN OLD CANVAS TARP COVERING THE APPLES.

FOR A MOMENT, **SARAH** LAYS THERE, BREATHING HARD. SHE STRUGGLES TO GET IT UNDER CONTROL. DESPITE THAT, WITHIN MINUTES, SHE DRIFTS OFF TO SLEEP.

NOT LONG AFTER, THE LARGE, SLUMPED, AND CLOAKED SHAPE OF **ELDER HENRY** EMERGES FROM THE SAME KITCHEN DOOR THAT **SARAH** HAD COME THROUGH. HE DOES NOT NOTICE THE STOWAWAY. HE SLOWLY CLIMBS UP INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT AND URGES THE CART HORSE ON.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVE- NIGHT/JUST BEFORE DAWN

SARAH WAKES AND INSTANTLY KNOWS SHE'D MAKE A MISTAKE. THERE IS NO SOUND OF A BUSTLING MARKET, NOTHING TO INDICATE ANY SIGN OF LIFE. SHE SMELLS DANK WATER AND THE STILLED AIR SCENT OF DECAY. SHE CREEPS TO THE SIDE OF THE CART AND PEERS OUT INTO THE NEAR DARKNESS.

AT THE MOUTH OF A MOUNTAIN CAVE, **ELDER HENRY** IS THERE. HIS HOOD THROWN BACK AND HIS MISSHAPEN HEAD, NECK, AND SHOULDER PARTIALLY VISIBLE. HE IS SHAKING AND FLEXING AS HE TEARS INTO A HUGE, BLOODY CHUNK OF MEAT IN HIS HAND.

SARAH'S HEAD SWIMS AND SHE SHAKES IT HARD TO CLEAR IT. **ELDER HENRY** SHUFFLES OVER TO THE CART. **SARAH** DUCKS BACK INTO THE DARKEST, SMALLEST PLACE SHE CAN FIND IN THE CART.

ONE OF **ELDER HENRY'S** ARMS GROPE UNDER THE CANVAS UNTIL HE GRABS ONE OF THE WHITE PAPER-WRAPPED BOXES, NOT TWO INCHES FROM **SARAH'S** HEAD. THE HAND RETREATS AND THE MAN GOES BACK TO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE, WHERE A BONFIRE RAGES MERRILY.

ELDER HENRY PULLS OUT ANOTHER PIECE OF MEAT FROM THE BOX, THIS ONE WOBBLY AND SHINY LIKE A CALF'S LIVER.

SARAH WATCHES IN HORROR.

ELDER HENRY BURIES HIS FACE IN IT LIKE A DOG, ROOTING AND SNORTING AND SUCKING AND BITING AND CHEWING AND SWALLOWING, GROANING WITH PLEASURE. HE PULLS BACK, LOOKING AT THE MESS IN HIS HANDS, AND DISCARDS THE BULK OF THE LIVER TO THE FLOOR.

ELDER HENRY LOOKS ABOUT AS IF SUDDENLY AWARE THAT HE WAS BEING WATCHED. HE PULLS HIS HOOD BACK INTO PLACE, COVERING THE GORE-STUFFED HOLE OF HIS MOUTH.

SARAH'S EYES MOVE FROM THE SHUFFLING, OFFAL SMEARED PASTOR AND LOOKED AT THE TABLE WHERE HIS OPEN AND NOW BLOOD-SMEARED BOX SAT ALONGSIDE FIVE OTHERS JUST LIKE IT.

SARAH

Six boxes... six girls missing... oh,
no, Velma...

SARAH KEEPS HER EYES ON THE ELDER AS SHE SLOWLY TRIES TO CREEP OVER THE SIDE OF THE CART TO THE GROUND BELOW WITHOUT MAKING A SOUND.

ELDER HENRY BEGINS TEARING INTO THE NEXT, WHITE-PAPERED BOX.

SLOWLY, **SARAH** MOVES ONE LEG OVER THE SIDE OF THE CART TRYING TO KEEP HER BALANCE, BUT - WHETHER IT WAS FEAR OR NERVES OR JUST BEING LITTLE - SHE LOSES HER FOOTING AND SLIPS, FALLING HARD ONTO THE GROUND.

ELDER HENRY SNAPS HIS HEAD UP AND SEES HER. HE FREEZES. **SARAH** FREEZES AS WELL, EYES LOCKED.

WITH A CASUAL MOVEMENT OF HIS SHOULDERS, **ELDER HENRY** ADJUSTS HIS HOOD BACK INTO ITS PROPER PLACE, PRODUCES A HANDKERCHIEF FROM NOWHERE AND BEGINS TO CLEAN HIS HANDS AND MOUTH. HE WALKS TOWARD THE GIRL.

SARAH TRIES TO GET TO HER FEET. BUT SUDDENLY A CRUSHING SENSE OF WRONGNESS, OF BROKENNESS FILLS THE AIR.

A GIANT INVISIBLE HAND IS TRYING TO PUSH HER DOWN AND HOLD HER IN PLACE, BUT **SARAH** FEELS GAPS BETWEEN ITS 'FINGERS' AND SLIPS THROUGH THEM. SHE STRUGGLES TO HER FEET AND LOOKS UP AT THE HOODED FIGURE.

ELDER HENRY MAKES A MOTION TOWARD HER AND **SARAH AVERY** FLIES THROUGH THE AIR, HITTING THE INNER CAVE WALL AND SLIDING TO THE FLOOR.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. CAVE- CONT.

[MALICIOUS, ANIMALISTIC SNARLING.]

ELDER HENRY

Child... What is your name?

SARAH STARES AT **ELDER HENRY** AS HE APPROACHES. THERE IS SOMETHING LARGER THAN HIM HERE, BUT LIKE IT IS LEAKING OUT OF HIM—LIKE LOOKING AT A FIRE THAT IS SPREADING BUT THINNING OUT AND, IN DOING SO, GOING OUT.

SARAH

Sarah?

ELDER HENRY

Sarah... What is your Christian name, child?

SARAH

M-my what, sir?

ELDER HENRY

Your last name, girl. What is it?

SARAH

(Stammering, suddenly remembering the power of names) I-I don't rightly know, I been on my own since I was real little—

ELDER HENRY

Do. Not. Lie. I can smell it when
you do.

ELDER HENRY TAKES A LONG, LINGERING INHALE OVER SARAH'S HEAD AND
STOPS DEAD.

ELDER HENRY

Why do you smell like her?

ELDER HENRY'S BLOOD-SMEARED FINGERS CLOSE ON **SARAH'S** WRIST AND
PULLS HER TO HER FEET. HE SNIFFS AND SNORTS IN HER HAIR.

ELDER HENRY

why do you smell like her?!

SARAH LOOKS AWAY FROM THE HOOD AND GLIMPSES THE ELDER'S BAD LEG,
WHICH IS SO MISSHAPEN IT LOOKS MORE LIKE AN ANIMAL'S HOOF THAN A
HUMAN FOOT.

ELDER HENRY GROWLS AND SHAKES HER. HIS HOOD IS THROWN FULLY BACK
AND **SARAH** NEARLY SCREAMS AT THE SIGHT OF HIS FACE

ELDER HENRY IS NOT HUMAN, NOT ANIMAL. IT LOOKS LIKE HE IS SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. HE LOOKS LIKE SOME BLACK-FURRED ANIMAL EATEN BY MANGE AND FADED GRAY; LIKE SOMEONE HAD SHEARED SOMETHING WILD, AND THE SKIN UNDERNEATH WAS DARK AND LEATHERY. IT LOOKS LIKE IT HAS BEEN STITCHED TOGETHER AGAIN AND AGAIN. HIS EYES LOOK LIKE EVERY BLOOD VESSEL IN THEM HAS BUST AND WERE CLOUDY RED, SET DEEP IN HIS DISTORTED FACE. HIS NOSE WAS LONG AND BEASTIAL. ON HIS FOREHEAD, BROKEN AND SPLINTERED STUMPS OF ANTLERS PROTRUDE. THEY BLEED A PALE AMBER LIGHT, SPARKS AND ASH DRIFTING FROM HIS HEAD AS HIS ANGER RISES TO A PEAK.

ELDER HENRY

*Who. Are you? What. Are you? Why
Do you smell like her?!*

HIS PATCHWORK FACE IS A MASS OF RAGE AND CONFUSION... AND FEAR. THE BROKEN ANTLERS PULSE WITH HATE AND HE SEEMS COMPLETELY... LOST.

SARAH TAKES ADVANTAGE OF **ELDER HENRY'S** BRIEF MOMENT OF CONFUSION TO KICK AT HIS DEFORMED, BEAST-LIKE LEG AS HARD AS SHE CAN. IT FLIES OUT FROM UNDER HIM AS IF IT WERE HOLLOW, AND **ELDER HENRY** FALLS TO THE GROUND HEAVILY.

SARAH AVERY RUNS.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. CAVE- CONT./MORNING

SARAH RUNS OUT OF THE CAVE AND INTO THE MORNING SUN. AN UNSEEN FORCE KNOCKS HER TO THE GROUND, AND SHE IS SUDDENLY BEING PULLED BACK THE WAY SHE CAME.

SARAH WRITHES AND SPINS AND TRIES TO RIGHT HERSELF. WHEN SHE DOES, SHE LOOKS BACK TOWARD THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE.

ELDER HENRY, HOOD BACK UP, IS STANDING IN THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE, OUT OF THE SUNLIGHT. HOLDING BOTH HIS HANDS OUTSTRETCHED, HE PULLS HER TO HIM AS IF WITH AN INVISIBLE ROPE.

GRAY LADY (O.S.)

Elder? We have guests.

SARAH AND ELDER HENRY BOTH START AND TURN. THE FORCE PULLING SARAH TO HIM VANISHES.

ONE OF THE GRAY LADIES STANDS BEFORE THEM, LOOKING FOR ALL THE WORLD LIKE SHE MIGHT BE THE REFEREE IN WHATEVER GAME WAS BEING PLAYED HERE. BESIDE HER STAND TWO WOMEN. **MARCIE WALKER (31)** IS TALL WITH BROAD, POWERFUL SHOULDERS AND A LONG CHESTNUT BRAID DOWN HER BACK. SHE IS DRESSED IN MEN'S HUNTING CLOTHES, ALL RICH LEATHER BELTS AND FINE BOOTS. SHE CARRIES A WALKING STICK TIPPED IN SILVER. **ELLIE WALKER (25)** IS A SHORTER, SOFTER GIRL WITH A

CASCADE OF BRIGHT RED HAIR. SHE IS DRESSED AS IF SHE WERE ON HER WAY TO A FINE LADIES' TEA - EXCEPT FOR THE VERY OBVIOUS AND VERY SHARP HUNTING KNIFE SHE HAS HALF-DRAWN FROM A LEATHER SCABBARD ON HER BELT.

GRAY LADY

Elder, This is Miss Marcia and Miss Heloise Walker. They are blood relations to little Sarah here and they've come to take her... home.

ELDER HENRY

(Sneering) Are their papers in order—

MARCIE WALKER

We were both there the day she was born, pastor. I pulled her from betwixt my sister's legs myself, and Ellie here cut the cord.

ELLIE WALKER FULLY DRAWS THE HUNTING KNIFE AND EXAMINES IT BEFORE RETURNING IT TO ITS SHEATH.

MARCIE WALKER (CONT.)

We got the papers you're asking for, we can show you those. And we can show you a whole lot more if you need showing. But based on the shape you're in, I suspect you might just want to make your mark on the going home form and let us carry on. Think careful on that, now.

SARAH LOOKS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE TWO WOMEN AND ALMOST CRIES. SHE SEES HER MOMMA'S EYES ON AUNT MARCIE AND HER MOTHER'S SMILE RADIATES OUT FROM AUNT ELLIE'S GLOWING FACE.

SARAH RUNS TO **ELLIE**, WHO SCOOPS HER UP AND USHERS HER BEHIND **MARCIE**.

MARCIE STEPS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO **ELDER HENRY**.

MARCIE

I don't know your name, beast, but I could smell what you are. And I could smell that you're not what you were or what you might be again, and that makes this day mine, I think. No bargains. No offering. We walk away right now

(cont'd)

or I swear by my mother's name
I'll bind you in that busted tent
of a body until the sea takes this
place and the last crow sees you
sink. My sister's girl keeps her
life. You keep yours such as it
is. We clear?

THE HATE THAT SHINES IN **ELDER HENRY'S** EYES SPEAK MORE WORDS THAN
CAN BE COUNTED. HE NODS AND SLIDES SILENTLY BACK INTO THE CAVE.

BEHIND ALL THIS, THE ORCHARD CAN BE SEEN NOT A HUNDRED YARDS
AWAY, AND BEYOND THAT, THE HOME.

THE GRAY LADY HAS VANISHED, AND IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

MARCIE WALKER TURNS AND FACES **SARAH**, WHO IS HITCHED ACROSS **ELLIE
WALKER'S** HIP.

MARCIE

Hey there, darlin'. You ready to
go home?

END