

P A R D O N E D
A Judicial Memoir

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Based Upon The Book by Promise Y. Lee
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1. BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
and in sin did my mother conceive
me."

Psalms 51:5

TITLE CARD:

Inspired By Actual Events

2. EXT./SUBURBAN HOME: NIGHT

Minutes past midnight outside a run-down suburban home, PROMISE, a feral urban youth of 15, aims a .357 revolver while stepping backward, demanding his unseen opponent not come any closer. The gun looks enormous in his smallish hands.

PROMISE is a street-hardened kid who, like so many others, has older eyes, a Samuel L. Jackson glare.

ANGLE: HANSON, a hulking U.S. enlisted soldier, laughs at PROMISE, continues toward him, flailing nunchucks.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S FEET: taking a step backward, dust kicking up.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S EYES: locked on his assailant, the gun in forced perspective.

PROMISE cocks the gun. He's taken his last step back.

HANSON keeps coming.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S finger on the trigger.

3. BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

I have offended God because I have
damaged the souls of his children.

TITLE CARD:

Over the years I have hurt many
people,

both intentionally and unintentionally.

My intent is not for this film to be viewed as a way to profit over shed blood or offended souls, but to simply share from my limited experiences the power of redemption and warn against the agony of regret.

TITLE CARD:

Each day I ask God to help me to do less harm.

[Silence for a beat. And then:]

[GUNSHOT. LOUD.]

GUNSHOT fades to silence. And then:

[CAMERA SHUTTER; VERY LOUD.]

SLAM CUT TO:

4. MAIN TITLE

Images of PROMISE being handcuffed, stepping onto a milk crate in order to be photographed, hair ungroomed, indifferent to the arrest placard with numbers hung around his neck, blend with images of an arrest report, scenes from the boy's arraignment blend with an affidavit & complaint charging murder one, a public defender hands the boy a pen to sign a plea deal blend with plea arrangement paperwork, leg irons and shackles attached to this boy who is almost too small for them, angles through windows of a prison bus reveal hardened faces of bitter and angry men, the young boy PROMISE incongruently among them, the bus arriving at Colorado State Penitentiary, a line of semi-nude gown men, most of whom tower over this boy, men holding paperwork as they await invasive and demeaning search and examination—the boy PROMISE, much smaller and much lighter weight, alone among a collection of hardened giants, predators; one of these, a MEXICAN, making a lewd pass at PROMISE which foretells of struggles to come.

CUT TO:

(MORE)

5. INSERT: a DOCUMENT:

DOCUMENT:

Name:

Date of Birth:

List of personal possessions:

I agree not to perform acts of sodomy and understand that they are a crime, punishable by the state of Colorado.

Signature

Date

CUT TO:

PROMISE handed prison greens and a number, a sentencing sheet with an astonishing, arbitrary zero-to-life sentence, the boy following a herd toward tiers of prison cells, the herd thinning until PROMISE is led, alone, toward a cell, the eyes of hardened, dangerous lifers transfixed upon this boy, small in stature, lost in prison greens that are sizes too big for him, until PROMISE sits, alone, in a cell, now abandoned by the prison guard. A boy, alone, in general population.

A child among killers.

6. INSERT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL FORM

QUESTION 1: Do you hear bells?

QUESTION 2: Do you love your mother?

QUESTION 3: If you were driving and there was something in the road would you:

A. Go around it

B. Go over it

QUESTION 4: Do you hear voices?

QUESTION 5: Do you hate your mother?

(MORE)

7. INT./DR. LEVY'S OFFICE: DAY

Crowded, musty old room. Worn carpet, institutional metal desk and chairs. A dismal, hellish place.

PROMISE sits, glaring at LEVY, a pudgy humpback type with thick glasses. LEVY reads PROMISE's evaluation form.

LEVY:

Convict, tell me about your parents.

ANGLE: PROMISE: feral. Glaring.

[Japanese Gong; Japanese music begins]

CUT TO:

8. EXT/ MT. YAEDAKE NATURE PRESERVE, near KADENA, JAPAN. SUNRISE: AERIAL PANORAMA of the area, turning toward a cluster of buildings on the city's edge.

[Heavy Hip-Hop Beat now mixes with traditional Japanese music]

TITLE CARD:

Kadena, Japan

PUSH IN TO:

A group of BLACK MEN standing on one of the roof tops, LAUGHING, enjoying themselves. KOKUJO (girls who like black men) FROLIC with them. The KOKUJO dress like HOOKERS. This is the end of a party, not the beginning of a morning. Some of these men wear U.S. military fatigues and tee shirts.

PUSH IN TO:

DAD, age 25 or so, LAUGHING with his friends. DAD wears U.S. Air Force uniform shirt, unbuttoned to reveal tee shirt beneath. DAD has a Vietnam-era Army issue 1911A1 Colt .45 automatic tucked into the waistband of his pants.

(MORE)

INSERT: the pistol, custom grips with a provocative GEISHA painted brightly on the wood grips.

CUT TO:

PROMISE, age 5 or so. On the rooftop, staring out at the mountains in the distance, oblivious to the adults and their partying.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

For a child, PROMISE has an preternaturally stoic expression and is extremely focused and stoic.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

DAD (OFF):

Promise.

PROMISE:

[Without turning]

Sir.

DAD (OFF):

What do you see?

CUT TO:

PROMISE's POV: YAEDAKE NATURE PRESERVE, just past Kadena city limits: Beauty, mystery.

CUT TO:

PROMISE.

PROMISE:

Everything.

(MORE)

CUT TO:

DAD, laughing, chugs down his plastic cup of hard liquor. The other soldiers leaving, now, thanking DAD for the great time.

DAD:

Everything?

PROMISE (OFF):

Yes, sir.

DAD:

No. Not yet, you don't.

DAD unceremoniously grabs PROMISE by the back of PROMISE's shirt, lifting PROMISE up and off of his feet.

DAD:

Here. Let me help you see better.

DAD HEAVES PROMISE over the railing, hanging the boy over the side of the building.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

When I was in kindergarten,
Daddy was stationed in Japan.

DAD:

How about now?

PROMISE shows no emotion. His unnatural intensity locks in, even in the face of death. DAD's trying to break him. PROMISE won't break.

PROMISE:

Sir.

CUT TO:

(MORE)

LOW ANGLE: The ROOF: DAD holds PROMISE perilously by the back of PROMISE's shirt, PROMISE's feet dangling.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I don't remember much about it.

DAD:

How about now?

PROMISE:

Sir.

CUT TO:

HIGH ANGLE: THE STREET: 40 stories below, traffic and people walking past, oblivious to what is going on above their heads.

DAD (OFF):

Now?

CUT TO:

9. INT/COLORADO STATE PENITENTIARY: DAY:
HIGH ANGLE: PROMISE's POV: the cell block floor some 60 feet below: inmates walking in single lines, inmates leaning over railing on various tiers below. PROMISE's feet protrude from the railing.

DAD VO:

Now?

CUT TO:

10. EXT/SHINTOSHIN, KADENA ROOF: DAY
DAD dangles PROMISE off of the roof. A 40-story drop.

PROMISE (Off):

Sir...

CUT TO:

(MORE)

DAD'S FIST clutching PROMISE'S SHIRT: PROMISE'S shirt tearing,
Promise dropping a few inches as the shirt rips.

DAD (OFF):

You see everything yet?
Everything?

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

This is what I do remember.

CUT TO:

PROMISE: completely stoic: he glares straight ahead. No longer
looking down, but looking out into the distance at YAEDAKE, at
the beauty of the nature preserve. He refuses to give DAD the
satisfaction of begging for his life.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I remember Daddy's lessons.
Things my father taught me.

PUSH IN TO:

TIGHT on PROMISE: an unnatural stoicism for so young a child.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Not what it is to be a man, but
what it is to be a helpless boy.

[Exaggerated SFX of CELL DOOR sliding shut]

SLAM CUT TO:

11. EXT/SUBURBAN HOUSE. BRIGHT SUN
BEES buzz around a bush of yellow flowers.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

And I determined to never be
helpless again.

(MORE)

ANGLE: THROUGH THE BUSHES: PROMISE age 8 or so. His eyes narrowed as he studies the BEES. A predator.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

ANGLE: PROMISE'S HANDS: little kid hands, innocent hands, reaching. Promise's hands swat the bushes, causing the bees to fly out.

JAMAL (OFF):

Promise!

ANGLE: PROMISE and the BEES: Promise smiling, unafraid as bees swarm around him.

JAMAL (OFF):

Niggazucrazy?!

ANGLE: JAMAL. Age 12 or so, ducks for cover. He's terrified of the bees. Jamal wears a bandanna tied over cornrows.

JAMAL:

What them bees did to you?!
Leave them buzzy pests alone!

CUT TO:

PROMISE catches a BEE in his hand. Pleased with himself.

JAMAL (OFF):

Hope he stingya in the nuts.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S HAND: he shakes his closed fist violently, torturing the bee and enjoying it. Promise opens his hand, and the unhappy bee flies off. Promise races around the bushes, gleefully chasing bees. An idyllic childhood moment.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

CUT TO:

(MORE)

JAMAL getting up, dusting himself off.

JAMAL:

Y'know, Promise, sane dudes ride skateboards and, say, chase the occasional ho.

CUT TO:

PROMISE: watches the BEES. ignoring JAMAL.

PROMISE:

Relax, Jamal. It's just bees.

JAMAL arrives, annoyed.

JAMAL:

Promise, seriously:
I seen this movie. It don't end well.

PROMISE:

Don't be scared, man.
I'll protect you.

JAMAL, insulted, pulls his shirt up, revealing a pistol stuck in the waistband of his shorts. Promise continues tracking the bees, ignoring Jamal.

JAMAL:

Wha--? Man, I pull my strap and bust a cap. Brotha best reckonize.

PROMISE:

Jamal... it's a water pistol.

JAMAL:

{A defiant nod.}

Whatemsayin.'

(MORE)

PROMISE catches another BEE.

JAMAL (OFF):

Geez--!! Will you--!

PROMISE shakes his closed fist, agitating the BEE inside.
PROMISE smiling.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S HAND as he opens his fist: the bee just lying still in PROMISE'S hand. Apparently dead.

PROMISE glares at the BEE, annoyed.

PROMISE:

Stupid bee.

JAMAL (OFF):

Uh-huh. Now you done did it.
You pissed off God.

ANGLE: the BEE suddenly comes back to life, stings PROMISE'S hand and buzzes away. PROMISE screams in agony.

PROMISE, crying, races past JAMAL, his hand holding his wrist.

JAMAL:

Whatemsayin.'

PROMISE doubles back to JAMAL, punches JAMAL in the face. JAMAL goes down in the dirt.

PROMISE runs off. JAMAL watches him go, tears welling up.

JAMAL:

[Starting to cry]

...punk...

WIDEN TO:

EXT/SUBURBAN HOME: WIDEN/REVEAL PROMISE'S HOUSE.

Lower Middle Class, modest yard, bikes and toys in the yard and driveway. PROMISE screaming as he runs into house.

(MORE)

CUT TO:

12. INT/KITCHEN: DAY

MOM is busy cooking. PROMISE enters, screaming, holding his hand. MOM does not turn towards him, but continues with her work.

PROMISE:

Maaaaaaaaaaa-!

MOM:

Boy if you don't hush all that hollerin'.

ANGLE: MOM as she cooks. Life hasn't turned out quite the way she'd hoped.

MOM:

You finish that porch like I say?

PROMISE (OFF):

No, ma'am.

MOM:

Then I can't imagine what you want with me.

PROMISE (OFF):

Maaaaa-!

MOM:

Out there with that no account boy again. Pass me them peas.

ANGLE: PROMISE, in tears, obediently turns away, grabbing an oversized can of generic-brand peas while nudging a cabinet door shut with his foot.

PROMISE hands the peas to MOM, who pours them into dinner.

PROMISE:

(MORE)

Momma...

ANGLE: MOM cooks, ignoring PROMISE.

PROMISE (OFF):

Maaaaaa...!

ANGLE: MOM turning, annoyed, wiping her hands on a towel.

MOM:

Let me see.

ANGLE: PROMISE's HAND, MOM's hand holds his wrist in a clinical fashion. This is not particularly motherly, more like the school nurse.

ANGLE: MOM and PROMISE: MOM puts ice on his hand.

MOM:

Didn't I tell you let them bees alone? Them bees don't belong to you, those are God's creatures. Now you killed one.

PROMISE:

Killed--? But he stung me!

ANGLE: PROMISE: staring at his hand. Considering the moment.

MOM (OFF):

When a bee stings, his stinger breaks off and he dies.

PROMISE:

...why?

MOM (OFF):

Don't ask me ask God.
He makes the rules.

VOICE (Whisper):

(MORE)

Promise...

MOM (OFF):

Now go do that porch like I tell
you.

Leave 'em bees be.

And send that runny-nose boy home
'fore I hurt him. That boy no good
to the bone.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

CUT TO:

13. BLACK

CHARMAS VO (Angry Whisper):

Get up!

[Exaggerated SFX of CELL DOOR sliding shut]

SLAM CUT TO:

INT/BOYS BEDROOM: NIGHT

FOUR BOYS in pajamas and underwear, crammed into tight quarters.
THURMAS is asleep. CHARMAS angrily awakens PROMISE while THOMAS
stands near the closed door. THOMAS does not open it.

ANGLE: PROMISE, age 13 now: wiping sleep from his eyes. CHARMAS
chastises him.

[Shouting/Arguing Under]

CHARMAS (Whisper):

It's bad this time.

PROMISE:

It's bad every time.
Get away from the door.

(MORE)

[MOM screaming unintelligibly, running]

PROMISE and CHARMAS lie on their beds, staring at the ceiling. They try and screen out their parents arguing. THOMAS starts crying as he climbs back into bed.

[DAD yelling unintelligibly, WALKING as he pursues her]

PROMISE:

It'll stop soon.

ANGLE: THE BOYS: listening: PROMISE angry. CHARMAS afraid, THOMAS cries.

CUT TO:

14. INT/PRISON CELL: DAY: PROMISE lies in his bunk, staring at the ceiling. Stoic. Waiting.

[VIOLENT ARGUING, MEN'S VOICES, under]

DAD (OFF):

Don't you run from me, woman.

[A DOOR SLAMS. DAD'S footsteps stop]

CUT TO:

15. INT/BOYS' BEDROOM: NIGHT: PROMISE lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling. stoic.

MOM (CLOSET FILTER):

Whores! Whores! It's all you want—
them white whores!

[LOUD POUNDING on DOOR]

CHARMAS and THOMAS jump at the sound, startled. PROMISE glares angrily at the ceiling, does not flinch. THURMAS is sound asleep.

DAD (Off):

Open this door, woman!

(MORE)

MOM (CLOSET FILTER):

You go to hell! You and your
whores.

The BOYS: lying still. Staring at the ceiling.

DAD (Off):

Open It!

MOM (CLOSET FILTER):

No!

DAD (Off):

Woman-- this is MY house!

MOM (CLOSET FILTER):

Go to hell!

[GUNSHOT; VERY LOUD]

The BOYS, including PROMISE. jolted by the sound. They pause a beat, stuck in the moment, then PROMISE takes action. Leaping out of bed, he opens the door, racing into the hall.

CUT TO:

16. INT/HALL: DARK, the house is clean but not in the best shape. TOYS strewn on the floor, other signs of innocence, crayon drawing on the walls.

ANGLE: PROMISE: angry, cautiously makes his way down this HALL.

ANGLE: PROMISE's destination: the closed bathroom door at the end of this hall. Between PROMISE and this door: DAD.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was thirteen.

ANGLE: PROMISE, approaching. Angry. Cautious.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

(MORE)

Mom was sick of Daddy's running around. I was sick of it, too. Partly because it hurt Mom, but also because ever since I was a little boy, Daddy told me not to mess with white girls.

ANGLE: DAD: bitter, drunk, frozen in the moment. DAD should take action, but he just stands still, a cigarette dangles from a corner of his mouth. Lines of hardship and pain on his face.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

And this was all over
his chasing white women.

CUT TO:

PROMISE approaching. PROMISE's eyes focused up on DAD. Then PROMISE's eyes glide downward and FOCUS on something lower.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I never really understood why. I
just figured it was one more
reason to discount his advice--

ANGLE: DAD'S HAND. The 1911A1 Colt .45 automatic clutched in it. Geisha drawing on wood pistol grip. This is the same pistol from the opening scene.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

--and the example he set.

ANGLE: The HALL: PROMISE passes DAD, unafraid and unconcerned about DAD or the gun. PROMISE moves towards the closed bathroom door.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was thirteen. Walt Disney World
was opening in Florida, but I
wasn't going to see it any time
soon.

ANGLE: THE DOOR: a gunshot has blown the doorknob and lock off, leaving an awful hole in the door.

(MORE)

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Sonny Liston and Louis Armstrong
died that year.

PROMISE cautiously pushes the door open.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

And so did my faith in my father.

PUSH IN TO:

THE BATHROOM: MOM sitting on the closed toilet lid. slumped over
to one side and bleeding. She's been shot.

REVERSE TO:

PROMISE: stoic. angry, bitter like DAD.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Death was my constant companion.

FADE TO:

17. INT./A GLASS WALL: PROMISE'S EYES glaring. Harsh, bright light.

REVERSE TO:

What PROMISE sees: a NURSE attends his MOTHER in a crowded ward.
Several other patients, visitors, family. Chaotic and
impersonal.

PROMISE approaches MOM. He strokes her hair.

NURSE (OFF):

Don't worry. Your mom'll be just
fine.

PROMISE: STOIC. Far too serious for a 13-year old. He never
looks at the nurse, looks only at his unconscious mother.

PROMISE:

(MORE)

She wasn't fine before.

18. INT./HOSPITAL HALL: DAD standing, wired, grim. A white POLICEMAN questions him about the accidental shooting. CHARMAS, THURMAS, THOMAS seated nearby, THOMAS cries.

COP:

So, which boy was playing with
your gun when it went off?

PROMISE arrives. GRIM. GLARING at DAD as he walks past.

DAD glares back. The COP stops writing, turning towards PROMISE, observing this.

COP:

I see.

PROMISE keeps walking. He's leaving.

COP (OFF):

I'll need a name and age...

PROMISE returns, talking to the crying THOMAS.

PROMISE:

Stop that.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

My anger was just beginning.

19. EXT./PROSPECT LAKE AREA: NIGHT
ANGLE: A SHOVEL digging into the soil. The SHOVEL digging and digging.

WIDEN TO REVEAL:

JAMAL, now about age 15, shivers in the night cold. He wears a BANDANNA over cornrows.

[SHOVELING under]

JAMAL:

(MORE)

Okay. Tell me again, why am I here?

REVERSE TO:

PROMISE: digging a hole in the ground with a shovel. PROMISE ignores JAMAL.

JAMAL:

Hello? Earth to Promise...?

JAMAL agitated.

JAMAL:

Look, bro', Reecie Gilbert was 'bout to gimme some.

PROMISE (Off):

Reecie Gilbert wouldn't cross the street to spit on you.

JAMAL:

That's just an act. I'm wearin' her down.

PROMISE (OFF):

Yeah. Home. Alone. With your right hand.

JAMAL:

Brother's gotta start someplace...

ANGLE: PROMISE, annoyed, pulls his Dad's pistol out of the waistband of his pants. Geisha drawing on pistol grip.

PROMISE:

Jamal, would you please shut up?!

JAMAL freaks out.

JAMAL:

(MORE)

A gun? A GUN?!
I knew it! I KNEW one day you'd
snap!

You out here diggin' my grave!
Man, that's cold!
You still mad about the bee
thing?!

PROMISE keeps digging.

PROMISE:

You're being an idiot, now.

JAMAL:

Me? Me?! Who got the gun? When I
ever meet you in the middle of the
night with a shovel and a gun?!

PROMISE:

Jay...

JAMAL:

When nigganigga when.

PROMISE:

Jay...

JAMAL:

Help! Help me! Crazy man wit' a
shovel! Dude gonna bury me!!

Attica! Attica!!

WOMAN'S VOICE (Off):

Boy, if y'all don't stop all that
damn hollerin'...!

JAMAL:

Yes'm.

(MORE)

[chokes] ...help...

PROMISE has finished digging. Annoyed.

PROMISE:

You done yet?

JAMAL:

Well, I haven't peed on myself,
but it's on the list.

PROMISE:

The gun ain't for you. It's for my
dad. It's his gun.

ANGLE: PROMISE drops the gun into the hole he dug.

PROMISE:

And now it's a lot more than that.
Now it's a memorial. You know, a
shrine.

PROMISE pitches dirt into the hole, burying the pistol.

PROMISE:

A testament to broken promises.

PROMISE exits, carrying the shovel. JAMAL indignant, gesturing
toward the gun's grave.

PROMISE:

As for why you're here: for some
stupid reason I thought I needed
you.

JAMAL:

For what?
To bury a perfectly good gat?

Man, we coulda used that piece!

JAMAL reluctantly follows, complaining.

(MORE)

JAMAL:

Burying guns... here's an idea,
let's stop by a bank and set some
money on fire.

God, you's a strange kid.

FADE OUT:

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Nothing was ever the same after
that.

FADE IN:

20. EXT./ALLEY BEHIND PROMISE'S HOUSE: DAY
JAMAL waits in the alley. Bandanna over cornrows, school
clothes, a backpack.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Shortly after the shooting, Mom
and Daddy had divorced. I was
living between both of their
houses.

ANGLE: PROMISE rushes out of the back door. School clothes and
backpack.

MOM (From House):

Boy-- wait a minute!

MOM appears at the door, holding PROMISE'S lunch. PROMISE rushes
back, takes the lunch from her. They do not hug and MOM shows no
affection. Some time has passed and MOM shows no sign of injury.

MOM:

Forget yo' head if it wasn't
attached.

JAMAL (Off):

(MORE)

[singsong, patronizing]
Morning Mrs. Leeeeeee--

MOM:

Harrummphhff. No account.
Don't be late for school, hear?

CUT TO:

21. EXT./SOUTH JUNIOR HIGH: DAY
PROMISE and JAMAL enter the school, joining other children.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was never late to school.

I was always there when the doors
opened, and I was always there
when the final bell rang.

CUT TO:

22. EXT./REAR OF SCHOOL: DAY
PROMISE and JAMAL head out the back door and into the world.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

What happened between those times
was often another story.

PROMISE:

Got your uncle's car keys?

JAMAL:

And you know this.

PROMISE:

I wanna be back by one-thirty.
Got wood shop today.

(MORE)

23. EXT./CITY STREETS: DAY
TIGHT ON PROMISE and JAMAL: they peer around a corner, trying not to be seen.

REVERSE TO:

WHAT THEY SEE: a MILKMAN makes a delivery, leaving bottles of milk on a doorstep and taking the empty bottles with him.

PROMISE and JAMAL wait for the MILKMAN to enter his truck and drive off, then they scamper over and steal the milk.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Some days we'd leave early and follow the milkman on his route.

CUT TO:

INT./CAR: DAY

PROMISE hustles back into the car. JAMAL is driving. PROMISE stacks the milk in the back seat, which is already stockpiled with milk bottles and other dairy products.

CUT TO:

24. EXT./ACACIA PARK: DAY
PROMISE and JAMAL trade the cheese and milk to HIPPIES in the park.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

We'd take the stuff over to the hippies on the north side of town and trade it for acid. The hippies really loved that milk and cheese, so we always got paid.

25. EXT./DOWNTOWN POST OFFICE: DAY
PROMISE and JAMAL accost passers by, looking for a handout.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Sometimes we would hang out at the post office and ask for money to buy stamps.

(MORE)

ANGLE: a BLIND MAN at a street corner. He uses a walking stick.
PROMISE helps the BLIND MAN cross the street.

BLIND MAN:

That you, boy?

PROMISE:

Sir.

BLIND MAN:

Y'all out here hustlin' for
"stamps" again?

PROMISE:

No, sir, we're on our way to
school.

BLIND MAN:

And I'ma airline pilot.

PROMISE:

Watch the curb.

BLIND MAN:

YOU watch it, Promise. God don't
like ugly.

The BLIND MAN passes JAMAL who cheeses him (grins, lots of
teeth).

JAMAL:

[Singsong. Patronizing]
Hi Mister Montgomereeee.

BLIND MAN:

Harrumphhff. No account.

CUT TO:

(MORE)

26. EXT./INTERSTATE 25: NIGHT
A STATE TROOPER places handcuffs on PROMISE. JAMAL and KENNY observe from a beat-up yellow Vega. Two girls in the car. PROMISE uses his free hand to pass a roll of cash to KENNY.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Our days began with schemes to get money and ended with finding ways to spend it. Sometimes, we'd get caught.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was fifteen years old.
I didn't have a driver's license.

PROMISE:

Kenny-- take this, meet me in Castle Rock tomorrow and bail me out.

KENNY:

Man... I'm so sorry... I never meant...

PROMISE:

Don't be sorry, Kenny. Just get me outta here.

KENNY:

Doc-- I'll run the girls home and be right back!

27. INT./CASTLE ROCK JAIL: DAY
PROMISE sits on his bunk. He has not bathed in three weeks. Bitter, angry, in withdrawal.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Kenny never came back.

(MORE)

ANGLE: PROMISE shares his cell with a filthy WINO who sleeps throughout.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Kenny had all my money.
I couldn't call Mom, didn't
want to call Daddy.

So I sat.

28. EXT./CASTLE ROCK JAIL: DAY
PROMISE is escorted out by UNCLE BUD and DON RITCHIE.

PROMISE:

Three weeks.

UNCLE BUD:

Why didn't your folks come for
you?

PROMISE:

I didn't tell 'em. And I'd
appreciate it if you wouldn't,
either, Uncle Bud.

UNCLE BUD stops PROMISE, offers fatherly advice.

UNCLE BUD:

Promise: I don't know what goes on
with you. I know the nice kid I
see at school.

Then, I know what I hear on the
street.

But this needs to be a wake-up
call, son. Maybe God is trying to
tell you something, huh?

PROMISE bows his head a moment, letting BUD's words sink in.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

(MORE)

Uncle Bud was one of very few men I actually respected. One of very few people I knew actually cared about me.

Turn right, turn left. This was my chance.

PROMISE:

Will... will you help me...?

The three head for UNCLE BUD's car. UNCLE BUD's arm around PROMISE's shoulder.

UNCLE BUD:

I'm here, right?

You'd better stay at my place while I calm your folks down...

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Uncle Bud kept his word. I stayed at his house for a while and luckily, this kept my mom from taking my life or at least my hide.

Kenny wasn't so lucky.

CUT TO:

29. EXT./SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD: AFTERNOON
 PROMISE beats the crap out of KENNY. JAMAL cheers PROMISE on while casually eating a ham sandwich.

JAMAL:

[Jabbing a finger at poor Kenny]
 Yee-eah. Yee-eah. 'Slike dat.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I found out Kenny used my money that very night to buy a bag of weed and just left me there on

(MORE)

purpose. I would have killed him,
but he had a car, which helped get
girls.

Besides, I had plans that night.

30. EXT./DEAF AND BLIND SCHOOL: LATE AFTERNOON

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

At an early age I learned that, if
you invested a little time in
keeping up appearances, you can
get away with just about anything.

At least, that was my rationale.
It was easier than admitting some
part of me wanted to do this...

31. INT./DEAF AND BLIND SCHOOL: LATE AFTERNOON

PROMISE sits with a small group of DEAF CHILDREN in a multi-
purpose room. He is reading a story to them, using sign language
to communicate to them.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

The truth was, the indecipherable
rush I got from slamming someone's
head against a wall or smoking
dope or laying with some girl--

--all of it fell short of the
warmth, the light, that flooded my
life when I nurtured instead of
destroyed.

I was far too angry and lost to
receive that message at the time.

That the high I got from taking,
from destroying, couldn't begin to
compare to the high I got from
giving.

ANGLE: PROMISE pauses briefly, looking at his hand. He winces
with pain from the fight.

(MORE)

32. INT./PROMISE'S HOUSE: DAY:
 ANGLE: 8-YEAR OLD PROMISE: STARING at his HAND. Considering the moment.

[BEE BUZZING under]

MOM (OFF):

When a bee stings, his stinger
 breaks off and he dies.

CUT TO:

33. INT./DEAF AND BLIND SCHOOL: LATE AFTERNOON
 OUTSIDE OF THIS ROOM: REECIE observes PROMISE with the CHILDREN.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

My brother, Thurmas, was deaf. I
 wondered, "Why were things like
 this, God? Why was everyone so
 different? Why did some have more
 than others?"

I didn't understand, but I felt
 that I was there to make sure they
 didn't lose their stingers.

CUT TO:

34. EXT./A CHURCH: NIGHT
 Several cars parked in the lot and on the street.

[Gospel MUSIC from church]

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was leading two lives. One for
 Mom and Daddy and my aunts who got
 me into the church choir.

CUT TO:

35. INT./CHURCH: NIGHT
 Choir rehearsal in progress. PROMISE sings in the tenor section.
 REECIE sings in the soprano section.

(MORE)

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

One for me.

ANGLE: REECIE: looking over at PROMISE who doesn't see her.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

A duality conceived in Kadena.

36. INSERT: JAPAN: DAD dangles PROMISE over the roof.

CUT TO:

37. INT./CHURCH: NIGHT

PROMISE sings Gospel songs. He appears to be a clean cut American kid.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

And given birth in Colorado Springs.

CUT TO:

38. INT/BOYS' BEDROOM: NIGHT

[GUNSHOT; VERY LOUD]

The BOYS, including PROMISE. JOLTED by the sound.

CUT TO:

39. INT./CHURCH: NIGHT

The CHOIR sings, REECIE looking over at PROMISE.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Having no other frame of reference, I supposed that was what life was.

I decided I'd just make the best of things.

(MORE)

40. EXT./GARAGE: SUBURBAN HOME: NIGHT

This is an older, well-worn garage. Paint peeling. The yard not in the best shape. Old bikes left abandoned in weeds.

[RHYTHMIC THUMPING, SEXUAL SOUNDS]

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

It wasn't love.

CUT TO:

41. INT./GARAGE: NIGHT

PROMISE dresses himself, stoic as always. A few bottles of Mad Dog nearby, a joint in his mouth.

REECIE lies on the hood of an old car, the hood covered by a tarp which she now uses to cover herself.

REECIE glows with love. PROMISE ignores her, checks his watch.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

It was what she wanted.

A lot of girls think their sex can control a man. Reecie believed that.

In the history of the world, never has anyone been more wrong.

REECIE:

Lemme hit that.

ANGLE: REECIE, takes the joint from PROMISE. She lies on her back, looking up at the ceiling, dreaming of what could be.

REECIE:

When I was little, Mama took me to the ice show. There were all these girls in pretty costumes... dancing on the ice...

(MORE)

I wanted to be like them.
Graceful... like swans. I wanted
to be a swan, Promise.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

This was the part I hated.

PROMISE continues dressing. He's not trying to hear this.

REECIE:

Now, [*laughing*] I'd rather do
without all that ice. Maybe go to
New York... dance at Lincoln
Center...

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

This. The stupid nonsense you've
got to listen to after you get
some. The price they make you pay.

She rolls over to face PROMISE, smiling, covering herself with
the tarp.

REECIE:

Think you could live in New York,
Promise?

PROMISE ignores her.

REECIE:

Promise...?

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I never liked being called
Promise. It seemed soft and
vulnerable.

PROMISE lights another joint. Annoyed that she's ruining his
buzz.

PROMISE:

Look, Reecie, I gotta go.

(MORE)

REECIE:

You don't think about your future...?

PROMISE:

I don't think about dancing in Lincoln Center or no stupid nonsense like that. I don't think about no ice shows.

REECIE:

Well, then, what do you think about?

PROMISE:

I think a lot about how dumb girls waste their time dreaming about Lincoln Center when they know full well they'll be working at their Pops' hardware store until they're old and their titties sag.

REECIE:

[Angry] What the hell's wrong with you?

PROMISE:

[Angry] Why can't you leave it alone? We had fun, now you've got to come on with all that stupid girl crap.

REECIE:

"Fun"? "Fun?!" Is that all I am to you?

PROMISE ignores her. He's leaving.

PROMISE:

Less than that.

(MORE)

REECIE grabs his arm, stopping him.

REECIE:

"See you?" That's a joke, right?

Promise... I love you.

PROMISE:

Doubt it.

REECIE:

I... I gave you my virginity...

PROMISE:

Which explains why you were so boring.

REECIE slaps PROMISE.

PROMISE punches REECIE with his fist, sending her caroming over the hood and onto the dirty garage floor.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I could make a lot of excuses. I could do a lot of explaining. I was young. I was high. My Dad mistreated me.

Truth was, I was just mean.

Mean as he was.

PROMISE beats REECIE. Ruthless, brutal, firing at will. REECIE offers no resistance and is clearly helpless but PROMISE doesn't care. He shows REECIE no compassion whatsoever as he snarls at her.

REECIE:

[Sobbing]

God... oh God... what's wrong with you?!?

PROMISE:

(MORE)

What's wrong with me?

When I was little, my dad didn't take me to no damned ice show, bitch.

I don't wanna hear none of your corny Lincoln Center B.S.

PROMISE exits.

REECIE:

[Sobbing]

C'mon, Promise... don't go... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to...

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

And that just made me angrier. Her weakness. I beat her and she apologies to me. I utterly despised her.

And I'd said too much. Talked too much about myself. Gave her something she could use as a weapon against me.

CUT TO:

42. EXT./SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD: NIGHT
PROMISE heads out into the world.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

This was what passed for nobility in my drug-addled state: push her away. Get her to hate me.

These good little church girls, giving up their virginity six and eight times.

I wasn't what she needed and she definitely wasn't what I wanted.

(MORE)

43. EXT./BRITT'S HOUSE: NIGHT
Dumpy neighborhood, older cars, junk in the yard.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

The fellas and I landed at Britt's house-- a crash pad where lots of GI's and street kids hung out.

CUT TO:

44. INT./BRITT'S KITCHEN: NIGHT
PROMISE and KENNY fix up a pitcher of Kool-Aid while JAMAL talks on the phone.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I met Britt and his roommates Keith and Slam when I was selling dope.

Kenny hung out for the free dope, in spite of the beating I gave him.

ANGLE: PROMISE'S POV: SLAM asleep in the living room. SLAM is a huge guy, a wrestler. A bear.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

That night we mixed up some Kool-Aid and decided to make it supersonic. So we put in twenty or maybe thirty hits of windowpane acid.

ANGLE: the BOYS in the KITCHEN. JAMAL hangs up the phone.

JAMAL:

Yo, let's bounce.

KENNY:

Hello-- just about done, here--!

JAMAL takes the pitcher and puts it in the fridge.

(MORE)

JAMAL:

Yo, Betty and Knee-Hi say they got us a little sumthin'-sumthin'.

KENNY:

I'm in.

JAMAL:

Promise? Stay or go?

ANGLE: PROMISE: Intense.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Turn right, turn left.

PROMISE:

Sure. Whatever.

FADE TO:

45. EXT./BRITT'S HOUSE: NIGHT

The BOYS return to the house, walking. JAMAL laughing.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

The girls were a bust. Ugly and wouldn't put out. So we headed back to Britt's.

JAMAL:

Man, Kenny, you wouldn't know what to do with a girl if you tripped over one!

KENNY:

"To mourn a mischief that is past and gone is the next way to draw new mischief on!"

Othello. Act I, Scene III

(MORE)

JAMAL:

"Let's ride with the family down the street. Through the courtesy of Fred's two feet."

[Speaking stoically, not singing]
Flintstones. Meet The Flintstones.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I shouldn't have been there.

I should have been at Uncle Bud's. He gave me sanctuary. Good advice. He was one of only a handful of people I actually trusted.

CUT TO:

46. INT./BRITT'S KITCHEN: NIGHT

PROMISE is distracted, feeling out of place. KENNY is oblivious as he chats, JAMAL gets the pitcher from the fridge.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I wondered what I was doing there. And I didn't like wondering.

Getting high was the answer to everything. A few sips of the Supersonic Kool-Aid, and I wouldn't be wondering anymore.

JAMAL (OFF):

Heyyy--!!

ANGLE: JAMAL, holding the pitcher: it's empty.

JAMAL:

Who poured out our stuff?!

The BOYS look at each other.

KENNY:

(MORE)

Hey-- don't look at me. I already
took one ass-whuppin' tonight!

Maybe Britt's mom poured it out?
Does Britt have a mom...?

It finally dawns on them: the BOYS turn as one, looking into the
living room.

CUT TO:

47. INT./BRITT'S LIVING ROOM: NIGHT
SLAM slouched in an easy chair. Glassy eyed. Stoned out of his
mind while the television blared on.

JAMAL (Off):

Slam! Slam, man--

The BOYS rush into the living room, surrounding SLAM, JAMAL
displays the empty pitcher, pointing to it.

JAMAL:

--yo, what happened to our stash,
man? The Kool-Aid-- what happened
to it--?!

ANGLE: SLAM: high, disoriented.

SLAM:

...I drunk it...

ANGLE: The BOYS: realization sinking in: JAMAL stares at the
empty pitcher.

KENNY:

That... that's not possible... the
whole pitcher...? There's thirty
tabs of acid in there!

SLAM:

I am the son of Malcolm X!
I am the spirit of Martin!

(MORE)

JAMAL:

Yo-- we out!

KENNY:

Are you nuts?! We can't just leave him--

JAMAL:

That-- [*jabs at SLAM*] --is a dead man. Yo, I don't do dead people.

KENNY:

And it's our fault!

JAMAL:

The hell it is.

KENNY:

We can't just leave him!

JAMAL:

Please to observe.

PROMISE:

Kenny-- where's your car?

KENNY:

Dead. Alternator's shot.

ANGLE: PROMISE: stoic. He's making the decision.

PROMISE:

Well, then, we go to "Plan B."

CUT TO:

48. EXT./MEMORIAL HOSPITAL: NIGHT

With great difficulty, PROMISE, KENNY and JAMAL drag the hulking SLAM out of a TAXI and into the EMERGENCY ROOM.

(MORE)

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Slam was in the Air Force, on their wrestling team. He was a fun guy and a funny guy who never really harmed anybody.

KENNY:

Doctor! We need a doctor!!

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Days later, they admitted him to the State Mental Hospital. He was gone. He had lost his mind.

All that acid.

ANGLE: a COP approaches the BOYS.

COP:

You kids-- hold it right there--!

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

What I did to Slam is one of the biggest regrets of my life.

The BOYS drops SLAM and bolt out of the hospital.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

The sad thing about regrets is they never go away.

CUT TO:

49. EXT./PARK: NIGHT

PROMISE, KENNY, and JAMAL stop running. KENNY and JAMAL are laughing, celebrating their escape.

JAMAL:

You see that cop's face? Now he know he ain't about to catch a brother!

(MORE)

KENNY:

Guess you two would know-- you being felons and all-- this must be everyday stuff.

JAMAL:

Yeah, like the runnin' part-- you being a woman and all--!

VOICE (OFF):

Ey-- ey, yo.

CUT TO:

ANGLE: a panel VAN. HANSON and DUVALL in the van. HANSON, a large, muscular white man is in the passenger seat. They wear street clothes, but they are G.I.'s

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

G.I.'s. I'd been around enough of them to tell right away. G.I.'s were such saps. Such easy marks.

HANSON:

What'choo need, cousin?

JAMAL approaches them, cocky. Unafraid.

JAMAL:

Whatcha got, G.I.?

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Jamal was always brave when he had brothers watching his back. That was the problem, the situations a brother like Jamal could put you in.

Watching a brother's back exposes your own.

(MORE)

HANSON:

Speed and weed.

JAMAL:

Blaze and Sherm, baby.

HANSON and DUVALL confer.

HANSON:

All right. Let's do this.

CUT TO:

50. INT./DUVALL VAN: NIGHT
PROMISE, JAMAL and KENNY enter the VAN.

JAMAL:

Sheridan and Las Animas.

KENNY:

Hey-- lemme check out the goods,
ey?

ANGLE: PROMISE: HANSON reaches past as he passes his drugs to
KENNY.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Do you remember the day your life
changed forever? What if you could
go back, to just an hour before
that car accident. Just a few
minutes before the house caught
fire.

Would you actually hear the
warning bells? Would you feel the
world shifting around you?

And, would you pay attention?

VOICE (Whisper):

(MORE)

Promise...

CUT TO:

51. EXT./BRITT'S HOUSE: NIGHT
THE VAN pulls up in the driveway.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

There was nothing whatsoever right about this scene. About these two G.I.'s we'd never seen before. Might be a rip-off. Might be cops.

CUT TO:

52. INT./VAN: NIGHT
The BOYS are leaving. HANSON stops KENNY.

HANSON:

Hold up. One of you has to stay. We'll keep Shakespeare, here.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Things were heading south.

The whole time Kenny was trying to steal both the weed and the speed. When he passed it back, the bags were short.

They knew he had the missing stuff. Now I'd have to save him.

JAMAL:

Yeah, whatever. Back in a sec.

CUT TO:

53. INT./BRITT'S KITCHEN: NIGHT
JAMAL passes through the kitchen, heading for the living room. He has no intention of going back to that van.

(MORE)

JAMAL:

Yo, we out.

PROMISE:

Can't leave Kenny.

JAMAL:

Kenny who?

PROMISE:

Jay...

JAMAL:

Kenny is an idiot. He stole them
G.I.'s dope. They 'bout to make a
piñata out that fool.

PROMISE:

Look, we made a deal--

JAMAL stops, argues with PROMISE.

JAMAL:

For what?! Man, I was just runnin'
some game on them G.I.'s.

You see the muscles on that guy?!

PROMISE:

So, we just leave Kenny?

JAMAL:

Ey-- nigga left YOU, remember?
Twenty-one days in Castle Rock?
This here's whatcha call "Kenny
Karma."

PROMISE walks away from JAMAL. TRACK WITH PROMISE TO:

(MORE)

INT./BEDROOM: NIGHT

PROMISE pulls an object from under a bed, a pistol wrapped in a cloth. Make this a revolver so it does NOT resemble the gun he buried.

CUT TO:

54. INT./BRITT'S KITCHEN: NIGHT

PROMISE walks past JAMAL. Grim expression.

PROMISE:

Grab up whatever dope we've got left and meet me outside.

JAMAL:

Promise-- Promise, you don't owe the guy.

JAMAL:

Yo, I seen this movie, man. It don't end well.

CUT TO:

55. EXT./BRITT'S DRIVEWAY: NIGHT

HANSON has pinned KENNY up against the van and is choking him. DUVAL holds baggies of dope, going through them to make sure it's all there.

PROMISE (OFF):

Let him go.

HANSON continues choking KENNY, turns to snarl at PROMISE.

HANSON:

You're next, kid.

PROMISE approaches slowly. He shows no emotion.

PROMISE:

(MORE)

I know. Look, I'll take care of
him. Just take your stuff and go.

HANSON, arrogant, defiant.

HANSON:

Don't give me orders.

PROMISE:

Let him go.
I won't tell you again.

HANSON smiles, brutally shoves KENNY to the ground near DUVALL.
HANSON turns towards PROMISE. HANSON produces a pair of
nunchucks that had been tucked into his waistband and begins
expertly flailing them around.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Derek Hanson was a soldier in the
U.S. Army Special Forces. A
martial arts instructor. He was
six foot two and 220 pounds.

PROMISE holds his ground. Shows no emotion.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I was fifteen years old.
Five foot six and 145 pounds.

PROMISE:

Look: don't come any closer.

HANSON laughs at him, continues towards him, flailing the
nunchucks.

PROMISE raises his shirt, displaying the butt of the revolver.

PROMISE:

Just stop where you are.

HANSON keeps coming.

PROMISE pulls the revolver out.

(MORE)

PROMISE:

You're going to make me shoot you.

HANSON keeps coming.

ANGLE: PROMISE's hand on the trigger.

56. INT./PROMISE's HOUSE: DAY:

ANGLE: 8-YEAR OLD PROMISE: STARING at his HAND. Considering the moment.

[BEE BUZZING under]

CUT TO:

57. EXT./BRITT's DRIVEWAY: NIGHT

PROMISE, emotionless, aiming the revolver.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

CUT TO:

JAMAL exits the house, baggies of drugs in his hands. Alarmed.

JAMAL:

Promise--!!

SLAM CUT TO:

BLACK.

[Silence for a beat. And then:]

[GUNSHOT. LOUD.]

GUNSHOT fades to silence. And then:

[CAMERA SHUTTER; VERY LOUD.]

SLAM CUT TO:

(MORE)

58. FREEZE FRAME: KENNY's mug shot. Hair unkempt, KENNY badly beaten.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Kenny gave us up.

The cops barely looked at him and
he was on his back like a fish.
Put everything on me and Jamal.

SLAM CUT TO:

HOLD: KENNY mug shot side profile.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

In exchange for his cooperation,
Kenny was sentenced to a few years
in reform school.

SLAM CUT TO:

HOLD: JAMAL's mug shot. JAMAL with sarcastic scowl, "What you lookin' at?"

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Jamal and I were tried as adults
and sent to the penitentiary.

SLAM CUT TO:

HOLD: JAMAL mug shot side profile.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Jamal and Kenny pled guilty to
armed robbery, even though they
weren't armed and there was no
robbery.

The charge was an alternative to
being named accessory to murder,
but the main purpose of the

(MORE)

charge, however, was to guarantee
jail time for me.

SLAM CUT TO:

HOLD: PROMISE's mug shot. No expression. No fear, no anger.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Their pleading on armed robbery
meant that if I went to trial, my
charge would automatically stick
at first-degree murder. First
degree murder implied intent,
which I didn't have, and didn't
allow for the fact that I was
pinned down by a trained killer
twice my size.

Or the fact everybody there that
night was in the wrong.

HOLD: PROMISE mug shot side profile.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

If found guilty, I would face the
death penalty or life in prison.
So, on a plea bargain, just weeks
before I turned sixteen, I pled
guilty to second-degree murder.

There was no trial. I was
sentenced to ten to twelve years
in the Colorado State
Penitentiary.

SLAM CUT TO:

59. INSERT: a DOCUMENT:

DOCUMENT:

Name:

Date of Birth:

(MORE)

List of personal possessions:

I agree not to perform acts of sodomy and understand that they are a crime, punishable by the state of Colorado.

Signature

Date

CUT TO:

60. INT./FISH TANK: DAY

This is a processing area for new prison arrivals. A dozen or more newly arrived CONVICTS waiting to be processed, holding paperwork, personal effects. Etc.

ANGLES: these CONVICTS. Some are SCARY DUDES. Tattoos, muscles, hostile looks. This is PRISON.

PROMISE and JAMAL, still in street clothes, await their turn for cavity inspection. JAMAL is wired, nervous, putting up a tough front for the others. PROMISE reads, ignoring him.

[BOUNCING BALL]

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I didn't feel anything.

I didn't feel scared. I didn't feel sad. I didn't feel happy. I had stopped feeling a long time ago.

JAMAL:

Yeah, well, this is about to be real unpleasant...

And that finger up your butt deal? Get used to that.

PROMISE looks toward the source of the noise.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

(MORE)

If you absolutely refused to submit to this paper rape, you were shipped to the state hospital in Pueblo. Some of those guys became part of an experiment with a new drug called Thorazine that left them not caring about anything.

This was a lot like the Tuskegee experiments or the Army planting smallpox-infected "disease blankets" in trade items so Native Americans would be killed.

ANGLE: what PROMISE sees: THE MEXICAN.
A MEXICAN CONVICT, wearing a red bandanna, bounces a rubber ball off of the staircase.

[BOUNCING BALL]

THE MEXICAN catches and holds the ball, the noise stops.

JAMAL gives the MEXICAN a "What's up" nod. Making friends.

JAMAL:

[Trying to butch up]
So, you get to play ball in here?

The MEXICAN glares at JAMAL a minute before grabbing his own crotch, smiling.

MEXICAN:

Hell, yeah, boy.
We play all kinds of ball in here.

The MEXICAN smiles at PROMISE. PROMISE locks his eyes on the MEXICAN, glaring at him.

CUT TO:

61. INT./PRISON: DAY
JAMAL and PROMISE exit the processing area, now wearing prison greens, carrying their personal effects.

(MORE)

PROMISE and JAMAL have had their heads shaved: they are completely bald. JAMAL, annoyed, rubs his bald head with one hand.

JAMAL:

You kiddin' me. You must be
kiddin' me. Man, ain't this a
bitch!

What crime did my hair commit?!?

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I finished my paperwork and got my
number, 42885. It fit me. It fit
me like my green shirt and pants
and my Brogan shoes with the "V"
cut in the heel.

I felt and looked like a seasoned
convict. As if I knew this was
where life would inevitably send
me.

GUARDS separate PROMISE and JAMAL, leading JAMAL off. JAMAL is a bit fearful.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

They put me on the third tier
and Jamal on the first.

JAMAL:

Stay strong, man. I mean, if you
don't, what's gonna happen to me?

PROMISE gives JAMAL a "Stay up" look. Friends for life.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Everyone had thought that Jamal
had been leading me around because
he was older. But I knew I was
going to have to take care of this
boy.

CUT TO:

(MORE)

62. INT./CELLBLOCK: NIGHT
 PROMISE walks along the TIER, following a GUARD. INMATES turn and watch, taunting/welcoming the new meat.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I'd have to look after us both.

HIGH ANGLE: PROMISE's POV: the cell block floor some 60 feet below: inmates walking in single lines, inmates leaning over railing on various tiers below. Promise's feet protrude from the railing.

DAD VO:

Now?

CUT TO:

63. INSERT: JAPAN: DAD dangles PROMISE over the roof.

CUT TO:

64. INT./CELLBLOCK: NIGHT
 PROMISE sits on his bunk in his cell as the door slides shut.

PROMISE lies down on the bunk, staring out into space.

ANGLE: in CLOSE: PROMISE's EYE.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

PROMISE scampers up, looking this way and that. He has finally heard the voice.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

Three times I heard the voice call.

VOICE (Whisper):

Promise...

(MORE)

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I knew I wasn't asleep, so I
 couldn't be dreaming but I also
 couldn't figure out where the
 voice was coming from. I just
 heard it.

PROMISE looks around, his stoicism momentarily broken. Then he
 lies back down again.

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

No one else seemed to hear it. And
 I couldn't risk being seen as a
 lunatic my first night.

PROMISE curls up defensively in fetal position, tugging his
 pillow around his ears.

PAN BACK AND AWAY

PROMISE (ADULT) VO:

I hadn't realized the voice
 in my ear was God.

FADE OUT