

WHAT'S BURIED BENEATH THE PINES

EPISODE 1: "WHAT'S BURIED BENEATH"  
PILOT

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*"What's buried in the dark will  
always come to light."*

- Geraldine Morris

**EXT. PINE FOREST - TREUTLEN COUNTY, GA. - 1984 - DAY**

Misty light refracts through towering pines. Birds CHIRP.

GRAY (V.O.)  
The pines run deep in Georgia.

A southern wind SWISHES through the boughs.

GRAY (V.O.)  
Some of 'em have been here for  
hundreds of years. Longer than you  
and me, for sure.

Tangled and gnarled roots PEEK from the dirt.

GRAY (V.O.)  
Their roots preserve our history.

A white-tailed deer licks the air. Its TAIL FLICKS.

GRAY (V.O.)  
And on the surface, it's a place of  
serene beauty--even promise.

A rhythmic DRAGGING. The deer perks up--darts. A murder of  
crows squawk, take flight.

GRAY (V.O.)  
But we grew up here. We know the  
truth.

A HOODED FIGURE. A man. He GRUNTS, STRUGGLES with something:  
a woman wrapped in plastic and an old quilt.

A SHOVEL against a fat pine - a fresh NAME carved into its  
bark: EVIE. Pine sap DRIPS.

GRAY (V.O.)  
Beneath is a mangled web of shame,  
guilt, greed, and rot.

He CRADLES her in the grave - not quite rough, not quite  
gentle. He lays her to rest. A GOLD BAND gleams.

GRAY (V.O.)  
We dig the stories up now and then.  
Call 'em legends. They become  
campfire stories we tell our kids.

The quilt opens reverently. A hard sigh. Eye meets eye - the  
living and the dead.

GRAY (V.O.)  
But others--their stories are  
better off left buried.

EVIE HARRIS (30s) - STILL, RIGID, COLD, BEAUTIFULLY MACABRE - eyes open with an expression that begs, "Why?"

Her temple. A gash. Crusted blood in dark rivers on a pale cheek. Not a gunshot. Not a stabbing. Something else.

The shovel moves: SCOOP, FILL. SCOOP, FILL. Dirt slaps Evie's face, and if she weren't dead, she might flinch.

Nearby trees bear a CARVED NAME - decades old. STEPHANIE, ABRAM, BETH, SILAS, JENNIFER, RIMES, SUSAN, EMILY.

They watch, welcome their new neighbor.

GRAY (V.O.)  
Down here, nothing stays buried  
forever. Cover it all you want.  
Sooner or later, the forest spits  
it back out.

A last SCOOP. A pause. FILL. Evie disappears like the rest.

GRAY (V.O.)  
So be careful when you start  
digging--

SMASH TO BLACK

GRAY (V.O.)  
--'cause there's an awful lot of  
secrets buried beneath the pines.

TITLE CARD: "WHAT'S BURIED BENEATH THE PINES"

**EXT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

An SUV GRINDS over gravel. SADIE HARRIS (20s) - girl next door meets best friends sister - pulls in. Routine. Normal.

She grabs her things, walks to the wobbly wooden steps of the jobsite trailer.

Top of the steps. She hesitates. Shouts from within.

JOLENE (O.S.)  
Listen to me you sonuvabitch! That  
poor girl does everything for you!  
She deserves to know the truth--

A pause. Sadie grabs the knob. The door flings open. JOLENE DITMER (60s) - your flagrant fat aunt that don't give a fuck - stomps out, locks eyes with Sadie. She turns back.

JOLENE (CONT'D)  
--at least a better version of it!

Jolene passes. A peck on the cheek. Sadie smiles.

SADIE  
Wait in the car, Aunt Jolene. I'll  
give you a ride.

Jolene tosses up a hand. Sadie enters.

**INT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

The kind of place where pride trumps potential. Dusty accolades. PAST DUE notices. Mildew and pine sap collide.

HARLAN HARRIS (70) - carved from the same pine he made his fortune on - stares out of a window at the property, the motionless equipment. He doesn't turn.

HARLAN  
There was a time when these  
machines didn't stop moving from  
sun-up to sun-down.

A sip from a chipped coffee mug. The waft of Scotch.

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
How'd it go at the bank? What'd  
they say?

Sadie lays a deposit slip on Harlan's desk. A scribbled note on legal pad: BILL OF SALE.

She adjusts it for a better look. Scans. A name: DICKS--

Harlan THUMPS down an issue of SOUTHERN LOGGING TIMES. Headline: A Legacy in Jeopardy? On its cover: Harlan - arms crossed and big-smiled.

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
Haven't I told you to mind your  
business?

SADIE  
I thought this was my business.

His phone rings. He turns back to the window.

HARLAN  
That's what you get for thinking.  
(on phone)  
Yeah. I'm here. Five minutes? Good.

Sadie watches closely. Her eyes flick to the magazine.  
Curiosity burns. Should she defy him? She reaches--

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
Ain't it time for you to knock off?

It's not his tone but his gaze. She shrinks. Embarrassed?  
Afraid? Both.

Harlan turns away, resumes his conversation. Sadie looks at a  
clock with game - deer, turkey, bass - instead of numbers.

She grabs her purse, hesitates. Something compels her to stay  
- something unsavory.

HARLAN (CONT'D)  
(on phone)  
No. No. No need for that. She's  
just leaving. I'll be alone. Let's  
get this done.

Click. Sadie stares at him.

SADIE  
Who was that?

Harlan looks at her, then turns to the window. Sadie eyes the  
magazine as if staring would help her see through it. A sigh.

SADIE (CONT'D)  
Right. Mind my business.

She flings her purse on her shoulder and reluctantly leaves.

#### **INT. SADIE'S CAR - DAY**

Jolene fans herself with a church bulletin. Sadie enters.

SADIE  
I swear. I don't think I'll ever  
understand that old man.

Sadie sniffs, looks at Jolene. A cigarette burns between two  
fingers. Sadie waves away the smoke the best she can.

SADIE (CONT'D)  
Dammit, Aunt Jolene. You know you  
can't smoke in here.

Jolene takes a bigger-than-necessary puff. She doesn't care.

SADIE (CONT'D)  
Those things are going to kill you,  
ya know?

Jolene flicks an ash, exhales as she speaks.

JOLENE  
We all gotta die someday, right?  
Might as well be happy.

Sadie GRIPS the key. She doesn't turn it. Jolene watches.  
Sadie's mind churns.

SADIE  
What were y'all fussin' about?

JOLENE  
J-Just leave it be, sugar.

Gravel. A Chevy truck pulls to a stop. DICKSON LOGGING.  
Jolene watches with disgust, points.

JOLENE (CONT'D)  
Goddamn Dickson. Nothing good ever  
follows that name. You hear me?

Two men exit. One playfully tips his hat with a teasing grin.

SADIE  
They ain't got no business here.

Harlan opens the door. Invites them in. Sadie's face twists.  
Jolene tosses her butt. She pats Sadie's thigh.

JOLENE  
Come on, honey. Let's not dally.  
Family Feud's startin' soon.

The engine turns. Sadie's eyes fix on the closed door.

#### **INT. SADIE'S CAR - THE NEXT DAY**

Sadie JOSTLES down the logging road. It's barely dawn. SNAPS  
a compact, throws it in her bag.

Grabs her coffee. A sip. Another day until--

She JAMS THE BRAKES.

**EXT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

Harlan's truck, covered in morning dew. A county sheriff's truck parked beside it. Sadie EASES between them, kills the engine.

**INT. FILE ROOM - HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

A dank place where organization went to die. Cluttered shelves. Loose piles of papers fill the floor.

A floor safe GLEAMS in the corner. The only clean space.

SHERIFF FORD WINSLOW (60s) - a man that appreciates a greased palm - kneels at the safe. He turns the tumbler.

A small strip of paper - a cipher: 59R, 17L, 24R.

The lock CLICKS. Winslow exhales, breath tight. He swallows, dry. He knows he shouldn't be here. He pulls--

A KNOCK at the door. He freezes, alert.

**EXT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

Sadie knocks loudly, thumping the aluminum door.

SADIE

Grr. Son of a--This is ridic--

Winslow throws open the door. She jumps. He peeks his head out, looks around.

SHERIFF WINSLOW

Sadie? Jesus. Y-You're early.

His face is a twisted mix of paranoia, guilt, and surprise.

SADIE

I work here. Duh. Why's the door locked?

She pushes past the sheriff.

SHERIFF WINSLOW

Sadie! Don't--

He grabs for her, but it's too late.



**INT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

The smell of copper - sharp and thick - hits first.

Her breath stops. A sound escapes - half-gasp, half-scream.  
Her bag drops. Knees buckle.

Winslow rushes to her, catches her mid-collapse.

**EXT. HARRIS TIMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY**

Sadie on the steps, her sobs heavy, at times hysterical.

SADIE

W-what the actual *fuck* was that?

Winslow's head hangs, unsure how to answer. Her eyes plead.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Is he--

Winslow kneels beside her - cautious, like she might break  
under his touch. He gently grabs her hand.

SHERIFF WINSLOW

Sadie?

His eyes flick to the office door.

SHERIFF WINSLOW (CONT'D)

You got somebody we can call?

Her sobbing trails. She stares absently at the sharp angles  
in the trailer's aluminum siding. Slowly, she nods.

SADIE

Y-Yeah. I-I can call my brother. I  
can call Gray.

**INT. FORESTRY LAB - UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA - DAY**

A bland lecture hall. Haint-faced teens, half-listening.

GRAY HARRIS (30s) - a down-home country boy who wears the  
guise of city slicker well enough - leans in at a podium.

GRAY

Pine beetles. Small pests, big  
problems.

His phone SHOUTS. SADIE. Red 'X.' Gray sputters, words out of  
sync with his brain.

GRAY (CONT'D)  
Um--yeah--like--uh--students who  
turn in late papers.

His eyes flick to the clock - 2:56 PM. Close enough.

GRAY (CONT'D)  
Okay. That's it. Get out. You ain't  
gotta go home, but you can't stay  
here.

Scattered chuckles ripple as the students stampede.

GRAY (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Don't forget. Pine Beetles: Their  
Economic Impact is due next week.

No one listens. A resigned sigh. He packs his satchel. AMELIA  
(19) approaches with an innocent smile.

AMELIA  
M-Mister Harris? A man told me to  
give this to you.

She hands him an envelope. In shaky penmanship: GRAY. He  
takes it, turns it over. Sealed tight.

GRAY  
You ever seen him before?

Amelia shakes her head.

AMELIA  
No, sir. He was pretty old.

He glances at his watch, then shoves it into his satchel.

GRAY  
Great. Thanks, Amelia. See you next  
week--

His phone SCREAMS: SADIE - AGAIN. Red 'X' - Again. ANOTHER.  
His finger hovers--He swipes GREEN.

GRAY (CONT'D)  
Sadie? I'm pretty busy. What's  
going on?

A hesitation. Her voice catches.

SADIE (V.O.)  
Gray--I-It's Dad. You need to come  
home.