

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MILES CALHOUN, a scrawny thirteen year-old boy with shaggy, cow-licked hair and pre-braces teeth, sits at his desk with his back turned to us. His laptop sits open, glowing blank.

His bedroom is decorated with his many achievements. Vibrantly colored art projects hang on the walls. Intricate dioramas depicting great battles in history rest on shelves.

A poster of the Wu Tang Clan hangs over him on the wall. Behind him, a Playstation 2 makes violent, exploding sounds of a war game having been left on.

Miles wears an ill-fitting suit with a clip-on tie. We hear the sounds of his fingers typing rhythmically.

MILES (V.O.)

Dear mother and father. I want to thank you. Without you I would not be here and none of this would be possible.

He lifts a bottle of what can only be his parent's Merlot, and takes a long, desperate swig, leaving his lips stained crimson.

After a moment, he spits the red wine into a plastic Clippers cup nearby, disgusted by the taste. He empties the rest of the wine into the cup, and refills the bottle with grape juice.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

However, I feel compelled to write to you, to put my thoughts down on paper. I wish we could speak like adults, but clearly you are both incapable of such an act.

The voice of a MOTHER can be heard somewhere down the hall.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Miles, go to bed!

Miles grabs a stack of thick, hardcover books off his shelf and heaves them at the door. Then, continues.

MILES (V.O.)

Consider this a means of trying to communicate with you as a last possible resort.

(MORE)

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Maybe the following words will help
 you understand that I am a
 complicated person. A human being
 with...
 (thinks)
 ...incredible depth.

He sips some more Welch's wine, and continues.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Or, in a worst case scenario, this
 document shall serve as evidence of
 a boy trying to be heard.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: **A HISTORY OF FOOLS**

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles taps his fingers on the desk pensively, sighs, and
 resumes typing.

MILES (V.O.)
 I understand that in the basic
 biological sense, you 'made' me.
 Though I also understand that in
 the basic biological sense, it
 doesn't take a genius to do so.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - DAY

TIGHT on the FINGERS of a BOY as they dip into various colors
 of cheap acrylic paint. PINKY in midnight blue. RING FINGER
 in sunburst yellow. A THUMB splashes in a glob of fire-engine
 red.

The fingers belong to a SEVEN YEAR-OLD MILES, sitting in
 front of a large white canvas.

MILES (V.O.)
 Besides, surely I am deserving of
 most of the credit.

He turns to MRS. WHITE, his eager teacher. He gives her a
 confident nod, and with an innocent voice:

SEVEN YEAR-OLD MILES
A little motivation, maybe?

Mrs. White nods obediently, and glances over her classroom of SEVEN YEAR-OLDS. Some students watch with great curiosity. Others pick their noses.

Mrs. White drops the needle on a plastic toy record player and we hear these timeless lyrics:

Puff the magic dragon, who lives by the sea... Frolics in the autumn mist in a land called Hano-lee...

Miles takes a deep breath, inhaling the cosmic diatribe. He stares deep into the blank canvas with furious determination.

And in a flash, Miles' hands wave rapidly over the canvas. His fingers SWIRL and SWOOP and SLASH until his work is complete. He turns the canvas to reveal...

A COLORFUL MASTERPIECE

Brilliantly abstract. Chaotically-themed. Mysteriously elusive.

Mrs. White and her students share a collective AWE of amazement.

GARY AND MEREDITH CALHOUN, Miles' caring, supportive parents, watch from the door. They beam with pride.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A packed house, yet eerily silent. Hundreds of parents, many armed with digital cameras, blinking red-lights everywhere, stare forward with anticipation, for on-stage, holding an upright bass twice his size, is Miles -- and the bass is so large we can only see the top of his head. Nothing but a cowlick.

With style, precision, and even a clever sense of mockery, Miles plucks through the jazz classic "*Blue Monk*". Somewhere, somewhere, Thelonious Monk is listening in awe.

The audience is enthralled. In the front row, the Calhoun's are impressed.

MILES (V.O.)
I am only dangling on the precipice
of puberty...

CUT TO:

MILES' REFLECTION

As he gels his hair into a perfect crest in the mirror, and almost winks.

MILES (V.O.)
...and am already at the top of my
game.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

The sun beams through open blinds, illuminating wall to wall bulletin boards covered in colorful, though disjointed art projects.

DRIFT OVER the rows of STUDENTS. Some hard at work. Others staring off in odd directions, catatonic.

But not Miles, writing furiously. Feverishly pressing lead. A stack of pages as high as six phone books is gathered off to his side.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Students in suspenders mingle with teachers in their finest corduroy. It's the elementary literary elite. MR. SCHAFFER, head of the English Department, commands attention.

MR. SCHAFFER
It is my distinct honor to present
this years' Best New Author
Award...

In front of bookshelves dotted with the classics, the three 13 year-old candidates sit in metal fold-out chairs: a smug little BRUNETTE GIRL, a terrified INDIAN BOY, and Miles, patiently awaiting his prize.

MR. SCHAFFER (CONT'D)
For his powerful short story, 'The
Bully Inside', fellow faculty and
honored students, Miles J. Calhoun.

Respectable golf claps abound. The brunette girl bursts out of her chair.

BRUNETTE GIRL
Mongoloids!

She stomps out. Miles looks at the crowd with a we-know-better smile, and approaches the podium.

MILES

Wow, this was totally unexpected.
Okay, let's be honest... it wasn't.
Seriously, did anybody read the
third act of Vaghars' "If My Dog
Could Talk?" Entirely void of
realism. An unintentional farce.

VAGHAR, the terrified Indian boy, turns bright red.

MILES (CONT'D)

I think if his dog could talk he'd
politely ask him to put the pen
down.

Around the room, uncomfortable silence.

MILES (CONT'D)

In conclusion, I would like to
quote one of my inspirations, W.C.
Fields. 'I am free of all
prejudice. I hate everybody
equally.'

He holds up his hand-bound book and smiles, dignified as
flash bulbs erupt.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And tonight, the very night of my
eagerly anticipated Bar Mitzvah...

INT. SYNAGOGUE - NIGHT

The most highly-attended Bar Mitzvah in Jewish history.
FRIENDS and RELATIVES in horribly clashing outfits look on
with pure enlightenment as Miles chants his Torah portion --
the Hebrew sung in a beautiful, somewhat-feminine staccato.

MILES (V.O.)

...I think even God was in awe. In
fact, I know he was.

Miles walks over to the Ark, and with the Rabbi's stern,
dramatic nod, pulls it open -- BATHING US IN WHITE LIGHT.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles now has his jacket off, his collar hanging open loosely.

MILES (V.O.)
Technically, and now made official
in the eyes of our entire religion,
I am now a man.

The voice of a now-furious FATHER is heard somewhere down the hall.

FATHER (O.S.)
Damn it Miles, turn the goddamn
lights out! I'm trying to sleep!

He grabs another stack of hardcovers -- Che Guevara's various biographies -- pauses in mid-throw, and calms himself down with a long, deep breath.

MILES (V.O.)
...and with that comes
responsibility. Therefore, in this
hereby document I am relinquishing
you of any and all responsibility
for what I have done in the past,
and for what I may do in, what is
certain to be, a very bright
future.

He takes another pull from the wine bottle of Welch's grape juice, sighs, and closes his laptop.

FADE OUT.

SUPER:

Fool (fool) *n.*

1. One who is deficient in judgment, sense, or understanding.

FADE IN:

A FOR SALE SIGN

As the wooden stake breaks the surface of a neatly manicured lawn.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

It's early morning in affluent Calabasas. San Fernando Valley's Laguna Beach. Miles, always in his freshly-ironed suit, shoves a FOR SALE sign twice his size into the lawn with all the strength he can muster.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Miles sprays and scrubs the counter tops, the oven range, and the breakfast table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

He vacuums, and as he passes framed photos of himself with his parents, he turns them over or tosses them face down into drawers.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Miles makes the bed with disgust.

MILES
Derelicts.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

He fishes brown leaves out of a kidney-shaped swimming pool with a net.

MILES
Slum Lords.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

He walks through each room for final inspection. The house is spotless, glowing to perfection.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - DAY

Miles sits at his desk, an open manila folder in front of him. He sorts through a handful of documents. A MY SPACE page with the photo of a YOUNG TEEN GIRL on it. She's sixteen and gorgeous. GOOGLE searches are printed off the internet, all under the name LAYLA GARDNER.

He folds the envelope closed and slides it into his desk drawer. Locks it with a key.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Reflected in the mirror, Miles gels his hair into a perfect crest, and as is his routine, considers winking.

Instead, he pulls out his red striped, clip-on tie from his inner-coat pocket, clips it onto his collar and adjusts it so it's just right. Satisfied, he turns and leaves. Even shuts the light out.

Then, he turns around and flips the light back on, slides a bluetooth cell phone earpiece behind his ear, and now, entirely impressed by what he sees, gives a full, obnoxious wink.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

A Lexus sedan pulls to a stop in front of the house. A lovely couple, CRAIG and SUZANNE GARDNER, get out of the car.

The back door opens, and out steps the most beautiful girl Miles has ever seen. She wears a little cotton skirt and boy's converse shoes. This is LAYLA GARDNER.

Miles approaches the family, his hands held together in a sophisticated fashion.

MILES

I just love that crisp morning air,
don't you? I'm sorry, and you must
be the Gardners?

SUZANNE

Well hello there, young man. Where
are your parents?

MILES

Wow. My parents. Huh. I haven't
thought about them in awhile. To
tell you the truth, I... I guess I
don't really know.

CRAIG

You don't really know?

MILES

(shakes his head)
Never actually met them.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT' D)

I'm told my mother didn't want the pregnancy and escaped the hospital just hours after she birthed me. Actually ran from the building, still in her hospital gown.

SUZANNE

Oh. My.

MILES

So, where are my parents? Mr. And Mrs. Gardner, you find them, you tell them to give me a call, okay?

SUZANNE

I am so, so sorry.

MILES

Listen, we live, we learn, and in the end, we accept.

Miles nods solemnly, feigning emotion. Layla watches him, intrigued. He extends his hand to Craig, professionally.

MILES (CONT' D)

Miles J. Calhoun. I'll be showing the house.

Suzanne and Craig share a perplexed look.

MILES (CONT' D)

Oh, I work for the realty company. In exchange for school credit.

He flashes a winning smile.

MILES (CONT' D)

Shall we?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

They enter the freshly-cleaned house. Craig is visibly put off by the thirteen and a half year-old realtor.

MILES

I understand that you're new to the neighborhood. Let me tell you, it's a fantastic place to raise a family. Very little crime. Not a child molester on the block.
(to Layla)
I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name?

She looks away.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Miles continues the tour. The Gardners walk around the master bedroom.

MILES

Two bedrooms, two and a half baths,
brand new wall to wall carpeting,
hardwood floors, central heating
and air...

Layla overturns a picture frame. It's a shot of a seven year-old, grinning Miles and his parents posing happily among local RASTAS on a family trip to Jamaica. Miles catches her in the corner of his eye, and she turns the frame back over.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

They all hold frosty glasses of Lemonade.

MILES

Tile floors and counter tops, state-of-the-art range and oven, laundry area attached...

SUZANNE

Miles...

MILES

Suzanne.

SUZANNE

You've done a fantastic job. I'm very impressed, young man.

She glares at Craig. Reluctantly, Craig pats Miles on the back.

CRAIG

Yeah. Super job, pal. Bang up.

MILES

You're a complete tool, you know that?

CRAIG

(stunned)
Wait, what did you just call me?

Miles gestures to his bluetooth earpiece. He's on a call.

MILES

First you waste my time. Now you tell me you can't clear escrow? Listen closely and follow these instructions. Scroll down to the number on your cell phone that correlates with the name Miles J. Calhoun, and press delete. You're dead to me. That clear? Dead. To. Me.

(turns, whispers)

Hi, grandma.

Miles gives Layla a little inside wink. She looks away, with the slightest hint of a grin.

Suzanne and Craig step aside for a private conversation.

CRAIG

(to Suzanne)

...because there's no way I'm going to buy a house from a pre-pubescent broker, that's why. And I'm sorry, but I don't think I'm being unreasonable here!

SUZANNE

Well I love this house. For the record.

CRAIG

Let the record reflect.

Miles paces, appearing stressed by the phone call.

MILES

...if you can't put a couple of dollars together and make a decision like an adult, then we have nothing more to discuss, entiende?

He presses a button on his earpiece, ending the call.

CRAIG

Busy, huh?

MILES

(nods)

It's a buyer's market.

CRAIG
You must be racking up those school credits.

MILES
Oh, I don't do it for that, Craig.

Miles flicks an ice-cube into his mouth, chews.

MILES (CONT'D)
Look, take all the time you need.
But she's going to go quick, so I suggest you --

MOTHER (O.S.)
Miles, who's car is that out front?

Miles races out, leaving the Gardners in the kitchen alone.

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And why is there a For Sale sign on my goddamn lawn?

Craig and Suzanne share a confused look. Layla grins, amused.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

MEREDITH, Miles' mother, walks the Gardners to their car. We see Miles in the background, sitting on the porch, resigned.

MEREDITH
He thinks he's so clever. I'm gonna put his head in the washing machine.

SUZANNE
Wait, so he's not an orphan?

CRAIG
Big shock, hon.

Layla lingers from the group, and turns back to Miles.

LAYLA
Hey, I'm Layla.

She smiles, and walks back to her parents, not awaiting a response.

MILES
(to himself)
Hello... Layla.

Layla stops, and turns back around.

LAYLA
Yeah, howdy. Hi there. Didn't I
just cover all that?

MILES
Yeah, I mean... bye.

She slips into the back seat of the Lexus, leaving Miles stung.

Meredith walks past Miles without breaking stride, and slams the screen door.

MILES (CONT'D)
Thanks. I had a sale.

The Gardners drive away. Out the back window, Layla looks back at the house, and the strange yet intriguing boy sitting on the steps.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - DAY

A loud hip-hop beat rattles shelves. Trophies clink together. Prized dioramas jostle this way and that.

Miles is playing the bass-line on an electric bass. A drum-machine is jerry-rigged to his laptop. Two large speakers are set on either side of the desk.

Two fourteen year-old black kids, KEYSHON and NATE, sit across from him. Keyshon's got a shaved head and prominent buck-teeth. Nate is overweight, built like a lineman with a protruding belly. Oddly, an unlit joint hangs from his lips.

KEYSHON
Hot, kid. Hot.

NATE
Like that Timbaland shit and shit.

KEYSHON
Take that joint out of your mouth,
and shit.

NATE
My brother said it'll make us more
creative. Plus, it makes TV better.

MILES

Nate, I don't need any drugs to create. Besides, you're not even going to light that.

NATE

You think I'm scared, partner?
Watch a brother spark one up.

Nate sparks the joint, and inhales deeply. He coughs harshly, and falls back to the ground, dizzy.

NATE (CONT'D)

Dawg... this feels... weird.

KEYSHON

Creative yet?

NATE

Nauseous.

Miles and Keyshon laugh hysterically.

MILES

(shaking his head)
A real life public service announcement.

KEYSHON

Miles, that beat though...

MILES

Yeah, what about it?

KEYSHON

Too much bounce. Hot in the club, but I'm no clown rapper. I want that laid back boom-boom-BAP shit.

NATE

Word.

Nate runs his fingers through the carpet.

NATE (CONT'D)

Boom-boom-BAP!

KEYSHON

Feel me?

MILES

Feel this.

Miles holds up his finger, pauses dramatically -- and when he lowers it, a spine rattling Southern-style hip-hop beat erupts from the speakers. Walls shake. The earth shifts.

Keyshon smiles, loving it. Nate bobs his head.

MEREDITH (O.S.)

Damn it, Miles! Turn that godawful noise down!

KEYSHON

(over the music)

Your moms is always trippin', kid.

MILES

Tripping? The woman has no culture.
(re: poster)

You think the Wu Tang Clan had their mothers shouting at them every time they made a beat?

NATE

A: Wu Tang probably didn't even know their mothers, and even if they did, they sure as hell didn't live in a nice house in the suburbs like you do.

MILES

Ha. Nice house in the suburbs. My entire life is a front.

KEYSHON

And B: your mom, she let's you have a recording studio in your bedroom! She supports you in everything you've ever wanted to do. That's a wonderful woman out there.

MILES

I still struggle. Every artist does. Every day of my life.

KEYSHON

Maybe you do, maybe you don't, but that mom of yours... now there's a good woman.

NATE

For real. A good, good woman.

MILES
(defensively)
Call my mom a woman again.

There's a KNOCK at the door. They quickly open a window, allowing the smoke to escape.

MILES (CONT'D)
(yelling)
In a meeting!

Meredith opens the door anyway.

MEREDITH
Sorry boys. Know any James Taylor?

Miles buries his head in shame.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
(to Miles)
Honey, I've got a migraine. My hormones are going AWOL. I'm hot, I'm sweaty, my entire body is on fire.

MILES
First, James Taylor. Now my friends are forced to hear the sordid details of your hot flashes? Sit in the freezer. Figure it out.

MEREDITH
(appeasing)
Just a little quieter, okay.

She leaves.

NATE
Hot flashes? Wow.

KEYSHON
That's some serious shit. No joke.

Miles pops a CD out of his computer and slides it over to Keyshon.

MILES
Next time we'll talk about distribution.

They pound fists.

Miles notices the barely smoked blunt in the trash can, and slides it into his desk drawer.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meredith sits on the couch, draped head-to-toe in blue gel ice packs and reading US WEEKLY. Miles sits on the other side of the couch, jotting feverishly in a composition book.

MEREDITH
Why'd you sell the house today?

MILES
Doesn't matter.

Miles turns a page. So does Meredith.

MEREDITH
You don't like this house, is that it?

MILES
I'm sitting here, aren't I?

MEREDITH
Seriously, Miles, you don't like our home?

MILES
It was a lousy investment. I don't know why you and dad bought it. Nobody consulted me.

MEREDITH
You were six.

MILES
And even at such a young age I knew this place was a pass. Not to mention the interest rates are going up and you and Dad decided ingeniously on a three year fix. Brilliant.

Meredith goes back to her reading. Miles writes some more.

MEREDITH
Dad and I read your letter. No matter how many documents you ask us to sign, you're our son and we're your parents, and that makes you our responsibility.

MILES
Let's agree to disagree.

Meredith closes her magazine.

MEREDITH
You know, Miles, as smart as you are, you're still a little boy. My little boy.

MILES
Where are you going with this?

MEREDITH
You can't just wake up and sell our house because the interest rates are going up. You don't make that decision. I was embarrassed today.

Miles puts down his composition book.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
Tomorrow you're going to stay home all day, wash the dishes, do the laundry, and whatever else I can think of, and I am going to think as hard as I ever have.

MILES
I'll out-source, I swear. Maybe even turn a profit.

MEREDITH
Listen to me, Miles... As long as you live under my roof you'll abide by my rules.

MILES
That's really what you're going with? That... cliché?

Meredith furiously throws the magazine down.

MEREDITH
Do you understand me?

Miles' looks like Che on the eve of the revolution.

MILES
Yeah. Yes, mother. I understand you.

He grabs his composition book and storms out of the room, fueled for battle.

INT. MERCEDES E-CLASS - NIGHT

GARY CALHOUN drives. He looks stressed, worried, even a bit sad. We notice a few white file boxes in the back seat.

He flips around on the radio, unable to settle on a station. Finally, he just leaves it on depressing, rainy-day jazz.

EXT. CALHOUN HOUSE - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls into the driveway. Gary is immediately met by Meredith, looking concerned.

MEREDITH
You're home early.

GARY
Yeah.

He pulls the white file boxes from the back seat.

MEREDITH
Gary, what happened?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gary and Meredith sit at the kitchen table. The white boxes are stacked along a nearby wall. The fridge is plastered with happy photos of Calhoun Family vacations.

GARY
The firm's official position is that I've been laid off due to economic restructuring.

Gary takes a large swig from a glass of red wine.

MEREDITH
Okay, I see. So it's not like you were...

GARY
...fired? No, honey, I told you, I was laid off.

MEREDITH
Right. Laid off.

GARY

As if that's better? At least when you're fired it's because you messed up or made a serious mistake, and then, you're fired. Simple as that. But when you're laid off, they're telling you 'we have no use for you anymore. You're just a body. A useless one at that. Thanks for your time, but we'll need your office and oh please understand how hard this is for us to do. We're really gonna miss ya, pal. It's like losing a member of the family.'

Gary finishes his wine.

GARY (CONT'D)

Assholes.

MEREDITH

Like that, our lives change.

Meredith sighs, and rests her head on her hand.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles runs hard on a treadmill at a ridiculous incline while watching FOX NEWS. The digital timer reads: 48:50, 48:51, 48:52...

On the wall behind him is an 8 x 10 sheet of white paper that reads, in dark black letters: ***As long as you live under my roof you'll abide by my rules.*** -- the obvious source of his cardiovascular motivation.

As he runs, he presses a button on his earpiece.

MILES

Evening Diego, I'm on house arrest. I know, I know, I can't believe it either. That's exactly what I said! Communi sm.

He shoots cold, bottled-water into his mouth without missing a step.

MILES (CONT'D)

Listen to me. Your talents, well, you've proven your worth to me. The subject was in my house, Diego.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)
 In my house! And if I'm not
 mistaken, she practically fell in
 love with me on the spot!

He drinks some more.

MILES (CONT'D)
 No, I'm not mistaken. Yes, I got
 'the look'. What do you know about
 girls anyway, tough guy? Listen,
 I'd like to retain your services.
 Another job.

The treadmill BEEPS three times and slows to a halt. Miles
 steps off and stretches his neck from side to side.

MILES (CONT'D)
 So, you game?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meredith pours herself a glass of wine. She reads a legal
 document. An open envelope sits on the table in front of her.

GARY
 Right now, we have nothing to worry
 about, you know, as far as our
 finances are concerned.

MEREDITH
 For a couple of months, at least.

GARY
 The severance package is reasonable
 and we have plenty in our savings.
 Mer, we have money. And I'll get
 another job. We have to be patient.

MEREDITH
 I can start seeing patients again.

GARY
 No, no. I don't want you to --

MEREDITH
 I'll set up an office here at home.
 The extra income won't hurt, and
 this way I can keep an eye on
 Miles.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miles, soaked in sweat with a white towel draped around his neck and a blender full of green protein shake in hand, stops walking, intrigued by what he's overhearing.

GARY (O.S.)
Keep an eye on Miles?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gary paces, wine glass in hand.

MEREDITH
He's been acting strange lately.
This morning he tried to sell the house.

GARY
Yeah, right.

She looks at him, dead serious.

MEREDITH
I wonder what he was asking for.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miles proceeds cautiously, careful not to miss a word.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
Don't worry, I punished him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gary sits down, his wine-glass empty.

GARY
Next time, wait for me. It would have been the day's only joy.

Miles' little head appears from around the corner, entirely unnoticed.

MEREDITH
Get your resume together, send it out to every firm in the area, and we just wait, and cross our fingers.

GARY

Why? Because I'm a mediocre lawyer?
Who'd hire Gary Calhoun? Should we
just move on to prayer?

MEREDITH

I never said that, Gary.

GARY

Thinking it is worse. This is
temporary.

MEREDITH

Don't get mad at me. This wasn't my
fault.

GARY

But it was mine? Mer, I got laid
off!

MEREDITH

I told you to stay on your toes
around there. It's like a boys
club, that place.

GARY

Fuck their little boys club.

MEREDITH

That little boys club was paying
you. A lot.

GARY

I'm only as valuable as my salary?

MEREDITH

I never said that.

GARY

Thinking it is worse.

Miles recoils. He's never heard his parents fight before.

He regains his composure, and drags the white file boxes away
like a lion collecting his kill. Meredith and Gary are
oblivious.

GARY (CONT'D)

Twelve goddamn years. You don't
just 'let someone go' after that
kind of commitment. I have a
family. I have a life.

MEREDITH
Gary, let's go to bed.

GARY
Yeah. Okay.

Meredith turns out the kitchen light as they walk out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Gary walks towards his bedroom, head looking at the ground.

MILES (O.S.)
Hey, Dad.

Gary stops at Miles door. He opens it.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles is at his desk, his laptop in front of him.

GARY
What, Miles?

MILES
I heard, you know, what happened.

GARY
Don't worry, Miles. We'll be --

MILES
There's this quote by the great 6th
Century philosopher Heraclitus...

GARY
Heraclitus? We should allow you to
watch more MTV.

MILES
He said, 'There is nothing
permanent except change'. Think
about it, is all I'm saying.

Gary does, touched by his son's concern.

GARY
Go to bed, pal. It's late.

Miles crawls under the covers. Gary turns off Miles' light,
and shuts the door.

INT. PARENT'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Meredith, wearing her nightgown, brushes her teeth in the mirror.

MEREDITH
...it's just scary, you know, not
knowing where the next paycheck
will come from.

GARY (O.S.)
We'll be fine.

She spits, and brushes some more.

MEREDITH
Car payments, mortgage, health
insurance...

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary is in bed. Meredith climbs in.

MEREDITH
...property taxes. Life is so damn
expensive, Gary? You know?

She leans over and finds Gary asleep, facing his side. She turns out the light and rolls over to her side, leaving them back-to-back.

DRI FT OVER to Gary, who lies there, his eyes now wide open.

THROUGH A CRACKED DOOR - Miles has been spying the whole time.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The white file boxes have all been opened. The contents -- law papers, journals, written arguments -- are laid out on the desk. The room is bathed in darkness, but for a desk light illuminating a stack of law books that Miles is intensely studying. The clock reads 4:30am.

He looks at the framed photo of he and his parents in Jamaica. Looks like good times. Better times. Miles shakes it off, and goes back to the books.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. GARAGE/LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Miles is carelessly throwing whites and colors in together. The whole task is beneath him. He slams the lid shut.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Miles cautiously makes his way down the hall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Under the cover of darkness, he gets to the front door and turns the knob.

GARY (O.S.)
What, no good-bye?

A light is turned on. Gary, in stretched-out boxers and a food-stained T-shirt, sits on the couch with a steaming mug of coffee.

MILES
Dad! Hey, didn't see ya there, you know, setting an example... of how to be a... laid off guy.

GARY
What do you want?

MILES
Oh, just going over to Diego's house for a little while.

GARY
Diego. Never heard of him.

MILES
He's only my best friend.

GARY
The fat one?

MILES
Judge a book by his cover. Life lessons, from father to son.

GARY
I thought his name was Elliot.

MILES
Be back soon.

GARY
Forget it. You're not to leave the house today. Mom's instructions.

MILES
Whatever she's paying you, I'll double it.

GARY
You don't have any money.

MILES
That makes two of us.

GARY
Easy. I'm not above fighting a kid.

MILES
Want to repeat that for Child Protective Services?

Miles presses speed dial on his cell phone and holds it up for his dad to see. They lock eyes.

MILES (CONT'D)
I'm glad we had this talk.

Miles walks back to his room, victorious in his own mind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

He scrubs a plate in the sink, paying no attention. Leaving the faucet on, he walks into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gary is on the couch watching TV. A phone is wedged between his shoulder and his ear.

GARY (INTO PHONE)
(irritated)
I know, Meredith. I know. I'm going to take a week to relax and get my life in order. Is that allowed? Is that acceptable to you?

Miles peeks his head around the corner.

MILES
The woman's a dictator, right?

Gary covers the mouthpiece.

GARY
Even Ahmadi nejad has a sensitive side.

They laugh quietly, so as not to be heard on the other end of the phone.

MILES
Good one. I'll go get the paper.

Miles walks out the front door.

GARY (INTO PHONE)
Have I ever not been able to provide for you? Tell me that. Have I? These things take time. Listen, no, stop shouting. Stop shouting for one fucking second!

Gary calms down, sips his coffee, and then he realizes something.

EXT. STREET - DAY

He barges out of the house and spots Miles up the street, running away. Gary rushes after him, gaining. With a burst of speed, Gary dive-tackles Miles and the two roll onto the front lawn of a neighbor's house.

MILES
You're in terrible shape. I can actually hear your body age.

GARY
(out of breath)
Go to your room. Forever.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gary opens the door, and a sweet, little-old GRANDMA enters with a basket of muffins.

GARY

Thanks for coming, Ma. I've got to run to a meeting with my accountant and I've --

GRANDMA

Gary, please. A chance to spend some time with my grandson?

GARY

He doesn't leave the house. In fact, he doesn't even look out the windows.

Miles appears.

MILES

Grandma! Grandma!

They hug. A kid after all. Gary grabs his briefcase.

GARY

I find out you did anything wrong and I'll slap the eyes out of your head.

MILES

Infantile, dad. Just... infantile.

Gary raises a hand as if to throw a slap. Miles doesn't even flinch as he pops a fresh, blueberry muffin into his mouth.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A teapot whistles. Miles takes it off the stove and pours boiling hot water over loose tea leaves. He watches it seep, and a strange smile grows on his face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Grandma is sitting in a chair reading the New Yorker. Miles presents her with a mug of freshly-brewed green tea.

GRANDMA

Such a sweet boy. And I hear you're doing so well in school?

MILES

Ah grandma, it ain't hard.

GRANDMA
It isn't hard.

MILES
It isn't hard.

She rubs his head, lovingly.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - DAY

Miles enters his room, and in SLOW MOTION he flicks an empty pill bottle into the garbage can as though it were a spent bullet shell.

CLOSE ON the prescription: ***Meredith Calhoun, Ambien.***

Miles grabs a copy of Charles Bukowski's NOTES OF A DIRTY OLD MAN, and lays on his bed with his hands behind his head, incredibly proud of himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Grandma is in a deep, Ambien-induced sleep on the couch. Half her body is slumped off the cushions. Her dress rides up in an unflattering way, revealing an intricate pattern of varicose veins on her upper thighs.

Miles is at the door, dressed in his crisp suit. He takes her pulse, and, satisfied with his diagnosis, flips off the light, and walks out the front door, a brown bag in hand.

EXT. CALABASAS STREETS - DAY

Miles walks up the block holding the brown bag. He approaches a BOY leaning against a street sign and eating from a melted box of whoppers. He's a pasty-white, chubby ball of a teenager with thick glasses, who's name is actually ELLIOT.

MILES
Afternoon, Diego. Shall we?

Elliot shrugs and they walk up the block, enveloped in the hazy sunshine of the West Valley.

ELLIOT
How's detainment?

MILES

Introspective. Sometimes, Diego, a man needs his solitude. But my parents, holy Christ...

ELLIOT

What?

MILES

They're at each other's throats. All the time.

ELLIOT

Mine too. What are your parents fighting about?

MILES

My dad lost his job.

ELLIOT

Ouch. And the unemployment rate this month was like, some kind of high percentage or something. Not good, is my point.

MILES

Got it. Thanks.

ELLIOT

What if they get a divorce?

MILES

They're not going to. Okay?

ELLIOT

Okay.

MILES

Besides, I can take care of myself even if they did.

They walk some more, suburbia their backdrop.

ELLIOT

Hey, Miles...

MILES

What?

ELLIOT

It's not your fault.

MILES
What isn't?

ELLIOT
Your parents, you know, fighting.

MILES
(sullen)
Yeah. Yeah, I know.

Elliott slaps Miles on the shoulder. They walk on.

INT. CALABASAS STREETS - DAY

They approach a gated-community. Elliott gives Miles a boost over the fence. Elliott throws himself over, but his pants get caught on a metal rod at the top. He desperately extends his hand, covered in chocolate.

ELLIOT
Give me a hand!

MILES
Not even if you were hanging off a cliff.

Elliott wildly propels himself over and lands hard on a hedge. He wipes the dirt from his clothes with his hands, replacing the dirt with large smears of chocolate.

MILES
Good look, Diego.

They make their way up the Cul-de-sac.

ELLIOT
Can we stop using code names now?

MILES
You actually want to be called Elliott?

ELLIOT
My mom says it makes me sound smart.

MILES
She also said you were handsome.

ELLIOT
And?

MILES

And, we have a credibility issue here. The woman has established a terrible pattern of lying.

ELLIOT

In your opinion.

MILES

Yeah. In my opinion.

They approach a large, Mediterranean-style house. It looks like the owners have just moved in. The FOR-SALE sign is still wedged in the lawn.

ELLIOT

This is it. I'm sure.

MILES

You trust your sources?

ELLIOT

I carpool with them.

Miles knocks, and waits. Nothing. He looks at Elliot with doubt. Then, the door opens, and standing across the threshold is Layla Gardner.

LAYLA

What are you selling today? Junk bonds? High interest loans? Thanks anyway.

MILES

(off-guard)

No. Hi. Hello. I mean, I was just, um... I came to --

Miles hands Layla the brown bag. She pulls out a half-filled bottle of Merlot, with a cork plugged in it.

MILES (CONT'D)

Apologize.

LAYLA

(re: wine)

I think this has been opened.

MILES

It's my father's finest Merlot. Very expensive. Wonderfully light, mild-bodied, yet you can really taste the grapes.

She takes a sip.

LAYLA
Wow. You're right. This is amazing.

ELLIOT
Since when do you know anything
about wine?

Miles elbows Elliot, who keels over in pain. Layla laughs,
her eyes sparkling.

LAYLA
Well, apology accepted.

And she shuts the door, leaving Elliot and Miles standing
outside.

MILES
Thanks. You've been a great help.

ELLIOT
(mocking)
Hi. Hello. I mean, I was just,
um... I came to --

MILES
Yeah? And how are you with women?

ELLIOT
Me? Please. Incredible.

Miles looks at him skeptically.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I know my way around one, if that's
what you're asking.

MILES
Okay, that's what I'm asking.

ELLIOT
Than you have your answer.

MILES
Right. I guess I do.

Miles holds a doubtful look.

ELLIOT
Whatever.

MILES
Yeah, whatever.

The door opens, and Layla stands there giggling.

LAYLA
Are you coming in or not?

She turns around, and walks inside.

Miles fixes Elliot's hair. Tries to crest it. It falls miserably around his ears.

MILES
Don't embarrass me, Diego.

ELLIOT
Please, I'm an excellent wing-man.

Elliot smiles. His teeth blackened by chocolate.

MILES
You're more like an improvised
explosive device.

INT. LAYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Miles and Elliot follow Layla through a plush, modern home. As she walks, she kicks off her boy's converse and pulls her dress over her head revealing a tiny, black bikini underneath.

EXT. POOL - DAY

A crystal blue pool sparkles under the hot sun. A handful of freshly tanned, good-looking TEENAGERS splash in the water and lie back on lounge chairs.

Layla does a perfect dive right into the deep end, the water gently parting for her. She emerges right in front of Miles, her dark, brown hair glistening.

LAYLA
Come here.

MILES
Where?

LAYLA
(gesturing pool-side)
Here.

MILES

Sure. I mean, I was going there,
you know, here, anyway.

Elliot, feeling out of place, sits down on a lounge next to BETH, a freckled-skinned girl with large, intimidating black Gucci sunglasses.

ELLIOT

Hey, I'm Diego.

She doesn't respond.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Do you play Medal Of Honor on
Playstation 2?

She takes off her sunglasses.

BETH

Ohmygod, I so do. Level five is
like totally impossible! I keep
getting lost in that terrible
minefield.

ELLIOT

Me too! But check this out, there's
a trick. You just press X three
times, toggle the joystick and --

BETH

I was lying, half-wit.

Elliot shatters in every possible way. Beth slides her sunglasses back on.

ELLIOT

That was just so, wow...
unbelievably mean.

Miles is crouched down at the edge of the pool, near Layla. His suit is getting wet.

LAYLA

How old are you, anyway?

MILES

According to the Torah? A man.

LAYLA

The Torah?

MILES
You want to argue with the man
upstairs, be my guest.

Layla laughs. Her entire face lights up.

Meanwhile, over on the lounge chair, Elliot hasn't moved,
baffled by the cruelty of the world.

ELLIOT
Seriously, why did you do that?
It's just... cruel behavior. Cruel
behavior, nothing more. What is
gained by that? What did you
accomplish?

Beth turns over, annoyed. Elliot just shakes his head.

LAYLA
(to Miles)
How about you fetch that bottle of
wine?

MILES
I thought you'd never ask.

He winks, and turns away.

LAYLA
Did you just wink?

MILES
Huh?

LAYLA
You winked.

MILES
Wink? What? No. Sorry, no wink.

LAYLA
Yeah, no... actually you did. Sure
of it.

MILES
Sun was in my eyes.

He walks away, quickly.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Miles walks into the kitchen, where Elliot is working his way through a bag of cheddar-flavored goldfish, leaning against the sub-zero, contemplating the problems of the world.

ELLIOT

You know what, women are heartless,
evil creatures.

MILES

Better you learn that now, my good
friend. Better you learn that now.

ELLIOT

The hell you so chipper about?

MILES

L-O-V-E, Diego. A little thing
called L-O-V-E.

Miles pats Elliot on the back, grabs the bottle of, well, grape juice, and walks away with an irritating bounce in his step.

ELLIOT

I can spell, a-s-s-h-o-l-e.

EXT. POOL - DAY

Miles pulls open the sliding glass doors and spots Layla, now in the center of the pool, now floating on a raft, and now making out sloppily with a TAN GUY with a rippling six-pack.

Miles drops the wine bottle. It explodes against the concrete like a grenade.

CUT TO:

EXT. CALABASAS STREET - AN HOUR LATER

Miles and Elliot stand on the street corner.

ELLIOT

Attention. That's what that was all
about. To women, it's like oxygen.

Miles nods solemnly. They pound fists, and walk their separate ways.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Miles approaches his house. He walks around towards his window. A Speech-And-Debate trophy has been wedged in the sill. He slides his fingers in and pulls the window pane up as quietly as possible.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - DAY

He rolls in -- onto his bed. He walks over to his mirror and studies himself, wondering why a girl would ever reject such a face. Confused, he walks out into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

...where Grandma, practically comatose, is draped across Meredith and Gary on the couch, a hot towel resting on her forehead.

GARY
(in shock)
This is my mother.

MEREDITH
What were you thinking?

GARY
This is my mother.

MEREDITH
Are you out of your mind?

GARY
This is my mother.

MILES
Covered that, dad.

GARY
And you, you drugged her! You
drugged my fucking mother!

MILES
For four to six hours. And you just
said fu --

MEREDITH/GARY
(in unison)
You're grounded.

IN SLOW-MOTION, Miles stumbles backward as though he were just riddled with a thousand bullets.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meredith and Gary are going through his things. He stands aside and watches in anguish, like a prisoner having his cell tossed. Meredith fishes a cell phone from his desk drawer.

MEREDITH

What does a thirteen year-old boy need with a cell phone?

MILES

I bought that with my own money.

GARY

Money we gave you for school lunch.

MILES

What I do with my finances is my business.

She throws the cell and accompanying earpiece into a box, along with a keyboard, recording equipment, and a laptop computer.

MILES (CONT'D)

You break it you buy it.

MEREDITH

We bought it in the first place.

He documents everything on a ledger he holds in his hand. Gary rolls the treadmill out into the hallway.

MILES

Yeah, I don't need that. It's just my cardiovascular system.

Meredith and Gary look around the room. Empty, but for a desk, a chair, and a bed.

MILES (CONT'D)

So, this is what it's come to? A hostage situation.

They walk out, shutting the door behind them.

MILES (CONT'D)

You can expect an insurgency!

He bangs his fists on the door for a long, long time. Then he retreats to his desk, knowing a strategy must be formed.

CUT TO:

GRAINY VIDEO FOOTAGE

Miles, looking like a prisoner, sits on a mattress with no sheets. It's the middle of the night.

MILES
(into camera)
I am being held against my will.
Day and night have merged. To say
that I am frightened is to state
the obvious. I can only pray to a
higher power for mercy, though in
here...
(with a whisper)
...I fear that one does not exist.

He swallows, and begins his Torah Portion. The first few Hebrew words are sung in a beautiful soprano. But then something happens that's never happened to him before.

His voice cracks.

Confused, he starts again. And again, his voice cracks. PULL BACK to reveal...

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

He turns off the video camera that has been set on a pile of books, pops out the tape in frustration and tosses it into the garbage can.

He sits at his desk, his father's law books everywhere.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

He sneaks down the hallway, passing...

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

And notices his mom and dad, sleeping BACK TO BACK.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

He continues on into the...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

And fishes his mother's cell phone from her purse, and dials.

MILES
(into cell, whispering)
Keyshon, sorry to wake you. I know
it's late. Listen, your father's an
attorney at law, right?

Miles listens, jotting down notes.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Miles and Gary sit in the waiting room. Miles coughs harshly and blows his nose loudly into a tissue. It's disgusting. PATIENTS recoil. He shows the contents of the tissue to Gary.

MILES
Bird Flu.

GARY
We'll get the doctor to confirm
that you're faking, and then it's
straight back to your room.

MILES
And the award for Most Nurturing
Father goes to...

Gary smacks Miles on the back of his head.

MILES (CONT'D)
That make you feel good?

GARY
You have no idea.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

Miles sits on an exam table with a thermometer sticking out of his mouth.

NURSE
 Something must be going around. My
 daughter is home, sick as a dog.

MILES
 Oh God!
 (gagging)
 Bathroom? Bathroom?

Miles leaps off the table in a panic.

NURSE
 Down the hall to the left!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Miles rushes down the hall, pushes a LITTLE GIRL with a massive arm-cast out of the way, and slips into a nearby elevator.

EXT. VENTURA BOULEVARD - DAY

He walks at a quick pace down the sidewalk. After two blocks he enters a tall, glass office building.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Out of breath, he scans the directory and lands on the title:
ARCHIBALD, BAUMAN AND FOX, ATTORNEYS AT LAW.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Miles sits in a plush leather chair in a sky-rise office suite overlooking the smog-coated San Fernando Valley. Across from him, seated behind a massive oak desk in a crisp Armani suit and silk bow-tie, is CORNELL ARCHIBALD III. Archibald, early-fifties, dapper and refined, is a Southern black man morbidly addicted to success.

MILES
 I've read your bio. Pretty
 impressive. Defended rappers
 charged with possession of
 firearms, celebrities caught with
 transvestites, politicians taking
 bribes from lobbyists with links to
 terrorist organizations...

ARCHIBALD
It's a good time to be an attorney,
son.

Archibald winks. Miles takes notice.

MILES
Sir, I like your style.

Archibald smiles, impressed by the kid. He walks over to his bar, pours two glasses of his finest scotch, and offers one to Miles. He quickly pulls it away, realizing that Miles is a child -- be it a child in a suit.

MILES (CONT'D)
If I said that Cornell Archibald
the Third does not pass judgement
on potential clients, no matter who
they are or what they have or
haven't done, would that be a true
statement?

ARCHIBALD
I'd be out of a job if it weren't.

MILES
Are there any cases you won't take?

ARCHIBALD
I suppose so. Depends, I guess.
Why? Keyshon said you wanted to
interview me for a school project.
What is all this, son?

MILES
See, sir, Keyshon was mistaken.

Miles pulls an authentic Cohiba from his inner-coat pocket and hands it to Archibald. He sits back down.

MILES (CONT'D)
I'd like to begin a case against my
parents.

Archibald reclines in his leather chair. Sparks the Cohiba, and blows out a ring of smoke, contemplating opportunity.

FADE OUT.

SUPER:

Fool (fool) *n.*

2. One who acts unwisely on a given occasion.

FADE IN:

INT. BUNK - DAY

MORRIE, a nineteen year-old hippie-ish kind of guy with thick horn-rimmed glasses, and five-o'clock shadow left there for style purposes lies on a noisy cot with his hands behind his head.

MORRIE
(labored breaths)
And the painted ponies - oh, wow!
They go up and down, cause we're
captured on an ohmygod - ohmygod -
carousel of time...

A HAND with purple-polished fingernails runs through the hair on Morrie's chest. It is followed by a pony-tail and we see that it belongs to Layla Gardner, on top of him in only her underwear, grinding.

CAMPER (O.S.)
Morrie, everyone is waiting for
opening circle! You okay in there?

They freeze.

EXT. OUTDOOR PAVILION - DAY

Morrie, exceptionally glowing, strums an acoustic guitar as he paces around a large circle of irritatingly HAPPY CAMPERS and their PARENTS, connected at the hands.

MORRIE
(singing)
*We can't return, no, we can only
look, behind from where we came,
and go round and round and round in
the circle game.*

CUT TO:

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

THROUGH THE BACK WINDOW, Miles watches the campers sway and sing. He's horrified.

MILES
I need to brush up on the Geneva
Convention, but is this technically
torture?

GARY
(still in shock)
You drugged my mother.

MILES
And this is how you repay me?

Meredith stifles a laugh. Gary notices.

MEREDITH
Miles, you've got to do something
with the summer. Camp will keep you
out of trouble. You'll have fun
here, you know, with all your
friends. You'll see. You'll make
life-long memories.

Miles opens the back door, steps out, and slams it behind
him, leaving Gary and Meredith alone.

GARY
You're babying him. You always
have.

MEREDITH
Have I, Gary? Have I?

GARY
There's a time in every man's life
when he must stop behaving like a
boy and start behaving like a man.
Don't stand in the way of that.

MEREDITH
(re: him)
Yeah, I'm trying not to.

She glares out her window, seething. Then, the back door
opens and Miles slides back in, holding a formal-looking
document in hand.

MILES
Sign this release form and I'll be
on my way.

GARY
But you wrote this. It's not
even...

MEREDITH
Just sign it, okay?

Annoyed, both Gary and Meredith sign.

MORRIE (O.S.)
(singing)
We can't return, no, we can only
look...

CUT TO:

MILES SKINNY LEGS

Draped in knee-high black dress socks that poke out of a pair of checkered shorts. He wears a short-sleeve shirt and his clip on, red-striped tie. He holds a briefcase in hand and walks in SLOW-MOTION towards the assembled camp, like an IRS agent about to issue an audit.

MORRIE
(singing)
... behind from where we came, oh
yeah, and go round and round and
round in the circle game.

Miles stands next to his BUNK-MATES. Among them are Elliot, Nate, Keyshon, and a few other, AWKWARD BOYS.

ELLIOT
Look on the bright side. At least
the counselors are screaming hot.

Miles finally notices that all his bunk-mates are staring across the way at Layla -- wearing little mesh short-shorts and a tight, cotton tank-top. Miles is awe-struck.

NATE
I'd tap that ass two times.

Miles stares at Nate, defensively.

NATE (CONT'D)
You know, not just once.

MILES
Right. Why just once, you know?

CAMPER #1
My brother stuck his tongue in her
mouth last summer.

MILES
That's here-say.

CAMPER #2
No, so did mine.

MILES
Probably coercion.

CAMPER #3
And mine.

MILES
You serious?

Everyone looks to the last camper in line, VAGHAR, the tiny Little Indian Kid.

VAGHAR
(Indian accent)
And mine as well.

Miles shakes his head in disbelief.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - DAY

Rows and rows of barrack-style, ransacked, old wooden bunks in danger of being condemned. It sits on San Fernando Valley acreage that has the pleasing terrain of Syria.

Miles paces the grounds like a Vietnam War journalist with a long-lensed Nikon around his neck. He SNAPS black and white photos of dilapidated walls, filthy common bathrooms, and insects of all kinds infesting the establishment.

Morrie walks out of the bathroom.

MORRIE
Hey bud, what's up?

MILES
Excuse me, did you even wash your hands?

MORRIE
Huh? Yeah, man. Of course.

MILES
Why didn't I hear the water running?

MORRIE
No idea. Weird.

MILES
Bizarre.

Miles studies him intensely.

MORRIE
Hey, I don't think we've met, bro.
I'm Morrie, head counselor.

Morrie extends his hand. Miles doesn't take.

MILES
What'd you dry them with?

MORRIE
Dry what with?

MILES
Your hands?

MORRIE
Oh. A paper towel. Paper towels.

MILES
Paper towels?

MORRIE
Paper towels.

MILES
Odd.

MORRIE
Odd?

MILES
I was in there five minutes ago. No
paper towels.

Morrie doesn't respond, beaten.

MORRIE
Make sure to drink plenty of water.

MILES
Oh, I will.

They stand there for a moment, staring at each other. Then Miles SNAPS a photo right in his face and runs away.

EXT. ACTIVITIES FIELD - DAY

Girls do their little hand-slapping cheers and dances and rope-jumping crap that little girls in summer camp do. A GIRL sprains her ankle. She HOWLS in pain.

Miles snaps a series of photos of the incident.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Last summer was like so cool I
couldn't even believe it. I'm
telling you, this place is like a --

Miles lowers the camera, revealing Elliot standing there, happy as can be, a basketball in hand.

MILES

A labor camp, Elliot. It's a labor
camp.

Miles snatches the basketball and launches a textbook three-pointer. Swish. The ball is passed back to him and he drills another three. And another. And another. Even does a turn-around and it sinks beautifully through the net.

ELLIOT

Boy Miles, you've got quite a shot.

MILES

It's just physics, you lump.

ELLIOT

Oh.

Miles snaps black-and-white photos of loose rocks, cracks in the concrete -- any and all potential safety hazards.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Remember I showed you my memory
book signed by all the senior
counselors last year? Are you
making a memory book also?

MILES

Something like that.

ELLIOT

If not, than why are you taking
pictures?

Nate fires a bounce-pass to Miles who catches it, dribbles it between his legs, and buries another shot.

MILES

Evidence.

Miles walks away, leaving Elliot confused.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Slops of mush somewhat resembling food are flung onto plates. Campers shovel it in by the spoon-load.

Miles refuses. He takes a sample of the mush and drops it into a petri-dish, which he slides into his backpack.

An enthusiastic CLAP is heard. It echoes across the dining hall.

MORRIE

(as he claps, sing-songy)

One. Two. Three. Clear! One. Two three. Clear!

The entire camp joins in. They scrub and scrub and dry and dry and pass their dishes down, clapping like trained seals. Elliot claps and sings the loudest.

MILES

What. In the hell. Are you doing?

ELLIOT

Clearing.

MILES

(sounding it out)
Clear...ing?

ELLIOT

Clearing is something we do, as a camp.

Miles is not convinced.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Everybody does it.

MILES

Said the SS Officer before he raised his pistol and decimated my ancestors.

Elliot looks guilty, and stops clearing immediately.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
'The revolution is not an apple
that falls when it is ripe.

INT. BUNK - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night, and Miles is the only camper awake in a bunk-full of slob. He can hardly bare the symphonic sounds of snoring coming from every corner of the bunk. He writes a manifesto with an ink-pen, by candlelight.

MILES (V.O.)
You have to make it fall', said the
great Che Guevara.

Elliot snores the loudest from the top bunk. He flips over in his sleep, rattling the San Andreas Fault.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Today I must ask you, fellow
campers, help me shake the tree.
Take a moment and consider, are the
conditions in which we are living
up to the basic standards of a
civilized society?

Elliot farts loudly. Miles kicks the top bunk with serious aggression. Elliot sleeps right through it.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I shall take the opposing position.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - NIGHT

Miles wears all black as he moves under the cover of darkness.

MILES (V.O.)
Our parents drop us here to labor
and sleep so that they can enjoy
two weeks of solitude away from us.

He slips into a bunk.

INT. BUNK - NIGHT

He slides his manifesto under the beds of every camper.

MILES (V.O.)
I can now sympathize with the
interned Japanese...

INT. ANOTHER BUNK - NIGHT

He covertly distributes more copies of his manifesto.

MILES (V.O.)
And can only hope to maintain my
dignity as well as they did.

A TINY KID tosses and turns, deep in a disturbed sleep.

TINY KID
Mommy? That you? Is it you, Mommy?

Miles stuffs the manifesto into the kid's open mouth.

MILES
(shakes his head)
A lifetime of therapy. Guaranteed.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - NIGHT

Miles hides from tree to tree as he makes his way across
camp.

MILES (V.O.)
I say it's time we revolt.
Opposition to tyranny is our only
hope. Therefore, I ask each and
every one of you to --

Suddenly, a flash-light beam illuminates Miles. He freezes in
mid-stride, his hands up.

LAYLA
Don't even move.

MILES
Sorry, pardon me?

LAYLA
You're busted.

MILES
Seriously? You're gonna --

LAYLA
Seriously. You're in trouble.

MILES
(approaching, hands kept up)
It's Layla, right?

She nods.

MILES (CONT'D)
Authority, Layla. That make you
feel good?

LAYLA
Euphoric, actually.

MILES
I bet.

Miles lowers his hands slowly, as though she may shoot.

MILES (CONT'D)
Can we at least talk about this?

INT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Miles and Layla sit on the swings, lit only by moonlight.

MILES
Point is, you overlook this little
transgression and I'll unionize the
counseling staff and personally
guarantee an immediate increase in
wages.

LAYLA
Interesting proposal. I'll give you
that.

MILES
And... I won't tell anybody about
you and Morrie. Head counselor.

LAYLA
(shocked)
Who told you about that?

MILES
I never burn a source.

LAYLA
That's over, anyway.

She kicks her legs up and soars OUT OF FRAME.

LAYLA (O. S.) (CONT'D)
And I'm not a slut, if that's what
you're thinking.

Layla swings BACK IN FRAME.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Camp psychologist said I was just
'acting out'.

Miles kicks his legs and now he swings OUT OF FRAME.

MILES (O. S.)
Oh, is that what they're calling it
these days?

He swings BACK IN FRAME.

MILES (CONT'D)
And what are you acting out
against?

LAYLA
I'm a sixteen year-old girl. What
do you think?

Miles shrugs, having no idea.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Uh... everything.

Miles holds his swing steady with hers.

MILES
Can I tell you something? You might
get mad.

LAYLA
Now I really want to know.

MILES
I think I'm... kind of, in love
with you.

Miles kicks his legs up and swings OUT OF FRAME as quickly as
he can. He swings back down, digs the toes of his shoes into
the sand, and comes to a stop.

He eagerly awaits a reaction. She just looks away, avoiding
eye contact.

MILES (CONT'D)

It's not like I'm lusting over you or anything, if that's what you're thinking. So get that idea out of your head, the sooner the better. I don't even care. I barely even think about you. This is the first time, actually. Now I'm done. The subject bores me. Anyway, I only said 'I think'.

Miles gets off the swing, and walks out of the playground.

LAYLA

Tell your friends I'm not a slut.

MILES

Young girl. Acting out. I'll put out a press release.

Layla leans on the swing, and gazes up at the sky.

EXT. CAMP GROUNDS - NIGHT

Miles hikes back to his bunk, passing through shadows. Layla catches up, lighting him up with her flashlight beam.

LAYLA

Look, it's nothing personal.

MILES

Sorry, what's not?

LAYLA

This whole thing.

MILES

Oh...
(points to himself and her)
...this whole thing? Yeah, this whole thing's over.

LAYLA

Miles, I want to be friends, okay?

He continues up the dirt path. She still trails him. He pauses at the back door to his bunk.

MILES

I didn't even want to come here. My parents made me.

LAYLA

Yeah, well what are you going to do.

MILES

What am I going to do?

LAYLA

Yeah. I mean, you're here now so, my advice, make the best of --

MILES

No, no. I'm going to sue them.

Layla laughs hard. Real hard. Miles does not. She stops cold, realizing he's serious.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gary is brushing his teeth.

GARY

It's just a rough time, honey. The economy is in a downward spiral. Nobody's hiring. Hell, I don't even know if I want to work at another firm right now anyway, you know?

He spits, and shuts the light off.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary crawls into bed. Meredith is lying on her side.

GARY

I mean, I'm not even sure I want to be a lawyer anymore. Maybe this is an opportunity for me to explore something new. Something entirely different. Something exciting. What do you think?

Meredith doesn't respond.

GARY (CONT'D)

Honey?

Gary leans over her, and sees that her eyes are closed. He shuts his light off, rolls over, and goes to sleep.

DRI FT OVER to Meredith, who l i es there, eyes now wide open. They roll.

EXT. DINING HALL - NEXT MORNING

There's an awkward silence that hangs over the crowded hall. Meals have been eaten and dirty plates rest in front of still-hungry campers.

MORRIE

(cl appi ng)

One. Two. Three. Clear! One. Two
three. Clear!

Staff members push around carts that hold plastic bins for dirty dishes, antiseptic squirt bottles, and dish towels.

From around the room, campers watch Miles, awaiting a signal. He picks up his plastic plate and bangs it on the table over and over, in a rhythm. The entire camp joins in, like a prison uprising.

Miles nods to Nate, who rises to his feet, leans back and sings out loud. Surprisingly, he's got a deep, soulful voice, like a teenage Isaac Hayes.

NATE

*Go down Moses. Way down in Egypt's
land, oh yeah. And you just tell
that old Pharaoh to... to let my
people go.*

For a second, the camp sits in silence. Campers and counselors stare each other down.

Then, Miles nods and all at once campers bang their plates on the table over and over like quarter notes on a snare drum. Campers sing a haunting, spiritual harmony.

NATE (CONT'D)

When Israel was in Egypt's land...

CAMPERS

Let my people go.

NATE

*Oppressed so hard they could not
stand...*

CAMPERS

Let my people go.

NATE

*Go down Moses, way down to Egypt's
land and you, you tell that old
Pharaoh to...*

CAMPERS/NATE

Let my people go.

They continue to sing and Morrie has no idea what to do. Layla's eyes find Miles reclining in his chair, glowing with accomplishment. She hides a grin.

A COUNSELOR walks up to Morrie and hands him a wrinkled copy of Miles' manifesto.

Morrie glances around the room until he finds Miles, who darts out the back door.

EXT. DINING HALL - MORNING

Layla catches up, cornering him.

LAYLA

Dead man walking.

MILES

(shrugs)
Depends where you come down on free
speech.

He winks and walks away, leaving a trail of confidence behind.

MILES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And therefore, in conclusion...

INT. CAMP DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Miles is speaking to Morrie and two older CAMP DIRECTORS, a hippiesh man with a goatee and Birkenstocks, and a face-lifted woman whose tight skin is in a perpetual fight with gravity.

MILES

I argue that, though John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle clearly illustrates the danger of yelling fire in a crowded theater, tonight I was doing nothing more than airing my views and expressing my grievances, a privilege extended to us all as you most certainly know, by our beloved Bill Of Rights. I can only hope that you agree with this point of view. As Americans. During a fearful time. When our country is at war. At home. And abroad. With an enemy we do not know.

Morrie rolls his eyes.

MILES (CONT'D)

The terrorists.

The camp directors share a look of utter exhaustion.

CUT TO:

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Miles gazes out the backseat window as the summer camp passes by. A dirt path becomes a one-way road which becomes a city street which becomes the busy 101 freeway.

In the front seat, Gary and Meredith are enraged.

GARY (O.S.)

Alcohol, drugs, sex...

EXT. CALHOUN HOUSE - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls into the driveway. The engine turns off.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

They sit in the car, idle.

GARY

...all somewhat understandable reasons for a kid to get himself kicked out of camp. But not you.

MEREDITH
No. Not our Miles.

GARY
No, our Miles starts a revolution.

MILES
It was either that or arts and crafts.

MEREDITH
Dad and I have discussed this.
You're going to get a job.

Miles makes the sound of a rim-shot with his mouth, as though Meredith just delivered the punch-line to a joke. Gary and Meredith turn in their seats to glare at him.

MILES
I know money is tight and all
because dad got fired --

GARY
Laid off.

MILES
But seriously? This is a joke,
right? A tasteless, offensive joke?

GARY
The feeling of earning an honest
buck. How's that sound?

CUT TO:

A 9MM PISTOL

Cold, black steel pointed right at US. Three loud rounds of fire spit right out the nose.

INT. NORTHRIDGE GUN CLUB - DAY

Miles aims the pistol, squints his left eye through a pair of yellow safety goggles, and squeezes off five BLASTING rounds.

MILES
(to himself, possessed)
'The hour of Emancipation is
advancing. This enterprise is for
the young.'

He loads another clip, fires off seven more rounds, and proudly lowers the weapon.

MILES (CONT'D)
'For those who can follow it up,
and bear it through to its
consummation'.

Miles yanks off his goggles and fires one last, piercing shot, gangster-style with his hand cocked sideways.

MILES (CONT'D)
I will not let you down, Mr. Thomas
Jefferson.

Next to Miles, a large, tattooed GANGSTER shakes his head.

GANGSTER
I heard all that, you know.

MILES
Oh. Okay.

GANGSTER
Shit was gay, man. A speech to
yourself.

Miles clicks the safety on, and tucks the gun in the back of his suit pants.

GANGSTER (CONT'D)
I mean really, really gay.

MILES
Yeah, thanks. I've heard your
stance on the issue.

Miles walks into the shop and slides the gun across the counter to a Mexican SALESMAN with a shaved head.

SALESMAN
Told you bro, she got a serious
kick. You break a rib, little man?

MILES
Little man. That's cute.

He slides over a leather-bound folder.

MILES (CONT'D)
Your thesis. Spell checked and
everything.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

You'll graduate from junior college at the top of your class, and you've probably got a decent shot at the Pulitzer. Thanks for the shells.

SALESMAN

Always a pleasure, homes.

They pound fists and Miles walks out, a backpack slung over his shoulder.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE GUN CLUB - DAY

Miles shoves his i-pod earplugs into his ears and cranks up a gritty, thumping bass-line. "*Hip-Hop*", by Dead Prez.

EXT. VALLEY STREETS - DAY

He walks against traffic like he's the only person on earth. He passes liquor-stores, 7-11s, and a school holding fenced-in kindergartners. Eventually he comes upon a large, brick synagogue.

INT. SYNAGOGUE OFFICE - DAY

RUTH, a secretary far past 80, peels off her bifocals as Miles enters.

RUTH

Where have you been, young man? You were to be back from lunch at one o'clock. It's nearly one-thirty!

MILES

Forty years in the desert, Ruth, don't rush me now.

RUTH

Rebecca is waiting for you in the sanctuary.

He walks out the door.

RUTH (CONT'D)

(under her breath)
Hitler.

He pokes his head back in.

MILES
You have to live with that.

Ruth sighs, caught.

INT. SANCTUARY - DAY

The same sanctuary in which Miles was Bar Mitzvah'd. Stained glass windows bathe the room in glorious, bleached colors.

REBECCA, a tiny and timid little twelve year-old, stands up on the bimah. She chants her Torah portion and it's just horrible -- sounds like cats burning.

Miles sits in the front row with his arms draped over two chairs, as though this were theater auditions.

REBECCA
(chanting)
*Ve'havtah, et Adonai el ohei cha,
v'chol levavcha, v'chol
navshecha...*

MILES
Stop. Stop stop stop.

REBECCA
Uk-tov-tom le-yot al yadecha...

MILES
Stop. Stop stop. Stop stop stop.

REBECCA
Vchai-yu-l t' tofot bei nenecha...

MILES
Stop!

Miles beams his pencil at her. She has to duck to avoid a serious eye injury.

REBECCA
(frightened)
What? What'd I do?

MILES
You know how God created the world
in six days and on the seventh he
rested?

REBECCA
Uh-huh. So?

MILES
Seems like he had a little work
left to do, now doesn't it?

She bursts into tears and runs away. Miles sighs, and then spots the RABBI standing off in the corner, watching.

MILES (CONT'D)
(startled)
Jesus Christ!

EXT. CALHOUN HOUSE - NIGHT

The menacing Volvo pulls into the driveway.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gary is on the phone, sorting through files in front of him. Meredith enters with a sullen Miles in tow.

GARY
What happened?

MEREDITH
He got fired. And we'll probably
have to find another congregation
for High Holidays this year.

GARY
You got fired?

MILES
(shakes his head)
Laid off.

Gary charges after Miles, who makes it to his room and slams the door, fending off the attack.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

He flips down the Wu Tang Clan poster, revealing a white dry-erase board hanging on the wall. On it are the words:

Abandonment: Camp Okeebogee. Imprisonment: Grounded. Abuse:
Now, with a black sharpie, he writes **Mental.**

GARY (O.S.)
(yelling, through the door)
No television, no radio, no
internet, no telephone, no fucking
breathing unless I say to!

Miles opens his closet and we see boxes and boxes of legal briefs. He fetches his mini tape recorder, clicks it on and speaks right into it.

MILES
Can I breath now, papa? I'm turning
red! I'm turning red!

He slides the tape recorder across the carpet with an evil grin, in listening range of the door.

GARY (O.S.)
Open this goddamn door right now.
I'm going to take your tonsils out
with my bare hands!

MILES
(to himself)
This is good audio.

He crawls into bed, pulls the covers over him, and casually begins a new page in his composition book, as Gary continues to yell obscenities.

EXT. CALABASAS NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

It's painfully early, and Miles is hard at work at his new job, mowing lawns. He mows and mows with determination.

Down the block he notices the garage door to his house open, and his father's Mercedes pulling out.

A MOTORCYCLE COP is waiting around the corner, a speed-trap. Miles rushes over in a panic.

MILES
Excuse me, officer?

COP
Yeah?

MILES
You see that car over there? You
know, the silver one?

COP
I see it.

MILES
The man driving tried to sell me
marijuana. And I'm really scared.

Miles' innocent face is reflected in the cop's mirrored aviator sunglasses.

MILES (CONT'D)

See, I know drugs are bad for me and all, and that I should stay far away from them, but this man, he made such a compelling case and now I want to try them all.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The cop pulls up behind Gary's Mercedes. His siren roars.

INT. MERCEDES - MORNING

Gary spots the swirling red-light in his rear-view.

GARY

Shit.

He rolls down the window.

GARY (CONT'D)

There a problem, officer?

Without answering, the cop yanks open the door, pulls Gary out, and cuffs him on the sidewalk in one impressive motion.

GARY (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing? You can't just pull a man out of his car like this!

The cop reaches into the center console and finds the blunt that Nate painfully sampled, and Miles ingeniously saved.

GARY (CONT'D)

I have rights! I'll have you know I'm a lawyer!

MILES (O.S.)

Was a lawyer!

Gary instantly looks for the body connected to that voice. Miles dives down behind a Volkswagen next to Elliot, who holds a digital camcorder.

ELLIOT
Awesome footage. I'm going to put
it on the internet.

MILES
Not until after the trial.

We DRIFT ABOVE Miles and Elliot until we are high enough to
ANGLE DOWN and, when we do, we see that Miles has carved the
words JIHAD in the lawns of the neighborhood.

INT. DEN/MEREDITH'S OFFICE - DAY

Meredith, on the phone, sits at her desk across from SHARON,
a middle-aged housewife.

MEREDITH
(into phone)
I told you the judge would dismiss
it. Did they at least let you keep
the pot? That was a joke, Gary.
Don't take yourself so seriously.
Excuse me? Now why would you say
something like that? Look, I have a
patient. Can we talk about this
later?

Meredith hangs up, perturbed.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Sharon. Where were we?

SHARON
Oh, okay. Well, I spend all day in
the house. I vacuum, I clean, and
then there I am, all alone, in a
clean, vacuumed house with nothing
to do, and nobody to do it with.

MEREDITH
Uh-huh. Go on.

SHARON
Lately, I've even begun talking to
myself.

MEREDITH
More common than you'd think.

SHARON
Mostly sex stuff.

MEREDITH

Sorry, what?

SHARON

Like role-playing, but with myself.
Sort of like a child using his
imagination to create an
alternative world, only this world
consists of dark, twisted thoughts.

MEREDITH

I'm not following.

SHARON

Sometimes I imagine the FedEx guy
knocking on my door with a special
delivery. I sign for it and the
next thing I know he's got me bent
over the hood of my station wagon
with his hands sliding down my --
Well, I won't go on. Unless you've
got the time?

MILES (O.S.)

Oh, see... time we've got.

All eyes go to Miles, leaning against the door post.

SHARON

Okay, great. So, then he radios in
and gathers up some of his buddies,
like, other FedEx guys and stuff
and they come over with their --

MEREDITH

Miles, get out of here! Can't you
see I'm working!

(to Sharon)

Sharon, I really apologize.

(to Miles)

Counting to three. One...

Miles walks over, and takes Sharon's hands in his.

MILES

Lady, I don't have a Ph.D. And I'll
let you in on a little secret,
neither does my mom. But I know
this... you're really messed up. I
mean it. Total whack job. Can I
give you some advice?

SHARON
Please. Anything. I'm losing my
mind!

MEREDITH
Two.

MILES
Vicodin and Oprah.
(gesturing to Meredith)
It works for her.

MILES/MEREDITH
Three!

Meredith bursts out of her chair and slaps Miles right across the face -- he dramatizes the blow as though this were a Western. He throws himself over Meredith's desk, knocking over everything, and flings himself into the bookcase. Self-help paperbacks fall all over him.

MILES
Wow, that was surprisingly violent.
(to Sharon)
Ma'am, did you see that?

Sharon, in complete shock, nods. Miles pulls out a document and an ink pen.

MILES (CONT'D)
Great. Then if you'll just initial
here, here, here and here.

She does, out of reflex.

MILES (CONT'D)
Well, I'll leave you two to your...
whatever.

Miles winks at Meredith, and walks out.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - DAY

Miles races in, shuts and locks the door. He catches his breath and smiles victoriously. He walks over to his dry-erase board and writes: **Abuse: Mental And Physical.**

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Miles walks into the den, where Gary sits in front of the family computer, intensely surfing employment web-sites.

MILES
Hey there, pop.

GARY
(without turning around)
What can I do for you, Dr. Mengale?

MILES
Can you check the internet? I heard
the President just declared war.

GARY
Another one? Just what we need.

Gary clicks on the internet logo and a shocking amount of graphic pornography appears on the computer. It's a slideshow of raw flesh in incredibly raw situations.

Miles pulls out a digital camera and SNAPS. The FLASH goes off.

MILES
A woman having sex with a horse?
That's your thing?
(shrugs)
Hey, judge not lest ye be judged.

Gary explodes out of his chair and turns to decapitate his son, when -- FLASH!

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

A photo of Gary with his fist extended appears on Miles' laptop. Miles grins, ear-to-ear.

EXT. CALABASAS COUNTRY CLUB - DRIVING RANGE - DAY

Miles is working his new job -- carrying buckets of golf balls over to GOLFERS. He smiles cordially as he places balls in front of swinging iron.

He spots his father a few tees down, swinging next to a distinguished black man named RUSSELL.

RUSSELL
(teeing off)
How's that lovely wife of yours,
Gar?

GARY

Ever since I got laid off, we, I don't know, we argue, non-stop. And by non-stop, I mean I'm getting yelled at in my dreams, then I wake up and get yelled at for that.

Gary smacks a golf ball with a 3-wood.

RUSSELL

Women want security, pal. A woman's husband gets fired --

GARY

Laid off.

RUSSELL

And what do you expect?

GARY

Support. Instead, we battle. I don't know what I'm going to do.

RUSSELL

Don't start with that.

GARY

With what?

RUSSELL

An exit plan. Not when it comes to marriage.

Gary thinks about that for a moment, and drives another ball.

GARY

Well, I hear Nate had a great time at camp.

RUSSELL

I had an even better time with him gone.

Gary laughs. Russell swings. A beautiful 200-yarder.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

And your kid? My wife tells me he got the boot for organizing some sort of rebellion?

GARY

I'm trying to get him enlisted in the Marines but they say he has flat feet and asthma. That, and he's thirteen.

RUSSELL

I say give the boy a medal for speaking his mind.

MILES (O. S.)

And I concur.

Russell and Gary turn to see Miles on the green next to them, a club in his hand and a ball lined up on the tee.

MILES (CONT'D)

(to Gary)
Here's a tip, no charge.

Miles slices a picture-perfect drive nearly 300 yards.

MILES (CONT'D)

You're rushing the follow-through.

Gary drops his 3-wood and races after Miles. Miles, avoiding a sure death, darts out onto the driving range. Golf balls drop like mortars all around them.

Gary catches Miles near the 150-yard mark and dive-tackles him. The two roll around on the grass.

GARY

Sonofa --

Miles breaks free. Gary finds his footing, but gets pummeled by a golf ball to the forehead and hits the grass hard.

GARY (CONT'D)

I'm having you put to sleep! Just like Arnold! Our first dog!

Miles stops running and turns around, horrified.

MILES

What a cruel thing to say. That dog was my whole life! Why would you take it there?

Miles, about to cry, beams a golf ball at Gary's head, and escapes into the dense trees lining the golf course.

MILES (CONT'D)
Please tell me you got all of that.

Elliot, his trusted cameraman, gives a smiling thumbs-up.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Miles and Elliot stand a few feet apart.

MILES
Okay, punch me in the face.

WHACK! Elliot slugs him hard, close-fisted, square in the face. Miles goes flailing backwards and lands on the tile floor. Blood gushes from his fractured septum.

MILES (CONT'D)
(in agony)
Christ, man! Mother of GAWD! You're supposed to hesitate. Say, 'no Miles, I can't do it. I don't want to do it because you're my closest friend'.
(explosion of pain)
FUCK!

ELLIOT
I feel terrible.

MILES
Just take the picture.

Elliot kneels down, points the camera at Miles' disjointed nose, and -- FLASH!

INT. DEN - DAY

Meredith is at the family computer, typing. She appears frustrated. CLOSE ON an Excel sheet listing their family income. In the column marked Meredith, several numbers are listed. In the column marked Gary, nothing but zeros. She shakes her head, disappointed.

Miles, his nose taped up and stuffed with gauze, stands over her shoulder.

MILES
Hey there, Ma.

MEREDITH
(without turning around)
What now? Off selling secrets to Al-Qaeda?

MILES
This is serious. Can you check the internet real quick? I heard there was another terrorist attack.

MEREDITH
What is the world coming to?

Meredith clicks on the internet logo and a vile, pornographic montage begins. Raw, pasty flesh contorted in awkward, animalistic positions.

MILES
C'mon, mom... voyeur?

Meredith turns to grab him and -- FLASH! Miles lowers the camera and walks down the...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

...where Gary had been watching from around the corner. He's laughing hard into his palms.

GARY
That was good. I'll give you that.

MILES
(smiles)
Thanks.

Gary just keeps on chuckling until Meredith appears, out in the hallway. Then, Gary stops.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles downloads the photo of Meredith, her angry hands extended, onto his laptop. He catches a glimpse of his bandaged nose in the reflection in the mirror. He walks over to his dry-erase board and under **Abuse: Mental. Physical. Very Physical.**

GARY (O.S.)
Straight A's all your life. Over-achieved in every subject. When it comes to art and music, you're a goddamn renaissance man.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The unhappy family is gathered around the kitchen table. Meredith stands over the stove, stirring Spaghetti sauce.

GARY

I have to believe you're not a bad kid. Just maybe a little misguided. Actually, no... the more I think about it, yeah, you're a bad kid.

MEREDITH

(with disdain)
That's helpful.

GARY

Yeah? Well you patting him on the back every time he launches a Katusha rocket isn't helping either.

MILES

(quietly)
Um... I never actually went through...

They glare at each other and look away, not wanting to fight in front of Miles.

MILES (CONT'D)

...with the launch.

GARY

Miles, let's pray it's just a phase.

MEREDITH

We can't pray, remember? We got thrown out of temple.

GARY

I'm trying to talk to my goddamn son and you can't stop yourself from interrupting! Could you just please, please... go!

She drops the wooden spoon and storms out. Gary looks at Miles, but Miles looks down at the floor, uncomfortable.

GARY (CONT'D)

It's just... well, it's a tough time, you know, for everyone.

MILES

Yeah.

They sip their drinks.

MILES (CONT'D)

Dad?

GARY

What?

MILES

She understands.

Gary nods, appreciating the support. Gary goes to throw out the trash, and when he does -- Miles quickly sprinkles some sort of powder into the Spaghetti sauce.

Meredith returns, and angrily plops Spaghetti down onto everyone's plate. Gary takes his seat and they eat. Miles makes a big display of how tasty it is.

MILES (CONT'D)

(to Meredith)

Did I ever tell you how much I love your cooking?

MEREDITH

No, but, well... thanks, Miles.

Meredith smiles, touched by his unexpected kindness.

MILES

Hey, it's a pleasure.

CUT TO:

MILES

As he violently throws up into the toilet.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

He takes a short break from heaving to literally hug the porcelain.

GARY (O.S.)

For the love of -- !

Gary barrels in, knocks Miles out of the way, and vomits violently. They gather air, both nearly passed out on the floor.

MILES

Food poisoning. Like the summer of '98.

GARY

'98 pales in comparison. Don't tell Mom. She'll feel terrible.

Meredith bursts through the door, shoves both of them out of the way, and howls.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miles lays out his suit, shirt, clip-on tie, and freshly buffed dress shoes.

He pulls his laptop from under his bed, and he begins the arduous process of transcribing the thousands of words he has written in his two-foot tall stack of composition books.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

ON LAPTOP SCREEN, he types the words THE END. Satisfied, he presses print, climbs into bed, and turns off the lights. He goes to sleep to the sweet sound of pages printing.

FADE OUT.

SUPER:

Fool (fool) *n.*

3. One who has been tricked or made to appear ridiculous; a dupe.

FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Miles brushes his teeth in perfect little circles, his execution flawless.

He swishes the water around in his mouth, stares at himself in the mirror, and spits like a boxer ready to climb into the ring.

He slips on his trousers, buttons up his freshly-ironed suit, the iron still steaming in the background, and clips on his tie.

He gels his hair into a perfect crest in the mirror, and considers winking. Instead, he throws a fist.

EXT. CALABASAS STREETS - MORNING

It's daybreak. The sun shines down on freshly cut lawns. Sprinklers turn on in unison. Garage doors open and close as NEIGHBORS hustle off to work.

The awakening calm is broken by a three-car caravan of different model SUVs as they roar down the street like an angry elephant herd.

INT. LAND ROVER - MORNING

The lead SUV of the pack. Elliot sits in the passenger seat. His mother, DORA, an equally large individual, sips an extra-large strawberry-banana smoothie while she drives.

DORA
Did you forget the extra fiber
boost?

ELLIOT
No.

DORA
Than why don't I feel it yet?

In the backseat are three other KIDS. One's asleep. One's listening to an i-pod. Another drools as he stares out the window.

DORA (CONT'D)
Oh, there... now I feel it.

ELLIOT
(disgusted)
Mom.

DORA
So, everybody excited for the first
day of school?

ELLIOT
C'mon. You know the answer to that question. School blows.

Dora slaps him hard across his face, completely unexpected.

DORA
Consider yourself lucky to be getting an education. It's a privilege.

ELLIOT
No, actually... I'm pretty sure it's a right.

She grips his arm hard, like an angry cop.

DORA
Smart guy, huh?

ELLIOT
(nods)
I go to school.
(points left)
Turn here. Keyshon has to run something up to his father.

DORA
Ah, Christ. Why didn't you tell me earlier?

Elliot flinches, expecting another blow.

DORA
Oh, grow a pair, would ya?

Dora turns the wheel. She looks in her rear-view and signals to the MOMS behind her. These women could be piloting fighter jets.

EXT. CALABASAS STREETS - MORNING

WE DRIFT quickly past the second SUV in line, a Lexus, and we get a brief view through the passenger windows of bored KIDS being hauled off to school like mental patients in transit.

CUT TO:

FIVE OVERLY-MANICURED TOES

As they slam hard on a brake pedal.

INT. ESCALADE - MORNING

The toes belong to Keyshon's mother CLAIRE, the driver of a gleaming white, chromed-out Escalade.

Behind her, Miles sits between Keyshon and Nate, as though they were his bodyguards.

This is a motorcade. A motorcade for Miles J. Calhoun. And the moms don't even know it.

EXT. CALABASAS STREET - DAY

The SUV's brake in unison and come to a stop on the side of a busy street.

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

Claire looks at Keyshon, Nate, and Miles in the rear-view.

CLAIRE
Why we stopping?

They all shrug. She fidgets with the radio, leaving it on gangster rap. She taps her extra-long fingernails against the steering wheel.

EXT. VENTURA BOULEVARD - MORNING

The motorcade pulls away. Nobody even noticed Miles disembark, two heavy briefcases swinging at his sides.

He climbs the steps and enters the tall, glass office building.

INT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

He glances at his reflection in the mirrored-doors. As usual, he's incredibly pleased at what glances back.

The doors open and Miles steps out, briskly.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - ARCHIBALD, SCHAFER AND FOX - DAY

Doesn't break pace. A RECEPTIONIST shoots up from behind her desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Calhoun, we were expecting you.
How about a glass of orange juice
and a granola bar?

MILES

Coffee. Black.

He walks right into Archibald's office.

INT. ARCHIBALD'S OFFICE - DAY

Archibald paces back and forth, enjoying a sprawling view of the Encino Hills.

He looks up as Miles enters and slides the briefcases on the beautiful oak desk.

ARCHIBALD

(into phone)
Governor, calling you back now, ya
hear?

He hangs up, and shakes Miles' hand.

ARCHIBALD (CONT'D)

Have a seat, son.

Miles sinks into an expensive, brown leather chair. From behind, A HAND passes him a steaming cup of black coffee.

ARCHIBALD (CONT'D)

I just want to make sure that we're
real clear with each other here,
alright?

MILES

Of course, sir.

ARCHIBALD

Emancipation. You understand what
this word means, don't you?

MILES

Let's not waste anybody's time
here, okay?

ARCHIBALD

Freedom. It means freedom. In this
case, freedom from your mother and
father. Freedom from their
constant, unconditional love.

MILES

With all due respect, sir --

ARCHIBALD

Understand, you do this and you can't go back. The law is permanent. A decision is made and lives are altered. You're risking a whole lot here, a whole heck of a lot that may never be recovered, win or lose.

Archibald paces in front of his windows, commandingly.

ARCHIBALD (CONT'D)

Once you walk out of here my paralegal picks up the phone and files a motion and this goes public and a monster is unleashed that neither you nor I can control. Son, these people, they're your --

MILES

Defendants, sir.

Archibald sits on the edge of his desk, leveling with Miles.

ARCHIBALD

This will hurt them in a way you won't understand until you have a child of your own. This really what you want to do?

MILES

I'll be co-counsel if allowed.

Archibald sighs, then he chuckles to himself, amused by the kid's determination.

He sits down behind his desk and opens the first briefcase. He rifles through audio tapes, a petri dish of camp food, still photos of his parents surfing porn, medical documents with the words FOOD POISONING underlined.

He opens the second briefcase, and comes across 700 or so typed pages.

MILES (CONT'D)

My memoirs. I've been writing it since I was six. Non-fiction, feel free to fact-check. Filled with every sordid detail about my mother and fathers' lives.

Archibald closes the briefcase, impressed.

ARCHIBALD

Mr. Calhoun, I have some good news.
(Leans in)
We're going to win.

MILES

Because it's right?

ARCHIBALD

Because I can.

Miles nods, admiring the logic.

ARCHIBALD (CONT'D)

I'll have one of my interns assist
you in prepping your testimony.

MILES

I don't think that will be
necessary, sir. I'm perfectly
capable of --

The door opens and in walks Layla Gardner, gorgeous in a
young, professional kind-of-way.

LAYLA

Miles Calhoun. Well, I'd have never
guessed.

Layla extends her hand. Miles stands in disbelief.

ARCHIBALD

This is Ms. Gardner. My new intern.

LAYLA

(to Miles, winks)
School credit. But I don't do it
for that.

He hands her the two briefcases. Her shoulders sag from the
weight. Her smile disappears.

ARCHIBALD

Layla, give Mr. Calhoun a lift to
school, would ya sweetheart? Oh,
and make a copy of, uh, his
memoirs, read the thing and give me
a full report on it by the morning.
(to Miles)
Court starts on Monday, son. Be
ready.

MILES

Always.

Miles nods proudly, and walks out. Layla follows, lugging the heavy briefcases behind her.

ARCHIBALD

(yelling O.S.)

Phyllis darling, hold my calls.

Archibald sits in his chair, reclining back on the fine Italian leather. He pulls a file out of the briefcase and glances at it. The photograph of Miles and his parents vacationing in Jamaica slips out.

He studies it, intrigued by a once happy family soon to be torn asunder. He shakes his head.

INT. VOLKSWAGON JETTA - DAY

Layla drives. Miles sits shotgun, reading the Wall Street Journal.

MILES

What are you doing?

LAYLA

I thought you could use my help. I didn't believe you when you told me you were suing your parents, but then I talked to your friend Elliot who told me that you went and hired a lawyer. I found out who and applied for an internship.

MILES

I don't need your help.

LAYLA

I think you do. You got kicked out of summer camp based on a flawed argument.

MILES

Apparently Camp Okeebogee doesn't believe in the basic tenants of democracy and has no regard for individual rights. I don't know, I'm building a case.

LAYLA

See, I believe you can win this one. With some help, of course.

MILES

Shouldn't you be off binging and purging, or whatever 16 year-old girls do?

LAYLA

You're smart, but you don't know how to read people. It's okay, you're young. Eventually, you will learn that everything important exists between the lines. That's where you look, and that's where you make your moves.

MILES

Tell me more, oh wise one.

LAYLA

You can stay at my house once the subpoena is delivered. Archibald doesn't want you staying at home.

Layla turns up the radio. A terrible GWEN STEFANI pop song is heard.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it'll be fun!

She turns the music up a few more decibels and sings along loudly with Gwen.

MILES

Dear diary. Today I contemplated suicide.

Miles gazes out the window.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CALHOUN HOUSE - DAY

Meredith watches some chirpy morning talk show. The doorbell RINGS. She opens the door, revealing a MAN IN A SUIT.

MEREDITH

Can I help you?

He hands her an official looking document, turns on his heels and leaves. Meredith opens the envelope, stunned at its' contents.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

She kicks the door shut, and leans against it in pure disbelief.

MEREDITH

Gary!

Gary saunters into the living room, having just awoken.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

We've been subpoenaed.

GARY

Subpoenaed? C'mon, by who?

He snatches the document from her hand and reads the name
MILES J. CALHOUN.

MEREDITH

Our son.

GARY

What for?

MEREDITH

Emancipation.

GARY

He wants freedom?

MEREDITH

I guess so.

GARY

Why didn't I think of that?

Meredith glares, hurt.

GARY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that. Honey, I didn't.

MEREDITH

He's my son. And he wants nothing to do with me. He hates me and wants me out of his life.

GARY

I'm an equal part of the equation here.

MEREDITH

Remember when he used to crawl into bed with us at night, when he was scared.

GARY

Yeah.

They enjoy the memory.

GARY (CONT'D)

Impeccable timing, that kid. It was always when I was erect.

MEREDITH

Gary!

GARY

Hey, I cherish those.

MEREDITH

Those memories?

GARY

Those erections.

They share an amusing moment. Then, sadness returns.

MEREDITH

You think we may lose him, Gar?

GARY

I think we already have.

INT. LAYLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's the pastel-colored bedroom that belongs to every teenage girl since the beginning of time. The walls are plastered with posters and press clippings of TV stars and pop icons.

Layla lies on her bed, top-loaded with pillows, and reads the very last page of Miles' unbound novel. She looks off in thought, digesting the narrative, deeply moved by the prose.

INT. TOOL SHED - NIGHT

Miles is stashed away in a tiny little shed along with a bicycle, a tire pump, and beat-up old sports equipment. He's wrapped in a sleeping bag set on top of a weight bench, his head resting on the bench-press. A lantern bathes the room in green-tinted light.

The door cracks open, and Layla appears in the shadows.

LAYLA
I read your memoirs.

MILES
Here we go. Everybody's a critic.

LAYLA
No, no. I thought it was...
inspired.

She sits down next to him on the weight bench.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
It's brave, you know. What you're
doing. You have... passion.

MILES
That's what I've been trying to
tell you.

TIGHT ON her dainty hand as she lays it on his leg and just leaves it there, without thought. The touch of her flesh separated only by a thin layer of denim. To a thirteen and a half year-old boy, this is sex, pure and simple.

LAYLA
You're very talented.

MILES
The sky is blue.

She laughs. Miles struggles not to stare down at her hand. A charged moment passes, then --

LAYLA
(fake yawns)
Okay. I'm going to bed.

MILES
(fake yawns)
Yeah, me too. Boy, am I beat.

They sit there for another equally charged moment, nobody doing anything.

LAYLA
Well, good night then.

MILES
Yeah. Uh-huh. Good night.

She takes her hand off his knee and leaves.

Stunned, Miles rolls off the bench, still in the sleeping bag, and hits the ground with a THUMP. He stares up at the roof of the shed, his body still tingling from her touch.

INT. KITCHEN - GARDNER HOUSE - MORNING

Miles stands over the stove, frying eggs. Layla, sleepy-eyed and barefoot in a pair of oversized boxer shorts and tank top, walks into the kitchen.

LAYLA

What are you doing in the house? My mom will kill me if she finds you here!

MILES

Relax. Suzanne left early for work. Seems like a lovely woman, by the way.

LAYLA

You were spying?

MILES

Observing. Also, you should use less conditioner.

She throws a fork at him, knowing he's kidding.

Miles slides two plates of picture-perfect eggs and hash-browns on the table. They sit and eat together.

CUT TO:

QUICK CUTS:

- Miles sits on Layla's bed, practicing his answers as Layla cross-examines.
- Miles holds up the petri-dish of food from camp. He tries to shove it in Layla's face. She avoids him and laughs.
- ON LAYLA'S TV, they watch the video footage of Miles being attacked by his father on the driving range.
- They watch the footage of Gary looking at the cop, who holds a bag of grass in his hand.

- Layla flips through still photos of Gary and Meredith lunging for Miles in the den, with flashes of explicit pornography on the computer screen behind them.
- She looks at the photo of Miles' broken nose taken from five different angles. Looks like a mug shot.
- They tack the letter that Miles wrote in the opening to a cork-board.
- They listen to the grainy audio of Miles being berated by his father. It plays like the Watergate tapes.
- Using colored markers, Layla has concocted the entire case on the large dry-erase board. **Imprisonment**, **Abandonment**, **Abuse** -- little pink arrows connect the words.

END MONTAGE.

INT. LAYLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

They sit there on the bed, exhausted from prepping the case. Layla rests her hand on Miles' leg, again. He doesn't know what to do, but he knows he has to do something.

So he leans in fast and furious, and his forehead smacks into her upper lip.

LAYLA
What... in the hell!

Blood trickles from her upper lip.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Are you fucking sick? I'm bleeding here!

MILES
Yeah, ooh... apply pressure. That's gonna scar.

She holds a piece of cotton against the wound.

LAYLA
This can't happen. You're just a little boy.

He doesn't respond, hating that theory. He walks out of her room, holding his head low for the first time probably ever.

IN THE MIRROR, Layla stares at her wound, and watches Miles as he exits.

INT. TOPANGA MALL - DAY

Layla leads a protesting Miles through the mall.

MILES
I don't understand, what's wrong
with this suit?

LAYLA
Nothing, if you're in a casket.

MILES
Please. I debuted this at my Bar
Mitzvah to rave reviews.

INT. BANANA REPUBLIC - DAY

Layla grabs a pin-striped, seersucker suit off a nearby rack, pairs it with a tie, suspenders, and shiny shoes. She hands it all to Miles, and shoves him into a fitting room.

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

Miles opens the door. He fits perfectly into the stylish suit. Layla is enamored.

LAYLA
Well, well, well... would you have
a look at this.

She circles around him as though she were appraising a piece of fine art.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
It's perfect. You look --

MILES
Handsome. That's assumed. But there
are other adjectives. Start with
dapper, divine... work from there.

Miles walks back into the fitting room, and shuts the door.

He unbuttons the suit and pulls it off, when -- the door swings open and Layla appears. Miles flinches and drops down into the fetal position, in nothing but his jockeys and knee-high, striped socks.

She shuts the fitting room door, and locks it.

LAYLA
Just get up.

MILES
Don't tell me what to do.

Miles does as he's told. Gets up.

LAYLA
Okay. Alright. So you wanna try something?

Miles shrugs, unknowingly. Layla plants her lips on his with unbridled passion. They begin to kiss, gently.

INT. ANOTHER FITTING ROOM - DAY

A PIG-TAILED GIRL is trying on a summer dress. From the other room, sloppy LIP-SMACKING can be heard. Her MOM throws her hands over her ears.

MOTHER
Get a room, you animals!

MILES (O.S.)
Say that again and I'll...
(lip-smack)
...sue you for libel.

The mom grabs her very confused little daughter and walks out of the fitting room.

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

Miles slides his hand behind her pony-tail. The room spins and spins. And then it stops. The short, though powerfully charged kiss comes to an end, as they pull apart.

Miles is bright red, beside himself, having entered an entirely new universe. A pretty damn good one.

MILES
Your tongue, it was in my...

LAYLA
...mouth. Yeah. Cool, right?

MILES
It was... moving around. And stuff.
I mean, I felt it. And it felt...
real good.

LAYLA

I know how it feels. And now you do too. So, how about we cut the crap and get you emancipated?

Miles stand up, and pulls on his suit. He looks at himself in the mirror, Layla reflected behind him. Pure confidence looks back.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER MIRROR REFLECTION

Of Miles, who stands a tall four-foot something in his new Seersucker suit. He cracks his neck from side to side. Fixes the collar.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

IN THE BATHROOM MIRROR, he gels his hair into a perfect crest and, as is tradition, almost winks -- but this time TWO HANDS appear from behind. The hands mess up his perfectly sculpted crest.

LAYLA (O.S.)

The trick is to look natural.

Layla appears, REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Not like you tried.

She walks out, leaving Miles flushed.

INT. COURTHOUSE ANTEROOM - DAY

A small CROWD has gathered. Archibald and Layla hold the courtroom doors open for Miles, who pauses a moment to gaze across the hall, where his parents prepare enter.

Despite pleas from Gary and their ATTORNEY, Meredith darts over to Miles, beyond hurt. She's infuriated.

MEREDITH

Miles, you're really going through with this?

MILES

It's nothing personal.

MEREDITH
Nothing personal? I'm your mother!

MILES
Temporarily.

MEREDITH
I gave birth to you!

MILES
And my neck still aches from the
delivery. What do you think,
Archibald, we got a case?

Archibald walks away, not wanting any part of this.

MEREDITH
Don't you remember when you were a
little boy and we'd play all day
together, you and me? We'd make up
imaginary games and play pretend
and...

Archibald steps in.

ARCHIBALD
Pardon me, Ma'am. Court's about to
begin.

Meredith and Miles part -- walking in opposite directions.

MEREDITH
I carried you inside of me for nine
months.

MILES
One more and I'd have tunnelled
out.

MEREDITH
Miles... I Love you.

Miles watches his mom walk away, sad. And it hits him. He
loves her too. And can't help it.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

DRI FT OVER a table of labeled evidence: audio tapes, food
samples, doctor's reports, photos of camp, etc...

We are days into the trial and Miles is on the stand, playing the part of a scared child to perfection. Archibald questions his star witness.

ARCHIBALD

And right there, in the middle of the house, on the family computer no-less, this is what your mother and father were doing?

MILES

That's right, sir.

ARCHIBALD

Must have been shocking to a young boy.

MILES

Sir, it was terrifying.

ARCHIBALD

How so, son?

MILES

Just seeing these people, these real people, doing these scary things that I don't quite understand. It looks like it must hurt so much. And seeing my own mom and dad taking such pleasure in these images...

ARCHIBALD

...made you feel?

MILES

Sad.

ARCHIBALD

Sad?

Miles swallows dramatically.

MILES

Sad.

Archibald gives the jury a moment to digest.

INT. COURTROOM - ANOTHER DAY

TV monitors play the footage of Gary being arrested by the cop, and Gary attacking Miles at the driving range. The images freeze.

ARCHIBALD

Ladies and gentleman of the jury, I want to thank you for your time, and most importantly, for your understanding. As you know, my client is an above average, highly achieving young honors student. You've seen his report cards, and therefore have seen his inspiring marks. But folks, ever since Miles learned his ABCs, he has been writing, in vivid and may I say incredibly moving prose, a detailed account of his life with his parents, and the journey they have taken in raising him.

Layla walks over to the jury, and passes out manuscripts.

ARCHIBALD (CONT'D)

I ask of each and every one of you, read this tell-all for yourself before you decide whether this young man shall be set free. As you deliberate, I ask each and every one of you to read *A HISTORY OF FOOLS*, by my client, Miles J. Calhoun.

Archibald holds up the book as though lightning will shoot out of it.

TIGHT ON the cover of the novel -- a water-colored image of a boy wearing fleece, footed-pajamas, trapped behind prison bars.

The title page reads: **A HISTORY OF FOOLS: *The Story Of My Mom And Dad*, by Miles J. Calhoun.**

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

- The Judge reads intensely in his bedroom at home. His WIFE reads next to him, equally enthralled.

- JURORS read on park benches and cafeteria tables around the courthouse atrium, entirely immersed in the page turner.

JURY #1

Says here she can't have any more kids.

JURY #2

Yeah, and Gary took up drinking because of it.

They shake their heads in shame.

CUT TO:

- Two court-house JANITORS lean against their brooms, reading the novel.

JANITOR #1

The kid is prolific, let's be honest. He's captured that suburban, middle-class angst that has the potential to tear apart the very fabric of the family structure.

JANITOR #2

What I found most shocking was that he didn't shy away from a problem that has infected our society for years.

(deadpan)

Meredith Calhoun has a prescription drug problem.

The janitors shake their heads shamefully.

JANITOR #2 (CONT'D)

You got any weed, by the way?

JANITOR #1

(shakes his head)

Fresh out.

CUT TO:

GARY

As he reads a passage directly to camera.

GARY
Tonight, dad came home in a solemn mood. He says he was laid off.

INT. CALHOUN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary and Meredith read in bed.

GARY
(reading aloud)
But Mom and I know it was because he was fired.

Gary glares at Meredith.

MEREDITH
I never said that. I swear.

Gary shuts off his night-stand lamp, rolls over, and goes to sleep with his back facing his wife. After a moment, Meredith does the same.

INT. COURTROOM - NEXT DAY

The mood is solemn, pins and needles. Everybody takes their seats. The judge begins.

JUDGE
In the case of Miles J. Calhoun versus Gary and Meredith Calhoun, the jury has decided to grant Miles J. Calhoun full emancipation under the title of the law.

Meredith cries, softly and painfully. Gary consoles her.

MEREDITH
We've lost our son.

GARY
I know, honey. I know.

Miles watches them, then quickly looks away, fearing the slightest tinge of emotion.

JUDGE
This entails the ability to officially obtain legal adulthood before reaching the age at which you would normally be considered an adult.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

You now also have the right to sign
legally binding contracts, own
property, and keep one's own
earnings.
(to Miles)
Son, welcome to the real world.

MILES

A pleasure to be here, sir.

Miles smiles brightly, until he sees his mother and father,
visibly hurt. Then, his smile slowly fades.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. CALABASAS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Expensive, up-scale track homes as far as the eye can see.
DRIFT PAST ten-or-so of them until we land on a single one,
where Keyshon, wearing a cheap, black suit, yanks a FOR SALE
sign out of the freshly cut lawn, and breaks it over his knee
victoriously.

INT. MILES' HOUSE - DAY

The home is pristine. Mediterranean style, with high
ceilings, marble floors, skylights, the whole deal. However,
it's sparsely furnished, a couch here, a chair there, not a
painting on the wall.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Mr. Calhoun's office, how may I
help you?

INT. OFFICE - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

Elliot, also in a ragged Bar Mitzvah suit, sits at a desk,
answering phones -- multiple phones that ring and ring. Faxes
continuously spit out of the fax machine. A copy machine runs
loudly, spewing documents.

ELLIOT

(into phone)
I'm sorry, he is unavailable for
interviews at this time. Call back
in a month.

He grabs another ringing phone. Holds it to his other ear.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Mr. Calhoun's office. That's correct ma'am, he is currently working on his next book for Random House. An advanced copy? Nice try, sweet cheeks. Gonna have to settle for his blog.

Another phone rings. Holds it to his other ear.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Mr. Calhoun's -- I thought I made it quite clear the last time you called, lady... he is not doing any interviews at this time. What? Well you can tell Larry King to shove it up his --

Miles walks in, a pencil behind his ear, a steaming cup of coffee in his hand. Elliot changes his tone.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Look, Mr. Calhoun is a serious novelist, and as soon as he has the time, he'd love to join Mr. King for an in-depth conversation. Good day, ma'am.

Elliot hangs up. Miles pulls a fax from the fax machine. TIGHT ON the document -- an expose on Miles J. Calhoun in *The New Yorker*.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I hate this job. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it!

MILES

That's because you have no work ethic.

ELLIOT

How much are you paying me again?

MILES

Let's see, when you add it all up and round it off to the nearest tenth? Yeah... nothing.

ELLIOT

I still don't understand why I'm
doing this.

MILES

Life lessons, Elliot. Life lessons.
An honest day's work is my gift to
you.

Miles walks out, sipping his coffee, reading *The New Yorker*
expose with his eyebrows arched upward.

MILES (CONT'D)

You'll thank me some day.

The phone rings again. And again. And again and again and
again.

ELLIOT

(into phone)

Mr. Calhoun's office. Mr. Calhoun's
office. Mr. Calhoun's...

Follow Miles into...

INT. KITCHEN - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

A sparkling kitchen, complete with a sub-zero fridge, and
marble counter-tops. Nate, in a white chef's uniform, stirs
spaghetti sauce on the stove.

MILES

Christ, pasta again?

NATE

Dawg, I told you fitty times, I
don't even know how to cook.

MILES

True, but you know how to eat.

NATE

Is that necessary? Look, I need
some more loot.

MILES

For what?

NATE

Shopping. We're out of ice-cream,
Snickers bars, Doritos, Oreo
cookies, cupcakes, and Twinkies.

Miles peels him off a few bills.

MILES

Let me ask you something, you ever worry about your, you know, how shall I phrase this... weight?

NATE

Please. I'm big-boned.

MILES

Right. Big-boned.

A DOORBELL is heard.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

Keyshon opens the door. Layla is standing there, beautiful as always.

KEYSHON

Afternoon, Ms. Gardner.

LAYLA

Uh... afternoon, Keyshon?

KEYSHON

Is there something I can help you with, young lady?

LAYLA

I need to speak with Miles, young man.

KEYSHON

Is he expecting you?

LAYLA

Well, no.

KEYSHON

Huh.

Keyshon stands there, enjoying his authority.

KEYSHON (CONT'D)

Just a moment, if you would be so kind.

He shuts the door on her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

Keyshon presses an intercom button.

KEYSHON
(into intercom)
Miles, a Layla Gardner is here to see you.

MILES (O.S.)
(over intercom)
Send her in.

Keyshon opens the door. Layla stands there, now annoyed.

KEYSHON
After you.

She walks in, followed by Keyshon, who directs her to a couch sitting in the middle of a completely empty living room.

KEYSHON (CONT'D)
Mr. Calhoun will be right with you.

LAYLA
Mr. Calhoun? His father is here?

KEYSHON
Well, no. We just call him... oh, here he is.

Miles enters, coffee mug still in hand, pencil still behind his ear.

MILES
What a lovely, lovely surprise.

LAYLA
Is there someplace we can talk?

EXT. POOL - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

Miles and Layla sit with their feet submerged in a beautiful, black-bottom pool.

MILES
Something to drink?

LAYLA
I don't know. An iced-tea, I guess.

MILES
(screams)
Two iced-teas, A-SAP!

Nate instantly appears with the drinks.

LAYLA
Thanks, Nate.

NATE
A pleasure, ma'am.

Nate walks as far as another lounge chair, and collapses, exhausted, though out of view of Miles and Layla.

LAYLA
Wow, you have a full staff, huh?

MILES
When I'm writing, I can't be
burdened by the minutia of daily
life.

LAYLA
(re: house)
So, all this, it's all from the
advance from Random House?

MILES
A History Of Fools was a best
seller. They are eager for the
sequel, the Untitled Teenage Years
of, you know, me.

LAYLA
Congratulations, Miles. You deserve
it.

A moment passes. The sun reflects peacefully off the pool.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Listen, I have to talk to you about
something. Something difficult.

MILES
Talk away.

LAYLA
Okay, well, look, I like you a lot.
I mean, I really do. And I've had
such a great time with you these
last few days.

Despite his lack of experience, Miles knows what's coming.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

But I want to get something straight. The other day in the fitting room, I just wanted to try it, you know, and it really didn't mean any --

MILES

Good, because I've been meaning to talk to you too.

LAYLA

Just a minute, Miles. I'm right in the middle of --

MILES

I don't want you to get the wrong idea here. I mean, I'm young and I'm free and everything is just so new right now! I don't think it's smart for me to tie myself down, do you?

LAYLA

(shocked)
No. No, I guess not.

Miles lays his hand on top of hers. She's thrown off, feeling rejected.

MILES

I'm so sorry if I hurt you. It's the last thing I ever wanted to do.

Layla studies Miles, more fascinated by him now than ever. She stands, and she leaves.

And then he cries. Not just a normal cry either, but a primal, desperate plea for mommy.

Unbeknownst to Miles, Nate is watching the entire time, holding back a laugh.

Unexpectedly, Layla appears once again.

LAYLA

Forgot my sweater.

She grabs her sweater off the back of the lounge chair, and walks away. She stops, and turns back around.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Hey, were you crying?

MILES
What? Crying? Me? C'mon, please.

LAYLA
Oh, because you're eyes are kind of red and glossy and it sort of looks like you've been --

NATE
Crying. He was. I saw.

Layla rubs Miles' hair like he were her little brother.

LAYLA
You're so adorable, Miles J. Calhoun.

She gets in her car, and drives away.

MILES
(to Nate)
Appreciate that. End it with dignity, you know?

NATE
Right. Dignity.

Nate walks inside. Miles drops himself into the pool like dead weight. WE DROP UNDER WITH HIM, until he becomes hidden by bubbles.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT DOOR - MILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Miles stands at the door as his exhausted friends leave.

MILES
Thanks for coming, guys. See you tomorrow?

ELLIOT
Uh, Miles?
(to Keyshon, nudging him)
You want to tell him? You said you would.

KEYSHON
Miles, cool house and all, but...

NATE/KEYSHON/ELLIOT

We quit.

MILES

What? You can't just...

NATE

Yes, we can. And just did.

Nate and Keyshon walk away. Elliot slaps Miles on the shoulder, lovingly.

ELLIOT

Good luck, pal.

He shuts the door. Then, he looks around and realizes he's alone in a big, empty house -- in a big, empty world.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Miles lays in his massive bed, scribbling notes on a yellow pad of paper. Suddenly, he stops. And he just lays there, unable to write, unable to sleep.

He gets up, paces. Back and forth. Back and forth. Collapses back onto his mattress, the painful feeling of loneliness finally settling in.

He fishes the photo of the Calhoun's Jamaican vacation from his night stand, and studies it.

INT. CALHOUN HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Miles walks the streets of his old neighborhood, cautious not to be seen. He approaches his family home, hops over a fence, and walks around to the back of the house.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Gary and Meredith are lying in lounge chairs, each holding drinks with umbrellas in them. The pool is sparkling clean.

Miles' little head peeks over the wooden fence, just as Gary and Meredith clink their drinks together, in some kind of celebration.

GARY

This is the life.

MEREDITH
It sure is, baby. It sure is.

Miles' drops his head OUT OF FRAME. He leans against the fence, dismayed.

EXT. CALABASAS COUNTRY CLUB - DRIVING RANGE - DAY

Gary and Meredith both tee off, wide smiles covering their faces. Meredith slices the ball wide right, and she and Gary giggle at her lack of skill.

Now it's Gary's turn. Ducking behind a parked golf cart, Miles watches, his parents oblivious to his spying presence.

Gary smacks a perfect 300-yarder. Meredith is impressed.

MEREDITH
Gary, my gawd! Where on earth did you learn to drive like that?

GARY
I got a tip awhile back. Not too shabby, eh?

MEREDITH
Not too shabby at all.

They kiss and laugh, happy as ever. Miles sighs, hops in the cart, and speeds away.

Gary and Meredith immediately release each other.

GARY
He was in the golf cart, wasn't he?

Meredith nods. They smile, up to something.

EXT. ZUMA BEACH - MALIBU - DAY

The sun is shining, the Pacific sparkles, and the seagulls sing from high above. Gary and Meredith lie on beach towels, enjoying the day.

Suddenly, Meredith tosses sand at Gary and races towards the ocean. Gary rushes after her, picks her up, and dunks her in the ocean. They laugh hysterically, and kiss lovingly.

Miles, hiding behind an ice-box, watches the entire event -- confused, shocked, and somewhat infuriated.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - MILES' HOUSE - DAY

Miles, unable to work on his novel, dials a number on speaker phone.

MEREDITH (O.S.)
(through telephone, sounding
cheery)
Hi, you've reached Meredith...

GARY
(through telephone, equally cheery)
...and Gary!

MEREDITH (O.S.)
(through telephone)
And we're not home right now, so
please leave a message after the --

Miles presses END.

MILES
Where are you, mom and dad? Where
the hell are you?

He walks out of the room, head hung low.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Miles brushes his teeth, preparing for bed, when the DOORBELL RINGS. He presses the intercom.

MILES
(into intercom, unhappy)
Who is it?

MEREDITH (O.S.)
(through intercom)
Miles, honey... it's Mom and Dad.

MILES
(into intercom)
Hey, great! How you doing.
(MORE)

MILES (CONT' D)
 (screaming)
 Go away!

GARY (O.S.)
 (through intercom)
 C'mon, son. Open up. Just for a minute?

Miles races down the stairwell. Now, he talks to his parents through the door.

MILES
 I can have you arrested. I have a restraining order and...

Miles stands on his toes, and looks at his tanned, healthy-looking parents THROUGH THE PEEP HOLE.

MILES (CONT' D)
 ...all I have to do is --

He opens the door, staring at his parents, who hold hands across the threshold.

MILES (CONT' D)
 Jesus, you look great. Did you go on vacation?

GARY
 Maui.

Meredith elbows Gary in the ribs.

GARY (CONT' D)
 No. We didn't. Go anywhere. I mean.

Meredith leans in and gives Miles a big hug. He stands there, his body limp.

MEREDITH
 C'mon, honey, let us in.

He surrenders, and Gary and Meredith enter. They sit on the couch in the large, empty living room.

GARY
 Your own regular bachelor pad, eh?

Miles glares. Meredith prods Gary to start the conversation.

GARY (CONT' D)
 Listen, Miles, your mother and I, well we've missed you. It goes without saying.

MILES

How's the weather in Maui this time of year?

GARY

Fabulous. From the day we got there, blue skies, sunshine, white sands beaches like you've never seen before, and...

Meredith elbows Gary again.

GARY (CONT'D)

...we've been doing a lot of thinking, son.

MEREDITH

And it hasn't been easy. We asked ourselves all the hard questions.

GARY

And we've decided that yes, we probably have been holding you back. I mean, it goes without saying that you are not a normal child.

MILES

That supposed to be a joke?

MEREDITH

What he's trying to say is that we've tried to nurture you and give you whatever you needed to discover and develop your talents...

GARY

But now you feel that we're stifling your growth, that you don't need us...

MEREDITH

And that we're in your way.

He listens attentively.

MEREDITH (CONT'D)

And... we agree.

MILES

(stunned)
You what?

GARY

We don't want to stifle your growth. As parents, that's the last thing we'd ever want to do. So if living away from us, from our love and guidance, helps you become the man you want to be, then we wish you the best.

MILES

You do?

Gary and Meredith nod, and walk towards the door.

MEREDITH

Good-bye, Miles.

He shuts the door and leans against it, feeling separated from his parents in a way no child ever should.

MILES

Good-bye, Mom and Dad.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILES' HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

We hear the haunting song "*Let Me Fly*", by DMX.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Miles Calhoun, a once promising intellectual with the world in his hands, has become a 13 year-old Charles Bukowski. He is slumped over his laptop in his office, eyelids growing heavy.

He sits up, inspired by an idea. He types the words:

Freedom, a blessing or a curse?

Then, he passes out, hopeless.

- Four in the morning. Pages and pages have been crumpled up and thrown into the trash can. Miles types and types, prints the pages, walks into the kitchen, and sets the pages aflame on the oven range, finding pleasure in the blaze.

- He eats beans. He eats Cup-O-Noodles. He stares off longingly, wishing he had his mom to stir up a hot meal.

- Again, he tries to sleep. Struck by a perpetual loneliness, he unfolds the photo of the Calhoun family in Jamaica, and props it up next to his bed.

- Now he just sits there in his sprawling master bedroom, knees clenched to his chest. He can't write. He can't think. He's miserably alone.

END MONTAGE.

INT. OFFICE - MILES' HOUSE - NIGHT

His laptop screen glows. A blank page. He stares at it for a moment, thinking. Finally he types:

Freedom is a right extended to us all. However, with freedom comes loneliness, reminding us that nothing is ever free.

He stops typing.

MILES
I can't live like this.

EXT. CALABASAS STREET - NIGHT

A cab pulls to a stop in front of Miles' house. He hands the driver some cash and gets out. The cab pulls away.

Miles stands on the lawn and inhales its scent, a child standing at the foot of his childhood home.

He thinks about knocking, and then remembers something. He walks around to his bedroom window, jostles his Speech-And-Debate trophy from the window sill, slides it open, and drops in.

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

He falls down onto his warm bed, and stares up at his ceiling.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meredith and Gary lie in bed in the darkness of night. Meredith sits up, and her attention turns to the glow of light coming from the hallway -- a light that peaks through the bottom of Miles' bedroom door.

She lies back on her pillow with her hands behind her head. She smiles, proudly.

MEREDITH
I told you that would work.

GARY
Hey, I came up with Maui.

They share a warm smile. Then, in unison, they both roll over, this time facing one another. This time, happy.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILES' BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

Miles Calhoun, a scrawny thirteen year-old boy with shaggy, cow-licked hair and pre-braces teeth, sits at his desk with his back turned to us. His laptop sits open, glowing blank.

He wears his trademark ill-fitting suit with a striped red, clip-on tie. We hear the sounds of his fingers typing rhythmically.

MILES (V.O.)
I want to thank you, Mom and Dad.
Without you I would not be here and
none of this would be possible.

He thinks, sips from a bottle of juice, then continues typing.

MILES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And for that, we all would have
suffered.

He turns up his laptop speakers and enjoys the sounds of "*Blue Monk*", the original Thelonious Monk version. WE DRIFT UP, above the boy with his hands behind his head, now laying comfortably on his bed.

He reaches over to a nearby dresser drawer and fishes out a torn baby blanket. He rests it under the covers next to him, closes his eyes, and falls peacefully asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.