

LOOKING FOR ALASKA

Episode One
"Famous Last Words"

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Based on the novel
By
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FADE IN:

ON A WINDSHIELD

Rain drops SPLATTER the glass. Streak down... "CROSSES" by Jose Gonzalez plays over:

MILES HALTER'S VOICE
I am fascinated by last words.

WINDSHIELD WIPERS clear out the rain. And though it's blurry we see the HIGHWAY.

Dark. Save for the headlights.

And the CHERRY LIGHTS of a POLICE CAR up ahead.

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Like Oscar Wilde who said "Either that wallpaper goes, or I do," and then died.

EXT. HIGHWAY I-65 - NIGHT - WIDE

A JACK-KNIFED truck blocks lanes on the highway. A pair of COP CARS surround it. POLICE OFFICERS and a TRUCK DRIVER survey the situation. Everyone's safe... so far.

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Or Humphrey Bogart, whose final words were "I never should've switched from scotch to martinis."

They see the approaching headlights. With the rain and the darkness, we don't get a good look at the car.

But it's not slowing down.

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
James Dean said, "They've got to see us," just before slamming his Porsche into another car.

ON THE POLICE OFFICERS

Seeing this car bearing down on them... They stand frozen in the rain.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

Wipers methodically slice back and forth. The truck and cop cars only growing larger, the threat more immediate.

THE CAR'S TIRES

Spin on the slick highway asphalt.

BACK TO THE COPS

Scattering... now running for their lives --

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

My favorite last words ever? The French Poet Francois Rabelais, who said: "I go to seek the Great Perhaps." Because that's what I was after too.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

There is no fear. The car never brakes. Is it homicide? Suicide? There's no time to tell before the car is --

CRASHING into the POLICE CARS. Steel and metal SCREAM. The hood crumples, the windshield BLOWS OUT. Still the car doesn't stop --

It PLOWS off the road, ROLLING down an EMBANKMENT. Glass and metal pounding the earth, spraying the air --

Until it comes to rest. Wheels up. Totaled.

As fast as that, it's over.

SILENCE. Save for the rain.

And one last image:

A plastic tulip crushed against the shattered windshield.

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Except I wanted to find the Great Perhaps before I died.

Fade to BLACK.

Until one simple word fills the screen.

before.

EXT. ORLANDO - 2005

Our story is set in the mid aughts. So is our music.

Clap Your Hands and Say Yeah's "THE SKIN OF MY YELLOW COUNTRY TEETH" over --

A sprawling suburban development. Row after row of identical middle class homes.

Safe.

New.

Oppressive in its conformity.

QUICK CUTS OF:

-- a bag of chips being poured into a bowl.

-- homemade spinach dip being spooned out.

-- green and yellow streamers unfurling.

-- champagne poppers set out around a coffee table.

INT. MILES HALTER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A handmade banner reads: "GOOD-BYE TO MILES!"

Beneath it sits MILES HALTER, 16. Body of a gangly teenager. Soul of an old man. Flanked by his parents, WALT, clear eyed pragmatist and JUDY, supportive to the point of suffocation.

This party was her idea.

The Halter family are the only ones in attendance. Judy tries to put a positive spin on things.

JUDY

It's not even five. I'm sure your classmates will show. They're just running fashionably late.

But Miles knows better.

MILES

Yes, Mom. I've been keeping my popularity a secret all these years.

WALT

It's okay. This way, there's more for me.

Walt is about to dive into the spinach dip, but Judy shoots him a look. Suddenly the doorbell rings.

Judy is beyond relieved. Miles is puzzled.

INT. MILES HALTER'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Miles opens the door to two kids. MARIE, (16, blonde, tiny, all glasses) and her heavysset boyfriend WILL (16, too tight ATTACK OF THE CLONES t-shirt). They don't look super excited to be there either.

MARIE
Hey, Miles.

MILES
Oh, hey Marie. Hey, Will.

WILL
(to Marie, too loud)
See, there are snacks.

True motivation for coming revealed, Marie forces a smile. An awkward beat. Until Judy comes in over the top --

JUDY
Well, if it isn't the Goodbye to Miles Cavalry! Come in, come in!

INT. MILES HALTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Miles sits next to Marie and Will. Will is helping himself to generous portions of the spinach dip. This doesn't go unnoticed by Miles' dad.

Awkward silence. Until --

MARIE
So... boarding school? That's cool, I guess.

WILL
(mouth full of food)
You ever see that movie Toy Soldiers, with Samwise Gamgee but when he was young... but not like Goonies young? He goes to boarding school but then it gets taken hostage by terrorists. Or was it the mafia?

MILES
Haven't seen it.

MARIE
No one has.

WILL

(to Miles)

You totally should. In case your new school is taken hostage by terrorists. Or the mob. Samwise kicks ass. Could be very instructional.

This conversational hot topic now covered, everyone goes silent again.

MARIE

Well, we just dropped by to say good-bye. So, I guess...

Miles can't get to his feet fast enough.

INT. MILES HALTER'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Miles waves goodbye to his not really friends. His parents flank him, also waving. Once the guests are out of earshot --

WALT

The only thing worse than having a party no one attends is having a party attended only by two vastly uninteresting people.

JUDY

Walter.

MILES

Agree with Dad.

JUDY

We don't know that no one else is coming.

INT. MILES HALTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Miles is back on the couch, again flanked by his parents. They watch the PBS News Hour on TV. The Iraq war wages on, W. offers empty platitudes.

At this point it's clear no one else is coming.

JUDY

Is this why you want to leave?

MILES

No. Really, it's not --

WALT

It's 'cause of me. All those stories he heard about how his father was quite the legend at Culver Creek. Raised hell and aced all my classes.

MILES

Not exactly. I mean there's lots of more exotic places I could dream of going... but you'd have said no and they offered a partial scholarship. So Alabama and dad's alma mater will have to do.

WALT

You're welcome.

JUDY

But why do you have to go anywhere?

MILES

I've told you why --

JUDY

Please. Because of some French Poet's last words? What if they made a mistake in the translation --

MILES

I just need to know there's more out there. I need...
(the truth)
...a more than minor life.

JUDY

(to Walt)

We shouldn't have let him read all your books about great men in history.

WALT

What's wrong with wanting to be great?

JUDY

I just don't want him to be disappointed.

MILES

At this point, I'm open to disappointment.

Miles gets up. This wasn't the way Judy planned this last night going. She finds herself welling up.

JUDY

I'm sorry. But I have loved and raised you every day of your so called minor life. And now you want to move out? And to a different state no less. And just so you can find your "Great Perhaps?" What does that even mean?

A beat. Miles considers this, then --

MILES

That's what I need to find out.

His parents share a look. Hard to argue with that. Walt shrugs, Judy softens. Makes room for Miles on the couch.

He sits between his parents. And they settle in for some more tv.

The Killers "ALL THESE THINGS THAT I'VE DONE" over...

QUICK POPS:

-- A duffel bag ZIPS shut.

-- A computer printer spits out MapQuest directions.

-- A bookcase filled with books. Upon closer inspection, biographies. Miles' hand rifles over the collection, choosing carefully which are going with him...

-- Another BOX OF BOOKS are thrown into the back of a worn two door, blue paint chipped and faded. The backseat already overrun with books. Stacked on the seats, piled high on the window.

But these books don't belong to Miles. No, these books, battered and dog eared, belong to --

ALASKA YOUNG, 16.

Remember the girl that broke your heart in high school... or the girl that it broke your heart not to be?

EXT. ALASKA'S HOME - MORNING

Alaska closes the back door of her car -- the self named Blue Citrus -- now loaded with her worldly possessions.

She gives a last look up at her house. But it's clear she's ready to get the hell out of there.

The screen door hangs off the hinges. The front porch sags, the yard is overrun. And worst of all, there's no one there to see her off. No one, except --

RAISIN, her cat, who purrs from the top of the driveway. Alaska kneels in front of the cat. Scratching his ears.

ALASKA

See ya, Raisin. If he asks, I left for school. You are my witness.

Off Raisin -- carrying the weight of this responsibility...

EXT. VINE STATION, ALABAMA - DAY

Blue Citrus speeds along the winding country roads. Following the signs for Birmingham...

INT. BLUE CITRUS - (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Alaska holds a cigarette in one hand, spins the trackwheel on her scuffed first generation iPod with the other. She turns up the volume on the music (The Killers song we've been hearing). Windows down. Singing out loud.

The further she puts home behind her, the lighter everything feels.

INT. HALTER MINIVAN - DAY

Walt and Judy ride up front, Miles in the back.

Through the car window, Miles bids farewell to Florida as the amusement parks and chain restaurants recede into the distance. A world of plastic and parking garages.

On the interstate, they pass a sign: **WELCOME TO ALABAMA THE BEAUTIFUL.**

Miles can't help but smile. His journey has finally begun...

EXT. CULVER CREEK ACADEMY - DAY

Alaska drives past the low rise cinderblock buildings that give the school an architectural vibe somewhere between a Motel 6 and a prison. Pulling into --

STUDENT PARKING LOT

The Blue Citrus draws some side eye from wealthier FAMILIES unpacking their Jaguars and Range Rovers. Alaska parks next to a souped-up F-150 pick-up, which blasts Toby Keith.

MARYA, (16, Alaska's roommate; preppy Southern belle but wanting to rebel) unloads dorm furniture from the pick-up with her boyfriend PAUL, (17, lacrosse god, Puka shells). She runs to Alaska, giving her a big hug.

MARYA

Hey, girl! Omigod, I thought my mom would never leave -- so much crying and hugging and carrying on...

ALASKA

Tell me about it. That's why I drive myself. To get all the tears and hugs out of the way.

(then)

Let's catch up on the road? Coosa's cashiers have a shift change in twenty. Trust me, we want Gus manning that register.

MARYA

I can't just leave Paul to move me in on his own --

ALASKA

Sure you can.

(calls out)

Paul -- you don't mind finishing up while your lovely girlfriend and I pick up some sundry items?

Paul gives Marya a sly smile --

PAUL

Only if she promises to make it up to me later...

Marya grins, hopping in the car. But Alaska interjects --

ALASKA

Um, what the fuck, Paul? She shouldn't have to leverage her body so you'll be a good boyfriend. That kind of sexist bullshit is why we need to dismantle the patriarchy.

PAUL

Jesus, Alaska. I said yes.

ALASKA

It's not just your words, Paul.
But what's in your mind and your
heart. You think about that while
we're gone.

Paul can't tell if Alaska is fucking with him or not. (She is.) Alaska jumps in the Blue Citrus, and they PEEL OUT --

INT. HALTER MINIVAN (DRIVING) - DAY

Miles' mom pops in the next disc from The DaVinci Code audiobook on CD. She and Walt very into this mystery. But Miles' interest lays in the world outside --

THE ALABAMA INTERSTATE

Low flat lands and endless sky. Kudzu grows everywhere, a leafy green monster that feeds off the humidity and swallows everything in sight -- burying an abandoned TRACTOR, creeping over a sign reading "AMERICA. LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT"...

They pass A PIGGLY WIGGLY followed by a PICK YOUR OWN WATERMELON farm... a CONFEDERATE FLAG over a gas station.... countless billboards for WAFFLE HOUSE, with its golden waffle and can't-miss tagline: "You Should See the Bacon."

EXT. COOSA'S LIQUORS - LATER

Alaska and Marya pull into the dusty parking lot of a rural liquor store. Sign out front reads: We Cater To Your Spiritual Needs.

INT. BLUE CITRUS - CONTINUOUS

Alaska opens her wallet. As she rifles thru multiple drivers licenses, Marya takes her moment --

MARYA

Are you cool if I have the room to
myself for a couple hours tonight?

Alaska selects an ID, holding the photo up to her reflection in the rearview mirror. Tousling her bangs --

ALASKA

May I ask why?

MARYA

Paul and I agreed -- if we stayed together long distance all summer -- then the first night back we would...

ALASKA

Make an honest woman out of you?
(Marya nods)
You don't have to if you don't want to.

MARYA

I want to.

Alaska cups Marya's face in her hand.

ALASKA

They grow up so fast.
(then)
You coming?

MARYA

I'm too chickenshit...

INT. COOSA'S LIQUORS - DAY

Dusty floorboards. A large barrel by the counter with a LIVE BAIT sign, but contains exclusively dead minnows.

Alaska waits as GUS the cashier (20s, hungover, no genius on a good day) eyeballs the I.D.

GUS

This says you're twenty eight.

ALASKA

I can't believe it either. Time, right?
(shakes her head)
I believe it was the great Theodore Geisel who said, "How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flewn." You might know him as Dr. Seuss.
(then)
Life goes fast. Ask me, feels like I was just in high school.

GUS

Because you are in high school...?

ALASKA

I wish. My adolescence would have no doubt been greatly enhanced from the anesthetizing effects of Coosa Liquor's Strawberry Hill rosé.

(thinks...)

Though on the other hand I probably would have overindulged. Made some very bad decisions... Involving boys... girls... teachers.

(smiles, flirty)

Lord knows what would have happened without my inhibitions...

Gus stares at her.

GUS

You don't sound like you're in high school.

ALASKA

And that, Gus, is the whole point.

Alaska smiles, full of confidence.

EXT. COOSA'S LIQUOR - MOMENTS LATER

Alaska emerges with a bagful of wine in each arm. Inside the car, Marya cheers. Alaska heads for the trunk, looks up to make sure she's not busted as --

The HALTER MINIVAN drives past. Alaska catches a passing glimpse of Miles, in the backseat.

INT. HALTER MINIVAN - INTERCUT

But for Miles, seeing Alaska... it's like the whole world slows down. It's not just that she's pretty, or holding an armful of wine. But something... else.

Until she's gone in a blur.

BACK WITH ALASKA --

She climbs in the car. Hands a bottle of wine to Marya.

ALASKA

You're gonna need this tonight.

EXT. ALABAMA INTERSTATE - LATER

A rusted hatchback rattles along. A BMW 5 Series on its tail, flashing its lights to force the hatchback off the road and onto the shoulder --

INT. RUSTED HATCHBACK - (DRIVING) - INTERCUT

In the passenger seat sits CHIP "THE COLONEL" MARTIN, 16. (We'll learn how he got that nickname later.) He's a small angry tank of a young man.

His mother, LIBBY, (40s, no make up, waitress uniform on) eyes her rearview mirror, annoyed.

LIBBY

Goddamit. Is that one of those assholes from your school?

THE COLONEL

Sure as shit looks like it.
(gets a closer look, yep)
Longwell Chase. Weekday Warrior
douchebag and Birmingham's finest.

LONGWELL CHASE, 17 (standard Puka shells, multiple collared shirts) sure fits that description. He now honks.

LIBBY

I hate rich people.

THE COLONEL

Too bad my school is full of 'em.

LIBBY

Which is why I'm sending you there.

THE COLONEL

So I can grow up to be an entitled
douchebag some day?

LIBBY

No. So you can have the choice to
be one. But you won't. Because
your mama raised you right.

Longwell pulls alongside them. Both the Colonel and his mom simultaneously flip him the bird.

Longwell looks taken aback before speeding away, the Colonel and his mom holding their middle fingers high.

EXT. CULVER CREEK ACADEMY - LATER

The Halter minivan drives onto campus.

Architecturally -- with its low, flat, vaguely barn-like buildings -- it's not much to look at. But there's no denying its natural beauty -- spectacular oak trees, a glistening pond. And most importantly --

There are STUDENTS everywhere. New faces and endless possibilities. None of whom know anything about Miles Halter's minor life.

WALTER

Looks just like it did the day I left...

JUDY

Not a great selling point.

(off Walter)

Would it have killed them to update the campus over the last thirty years? Or at least air conditioning?

MILES

Wait, I don't have air conditioning?

WALTER

We got you a fan. Sweat builds character.

(pointing out)

That's the school bell we stole. Took six of us to get the sucker down, before we buried it in the cemetery.

JUDY

We know, Walter.

WALTER

(proud)

Still the greatest prank in Culver history.

INT. DORM ROOM - LATER

A cinder block box with a linoleum floor and a bunk bed. Now filled with Miles' bags. Walt and Miles, sweaty from the move, watch as Judy starts unpacking socks. She's trying to postpone the inevitable.

MILES
I can do that, Mom.

JUDY
At least let me hang your pants.

MILES
I got it.

WALT
Don't forget to call. Every
Sunday.

MILES
I don't have a cell phone.

WALT
That's what the payphones are for.

JUDY
But we'll get you a cell phone if
it means you'll call more.

Judy can feel the tears coming on. Walt tries to wrap it up.

WALT
We can't draw these things out
forever. At some point you just
have to rip off the Band-Aid.

JUDY
He's not a band-aid. He's our son.
And we're going to miss you so
much.

Judy steps through the minefield of suitcases to hug Miles.
Walt joins them. They hold in this awkward group hug.

JUDY (CONT'D)
Can I help make your bed --

MILES
I'm good. I promise.
(then, smiles)
After the unpacking comes the
adventure, right?

QUICK POPS:

-- Miles stares out the window as his parents drive away.
This is real.

-- Miles pulls biographies from his trunk. Sets them on his
bookshelf. Kennedy, Bogart, Joyce.

-- Miles hangs a map of the world over his bed.

-- Miles sits on the bottom bunk mattress, testing a tiny fan clipped to his bed. Not providing much in the way of cool air. But the unpacking is done. Where is the adventure...?

EXT. DORM - DAY

Miles steps into the blazing heat. A hexagon of dorms surround a small quad. A group of STUDENTS meet up, hugging, catching up on the summer. Paul and Marya among them.

Paul spots Miles --

PAUL

Hey. Is this your first year?

Miles is surprised anyone wants to talk to him.

MILES

It is!

(catching himself)

My maiden voyage on the SS Culver Creek.

(then, self conscious)

I'm from Florida.

Marya smiles.

MARYA

Florida. Cool.

MILES

Actually, not cool. Not just referring to the humidity.

The group laughs. Miles more at ease.

PAUL

At least you're used to the heat.

MILES

You kidding? I wouldn't be used to this heat if I was from Hades.

This cracks the group up. Holy shit, Miles is slaying!

Miles drinks in their laughter, the girls' flirty smiles. He's accepted. He's cool!

He's imagining this.

BACK TO REALITY

Miles stands in the same spot. Silently watching these kids hug and gossip. Miles is invisible to them.

He's not invisible to the sun. Nothing is. Even the walls seem to be sweating.

INT. DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - LATER

Miles stands hunched beneath the too low shower head. The water dribbling around him. He contorts himself to get his head wet.

Has he made a terrible mistake?

INT. DORM ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Miles steps out of the bathroom, skimpy towel wrapped around him.

The front door flies open and Chip Martin aka The Colonel comes barreling in, hauling a gigantic duffel bag.

THE COLONEL

You must be the roommate. Name's Chip. Chip Martin.
(then)
I'd shake your hand but I think it's best if you just hold onto that towel.

MILES

(self conscious, nods)
I'm Miles. Miles Halter.

THE COLONEL

Miles? As in "to go before I sleep?"
(off Miles, huh?)
It's a Robert Frost poem. Ever read him?
(Miles shakes his head)
Consider yourself lucky. Also no one calls me Chip.

MILES

Didn't you just say that was --?

THE COLONEL

Call me The Colonel. And we'll call you Pudge.
(off Miles)
(MORE)

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
It's called irony. Pants on,
Pudge.

Miles scurries to grab some clothes --

INT. DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Miles gets dressed. Calls through the bathroom door.

MILES
Where are your parents?

THE COLONEL (O.S.)
My parents? Well, my Dad's
probably passed out in his La-Z-Boy
right now. Or behind the wheel of
his truck. Either way he's drunk
off his ass. My mom just dropped
me off.

Miles isn't quite sure how to respond to this.

INT. DORM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Miles returns, now dressed, as the Colonel puts his bed
sheets down on the top bunk.

THE COLONEL
I'm a top bunk man. Hope you don't
mind --
(before Miles can respond)
I see you decorated the place.

The Colonel gestures to the map. Then, as he's making the
bed, he just starts rattling off -

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
Afghanistan. Albania. Algeria.
American Samoa. Andorra. Angola.
Anguilla. Antigua. Argentina.
Armenia... I could do the rest, but
I'd probably bore you.

The bed made, the Colonel moves to his duffel bag. His idea
of unpacking is throwing his clothes in any order into any
drawer.

MILES
You memorized all the countries --?

THE COLONEL
 (yeah, whatever)
 Everyone's got a talent. What's
 yours?

Miles doesn't have to think twice --

MILES
 I know a lot of people's last
 words.

THE COLONEL
 Example?

MILES
 Henrik Ibsen. He was a playwright.

THE COLONEL
 A boring as shit one.

MILES
 Well, he'd been sick for a while
 and his nurse said "You seem to be
 feeling better this morning," and
 Ibsen said "On the contrary". And
 then he died.

A beat. And then the Colonel laughs.

THE COLONEL
 That's morbid. I like it.

The Colonel surveys his hectic and harried unpacking job with
 satisfaction. Then he looks at Miles with concern.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
 Sure hope you're stronger than you
 look.

And with that, the Colonel's out the door. Leaving Miles
 feeling like a tornado just blew through the room.

And then the Colonel reappears, impatient --

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
 Well come on, Pudge. We got shit
 to do.

EXT. CULVER CREEK QUAD - MOMENTS LATER

Miles does his best to keep up with the Colonel. The
 Colonel, despite his short legs, moves very fast.

THE COLONEL

So you're a reader, Pudge?

MILES

Biographies, mostly. Or only.
They're my dad's --

THE COLONEL

My dad used to beat me with my books. So I just kept paperbacks around the house... the odd novella. All short and soft. That's why I came here. So I could read long ass books without getting whapped.

They pass a group of LACROSSE BRO WEEKDAY WARRIORS. Longwell Chase (last seen in his BMW) throws the ball back and forth with another bro, KEVIN. They all have the same haircut -- short on the sides, long on top, flopping over one eye so they all have to stand with their heads cocked to see.

LONGWELL CHASE

Hey, it's the Colonel. You grow this summer, bud? What are you four feet now?

THE COLONEL

Hello, Longwell. Fellow shit-rags.
(then)
I've always said no one's better at cradling Kevin's balls than you are.

LONGWELL CHASE

Say it to my face, you pint sized prick.

THE COLONEL

Are we still talking about Kevin's balls?

KEVIN

Wow. You must be the funniest guy in your trailer park.

This is a raw nerve for the Colonel. His face darkens.

THE COLONEL

The only thing I hate more than rich people are stupid people. But with Kevin, you get the total package.

The Colonel is now squaring off with Longwell and Kevin.
Miles watches, uncertain --

LONGWELL CHASE

C'mon, Colonel. You wanna go right
here? Put that scholarship at
risk?

The Colonel looks around, passing students and teachers,
lingering parents. He smiles.

THE COLONEL

You're right. When I strike,
you'll never see it coming. Sleep
with one eye open, boys. C'mon,
Pudge.

As the Colonel starts to walk away --

KEVIN

Pudge? The hell kind of name is
that?

MILES

It's supposed to be ironic...?

THE COLONEL

Don't try explaining, you might
give Kevin an aneurysm --

Miles follows after the Colonel.

KEVIN

You come for us, Colonel, we come
back twice as hard!

Colonel flips a no-look bird, as he strides away.

MILES

Friends of yours...?

THE COLONEL

Those are the Weekday Warriors.
Rich assholes who leave every
weekend for their air conditioned
Birmingham mansions and had
everything in life handed to them.
Also, they're the cool kids. I
don't like them, they don't like
me. So if you came here hoping to
be hot shit Pudge, best not be seen
with me.

As the Colonel enters --

INT. STUDENT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

A tv room that acts as a storage unit over the summer. Filled with furniture, belongings, and students navigating the byzantine belongings piled high.

They are greeted by TAKUMI, (16, a wiry, shaggy Japanese kid in a too big L'IL WAYNE "tha Carter II" t-shirt).

TAKUMI

Miles Halter. Orlando, Florida. Attendant of Doctor Phillips High School. Interesting side note about Doctor Philips High School. Named for a guy named Doctor Philips. Didn't have a PHD or anything. Just as an adult changed his name to Doctor. Welcome to Culver Creek, Miles.

THE COLONEL

I call him Pudge.

TAKUMI

Ah. The Colonel and his irony.

MILES

How did you know all that?

THE COLONEL

Takumi knows everything.

TAKUMI

Starting with: never let the Colonel rope you into helping him move.

(explaining)

He's immune to fatigue. His anger is a renewable energy source.

QUICK POPS OF:

-- Miles and the Colonel carrying a rolled up rug on each shoulder across the quad. Sun blazing.

-- A sweaty Miles with a mini-fridge on his back, tries to keep pace with the Colonel who carries a lamp and old tube tv. The Colonel also seems impervious to heatstroke.

-- Miles, dripping in sweat, struggles mightily to hold up his half of the Colonel's pleather sofa... one that's more ripped foam than not.

MILES

You know Ulysses S. Grant's last words?

THE COLONEL

That I do not.

MILES

"Water."

THE COLONEL

Those are terrible.

MILES

Always thought so too, 'til now...

They see Paul, about to go inside.

PAUL

Sweet couch, Colonel.

THE COLONEL

Found it lying on a curb in my neighborhood one night.

(then)

Oh wait, that was your mom.

Paul scowls, then makes sure to pull the double doors closed behind him -- another obstacle in their way.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

That was fair. I'm better than that joke.

MILES

Is there anyone at this school you do like?

THE COLONEL

I don't hate you, yet.

The Colonel tries to get the door open, holding the couch with one hand. Miles' arms shake. The Colonel spots someone.

MILES

It's slipping --

THE COLONEL

Shit. Smile big. It's the Eagle.

MILES

The what?

Miles follows the Colonel's look to --

THE EAGLE (otherwise known as MR. STARNES, 50s) who makes his way to them. Stern, humorless. He runs the school and enjoys the power he wields.

He opens the door for them, helping --

THE COLONEL

Mr. Starnes. Great to see you.
Thank you so much.

THE EAGLE

How are you, Mr. Martin?

THE COLONEL

Just exploiting my roommate for manual labor, sir.

THE EAGLE

I expect nothing less.
(turns to Miles)
Which means you must be Mr. Halter.
Son of Walter. Our paths never crossed but he was something of a legend.

MILES

So he tells me...

THE COLONEL

Wait, your dad's name is Walter Halter?

THE EAGLE

If you're hoping to live up to his reputation, remember: You're given a large measure of freedom here. Abuse it and you'll regret it. You seem like a nice young man. I'd hate to have to bid you farewell.

And the Eagle's thin smile gives way to a very intimidating stare. As the two boys struggle inside, Miles looks back. The Eagle still staring him down.

PRE-LAP:

THE COLONEL (O.S.)

Mr. Starnes. Code name the Eagle.
Dean of Students. Former Culver student. Currently a dick.

INT. DORM ROOM - LATER

Miles lays sprawled across the sofa. Trying to recover. The Colonel, unfazed, has pulled Miles' trunk in front of the couch. He's tearing off strips of masking tape, involved in some kind of an art project...

THE COLONEL

You ever hear three knocks on the door, that's how you know it's the Eagle.

MILES

I felt like he was staring in my soul.

THE COLONEL

Next time you see that look, you're busted. Alaska calls it the Look of Doom.

MILES

Alaska?

THE COLONEL

Our next stop. Since she has the cigarettes. You have money?

MILES

Yeah, but I don't really smoke.

THE COLONEL

Perfect. 'Cause I do. There, done.

The Colonel admires his handiwork. He's used the masking tape to spell out COFFEE TABLE on top of the trunk.

MILES

Classy and sensible.

THE COLONEL

That's me, Pudge. Me to a fucking tee.

INT. DORM - HALLWAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The Colonel approaches a door. As he goes to knock, he advises Miles --

THE COLONEL

Always knock once. Otherwise could be the Eagle.

As soon as he does, they hear from inside --

ALASKA'S VOICE

Omigod. Is that the Colonel?! Get on in here!

INT. ALASKA'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

The Colonel rolls in, but Miles pauses in the doorway. The first thing he notices are the books. Stacked high, along windowsills, in piles on the floor.

And then he sees who they belong to. The girl from the liquor store.

But Alaska's too busy filling out her bookshelves to notice him. She stops to hug the Colonel.

ALASKA

If it isn't the biggest little man I know!

Marya, finishing her make-up, gives a salute.

MARYA

Colonel. We thank you for your service.

THE COLONEL

Marya. Please tell me you got your head examined over the summer and dumped Paul?

PAUL

Nice to see you too, Colonel.

Paul enters, which forces Miles to step out of the way. Jostled into the hallway.

THE COLONEL

Jesus, Marya. How low is your self esteem or serious your daddy issues? You're one of the good ones.

PAUL

Just step around him, babe. Or you could just step over him.

MARYA

(tries not to laugh)
Paul. Thank you for your concern, Colonel.

Alaska gives Marya a conspiratorial smile --

ALASKA

I'll be gone by the time you're
back.

As Marya takes Paul's hand, heading out --

THE COLONEL

No procreating! We're already
running an asshole surplus -- the
world can't handle more Pauls!

The Colonel smiles at Miles, satisfied with himself. Then gestures for him to join them back in the room.

Alaska continues unpacking, her collection of books matched only by candles.

ALASKA

So get this. First day of summer
I'm in grand ole Vine Station,
Alabama. I'm with this guy Justin
watching tv on his couch - mind you
I'm already dating Jake -- actually
I'm still dating him, miraculously
enough. But Justin, we've been
friends since we were kids so we're
just watching The Office and
talking about SATs or something and
we're just chatting and I'm in the
middle of a sentence about
analogies and all of a sudden he
just HONKS my boob.

Alaska -- who has seemingly not noticed Miles -- now takes his hand and puts it right on her boob. Miles may have a heart attack. The Colonel is unfazed.

ALASKA (CONT'D)

Just like that. A much too firm
two or three second honk. Can you
believe it? And the first thing I
thought was... Okay, how do I
extricate this claw from my boob
before it leaves permanent marks?
And the second thing I thought was
God, I can't wait to tell Takumi
and the Colonel.

She looks back at Miles like it's obvious --

ALASKA (CONT'D)

You can let go now.

Miles immediately retracts his hand, embarrassed.

ALASKA (CONT'D)

Who's this guy not laughing at my story?

THE COLONEL

My roommate. Miles-to-go Halter. Aka Pudge. Pudge memorizes people's last words. He's also got money for your cigarettes. Pudge this is Alaska. She got her boob honked this summer. As you're now well aware.

The Colonel has just dropped a lot of information. But one thing catches Alaska's attention --

ALASKA

You really memorize last words?

MILES

Yeah.
(trying for cool)
You want to quiz me?

ALASKA

JFK.

MILES

That's obvious.

THE COLONEL

Oh shit.

ALASKA

Is it now?

MILES

No. Those were his last words. Someone said, "Mr. President, you can't say Dallas doesn't love you," and then he said, "That's obvious," and then he got shot.

Alaska laughs. Impressed too.

ALASKA

God, that's awful.

Alaska extends her hand --

ALASKA (CONT'D)

Nice meeting ya, Pudge. Next time
laugh at my story.

(then)

Meet you boys in a few.

PRE-LAP the VOICE of the Colonel --

THE COLONEL (O.S.)

Her name's Alaska. Alaska Young.

EXT. CULVER CREEK - EVENING

Miles follows the Colonel as they head out towards the edge
of campus. Hanging off the Colonel's every word.

THE COLONEL

She's from Vine Station. You could
drive past it without noticing --
and from what I understand, you
ought to.

MILES

And she mentioned something about a
boyfriend?

THE COLONEL

Jesus H. You touch one boob in
your life and now you're
obsessed... His name's Jake. At
'Bama on scholarship. Plays bass in
some band. She hasn't cheated on
him, which is a first. Don't know
much about her family.

MILES

So she really likes him?

THE COLONEL

Enough with the Alaska. By my
count, there are ninety-two girls
at this school, and every last one
of them is less crazy than Alaska.

A beat. But Miles can't help himself.

MILES

Crazy how...?

QUICK POPS OF:

-- Alaska zips up a terry cloth hoodie.

-- Alaska searches a pile of books. Fingers dance over the spines. Stops at Gabriel Garcia Marquez's The General In His Labyrinth.

-- A trunk pops open. Alaska is in the school PARKING LOT. Backpack slung over her shoulder. Inside the trunk -- the Strawberry Hill rosé and a shovel. Alaska glances around.

-- The trunk slams shut.

-- The shovel hits dirt.

EXT. CULVER CREEK WOODS - DUSK

Alaska digs in the woods, on the edge of the soccer fields. She drops to her knees, burying the wine in the shallow hole.

Suddenly, a branch SNAPS.

Alaska looks up.

CUT TO:

A MATCH IGNITES, LIGHTING A CIGARETTE --

EXT. CULVER CREEK BEACH - EVENING

Miles and the Colonel share an Adirondack swing at the edge of a small (fake) beach. In front of the lake. The Colonel takes a long drag from his cigarette.

THE COLONEL

Want a smoke?

Miles tries to hide the fact that he's never been offered a cigarette before, let alone smoked one.

MILES

Is it safe?

THE COLONEL

Nope.

The Colonel lights Miles a cigarette, hands it to him. Miles shrugs, isn't this part of the adventure? He inhales.

And then immediately falls into a massive coughing fit. Gasping for breath. And more coughing. Miles grabs the bench and throws the cigarette onto the ground. Stomping on it between coughing jags.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

Smoke much?

The Colonel ignores Miles' wheezing, points to a white speck across the lake.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

See that?

Miles looks up, forcing his eyes to focus --

MILES

Yeah... what is it? A bird?

THE COLONEL

It's the swan. The swan is the spawn of Satan. Belongs to the Eagle.

MILES

The Eagle has a swan?

THE COLONEL

Killer swan. Never get closer to it than we are now. It will rip you to fucking pieces. The Eagle put it there to prevent students from walking around the lake to smoke. Not that he needs it. The guy can smell a cigarette from five miles away.

Miles considers this news, eyes the Colonel's cigarette.

MILES

My parents will kill me if I get in trouble. Well, my mom will...

THE COLONEL

You're the son of Walter Halter. Legend. You're going to get in trouble. The question, Pudge, is what do you do when it happens...

(blows out smoke)

I'll tell you what you can never do. Tell on anyone. I hate the rich shits here with a fiery passion reserved for dental work and my father, but I would never rat on them. If you've learned anything from me today Pudge, let it be this. Never never never rat.

Miles nods, the Colonel's look serious.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

This school is really important to people. It may look like a minimum security prison patrolled by a killer swan, but for the people who go here, it matters.

Wisdom imparted, the Colonel checks his watch.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

Unfortunately we've reached the point in the evening when I'm obligated to find my girlfriend.

MILES

Wait. You have a girlfriend?

THE COLONEL

Don't remind me. Can't stand her. Then again, she can't stand me.

(rises)

That's what I get for dating a Weekday Warrior.

MILES

I thought you hated them as much as dental work...

THE COLONEL

(shrugs)

I contain multitudes, Pudge.

The Colonel turns to head off. Miles rises, following --

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

Whoa, where you going? I said I was meeting my girlfriend. We're not into threesomes --

Miles sits back down. Suddenly self conscious.

MILES

Oh, right - sorry -

THE COLONEL

You okay finding your own way back?

MILES

As it turns out, I have a lot of experience being on my own.

(then)

Didn't Alaska say she was meeting us? Would be rude if she got here and we were both gone...

The Colonel smirks, knowingly.

THE COLONEL

One boob. Jesus.

(walking away)

It's Alaska. Who the hell knows
what she's gonna do...

EXT. CULVER CREEK - BEACH - EVENING

It's later now, darker. But no cooler.

Alaska moves through the woods, pushing aside thick curtains of kudzu, revealing the beach. She looks shaken, emotional. She slows, composing herself. And spots --

ANGLE ON MILES

He sits on the swing. Considers leaving. Eyeballs a remaining cigarette on the swing. Picks it up. Tentatively lights it. Takes one small drag and...

Immediately begins coughing up a lung again.

MILES

Still... the... worst.

He stamps the cigarette out, vowing silently to never smoke again. And then he hears --

ALASKA

Okay, Mr. Famous Last Words. I
have one for you.

Miles turns. How long has she been standing there? Alaska seems changed; more serious than when they met.

MILES

Hey. Um, okay?

Alaska reaches into her backpack and pulls out The General in His Labyrinth.

ALASKA

Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The General in His Labyrinth. Ever read him?

(Miles shakes his head)

It's one of my favorites. It's about Simon Bolivar. It's a historical novel, so I don't know if it's true. But in the book you know what his last words are?

(MORE)

ALASKA (CONT'D)

No, you don't. But I am about to tell you, Señor Parting Remarks.

Using a lighter, Alaska holds it above the page.

ALASKA (CONT'D)

He - that's Simón Bolívar - was shaken by the overwhelming revelation that the headlong race between his misfortunes and his dreams was at that moment reaching the finish line. The rest was darkness. "Damn it," he sighed. "How will I ever get out of this labyrinth..."

MILES

Those are some seriously great last words.

ALASKA

(closes the book)
No shit.

MILES

But what does it mean?

Alaska slides in next to Miles. Lights a cigarette.

ALASKA

That's the mystery, isn't it?
(then)
Is the labyrinth living or dying?
Which is he trying to escape -- the world? Or the end of it?

MILES

I... don't know.

ALASKA

And here I thought you were the one who was going to finally deliver me the answers. We've only just met and you're already disappointing me, Pudge.

MILES

Have you really read all those books in your room?

ALASKA

(laughs, then)
Oh God no. I've maybe read a third of 'em.

(MORE)

ALASKA (CONT'D)

But I'm going to read them all. I call it my Life's Library.

(explains)

Every summer since I was little, I've gone to garage sales and bought all the books that looked interesting. So I always have something to read. But there's so much to do, you know?

(takes a drag)

Cigarettes to smoke, sex to have, swings to swing on. I'll have more time for reading when I'm old and boring.

Miles can't tell if this is flirting or just Alaska. This girl is worlds beyond him, he's just trying to keep up.

MILES

Hard to imagine you could ever be boring.

Alaska doesn't respond. Either because she doesn't hear it, or because she hears it all the time.

ALASKA

You remind me of the Colonel when he first came to Culver Creek. I mean you're taller obviously, and considerably less angry. When we met we were both just a couple scholarship kids with a shared interest in, let's just call it... booze and mischief.

MILES

Those are things I'm interested in.

ALASKA

Yet something tells me you haven't tried a whole lot of either.

(off Miles, guilty)

Exactly my point, Pudge. Much like yourself, the young Colonel paired a keen intellect with little life experience. I got rid of that problem quickly.

(then)

By Thanksgiving I got him his first girlfriend. Later that year we pulled our first prank... filled one of our classrooms with marbles. We've progressed since then.

(MORE)

ALASKA (CONT'D)

I provide the vision and the Colonel the military level planning.

MILES

So that's how Chip became The Colonel?

ALASKA

(nods)

You're smart like him. Cuter though. But I didn't just say that, because I love my boyfriend.

Miles is momentarily overwhelmed by this compliment.

MILES

Well, you're smarter than both of us. And much more attractive. But I didn't just say that because I love my girlfriend.

(off Alaska's look)

Who does not exist as I do not have one.

Alaska laughs again, charmed by him. To say this is the most charming Miles has ever felt would be an understatement.

ALASKA

Well don't worry, Pudge. If there's one thing I can get you it's a girlfriend.

(she rises)

Let's make a deal. You figure out what the labyrinth is and how to get out of it... and I'll get you laid. By a sexually liberated intellectual equal, of course. Deal?

Alaska looks into his eyes. A look Miles won't soon forget.

MILES

Deal.

EXT. CULVER CREEK QUAD - NIGHT

Miles follows Alaska back to campus. Dark now. Cicadas hum.

ALASKA

When you're walking at night, do
you ever get creeped out and even
though it's silly and embarrassing
you just want to run home?

Miles doesn't, but isn't about to disagree with her.

MILES

Yeah, totally.

Alaska is quiet a beat. Then she leans in to him, lips so
close to his ear and whispers --

ALASKA

Run run run run --

And she turns and runs, disappearing into the darkness ahead.
Miles hesitates, then takes off --

Chasing Alaska's silhouette into the darkness... like chasing
a ghost... until she's swallowed up by the void.

As Miles reaches the lights of the quad, he pulls up short.
Looking around, there's no sign of her.

PRE-LAP: Buddy's cover of Kesha's "MILKSHAKE" --

INT. ALASKA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Playing from the speakers of an iBook --

QUICK POPS OF:

-- A towel is placed under a door. Something illegal is about
to happen...

-- Weed burns in a glass bowl. Paul takes a hit, then passes
it to Marya. Who exhales into a paper towel roll stuffed
with dryer sheets. A fan whirrs, pushing the smoke out the
bathroom window.

-- Wine is emptied from the Coosa's bottle into an empty
Gatorade. The wine bottle hidden in a shoe box.

-- Marya, in her bra, takes a long sip from the Gatorade
bottle. Falls back onto her bed. Paul pulls down his pants.
Climbs on top of her, clumsily kissing.

-- Paul's hand fumbles for his jeans, searching for a condom.

Until, three knocks at the door.

Paul and Marya freeze. Oh shit --

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - NIGHT

Alaska sits at an outside table. The hum of the freeway nearby. Coffee in front of her, cigarette in hand.

She sucks down the cigarette. Stamping it out. Checks her watch... waiting for it to be over...

INT. DORM HALL - NIGHT

The hallway is crowded with onlookers. Miles joins them, coming out of his room, following the sounds of CRYING --

Marya has stumbled out of her room, wrapped in only a towel. She's hysterical. The Eagle is trying to coax her back in. Paul, in his boxers, is distraught.

MARYA

Paul, what do we do -- he's going to kick us out?!

THE EAGLE

Let's just go back inside and get dressed.

Paul is almost talking to himself --

PAUL

I don't get it. He's good, but he's not that good. Someone ratted.

THE EAGLE

Expulsion is the least of your worries. Inside.

Paul stares up at the crowd of faces. Takumi and the Colonel among them. An accident no one can look away from.

PAUL

Who's the rat? Huh?! I know it was somebody!

THE EAGLE

Paul --

Miles spots Alaska entering the hallway. She stands there, taking this all in.

MARYA

Alaska! You're not going to believe it --

Alaska pushes past students to get to her room. Marya collapses in her arms. Sobbing.

THE EAGLE

Ms. Young, please help your roommate get packed. Paul, come with me.

Alaska and Marya disappear inside her room. The Eagle leads Paul down the hallway. Paul bumps kids out of his way, pointing fingers --

PAUL

Who ratted? You?
(as he passes Miles)
Was it you?! Was it?!!

Off Paul's cries --

A SCHOOL BELL CHIMES

EXT. CULVER CREEK - CLASSROOM AREA - MORNING

School is in session. All classes housed in one low building facing the lake. Students in pajama shorts, flip flops, hoodies crowd the narrow sidewalks in front of classrooms.

Miles and The Colonel join up with Takumi.

TAKUMI

First official day of classes and we've already suffered casualties. Here's what I know --

THE COLONEL

I told you Takumi would know. He always knows.

TAKUMI

Apparently Paul and Marya hit the Culver Creek trifecta. 1.) Genital contact while 2.) Smoking pot and 3.) Already drunk. Though Paul was attempting to use a condom, so kudos to being sexually responsible.

THE COLONEL

They are fucked.

TAKUMI

Heard they were gone before the sun
came up.

THE COLONEL

No way The Eagle just got lucky.
Hate to say I agree with Paul. The
Eagle wasn't working alone.

They enter into --

INT. DR. HYDE'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Filling with students. The Colonel spots the Weekday
Warriors (Longwell, Kevin, etc). They stand, whispering,
trading conspiracies. Suspicions running high.

As they drop into their seats, Alaska enters. No make up,
hair in a pony tail. Doesn't look like she's slept much.

ALASKA

Marya's parents drove up and got
her last night. Luckily her mom is
addicted to Xanax, so I think she
slipped Marya a few to calm her
down.

THE COLONEL

That sounds healthy.

TAKUMI

Speaking of --

DR. HYDE enters the classroom. Or shuffles in to be more
exact. He's impossibly old, breathing slowly and audibly as
he takes tiny steps towards his lectern.

The Colonel leans in to Miles, whispering --

THE COLONEL

The Old Man only has one lung.

Dr. Hyde rests his hands on the lectern. However belabored
his entrance, when he speaks he holds the class in his
thrall.

DR. HYDE

A man being chased by a tiger leaps
off a cliff in trying to escape.
His fall is broken by a tree
growing out of the side of the
cliff. So there he is hanging from
this tree. Tiger above.

(MORE)

DR. HYDE (CONT'D)

Very large rocks and certain death down below. "Help!" The man cries. "Somebody help me!!" "Yes...?" a voice says. "God, God, is that you?" The man asks. "God, I'll do anything, just please, please, help me." So God says, "Okay then... just let go." The man pauses for a moment, then calls out, "Is anyone else there?"

Silence. Dr. Hyde smiles, to him this is funny. And he doesn't really care if anyone else agrees.

DR. HYDE (CONT'D)

Religion is important whether you believe in it or not. Just like history is important, whether you lived through it or not. In my case, I probably have. This year, we'll be studying three religious traditions: Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. We'll tackle three more next year. Gives me something to live for.

Again, Dr. Hyde is the only one amused by his own joke.

DR. HYDE (CONT'D)

My name is Dr. Hyde. You may be smart, but I've been smart longer. Therefore I will talk, and you will listen. Our time together may be short. And we are engaged in the most important pursuit in history: the search for meaning.

Miles sits up, leans in. Mesmerized.

DR. HYDE (CONT'D)

What is the nature of being a person? What is the best way to go about being a person? How did we come to be, and what will become of us when we are no longer?

Miles scribbles into his notepad: "labyrinth". His eyes shift to Alaska, but she's doodling, distracted.

DR. HYDE (CONT'D)

In short: What are the rules of this game, and how might we best play it?

Off of these profound words, we CUT TO:

A DEEP FRYER. Working overtime --

INT. CULVER CREEK - DINING HALL - LATER

MAUREEN, the heavysset school cook, pulls two large burritos out of the fryer and drops them onto Miles' and the Colonel's plates.

THE COLONEL

Maureen, you're a genius.

Maureen could give a shit. Miles and the Colonel head to an open table. Miles eyeing the large brick he's been served.

MILES

What is this exactly? Not that it doesn't look... hearty.

THE COLONEL

A fried burrito. Aka a bufriedo. Invented by aforementioned culinary genius Maureen. Named by Alaska.

(then)

You can say a lot of bad things about Alabama, but you can't say that Alabamans as a people are unduly afraid of deep fryers.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles experiences a foodgasm as he takes his first bite into the crunchy goodness of a bufriedo.

MILES

Omigod. This is the greatest thing I've ever tasted.

Takumi arrives, taking great pleasure in this visual.

TAKUMI

Nothing like seeing a man eat his first bufriedo.

THE COLONEL

You gather any more intel?

TAKUMI

I did. But maybe it's best if we talked... privately?

Takumi's eyes shift to Miles. The Colonel nods, rises.

MILES

You guys don't trust me?

TAKUMI

Sorry, bro. But we don't really know you. And chances can't be taken with this information.

The Colonel follows Takumi, without a look back. Miles suddenly reminded how fragile his relationships here are...

ACROSS THE ROOM

The Weekday Warriors eat at their table. Kevin watches Miles, sees the Colonel exit. Then looks over to Longwell.

They share a nod.

MOMENTS LATER

Miles takes a mouth watering bite of his bufriedo when suddenly he's flanked by Longwell and Kevin. They sit down, cocking their heads to see beneath their floppy hair.

KEVIN

Whoa. You do not want to put that poison in your body.

Miles looks up, mid-bite, mouth full of food --

MILES

But it's delicious.

LONGWELL

Kevin, c'mon. Everyone needs to try a fried burrito once in their life.

MILES

(still happily chewing)
I'm going to eat this so many times.

Kevin and Longwell share a look. Time to make an adjustment in strategy.

LONGWELL

All good, Miles. We were just offering some friendly advice. 'Cause it looked like you could use a friend.

Miles swallows. Confused.

MILES

You guys want to be friends?

LONGWELL

We don't want you to fall into the wrong crowd.

KEVIN

Yeah, you're cooler than those other losers.

Miles has never been told he's cooler than anyone before.

MILES

Really?

LONGWELL

Yeah, I mean... you're from Florida.

KEVIN

That's cool.

Miles has never heard this before either.

MILES

Even Orlando?

Longwell leans in, getting to business.

LONGWELL

We could use someone like you.

MILES

Like me...? You mean, from Florida?

KEVIN

No. Roommates with the Colonel.

Longwell shoots Kevin a look. They were supposed to slow roll this. But Longwell smiles at Miles. Calm. Charming.

LONGWELL

A person in your position could be very helpful to us. We need someone on the inside. Letting us know what the Colonel's thinking and when he's thinking it.

But Miles isn't buying what Longwell is selling.

MILES

You want me to be a rat?

LONGWELL

A spy.

MILES

Isn't that worse?

KEVIN

There's nothing worse than a rat.

LONGWELL

And nothing better than being friends with a Weekday Warrior.

MILES

Doesn't sound like friendship. Sounds like you're... using me.

LONGWELL

Well, Miles.... Sometimes you gotta play the cards you're dealt. Doesn't seem like you a have a whole lotta options.

Miles is offended, but a little too scared of these guys to fully show it.

MILES

Maybe I'll just stay out of it. Why pick a side? I can be like Switzerland. I hear that place is really nice. Gstaad in particular people seem to like...

KEVIN

Not possible, bro.

Longwell nods. Rises. Puts a heavy hand on Miles' shoulder.

LONGWELL

Here? Everyone chooses a side.

And off these ominous words, the Weekday Warriors walk away.

Postal Service's "THE DISTRICT SLEEPS ALONE TONIGHT" over --

INT. CULVER CREEK - FRENCH CLASS - DAY

Miles tries to keep up with French conjugation. As hands go up around him, he feels himself hopelessly lost.

EXT. CULVER CREEK - CLASSROOM AREA - DAY

Miles searches for his next classroom, tries to follow the schedule in his hand.

Up ahead, he catches a glimpse of Alaska. But loses her in the swarm of students spilling out of their classrooms.

INT. CULVER CREEK - LIBRARY - EVENING

Miles does his best to study his World Religions book. But can't focus. Stares out the window.

THE LIBRARY STACKS

Shelves of biographies... the one place Miles knows he can find comfort. He peruses the titles.

Stops at a book about Che Guevara. Pulls it from the shelf, flips to the end.

And there they are. The revolutionary's final words:

"Shoot, coward. You're only going to kill a man."

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Miles enter his dorm room to a surprising sight:

The Colonel shirtless and sweating hunched over an ironing board. Vigorously trying to get the wrinkles out of a shirt.

THE COLONEL

I have a date. Dinner with Sara's parents. This is an emergency. Do you know how to iron?

Miles approaches the wrinkled pink shirt the Colonel is failing at ironing.

MILES

I didn't even know we had an iron.

THE COLONEL

We don't. It's Takumi's. Not that he knows how to iron either. And when I asked Alaska she started yelling, "You're not going to impose the patriarchal paradigm on me!"

MILES

The what?

THE COLONEL

Alaska, among her many other qualities, is a third wave feminist.

MILES

They have waves?

THE COLONEL

Hmm, Pudge -- maybe you should try reading some biographies about women?

(off Miles, fair point)

Oh God, I need to smoke. But I can't reek of smoke when I meet Sara's parents. They smell like sandalwood and money.

Miles doesn't feel like helping the Colonel but offers --

MILES

You could turn the shower on. The steam gets out wrinkles?

INT. DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - LATER

The bathroom is filled with steam. Miles and the Colonel, cigarette in his mouth, pull back the shower curtain.

Sadly the shirt looks no better. The low shower head dribbling its water down the front.

THE COLONEL

As useless for ironing as it is for showering...

INT. DORM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Colonel puts a tie decorated with flamingoes on over his wet and wrinkled shirt. Miles watches from the couch.

THE COLONEL

The one thing my lousy father taught me was how to tie a tie. Which is odd since I can't imagine when he would have to wear one.

(then)

Too bad the tie is so goddamned ugly.

Suddenly the Colonel realizes that his girlfriend SARA is standing in the doorway, having overheard.

Sara is small like the Colonel, but doesn't appear to be the same rage fueled sociopath. Until she opens her mouth --

SARA

I got you that tie you asshole! It was a birthday present.

THE COLONEL

And one I will never forget.

Miles rises, trying to make the peace.

MILES

This must be Sara. Nice to meet you. I've heard so much about you.

SARA

Yeah, I can imagine.

(then)

Can't you at least press your goddamned shirt?

THE COLONEL

I freakin' tried, okay?! We can't all have our maids do our ironing for us.

SARA

Chip, that chip on your shoulder makes you look even shorter.

THE COLONEL

What difference does it make, Sara? I could wear a tuxedo and your parents would still hate me.

SARA

Because you antagonize them as you do all humans who walk the Earth.

(to Miles)

I am so sorry this is your roommate. You deserve better.

THE COLONEL

He's not the only one.

SARA

Cute. Look we either go now or we're not going.

THE COLONEL

Fuckit.

SARA

Fine.

THE COLONEL

Whatever.

SARA

Asshole.

Sara slams the door. Some of Miles' books fall to the floor.

THE COLONEL

Ahhhhh!!

MILES

So that's Sara? She seems...
sweet.

The Colonel moves to the mini-fridge. Pulls out a gallon of milk. Unscrews the cap.

THE COLONEL

Neither of us have a lot of
positive role models when it comes
to adult relationships.

The Colonel takes a swig of the milk. Then gags, trying to keep it down.

He collapses on the couch next to Miles. As he forces down another mouthful, half coughing --

MILES

Why are you drinking sour milk?

THE COLONEL

This isn't milk. Well, not just.
It's five parts milk, one part
vodka. I call it ambrosia. Drink
of the Gods. You can barely smell
the vodka so the Eagle can't catch
me unless he takes a sip.

(takes another pull)

Downside is it tastes like sour
milk and alcohol. But what the
hell, Pudge. Got to dull the pain.
Want some?

MILES

I'm good.

A beat. They hear the ring from the payphone outside.

THE COLONEL
You going to get that?

EXT. DORM - NIGHT

Not sure why he's agreed to this, Miles makes his way through the buggy twilight to the payphone drilled into the wall.

The wall is scrawled on with doodles, messages, profanity. Bored kids looking for something to do while stuck talking to their parents. Ah, the days before texting. Miles answers.

MILES
Hello?

SARA'S VOICE
Can you get Chip for me?

MILES
Sara? Yeah. Hold on.

But the Colonel is already there. He takes the phone.

THE COLONEL
Yes?

SARA'S VOICE
Can we go now?

THE COLONEL
Yeah.

The Colonel hangs up. Looks at Miles. Shrugs.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
I'm a bad boyfriend. She's a bad girlfriend. We deserve each other. Don't wait up.

Miles watches this strange little man walk off. In his wrinkled shirt and flamingo tie.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

Miles sleeps soundly. Shirtless, above the sheets. Small clip fan doing its best with the humid night.

Suddenly he's grabbed by TWO MEATY HANDS. Miles' eyes fly open--

THREE GUYS WITH SKI MASKS stand over him.

White Stripes "BLUE ORCHID" --

Now awake and alarmed, Miles sits upright. Banging his head on the bunk above. Now he's awake, alarmed, and in pain.

MASKED MAN #1
Let's go. Now, Halter.

MILES
Go? Go where?

MASKED MAN #2
Now. Don't make us kick your ass.

Miles, against his better judgement, slides out of the bed.

MILES
Right, hazing the new guy. My dad warned me about this. I'm game. Should I put on some pants first?

MASKED MAN #3
Won't be necessary. Move.

EXT. CULVER CREEK - SOCCER FIELDS - NIGHT

Miles is led at almost a jog by his three kidnapers.

MILES
Oh, I get it. You gonna handcuff me to the flagpole in my boxers. Very funny --

MASKED MAN #2
You wish, turd.

EXT. CULVER CREEK - BEACH - NIGHT

Miles is led out of the woods onto the fake sandy beach.

MILES
A good old fashioned dunking. Well that sounds refreshing --

MASKED MAN #1
Shut up. Arms at your sides.

MILES
Why do I need to do that --

Annoyed, the masked man grabs Miles' arms, yanking them down.

Suddenly the other guys have rolls of duct tape in hand. They begin to wrap Miles' arms and chest, mummifying him.

They shove him to the ground with a THUD.

Miles bangs his head hard off the gravelly sand. These guys are not playing. They start taping his legs together.

MILES (CONT'D)
Isn't that going to make it hard
for me to swim?

One of the kidnapers raises his mask. It's Longwell Chase.

LONGWELL
You had your chance to be on our
side.

MILES
I told you -- I'm on no one's side!

KEVIN
(pulls up his mask)
That means you're with the Colonel.

LONGWELL
And this is for him. For what he
did to one of us.

Miles is now acutely aware he's about to die.

MILES
Please guys don't --

Longwell rips off a piece of tape. Headed for Miles' mouth -

MILES (CONT'D)
Wait, "please guys don't" are
terrible last words!

But his mouth is taped shut. They carry Miles down the shore. And then throw his body into the lake --

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

SPLASH! Miles hits the water. Longwell and his cronies run off, disappearing into the moonlit night.

Miles thrashes, trying to free himself. But it's no use. Water fills his nose.

He's sinking. And fast.

Miles is trapped. There's no way out. He stops fighting. Accepting his fate. So much for that Great Perhaps --

Until feet hit the bottom of the lake bed! He kicks off --

His head breaks the surface. He inhales as much air as his lungs can hold.

A moment of calm.

Until he hears it...

THE SWAN.

Honking angrily. Wings flapping. Making its way across the lake -- a heat-seeking missile -- straight towards Miles.

Oh shit.

Trying to orient himself without drowning, Miles cranes his neck back and sees the shore about ten feet away. He's going to have to move fast --

Only able to use his hips, Miles undulates his body... a FRENZIED MERMAID shimmying across the water...

He looks back. The Swan is gaining. How can something so beautiful look so mean?

Miles keeps spastically gyrating... finally making it to shallow water...

As the swan closes in for the kill --

Miles rises, hopping away on dry land... out of harm's way... before toppling over into the sand. Face first.

He lays there, bruised and battered... but alive.

The Swan fires off a warning honk. *Next time there will be blood.*

INT. DORM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Soaking wet, Miles straggles back to the dorm. Duct tape hanging off his body. As he passes Alaska's door, he notices it's slightly open --

INT. ALASKA'S ROOM - INTERCUT

Marya's bed is stripped. Her closet empty. Alaska stands at her window. Staring at The General and the Labyrinth in hand. Open to the last page. Alaska scribbles something in the margin. As she does, a tear rolls down her cheek. She wipes it away, looks up --

Startled to see Miles in the doorway.

Even though he's nearly naked and dripping water on the floor, she's the one who feels exposed. Her look hardens.

MILES

You okay?

ALASKA

Better than you. Someone go for a swim?

MILES

(thrown)

Less of a swim, more of a drowning.
It was the Weekday Warriors --

ALASKA

Yeah well, you gotta be tough now,
Pudge. Mommy's not here to help
anymore. Not for any of us.

Her tone is so cold, she's almost like a different girl.

MILES

Alaska, is something wrong?

ALASKA

More than your limited, suburban,
Floridian brain can handle.

And with that, Alaska swings the door shut on Miles' face.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Miles enters his room. Slams the door shut behind him as he tromps loudly towards the bathroom. Could care less if he wakes the Colonel.

INT. DORM ROOM - BATHROOM - SHOWER

Miles once again tries to squeeze his frame below the shower head. Yanking the rest of the tape off.

God he hates this shower.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Miles grabs for some clothes as the Colonel sits up.

THE COLONEL

Where the hell you been?

(then)

Oh. You got tossed in the lake.
Culver Creek tradition.

MILES

Attempted homicide is a Culver
Creek tradition?

THE COLONEL

Don't be dramatic. Happens to all
the new kids. They throw you in
the lake. You swim out. And try
not to wake your roommate --

MILES

I couldn't just swim out.

THE COLONEL

Shit. You don't know how to swim?

MILES

Not when my legs and arms are duct
taped together.

THE COLONEL

Wait, what do you mean? They duct
taped you? How?

Miles puts his arms and legs together to show the Colonel.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)

Jesus. So you had to swim out like
a mermaid?

MILES

Mer-man, but yeah.

THE COLONEL

Christ. You could have drowned.
They're just supposed to toss you
in your underwear and run.

MILES

They said it was because of you.

THE COLONEL
They said that?
(then)
Shit. Takumi is right.

MILES
Right about what? Maybe you could
tell me what the hell is going on?
Or I could just go to the Eagle --

THE COLONEL
No. No way, Pudge. You're not a
rat. And that's not how things get
dealt with here.

MILES
Well, I've just about had it with
how things happen here.
(then)
And what's up with Alaska? She was
just like really mean to me --

The words sound ridiculous to Miles as soon as they are out
of his mouth.

THE COLONEL
Yeah, well. She's moody, dude. I
warned you.
(then)
I'm sorry, Pudge. About all of it.

And then he turns off his lamp. Miles left in the dark.

INT. DORM ROOM - MORNING

Miles is awakened by the Colonel yelling.

THE COLONEL
Goddammit!

Miles sits up, confused.

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
Those bastards.

The Colonel is holding a pair of tennis shoes. Miles still
doesn't understand --

THE COLONEL (CONT'D)
Last night, before they grabbed
you? They pissed in my shoes.

MILES

You sure?

THE COLONEL

You want to smell? Because if there's one thing I know it's when I've just stepped in another man's piss. It's like my mom always says: "You think you're walking on water, but turns out you just got piss in your shoes."

(then)

We gotta go. It's zero hour.

(then)

Also, do you have a pair of flip flops or anything I could borrow?

EXT. QUAD - MORNING

Miles and the Colonel, wearing Miles' too large flip flops, march towards the quad.

A grave Takumi is waiting for them.

TAKUMI

Hey, Pudge. Heard what happened. Alaska is pissed.

MILES

Didn't seem like it.

Takumi and the Colonel share a look -- it's time to tell him.

TAKUMI

Look, Pudge. You're collateral damage in a larger battle. One that has been going on since the beginning of time.

THE COLONEL

Or since we were freshmen.

TAKUMI

It's us versus the Weekday Warriors. Usually it's fun and games. But not after last night. Things have changed.

MILES

Why? What changed?

THE COLONEL

Paul and Marya.

TAKUMI

They think the Colonel is the rat.

THE COLONEL

Fuckers. I can't believe they think that! I mean Paul was a Jaguar-driving piece of shit. But I would never rat on him --

This is interrupted by Alaska, joining them --

ALASKA

If they think the Colonel is a rat, then they're dumber than they look.

THE COLONEL

Thank you. Probably one of those dickwads that ratted them out and blamed me.

ALASKA

Which is why we need to figure out how to ruin their shitty little lives.

TAKUMI

After class we start drawing up plans for a counter attack.

ACROSS THE QUAD

Kevin, Longwell and the other Weekday Warriors are huddled together, staring down our kids --

ALASKA

Looks like we're going to war.

THE COLONEL

I promise you, Pudge -- they will regret messing with one our friends.

Miles has to restrain himself from showing his happiness at being called a friend. He's in it now. One of them.

TAKUMI

(raises a fist of solidarity)

Trust.

The Colonel and Takumi march off. As Miles goes to follow, Alaska slips her hand in his. He turns, surprised.

ALASKA

Last night... I didn't realize how bad it was. I'm sorry.

(then)

We still have our deal?

Miles nods, smiles. As they head off together, catching up with their friends --

MILES HALTER'S VOICE

I came here searching for a more than minor life...

We START to see IMAGES of what's to come --

A blur of ADVENTURE, ROMANCE, FREEDOM...

Miles and Alaska RUN through an empty school HALLWAY...

Miles, in his first FIST FIGHT, as he and the Colonel throw down against Weekday Warriors...

The crew gathered inside a BARN, breathless from a PRANK WAR...

Miles and Alaska lay in the SOCCER FIELD, heads touching, staring at the STARS...

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I was following the famous last words of a dead French poet. I was seeking "My Great Perhaps"...

We end with a moment in the not too distant future --

NIGHT. Alaska, eyes wet with tears, behind the wheel of the Blue Citrus. She drives off, passing Miles. He holds up a hand to wave, but she doesn't wave back.

Miles can only stand there and watch her go.

MILES HALTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I know so many last words... but I'll never know hers.

And on the dashboard of her car... a single plastic tulip.

A card fills the screen:

One Hundred Twenty Two Days Before

END OF EPISODE 1