

## OLD GODS OF APPALACHIA

Season 4, Episode 68: The Bonds of Friendship

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

[ “The Land Unknown (The Bloody Roots Verses)” by Landon Blood ]

*These old roots run  
into a ground so bloody  
Full of broken dreams and dusty bones  
They feed a tree so dark and hungry  
where its branches split and new blood flows  
And the ghosts of a past you thought long-buried  
rise to haunt the young  
The shadow falls as judgment comes  
Tread soft, my friend, amongst your fellows  
Make your bond your word  
Lest you get what you deserve*

On a warm summer’s evening, Lee Underwood and his companion, Marigold Graves — known to her close friends as Goldie — made their way up the walkway to the front door of number 56 Rosebud Lane, right on the edge of the white side of Kingston, West Virginia. They had walked from their agreed upon meeting place outside Moses’ Drug Store — where the two had unofficially begun their courtship at the soda fountain — and walked north, away from the black quarter of town and towards the home of Lee’s good friend and employer, one Mr. J.T. Fields. The houses grew bigger and newer as they made their way to the address, and Marigold’s anxiety grew the further they strayed from the side of town where they were at least among their own, though no place was truly safe for black folks after the sun went down across Appalachia.

Before they were completely out of their element, Lee guided her down two streets into a modest neighborhood of single-story homes that sat on identical lots. The area reminded Marigold of the company towns some of the local miners lived in, though the homes were a little nicer. Her nerves were already buzzing as Lee knocked on the door of number fifty-six, but her heart leapt into her throat when a white man answered the door.

He was average height and a little stout around the middle, with neatly parted brown hair and a fashionable handlebar mustache. He wore a white shirt with no tie, and his sleeves were rolled to his elbows. Strangest of all, a black cloth apron that had clearly just been in service that evening was tied around his waist. The man was drying his hands on a checker print dish towel, and a sheen of working sweat lined his brow. It was clear he'd come straight from the kitchen, and Marigold prepared to make excuses for interrupting this stranger's evening meal, to explain they'd come to the wrong door, to run. Knocking on a white man's door while Black has never been a safe thing to do in rural West Virginia.

Framed in a rectangle of golden light that poured through the doorway, the man threw the towel over his shoulder like a barkeep and rested his hands on his hips. Before she could say a word, his face split into a thousand-watt grin as he reached out to shake Lee's hand. He chuckled warmly as he pulled Marigold's beau into a brotherly bear hug.

JACK: Doc! You old so-and so. You're early. Welcome! Welcome. It's about time you made it over to my house for supper. How many times did I have to ask?

LEE: It's good to see you off-the-clock too, Mr. Fields. Thank you for the invitation.

Doc grinned, taking off his hat and holding it over his heart, inclining his head respectfully to his employer.

JACK: Oh, don't you "Mr. Fields" me, son. Psh. Putin' on airs for your lady friend here, like you're some sort of respectable gentleman.

Jack laughed and Lee joined him.

Marigold's smile was stretched to its breaking point, all teeth. She hadn't the faintest idea what was going on here, but she didn't much like it. Lee had never told her his boss was a white man, much less a white man with whom he was on a first name basis. Her heart had begun to slow down and she was beginning to get her bearings — and to reflect upon how little she

appreciated Lee's failure to warn her in advance — when she found herself the center of J.T. Fields' attention.

JACK: And you must be the illustrious Miss Graves!

Jack crowed.

JACK: My, my, my. Doc here can't stop talking about you, and I see he ain't exaggerated a bit! You are lovely as a lily and pretty as a picture, if you'll allow me to be so bold.

Jack took Marigold's hand and pressed a chaste kiss to her folded fingers. A pair of dazzling hazel eyes found hers over the horizon of her knuckles.

JACK: But where are my manners? Y'all come on in. C'mon in. Supper's almost ready. I got a little bit of everything and a whole lot of nothing at the same time. I got a roast chicken in the oven and some green beans on the stove that have been getting very well acquainted with a hamhock from Gravely's butcher shop. I got cornbread that just come out the oven too, and some fine produce from old man Sensabaugh's farm — 'maters, taters, some green onions. I didn't know what you'd prefer, Miss Graves, so I figured I'd shoot for the moon.

Marigold noticed that all the food for the evening came from businesses on the Black side of Kingston and nodded approvingly. As she stepped over the threshold, she peered around to see what she could see of Mr. Fields' cozy home — an L-shaped space featuring a comfortable sitting room with a couch and an armchair, a dining table and sideboard set into a little nook around the corner. The kitchen lay on the other side of the sitting room wall, with a doorway that allowed easy access to the dining area. Savory aromas filled the small space. She looked around for any sign of a wife or housekeeper, but from what she could tell they were the only three folks in the house.

MARIGOLD: You cook, Mr. Fields?

Marigold asked, bringing her gaze to rest on the mustachioed white man in his well-worn butcher's apron.

JACK: Yes, ma'am, I do. And please, call me Jack. I'm just a crusty old bachelor. Been fending for myself for most of my life. Seems a bit much to hire anybody to do it for me. Don't want folks to think I'm big assing it.

The mild profanity made Marigold blush, and Jack dropped her a wink. She'd barely exchanged more than the standard formalities with white folks for most of her life, and now here was a white man — a rich white man, if Lee were to be believed — cooking her dinner and using blue language with her like they were old friends. Her guard went up and stayed up. There was something about Lee's friend that she found she didn't trust, though she couldn't quite put her finger on what it was. There was something lurking behind the blazing smile and "aw shucks, ma'am" demeanor that nudged at a part of her that most folks didn't know much about.

Lee reached into his inside jacket pocket and produced a narrow glass bottle that he presented to Mr. Fields.

LEE: My mama raised me better than to show up empty handed when somebody invites you over for supper, so I picked this up from one of the boys over in Cinder Bottom.

Jack popped the stopper on the bottle and sniffed, his eyes sparkling. Marigold could smell the potent spirits from where she stood. Mr. Fields was delighted.

JACK: Oh my! Your mama *did* raise you right, Doc. This is a lovely bottle you've brought to my table tonight. I thank you and welcome you as guests to my humble hearth, with all the rights and privileges that accompany that hospitality.

Jack took a snort from the bottle and passed it to Lee, who took a generous pull of his own. He offered the bottle to Marigold, who smiled awkwardly. Since the bottle came from Lee and not their host, she imagined it was safe enough. She wasn't used to spirits, but she took a small sip for politeness' sake. The liquor stung her throat, and she coughed discreetly into her hand. That secret part of her was tingling again. Marigold Graves had grown up in a family blessed and kept by the green, and she knew the forms and phrases of the old ways when she heard them. A pledge of hospitality sealed with a drink was strong magic in the most mundane of situations, a

guarantee of safety throughout the visit — leastways, from any outright harm. That didn't mean it was necessarily safe to let her guard down, so she stayed vigilant, her ears and eyes attuned to her beau's best friend and mentor.

Throughout supper, which Marigold had to admit was delicious, Jack regaled her with stories of what a fine man Lee — or Doc, as he called him — was. Doc was absolutely essential to the everyday flow of Mr. Fields' business, he assured her. The nature of said business seemed to slide from focus anytime Marigold tried to steer the conversation in that direction.

MARIGOLD: So, Mr. Fields, are you a local man?

Jack chuckled.

JACK: No, I'm afraid I can't claim that honor, Miss Graves, though I've come to love Bower County and hope to make it my home for some time.

MARIGOLD: What brought you to our little corner of the world?

JACK: Well, if I'm honest with you Miss Graves...

Jack looked at her as if he surely wished for all the world that she would say "please, call me Marigold," but she did not. She would not.

JACK: Bower County is ablaze with opportunity right now, and me and Mr. Underwood here are putting as many irons in that fire as possible, aren't we, Doc?

LEE: Yes, sir. There is money to be made and glory to be claimed.

Doc grinned and raised his glass to clink with Jack's. Marigold felt a wave of... something... flow from their host. It was like his smile, his laughter, his charm — all of it was contagious. She had the sense he could catch you up in it like a spider in his web. Marigold's eyes narrowed. He was trying to charm them. She glanced at Lee, who smiled back at her, and then looked back at Jack. Really *looked* into those hazel eyes and saw him.

What gazed back at her from behind the sparkling eyes and charming facade was something *other* — a timeless being who had walked this earth before men had language, before they even crawled. She smelled old earth and wild places rich with sticky vines and the musk of animals. In that glance, Jack saw her as well — saw the gifts that flowed through her blood, who she was and from whence she came — and the mask of the gregarious host slipped, just for a second, as he realized that he had not snared her.

And then the moment passed. Both conversation and drink continued to flow. Before she knew it, supper was done and dessert — a heavenly chocolate cake made from scratch — devoured. After serving them both a couple of fine after dinner cocktails, Jack saw them to the door. He handed Doc his hat and pulled him into another fierce hug, the two men laughing like schoolboys.

JACK: Y'all be careful going home now. I've put a word in with some of the boys who work security for us down at the shop to keep an eye on y'all, make sure you don't have any trouble getting Miss Graves here home.

When Marigold looked concerned, Jack merely flashed that Cheshire cat grin and leaned in to kiss her hand again.

JACK: Don't you worry none, Miss Marigold. You won't even know my boys are watching y'all. Y'all take your time. It's a nice night.

With that Jack closed the door to number 56 Rosebud Lane and sent them on their way. As soon as they were what she hoped was out of range of Jack's hearing — but who could tell, given what he was — Marigold turned a narrow-eyed gaze on her beau.

MARIGOLD: I know you ain't no fool, Lee Underwood. You have to know what that man is. Has he got you under some sort of glamor that blinds you to it?

LEE: Now, Miss Graves, you wound me. I think we know well enough by now what sort of cloth we're each cut from. He ain't got any more sway over me than he was trying to get over on you.

MARIGOLD: You caught that, did you?

LEE: Sweet girl, there are few things that I don't catch. He's a man with money and power, and that's a good man to know in times like these — even if he ain't really a man at all. C'mon now. Let's get you home before your daddy skins me alive.

Marigold decided to let the topic lie for the moment and enjoy the rest of their walk home, though she was far from convinced that Lee was fully immune to the charms of the being who called himself Jack. In time, she would come to know who and what Jack was better than she ever might have wished, over the course of other dinners like this one, of weekend barbecues and holiday celebrations. She would eventually accept that the creature who called himself Mr. Fields had not, in fact, glamored her man. No, the blind spot Lee had where Jack was concerned came from a more troubling place, a tie that bound him more tightly than mere magic — the bonds of love and friendship.

Marigold was no fool. She knew better than to try to come between Lee and the man he considered more than just an employer but a close friend and even something of a father figure. She kept her misgivings about Jack to herself. What she did not — would not — remain silent about was her objection to some of Jack and Lee's "business ventures." Doc Underwood was a gifted root doctor and healer — Jack's nickname for Lee was not without merit. He shouldn't be involved with the mostly worthless potions and concoctions Jack peddled up one side of the state and down the other — much less his other unsavory endeavors. Lee had learned his craft at his granddaddy's knee — a man whose reputation in Bower County was without blemish — and folks had begun to turn to Lee now that old Davis Underwood had passed. Her man could do a lot of good for folks around here, she argued, at least if he didn't allow his involvement with Mr. Fields and his schemes to sully the Underwoods' good name.

Slowly, as the months flew by and Marigold and Lee grew ever closer, her words began to take root in his heart. It didn't hurt that more and more folks in the community had been knocking on Doc Underwood's door when their babies caught the croup or papaw's gout was acting up. Lee's steadily improving reputation was not only due to his own skills, but in part to his connection with the Graves family. Marigold's mama was a trusted midwife. Her daddy was

what some folks called a witchdoctor — that is to say, he was skilled in the art of removing hexes and curses and expelling h'aints and other unwanted spirits that bothered the living. If they had been anyone else, Lester Graves' gifts might have seen the family shunned by the community. But Judith Graves was a churchgoing woman who made sure her husband and daughter were at her side in the pew every Sunday, and thus, the family's gifts were politely ignored — at least until somebody in town needed a baby delivered or a ghost evicted.

As Doc Underwood's healing work became increasingly time consuming, his work with Mr. Fields naturally began to take a backseat, much to Marigold's relief, although it seemed Lee was never fully outside his orbit. The two remained close friends and occasional collaborators in one scheme or another, though these "side projects" — as Lee liked to call them — grew steadily rarer. By the time Lee sat down with Lester Graves to ask for his blessing to propose to his daughter, Marigold found herself comfortable enough with the state of things to accept.

Her parents were nearly as excited at the prospect as Marigold herself. They had grown quite fond of young Mr. Underwood over the course of the young couple's courtship, and Judith declared herself ready to set down the responsibilities of motherhood and enjoy spoiling some grandbabies. Before they could be wed, however, Lee was determined to find himself and Marigold a home of their own.

While it was common for many young couples to remain in the home of one set of parents or the other — at least in the early years of their marriage — Lee Underwood had balked at the thought of lying down with his new wife under her parents' roof. He was his own man, damnit, and he would provide for his family in a home of their own. Aside from that, he adored his Goldie. He knew she dreamed of a pretty farmhouse with a big garden where she could raise not only vegetables for her kitchen, but the various roots and herbs they both used in their workings. A few chickens wouldn't go amiss either. Marigold seemed to love the ornery birds, particularly when they were fluffy chicks, and Lee was determined to give her everything she wanted and more.

He spent months searching for just the right spot to build a home for his queen. Finally, he settled on a sizable plot of mostly uncultivated land on a mountain forested with sturdy, healthy oaks. Oak Mountain was located outside town and bordered the edge of Bower County. The



parcel he was interested in encompassed — for all intents and purposes — the entirety of the mountain, and Lee had saved up just enough money to cover the advertised purchase price and begin building their home.

Acquiring the Oak Mountain property, however, was no small matter. From all accounts, the man who held the title to the land had fallen into rather difficult financial straits and was eager to unload the undeveloped mountainside that his family had found too challenging to cultivate. However, when a young Black man approached Everett Russell with cash in hand and a heartfelt desire to build a house on the mountain for his new bride, it seemed he had a change of heart. Overwhelmed by the sentimental attachment to the Russells' ancestral home — never mind that the only “homesteading” they'd ever managed was the construction of an old hunting shack he hadn't made use of in over a decade — old Everett found he simply could not part with it.

This was not the first attempt Lee had made to purchase a plot of land to settle down on with Goldie. In truth he had anticipated these sorts of setbacks, some white folks being what they were. But there was something about Oak Mountain. The place just called to him. Oak Mountain was special, and Lee Underwood could feel in his bones that it was the right place for him and his new bride to stake their fortunes and raise their family. He just had to convince Russell to let him have it — one way or another.

It was Jack who provided the solution. One night over a couple of cold beers enjoyed out on Jack's back porch, Lee confided to his friend about the beautiful property he'd found for sale on the edge of Bower County, and his frustrations in negotiating with the owner. Jack had leaned back in his rocking chair, taking a long pull off his beer, and nodded thoughtfully. After a moment, he smiled.

JACK: You know, I've been considering investing in some real estate here in old West Virginny.

Understanding his thought process immediately, Lee grinned.

LEE: Oh, have you?

JACK: Well it only makes sense, don't it? As much time as I spend up here doing business, I may as well put a few roots down — you know, invest in the community.

Lee nodded sagely, taking another sip of his own as he settled back into his rocker.

LEE: It's just sound business practice.

A smug grin spread across Jack's face, and Lee could all but see the wheels turning in his friend and mentor's head. Everett Russell had no idea what he was in for.

Within the week, Everett Russell's sentimental attachment to his bit of family land on the edge of the county had mysteriously dissolved, and Mr. J.T. Fields purchased the Oak Mountain parcel at a substantial discount. He passed these savings on to his close friend and business associate, Mr. Lee Underwood, who acquired the property for just a smidge north of what Jack had paid for it, but far less than he had initially offered Russell. The savings would allow him to add a lovely wrap-around porch to the farmhouse he planned to build for his future wife — a surprise he would keep under his hat until it was time to unveil their new home to her.

By unspoken agreement, neither Lee nor Jack ever mentioned the role Jack had played in Lee's acquisition of Oak Mountain to Marigold. Goldie's opinion of her husband's friend and occasional business partner had not improved much with time, and she would not have appreciated feeling any debt was owed to him in their new home. Not that there was any debt — Jack had purchased the land and resold it to Lee, fair and square — beyond Lee's gratitude to his friend for acting on his behalf. Lee loved Jack, but he knew well enough to make certain his claim on Oak Mountain was unquestionable.

Lee and Marigold were married in the spring, with all their families and friends in attendance. Lee had begun to help Marigold to track down the older siblings who had been taken from her parents before she was born, and a couple of her sisters stood up with her at the altar. Lee's brother acted as his best man, and his dear friend J.T. Fields served as groomsman. There were happy tears in Lester Graves' eyes as he walked his daughter down the aisle and took his place in the front row of the church at her mother's side.

As the couple settled into married life — first in the old hunting shack, which they fixed up as best they could while it served as their temporary home, and eventually in the beautiful house he built for his queen — Lee’s dealings with Jack ever grew less frequent. He was busy with their small farm and his healing work. The added responsibilities had shifted Doc Underwood’s priorities significantly, the lure of the potential profit to be gained from one of Jack’s “business ventures” now weighed against the potential danger to not only himself but his wife — and one day soon, their children.

It didn’t help that Lady Luck appeared to be tiring of his old friend’s company. While in the past the jobs they pulled had seemed to go remarkably smoothly, in the years after Doc’s marriage, things began to go sideways for J.T. Fields. Perhaps he was wearing out his welcome in Bower County, word of his cons and scams and crooked dealing spreading through a small community for which gossip was a shared hobby. Or maybe Lee was just getting too old for this shit. In any case, the straw that broke the camel’s back was the North Carolina job, at the tail end of what had been a long, lean year for the Underwoods.

Lee had finally finished the house at the end of summer — a project that had taken seemingly endless months of back-breaking work and depleted their savings to almost nothing. Lee’s brother Roger had helped him terrace the mountainside for farming, and Goldie spent the spring and summer tending and cultivating the land, coaxing the erosion-depleted soil back to health. Lee’s wife loved the green, and it loved her back. Every green and growing thing seemed to kindle at her touch, and soon their little garden was thriving with tomatoes and squash and beans and taters and corn.

But then Goldie had fallen pregnant with their first child, a happy circumstance that nonetheless came with its own burdens. She found herself tired and nauseous, and her efforts to grow ginger root — which would have helped alleviate her queasiness — proved more challenging than usual. Everything, in fact, seemed more difficult for her, the growing life inside her drawing hard on the energy she had previously been using to foster the growth of their crops. When drought struck, she’d managed to save some of the crops, but not all.

By early winter, the Underwoods found themselves stretched mighty thin, and Lee found he could feel nothing but relief when his old friend Jack turned up on their doorstep.

It was a blustery December evening, just before suppertime, when the knock came at their door. Lee and Marigold had only begun to spin the web of wards around the property to protect their home and family, but they were sound enough that Lee felt little anxiety in answering the knock. He had already begun to establish himself in the community as a healer and root doctor, so it was not entirely out of the ordinary to receive unexpected visitors after dark. He had already begun inventorying their stock of herbs and roots in his head, anticipating a potentially long night, so it was a pleasant surprise to find this was instead a social call.

JACK: Evening, Lee,

Jack said cheerfully.

JACK: I hope this isn't a bad time.

Lee grinned and embraced his old friend, slapping him heartily on the back.

LEE: There's no bad time for old friends. Come on in, make yourself at home. Goldie! Look who's here!

Lee called to his wife, who was currently in the kitchen, presiding over their evening meal. Emerging from the kitchen with a dish towel in hand, Marigold observed the older man, dressed in heavy wool coat and knitted scarf, as he hauled a heavily laden sack across the threshold and closed the door behind him. Lee caught the way her mouth tightened at the corners, but then she smiled politely and stepped into the room to welcome their guest.

MARIGOLD: Good evening, Jack. What brings you all the way out to Oak Mountain?

Seeming oblivious to her reserve, Jack turned a brilliant smile on Marigold, and embraced her fondly.

JACK: Well, I know Christmas is still a couple of weeks off, but I figured y'all would be spending the day with your folks, so I've come to offer my congratulations. Lee wrote to tell me y'all were expecting, and I thought I might play Santa.

Jack began to unload the heavy bag, laying its bounty out before them. There was a beautifully carved bassinet and a silver rattle tied with a pretty red bow, a stack of new diaper cloths and a quilt stitched with designs that Doc immediately recognized as beneficial charms — for protection and luck and the like. It was a thoughtful gift, and even Marigold found her reserve melting a little as she returned Lee's old friend's smile.

MARIGOLD: Why, thank you, Jack. That's very thoughtful. I was just about to put supper on the table. Will you join us?

JACK: That's mighty kind of you, Goldie. I'd love to.

Supper was a humble, weeknight affair — soup beans and ham with taters and corn bread, with buttermilk pie for dessert — but Jack praised Goldie's cooking to the point she finally laughed and rolled her eyes and told him to hush up. After supper, Marigold sent the two men off into the parlor with coffee while she took care of the washing up, which gave Jack the opportunity to make his pitch to Doc. As he poured a healthy splash of whiskey into each of their coffee cups, he told his friend about the next little project he had planned.

It seemed that Jack had recently been spending time in North Carolina. In the course of exploring his new homestead, he had become aware of certain artifacts in the possession of a widow in the community. Powerful artifacts, he explained, that could net them a tidy profit if sold to the right buyer — or be kept for their own uses if they saw fit.

LEE: I don't know, Jack. You know how Goldie feels about this sort of thing.

JACK: I know, I know. And I do understand, but it's all the way down in North Carolina. Even if somebody raises a fuss, word of that ain't gonna find its way back here. And if you don't mind me saying so, it seems like y'all could use the money.

LEE: You ain't wrong, but... things are different for me now. I've got a family to think about. We got a baby on the way, Jack!

JACK: I know, I know! But trust me, I've got it all worked out. I wouldn't ask if I didn't need you, and if I didn't think it'd be worth it to you in the end. Honestly, Doc, this ole girl might not know it, but we'd be doing her a favor. Some of this stuff could be dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands. I don't know where she come across it, but she surely don't have any idea what she's sitting on.

Lee considered for a moment, and Jack sat back and sipped his coffee, giving him space to think. Finally he sighed and nodded.

LEE: All right then. But we gotta do this right. Everything planned out, real careful. No guesswork and no cutting corners.

JACK: Absolutely. You have my word.

As Marigold rejoined the two men, the conversation turned to other topics. Jack was full of the sort of solicitous questions any expectant couple receives. When was Goldie due? Were they hoping for a boy or a girl? What names had they picked out? Was there anything they needed? If so, they need only say the word. So on and so forth, until the hour was late and the coffee drunk, and Lee and Marigold saw Jack to the door.

As they lay in bed that night, Lee outlined the plan for Marigold in broad strokes. He wasn't going to give his wife enough information to either overly worry her or potentially implicate her in this business, but neither would he lie to her. Marigold, unsurprisingly, was not pleased.

MARIGOLD: And here I thought, for once, that man had come to our door in the name of friendship. Just goes to show, some people never do change. I don't like this, Lee. But you already knew I wouldn't when you agreed to it.

LEE: I know. But things have been awful tight here lately, Goldie. And with the baby on the way? I'm worried. And the man's not wrong — these artifacts could be dangerous. They don't

need to be sitting on some old lady's shelf, just waiting for anybody — or *anything* — to snatch them up.

MARIGOLD: Oh yes! I'm sure Mr. J.T. Fields is undertaking this whole scheme merely out of the goodness of his heart.

LEE: You're right. He's not. And quiet as it's kept, I'm not. I'm doing this for *us*. For you and me that little boy or girl you carrying around there. This could set us up for a good, long while, Mrs. Underwood. No more scheming and hustling. Just you and me and that little one, tending to this place and doing what we do for folks in Bower County.

Lee could just see Marigold raise a skeptical eyebrow in the dim light of the bedside candle, though he'd have sworn he could feel the look she gave him even in the dark.

MARIGOLD: No more working with Jack? You promise?

LEE: Cross my heart and hope to die.

Lee leaned over to kiss his wife on the forehead, and then turned to put out the candle. Marigold punched his shoulder playfully in the dark.

MARIGOLD: You better not die. I'll have to get your friend Jack to raise you back up! I'm not bringing this child up alone, Lee Underwood.

The following morning, Lee and Marigold were up before dawn, Marigold cooking a hasty breakfast of bacon and eggs and toast while her husband showered and shaved and packed a bag. The sun was just cresting the treeline, painting their east-facing front porch in shades of gold and red, as a chestnut mare pulled J.T. Fields up their drive in a tidy little four-seat carryall. Lee kissed his wife good-bye at the door, hopped into the carriage next to Jack, and was gone, leaving Marigold Underwood and their unborn child to wait and worry.

[ "Atonement" by Jon Charles Dwyer ]

Well, hey there, family. We are in the home stretch, as only two — count ‘em, two — episodes remain in Season Four of *Old Gods of Appalachia: Root & Branch*. What more do we have to learn about Jack and his connection to the Underwoods? Will that information we gain save or doom our man Jack? Well, I guess we’ll have to come back a couple more times before we put this to bed, now won’t we? I think we will.

Speaking of coming back together with kinfolks, this is just your friendly reminder that tickets are on sale for the 2024 national tour of our new live show *Unhallowed Grounds* over at [oldgodsofappalachia.com/tour](http://oldgodsofappalachia.com/tour). We’re hitting up all kinds of different places this year, including Florida and Texas for the first time. Heck, there might be one near you! So go on over there to [oldgodsofappalachia.com/tour](http://oldgodsofappalachia.com/tour) and get your tickets straight from the source.

This is your “time is a lie and how are we at the end of season four and why is my beard greyer than it was a year ago” reminder that *Old Gods of Appalachia* is a production of DeepNerd Media, distributed by Rusty Quill. Today’s story was written by Cam Collins and Steve Shell. Our intro music is by brother Landon Blood and our outro music, “Atonement” — available on all streaming services — is by Jon Charles Dwyer. The voice of Marigold Underwood is Stephanie Hickling Beckman, and the voice of Doc Underwood is D.J. Rogers. We’ll talk to you soon, family. Talk to you real soon.

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