

EXT WILDERNESS- EARLY MORNING

Sweeping shots show the countryside of Yazoo County- valleys and hills lie between miles of woods. Much of it is covered in Kudzu.

EXT. KUDZU- EARLY MORNING

SUPER: 1985

In August, the Mississippi air becomes dense.

WIDE ANGLE: JOSEPH GREEN (40's), a tall African American man in a Navy baseball cap, walks through a field of leafy vines holding a shotgun.

CLOSE ON: Dressed in camouflage and boots, Joseph moves slowly, gun ready.

JOSEPH POV: In front of him, the vine begins to rustle. He can't see what is causing the movement, but whatever it is, Joseph is ready for it. The creature comes quickly towards him.

Joseph stops walking and aims his gun with his feet planted. He whispers.

JOSEPH

Come on.

As the rustling vines move closer, debris and leaves blow up in front of Joseph and a LOW RUMBLING SOUND gets louder and louder.

CLOSE ON: Joseph's eyes, wide and afraid, as he sees the creature for the first time.

He screams as he fires shot after shot.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE- EARLY MORNING

SUPER: 2021

There's an old house sitting on the edge of a hill. A country road and driveway lead up to the house, with woods across the street.

But below the house, in the valley surrounding the hill, lies a sea of kudzu. An endless expanse of the all consuming deep green vine. The leafy tendrils cover the tallest of trees and the smallest of shrubs, creating haunting and formless silhouettes.

INT. AVERY BATHROOM- EARLY MORNING

AVERY GREEN (14) is a highly sensitive and bright African American teenager with deep eyes. The shower head cascades water over her face, her eyes closed. She wipes her face with her hands. Takes a deep breath. Too deep, anxious.

CLOSE ON the glass wall of the shower- the condensation moves in an eerie unnatural manner.

Avery turns off the water abruptly, swallowing.

INT. KITCHEN- EARLY MORNING

David Green (40s), a handsome African American man wearing a robe, stands at the kitchen sink, looking out the small window above the sink as he sips coffee from his mug. Outside the window is the green sea of kudzu. He looks out with a sad look on his face.

David turns from the window towards the stove top to finish his eggs. As soon as he turns,

CLOSE ON the window- outside the kitchen window the KUDZU MOVES, as if there is something alive and hiding beneath the leaves.

INT. AVERY BEDROOM- EARLY MORNING

A LOW RUMBLING SOUND permeates the space. The sound is felt, rather than heard, a psychological experience.

Avery walks out of the bathroom in her towel. She breathes rapidly as the low rumbling sound gets stronger.

AVERY'S POV- Her vision blurs.

Dizzy, Avery leans over, allowing the bed to catch her. She takes deep breaths, steadying herself. The sound grows faint, slowly disappearing.

Avery sits in bed in her towel now. She picks up her iphone.

CLOSE ON cell phone screen. Tik tok Compilation

TIKTOK: A man with pink hair appears as a talking head floating over news footage.

MAN

This is what happens when the system fails to recognize violent predators.

(MORE)

MAN (cont'd)

Dan Carney was released in 2017 FREE OF CHARGES after his girlfriend Madison Ehrlich disappeared. Now, he's taken ANOTHER victim.

TIKTOK: The robotic TikTok automated computer voice narrates the words as they appear over the screen showing a map of a small town in Louisiana, then a picture of a dead body, then a high school photo of another woman.

ROBOTIC VOICE

This is where they found Selena's body. She was shot and stabbed 27 times. This didn't have to happen. Where is Madison Ehrlich's body??

TIKTOK: A young woman talks into her phone camera in her bedroom.

YOUNG WOMAN

I am so sick of society ignoring and dismissing violence against women while glorifying men. We are responsible for allowing Dan Carney to commit murders. We live in a culture that consistently dismisses the value of women.

INT. CARVER CAR- MORNING

ZOOM OUT:

JOHN CARVER (50's) a Baptist preacher, drives his teenage daughter Annie to school. ANNIE (15) a lanky goofy girl, sits in the passenger seat with her headphones on, also watching Tik Tok.

Annie takes off her headphones and puts them in her backpack as they approach the school.

JOHN CARVER

So. What's going on in the world of Tik Tok?

ANNIE

There's a killer on the loose.

JOHN CARVER

Well, that's a fun way to start off your school day.

ANNIE

It's a dark world dad. Might as well face it.

JOHN CARVER

I see. And what are you gonna do about it?

He smiles at her. She takes a bite of a granola bar and jokingly nods as she speaks.

ANNIE

I'm gonna.. Eat about it.

He chuckles as she opens the car door.

JOHN CARVER

Have a good day kiddo!

ANNIE

Love you!

EXT. PARKING LOT- MORNING

Avery gets out of the passenger door of a parked pick up truck. Her brother TRISTAN (17) hops out of the driver's side. Tristan seems to have it all going for him. Naturally smart, athletic, good looking and popular.

Tristan is immediately called over by some friends and Avery walks head down towards the building without him.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY- MORNING

Avery looks down as she walks. She is shifty, jumping slightly when someone comes out a side door. Her eyes dart around nervously.

Until.

Her eyes land on Annie, getting a book out of her locker and turning to face Avery. Avery's face lights up and Annie flashes a big cheesy smile back. Avery visibly relaxes in her presence.

ANNIE

Hey.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE- MORNING

David has just sat down when Sheriff MICHAEL KEENE (50's) a stern white man of large stature raps on the doorframe.

SHERIFF MICHAEL

David. Can I see you for a moment?

INT. SHERIFF KEENE'S OFFICE- MORNING

David sits down on the small old couch facing the Sheriff. Not a lot of extra cash in the budget for redecorating.

SHERIFF MICHAEL

I've been speaking with the FBI. I assume you've heard about this Dan Carney fella.

DAVID

The girlfriend killer? It's impossible to miss. Every true crime addict in America is talking about it.

SHERIFF MICHAEL

New evidence has come out since his release. He killed those girls and he's on the run. The FBI seem to think he's a real threat. He targets young women. The murders are... brutal.

David nods.

SHERIFF MICHAEL (cont'd)

The FBI seems to think there's a possibility that he could come through Yazoo County. Apparently he was spotted in a White Corolla coming up 49.

DAVID

Really?

SHERIFF MICHAEL

I'm letting the team know to keep their eyes open. I want everyone on high alert. YPD set up a roadblock South of Benton... Big name.

DAVID

Yes sir.

A pause.

SHERIFF MICHAEL  
There's uh, one more thing I wanted  
to talk to you about.

David leans forward slightly.

SHERIFF MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Your father's case. I noticed that  
it was still open.

DAVID  
Well, he hasn't been found yet.

SHERIFF MICHAEL  
David. The case has been cold for  
over three decades.

David takes a breath, his jaw set.

SHERIFF MICHAEL (cont'd)  
I don't know what else we can do. On  
our end. I know it's never easy to  
consider. But have you ever thought  
that maybe he didn't want to be  
found? Fathers abandon their  
families all the time. It's a  
terrible thing. But it does happen.  
Your mother reported they had a big  
fight the night before.

David shakes his head.

DAVID  
No. Not him.

Sheriff Michael sighs.

SHERIFF MICHAEL  
I understand. But I don't know what  
else we can do. As a son, I know  
you're not ready to let go of hope.  
But as a deputy, you know it's cold.

David looks at him, his eyes burning.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE- DAY

David walks into his office, body tense, mind tense. He sits  
down at his desk. He clenches and unclenches his fist.  
Then, in a split second decision, he opens his drawer and  
takes a pill bottle out, swallowing two quickly.

INT. HOSPITAL HALL- DAY

JOYCE GREEN (40's) walks down the hallway towards the open-air office where a young receptionist sits, working on a computer.. She is a lovely and warm African American woman. Sweet, but possessing a depth and power.

The office phone rings. The receptionist answers.

RECEPTIONIST

Nurse Green.

Joyce walks up to the desk to take the call.

JOYCE

Hello?

PAMELA (V.O.)

Hello, Mrs. Green? This is Pamela Tandy, counselor at YCH. I'm calling about your daughter Avery.

JOYCE

Is she alright?

Pamela Tandy answers tentatively.

PAMELA (V.O.)

Yes ma'am. She's here in the office with me right now. Avery had a pretty severe panic attack. I called as soon as we were able to calm her down so she is stable now. I think it might be best if she goes home early today and gets some rest.

JOYCE

Oh no. Yes of course. May I speak with her please?

There's the sound of shuffling and soft voices talking in the background.

EVERY (V.O.)

Hey mom.

JOYCE

Hey baby. Are you okay?

EVERY (V.O.)

Yes.

JOYCE

I've got an hour left of my shift but I'm going to ask Carol if I can leave early okay? I'll be there as soon as I can.

AVERY (V.O.)

Okay.

JOYCE

Okay. I love you.

Joyce gazes into the distance sadly as she says this.

AVERY (V.O.)

Love you too.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE- DAY

Knock knock. Joyce Green opens the door and peers in. A miserable middle aged woman named CAROL (50) looks up from the chart she's filling out.

CAROL

Yes?

JOYCE

Sorry to bother you. My daughter's school just called.

CAROL

Is something wrong?

Carol's tone is abrupt and rude. Like this whole conversation is greatly irritating to her.

JOYCE

Well.. she had a panic attack. They think I should come and get her. My shift ends in an hour and we don't have any walk-ins, do you mind if I leave ear-

CAROL

Absolutely not.

Carol returns her attention to the chart as she speaks.

CAROL (cont'd)

Complete your shift Joyce. Having a nervous kid does not constitute an emergency.

Joyce stands there stunned. She doesn't fight back, but it's clear that Carol's words made her angry.

Carol looks up briefly.

CAROL (cont'd)  
What? Is there something else?

JOYCE  
No.

Joyce closes the door.

INT. HOSPITAL HALL- DAY

In the hallway Joyce takes out her cell phone and types a message.

INT. YAZOO COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR OFFICE- DAY

Ding. Avery's phone goes off and she looks at the screen.

CLOSE UP: Avery's phone shows a text message from MOM:

"I'm so sorry baby."

The school counselor PAMELA TANDY (50's) looks over her spectacles at Avery.

PAMELA  
Is everything alright?

AVERY  
Yep. She's on her way. I'm going to wait for her outside.

Avery grabs her backpack and moves quickly towards the door.

PAMELA  
Avery...

Avery pauses briefly at the doorway and looks back at the counselor with absolutely no intention of returning.

PAMELA (cont'd)  
You know, many practitioners, myself included, consider sensory sensitivity to be of great advantage.

Avery looks at Mrs. Tandy like she is stupid.

EVERY

Okay.

She closes the door. Mrs. Tandy sighs.

EXT. YAZOO COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL- DAY

Avery sits on the sidewalk looking down, her over the ear headphones blasting music. QUINTESSENTIAL INTROVERT. The outside noises drown out. The beat is loud, almost meditative. Like a wave we can grab hold of and ride on. Straight out of here.

An old car drives up and her mom rolls down the window. Joyce smiles at her. Avery grabs her backpack and gets in the car.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR- DAY

Avery has her head phones wrapped around her neck with the music off now. She rides with her mom down green country roads, headed home. Joyce looks at her.

JOYCE

What happened? Were you nervous about the test?

EVERY

No.

JOYCE

Is it something at home? You can tell me.

EVERY

Mom, it's nothing.

She pauses for a moment here. This next part is difficult for her to say.

EVERY (cont'd)

It's not any one thing. I just hate school. I hate being around people.

Joyce looks taken aback for a moment. Then she smiles.

JOYCE

Boy, you really are my daughter.

Avery looks at her. Her mom nods her head knowingly, eyes straight ahead.

JOYCE (cont'd)  
I get it.

AVERY  
Really?

JOYCE  
Oh yes. I do.

She looks back at her daughter for a second and rubs the back of Avery's head affectionately.

JOYCE (cont'd)  
I'm sorry baby.

Avery wipes away the unwelcome tears.

EXT. HIGHWAY- DAY

Joyce's old car pulls up to a line of traffic on a country highway. Up ahead we see police lights and officers talking to a driver. Road block.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR- DAY

JOYCE  
What is this? I've never seen a road block in Yazoo.

They look ahead curiously.

EXT. PORCH- DAY

Tristan lounges on the porch swing, eating cheetos and drinking soda. His best friend TIM (17) good natured and FUN slouches on the chair next to him. Also surrounded by snacks. A bluetooth speaker plays music and they are both on their phones.

Their backpacks lay on the floor and homework is sprawled on the tables around them, giving the thinly veiled guise of productivity. Tristan laughs hard at something on his phone. Tim looks over at him.

TRISTAN  
Dude I'm sending this to you.

A beat. Then Tim breaks out in laughter at the Tiktok.

TIM  
AUGHH! What the fuuck man!

INT. GREEN DEN- DAY

The inside of the house is very modest and definitely not modern, but it is cozy and clean.

An old but comfy couch, a leather recliner, and a cushioned rocking chair surround a coffee table and small TV. Subdued colors and framed family pictures.

CLOSE ON the hallway connected to the Den.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM- DAY

In David and Joyce's bedroom, Joyce Green is taking a nap. She lies in the deepest sleep under the comforter, passed out after her long shift.

INT. HALLWAY- DAY

Back in the dark hallway. A door across the hallway from Joyce's room with a hanging old school "KEEP OUT" sign.

INT. AVERY BEDROOM- DAY

Avery's bedroom is dark, blinds closed and painted a dark red. Her desk is pushed against the wall next to her bed. The walls are covered with music posters. Next to her desk is a small keyboard.

Avery sits at a keyboard, surrounded by audio equipment. Headphones on. She mixes something and the music in her headphones becomes loud and clear. It's a LoFi song and mixed into the music is a repetitive phrase- her counselor's voice saying "is everything alright?" Over and over with the beats. It's a little weird but sounds undeniably cool.

EXT. FRONT PORCH- DAY

Tim takes a sip of Dr. Pepper, still looking at his phone. Then- he hears a faint rustling sound, like leaves blowing loudly in a storm. He looks up from his phone and sees SOMETHING that makes him sit up, his eyes squinting.

TIM

Did you see that?

TRISTAN

What?

TIM

The kudzu over there was MOVING! Like  
some big animal or something.

Tristan looks out.

TRISTAN

Maybe a wild hog? They never go in  
there though... WHOA!

CUT TO:

EXT. KUDZU- DAY

The kudzu moves. As if a strong gust of wind is blowing from  
the ground. Whatever it is moves FAST.

TIM

Dude. The fuck is that?

INT. DARK ROOM- DAY

Avery has her headphones off now. She fiddles with a piece  
of her equipment.

Then, an almost inaudible LOW rumbling noise.

Avery stops fiddling, her hands retreating, forming loose  
fists. She starts to breathe heavily.

Avery turns in her roller chair, leaning forward.

EVERY'S POV: Her vision blurs and a high pitch sound rings  
through her ears, along with the LOW RUMBLING.

WIDER ANGLE-

This time the effect is severe. Avery puts her head between  
her knees. She is now panting, borderline hyperventilating.

This lasts a while until the fast breaths begin to slow,  
becoming deeper as she steadies herself again.

EXT. FRONT PORCH- DUSK

Avery walks out onto the porch, glass of water in hand.  
Tristan looks at her.

TRISTAN

I heard you had another panic attack.

She glares at him.

AVERY  
What's it to you?

TRISTAN  
You gotta stop having panic attacks  
at school. They're gonna think you're  
being abused!

Tim chuckles.

TRISTAN (cont'd)  
They'll send CPS out here.

TIM  
I personally feel abused by your dad  
when he cooks.

Tristan laughs.

TRISTAN  
Dude!! That IS child abuse. Never  
mind Avery. You send out all the red  
flags you need.

She smiles, amused against her will.

AVERY  
Shut up Tristan!

TIM  
I think I see it again!

Tim jumps back in his chair on high alert.

AVERY  
What?

She looks at Tim.

TRISTAN  
There's a wild hog out there. Don't  
be a little bitch Tim! It ain't  
coming up here! If it does I'll get  
the shotgun. POW!

He mimics firing a deadly shot into the kudzu.

Avery doesn't say anything, just sips her glass of water and  
stares into the kudzu.

EXT. CARVER BACK YARD- DUSK

Annie plays with her dog in their back yard. The sun sets over the nearby Kudzu field, marking the edge of the Carver property. Behind her we see a spacious and nice middle class home. Her golden retriever sniffs the ground, running towards the kudzu. Annie follows him.

ANNIE

Prince. What is it, boy?

The dog starts barking at something in the kudzu. He runs in. Annie follows him, exasperated. She hears a loud rustling noise in the direction Prince is running. She pauses in her tracks for a moment, looking at the kudzu curiously. The rustling occurs again. She continues after her dog.

ANNIE (cont'd)

Prince! Come back here!

The rustling becomes LOUDER. The LOW RUMBLING NOISE accompanies the rustling. Suddenly, leaves and dust fly upwards in a gust of wind.

CLOSE ON: Annie's face as she sees SOMETHING in the whirlwind, eliciting terror.

INT. AVERY BEDROOM- DAY

Knock knock. Tristan opens the door and walks in casually.

He walks around the room, looking at her things. She glares at him.

TRISTAN

I'll pay you 10 bucks to do my algebra homework for the weekend.

AVERY

30.

TRISTAN

25.

AVERY

Okay deal.

He shakes his head dramatically.

TRISTAN

God damn it. The price of success.

She leans over and presses play on another song she mixed on her laptop. It's a hip hop beat with overlay cut of Tristan's voice using individual clips of words he had said.

"I'm - a - little bitch- little bitch- I am a little bitch  
bitch bitch I'm a bitch"

TRISTAN (cont'd)

Oh that's good. Yeah you're funny!

He puts her in a fast headlock as she laughs and fights him off.

EXT. GREEN DRIVEWAY- NIGHT

It's dark now. Tristan's truck is gone. David Green drives towards the little house in his Deputy Car.

INT. GREEN HOUSE- NIGHT

The den is empty. The TV left on at a low buzz.

INT. KITCHEN-NIGHT

Joyce is alone in the kitchen putting away tinfoil covered casserole dishes into the fridge.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM- NIGHT

David walks in the garage door.

DAVID

Hey baby.

JOYCE (V.O.)

Hey. How was your day?

DAVID

Long.

He takes off his shoes and unbuttons his shirt, hanging it up in the laundry room.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

David kisses Joyce on the cheek as she puts a dish in the fridge.