



Coal Dust On Purple Asters

A Trilogy Of Short Fiction

Blurb

Set in fictional Burfield County, Kentucky, these short stories unfold during the Great Depression, when coal mining was the dominant industry in the Kentucky mountains. The stories focus on three families caught between loyalty to the mines that feed them and resentment of the industry that devours them. In Appalachia during that period, families clung to each other despite poverty, tragedy, hardship and natural disasters.

In *Rain on Chinquapin Holler*, Wiley Hicks' heart is torn between his mountain-bred wife and a perfumed city woman who represents everything he both desires and despises. Meanwhile, bootleg whiskey offers both escape and enslavement. A devastating flood forces impossible choices that leave no one unscathed.

A Sprig of Purple Asters follows May Owens, whose unemployed miner husband vacillates between pride and despair while their sons' bellies grow hollow. When her opportunistic brothers arrive, May's desperate gamble saves her family by nearly destroying it.

The final story, *Red Snow in the Kentucky Woods*, follows young James Herald Gibson who, after losing his father and brother to a mine collapse, vows never to descend below ground himself, whatever the cost. His choice spirals into a decades-long mystery of family secrets and unbearable guilt.

Throughout, characters speak in the lilting cadence of mountainfolk whose poetic speech preserves the rhythms and phrases of their Elizabethan ancestors.

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