

THE PROMISE

Screenplay by

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TITLE ON SCREEN: "CHAPTER 1 - The Promise"

INT. ADOPTION CENTER - DAY

JASON'S MOTHER, sitting, holds BABY JASON for the last time. An ADOPTION WORKER sits next to her, waiting and listening patiently.

JASON'S MOTHER
You'll find him a good home?

ADOPTION WORKER
Yes ma'am, we'll find him a wonderful home.

Jason's Mother looks into Baby Jason's eyes.

JASON'S MOTHER
I promise you, my dear baby Jason,
you'll be successful in life,
you'll be healthy, and you'll find
lasting love.

She kisses Baby Jason on the forehead, crying, and hands him carefully over to the Adoption Worker.

Baby Jason cries too.

FADE OUT.

TITLE ON SCREEN: "CHAPTER 2 - TRANSFORMATION"

Thirty-Seven years later ...

EXT. JASON'S HOME - EVENING

Jason's wife, TAMMY, is planting some colorful flowers in the front yard.

Jason pulls up quickly and neatly into the driveway in his Audi S4.

Tammy stands up, stretches a bit, smiles.

Jason hops out in his airline Captain's uniform and greets Tammy with a warm kiss. He looks over the new flowers.

JASON
Looks nice. I love the colors.

TAMMY
Thanks. How'd work go?

JASON
No emergencies. Pretty good weather
all week. You know, good.

TAMMY
Great. I've got pasta for dinner,
that okay?

JASON
Yeah, fine. I'm just gonna grab a
quick workout - sitting my butt all
week.

TAMMY
A pilot's life.

She pulls his tie, smiles.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
There's something I wanna talk to
you about at dinner...

JASON
What? You get a promotion?

TAMMY
(smiling)
Nope. Much more important.

Jason is intrigued.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Go do your workout. I'm gonna
finish up here.

JASON
'Kay.

Jason heads inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JASON'S GARAGE GYM - EVENING

Jason is lying on a workout bench, doing bench press with a
decent amount of weight for his size.

He finishes his set, stretches a bit, gets up, hops on an exercise bike, checks his watch and starts pedaling.

INT. JASON'S HOME, KITCHEN - EVENING

Jason and Tammy are eating pasta and drinking wine.

JASON

So, what's the big news?

TAMMY

I want to start a family. Clock's ticking.

JASON

(not super excited)
Really?

TAMMY

I want to quit work and be a trad wife. You bring home the bacon, I'll make sure the kids have a mom who's present in their lives.

JASON

Um, what if the baby is, you know, not well? I read more and more kids are being born with problems. There's so many bad chemicals in our environment these days.

TAMMY

Don't be so negative. It's possible, but pretty slim chance - we're both pretty healthy.

JASON

A lot of the flight attendants and pilots I work with are saying they wouldn't want to bring kids into this world, things are getting so crazy and all.

Tammy's mood sours a bit.

JASON (CONT'D)

What if I lose my job? Like they say, mine's the hardest job to get, and the easiest job to lose.

They sit in silence, obviously at an impasse.

JASON (CONT'D)
I'm going out to the range
tomorrow.

TAMMY
Will you think about it?

JASON
Yeah, sure.

TAMMY
Please?

JASON
Yeah, we should talk more about
that.

TAMMY
It's not a perfect world, Jason.

Jason digests this new development in their relationship.

FADE OUT.

EXT. TARGET SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Jason is shooting his Beretta .380 handgun at a rack with six
steel pop-up plates. He's pretty good, hits mostly. He's
wearing a baseball cap, safety glasses and ear protection.

Next to his area is a bowling pin setup.

BOWLING PIN GUY in a pickup truck pulls in, unloads his gear
and sets it on the table in the bowling pin area. He sees
Jason is reloading.

BOWLING PIN GUY
(to Jason)
Mind if I shoot some pins?

JASON
Na, go for it. What're you
shooting?

BOWLING PIN GUY
.45 ACP. Home loads.

JASON
Cool. Enjoy.

Bowling Pin Guy walks over to the pins and lines them up on
the rack.

Jason pulls the rope that resets his plates, then reloads a couple of mags.

Bowling Pin Guy puts on his protection, puts a mag in his pistol, aims and shoots. A pin falls. He shoots another, misses.

Jason puts a loaded mag in his pistol just as Bowling Pin Guy fires again. We instantly hear a ricochet, Jason grabs his head behind his right ear and falls to the ground, screaming in pain, then passes out.

Bowling Pin Guy puts his weapon down and runs to Jason. Blood appears but not in great quantities from the area behind Jason's right ear.

BOWLING PIN GUY

Holy crap! Hold on man, I got some stuff...Dammit!

Bowling Pin Guy runs back to his bag, pulls out a packet of coagulant and some big gauze pads. He rushes back to Jason, rips open the packet and dumps some coagulant on the wound, then packs on the gauze.

Satisfied he's stemmed the bleeding, he tries waking Jason.

BOWLING PIN GUY (CONT'D)

Hey, wake up! Don't go anywhere on me. I'm getting help right now.

Bowling Pin Guy pulls out his cell phone and dials 911.

BOWLING PIN GUY (CONT'D)

(on phone with 911)

Hello! A guy's been shot at the shooting range, head wound, he's not responding, we need help right now! What? Yeah. The range off of Hwy 49...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ER - DAY

Jason lies in a hospital ICU bed. A SURGEON fills him in on the surgery.

The surgeon takes Jason's left hand in his own.

SURGEON

Squeeze.

Jason can't squeeze.

JASON

I don't feel anything there, doc.
What's going on?

SURGEON

So the slug struck you in the right parietal lobe area. Crushed the skull, but did not penetrate. I had to remove several bone fragments, which, to be honest, did some relatively minor damage to your brain. That's why you aren't feeling anything in your left hand. Could have been a lot worse.

JASON

How soon until I recover?

SURGEON

(very serious)

I can't say for sure. To be honest, maybe never.

Jason's face goes blank as he weighs the meaning of those words.

The surgeon rubs Jason's shoulder compassionately.

FADE OUT.

ONE MONTH LATER...

INT. JASON'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Jason is making a peanut butter sandwich, as best he can with no feeling in his left hand.

Jason's cell phone rings. He puts it on speaker phone, sets it down.

JASON

Jason speaking.

We hear the airline personnel scheduler.

PERSONNEL SCHEDULER

Hi Jason, Pam Stevens, with Scheduling.

JASON
Hi Pam, what's up?

PERSONNEL SCHEDULER
We got the Flight Surgeon's report
back today.

JASON
Yeah?

PERSONNEL SCHEDULER
I'm afraid your flight status has
been revoked, due to your injury.

JASON
Am I being fired?

PERSONNEL SCHEDULER
Furloughed. With benefits.

JASON
That's great. That's just frickin'
great.

PERSONNEL SCHEDULER
I'm sorry Jason.

JASON
Yeah, me too.

FADE OUT.

INT. JASON'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Jason and Tammy are discussing their new reality.

TAMMY
So can you re-train in some related
field?

JASON
I guess so. This isn't what I
planned for my life.
(beat)
I just need time to think. I can't
really start a family right now.
Until I get back on my feet.

TAMMY
How long's that going to take?

JASON
How am I supposed to know?

TAMMY

You aren't the only one this
accident has affected.

JASON

I'm sorry.

A few moments of silence.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'm going for a walk.

TAMMY

Where are you going?

JASON

Out.

Jason leaves.

Tammy cries.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SHOPPING STREETS - DAY

Jason walks down past the stores on a street near his house. He's sporting a fedora with a tidy hat band. Looks good on him.

He passes a pimple-faced malnourished kid hawking a new church concept. A sign board says 'Build a Better Church,' and has a few catchy bullet points beneath the title, like 'Not a religion,' 'All are welcome,' and 'We'll read ALL The Books,' etc. - The New Church of Spirituality.

CHURCH KID

(strong Irish accent)

Hey mister, will ya help us build a
better church and a better world?
All are welcome, not a religion.
Anything'd help.

Jason stops for a second, but is lost deep in his own thoughts, doesn't pay much attention.

CHURCH KID (CONT'D)

Wha'd'ya say, five dollars today?
Ten dollars? More if ya like.

Jason walks on down the street. He sees a used bookstore, goes inside.

INT. USED BOOKSTORE - DAY

Jason is helped by the bookstore owner. They're looking at books on spirituality. The Bookstore Owner hands Jason a book by Marianne Williamson.

JASON

Yeah, I'll take that one.

The owner pulls 'Man's Search for Meaning' by Viktor Frankl off the shelf.

BOOKSTORE OWNER

Viktor Frankl. It's a good place to start.

Jason looks at it, adds it to his haul.

JASON

Got anything with airplanes?

The Bookstore Owner looks over his collection.

BOOKSTORE OWNER

Yeah, not much. Maybe this guy? He used to be pretty popular.

He pulls Richard Bach's 'Illusions,' and 'Jonathon Livingston Seagull' off the shelf and hands them to Jason.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

I think he was a pilot.

He pulls a thin third Bach book, 'The Discovery of Saunders-Vixen' off the shelf.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Oh, and this, same guy. Didn't sell as well as his others. Maybe his best, in my opinion.

Jason looks them over while the bookstore owner looks for more.

The bookstore owner pulls 'A Gift of Wings' also by Richard Bach.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

And one more. Short stories if I recall.

Jason approves, keeps that one too, looks interesting.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE, CASH REGISTER

Jason is ready with his credit card.

BOOKSTORE OWNER
Would you like a canvas bag?

The store owner shows off one of their custom printed canvas bags.

JASON
Sure.

The Bookstore Owner puts at least a dozen books in Jason's bag, takes the credit card and runs it.

BOOKSTORE OWNER
Receipt?

JASON
Yes, please.

Bookstore Owner prints a receipt and hands it to Jason, with his card.

JASON (CONT'D)
Thanks for your help.

BOOKSTORE OWNER
Sure. Have a blessed day.

Jason grabs the loaded bag and heads out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHOPPING STREETS - DAY

Jason, carrying his stuffed book bag, walks past a liquor store. He stops, hesitates. Looks in the open door.

He decides not to go in, and keeps on walking towards the neighborhood park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jason spots an empty bench, sits for a minute taking in the scenery, then looks in his bag, pulls out Viktor Frankl and starts to read.

We clearly see the title, 'Man's Search for Meaning.'

FADE OUT.

INT. JASON'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jason and Tammy are in bed, reading.

Tammy puts her book down.

TAMMY

Where do you go all day?

JASON

The park, mostly. To read.

TAMMY

What are you reading?

JASON

Just books.

Jason continues reading.

Tammy looks over at what Jason is reading.

He's reading 'Saunders-Vixen.'

TAMMY

What's that, a children's book?

JASON

Hardly.

Jason lays the book down.

JASON (CONT'D)

He's talking about a Heaven, of sorts, you know, for pilots.

Tammy nods, neither in approval or disapproval.

Then Jason opines out of the blue.

JASON (CONT'D)

Did you know that bird designs change over time, just like airplane designs change and get better over time?

TAMMY

Okay...

JASON

So that means Creation is an evolutionary process. And Evolution is a creative process.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

Evolution and creation aren't mutually exclusive - they're concurrent. We're not only the beneficiaries of Creation - we're partners in it.

Tammy looks at Jason, at a loss for words. We wonder if she's going to praise him for his brilliance.

TAMMY

I have no idea what you're talking about.

Tammy rolls over, turning her back to Jason, and shuts off her light.

FADE OUT.

INT. JASON'S HOME, KITCHEN - MORNING

Jason and Tammy are having coffee. It's pretty quiet.

TAMMY

I think we should separate.

Jason ponders yet another negative development in his life.

JASON

You kidding?

TAMMY

No, I'm not. I don't see you trying real hard to get back on your feet. You go to the park, you read stuff. Are you depressed? You think you need to see a shrink?

Jason can't find the words.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

I'm going to my sister's for awhile.

Jason sips his coffee.

FADE OUT.

TITLE ON SCREEN: "CHAPTER 3 - CONFIRMATION"

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jason walks down the shopping street to the park, carrying his book bag. He's wearing his fedora.

He looks unshaven, slovenly and depressed.

He passes the bookstore.

He comes to the liquor store, and hesitates.

He lingers for a bit, reads some of the window ads.

He cancels those thoughts, whatever they were, and keeps walking.

The Church Kid has set up his show near the entrance to the park. Same spiel. Sees Jason.

CHURCH KID

Will ya help us out today sir? Just ten dollars for the Good News. Ten dollars sir?

Jason keeps walking past as the kid's voice fades.

CHURCH KID

Five dollars then? Less than a sandwich. Five dollars, for all the heavens, man, five dollars...

Jason stops, turns around, walks back to the kid, reaches into his wallet, and gives the kid a fiver.

CHURCH KID

Thank ye sir, thank ye! Money well spent. Yes indeed. Enjoy your day sir.

Jason walks on into the park.

Jason arrives at his bench, sits, observes the park life a bit, then pulls out Bach's 'A Gift of Wings,' takes out the bookmark, puts it deeper in the book, and reads.

Jason hears a jet airliner pass low overhead, and looks up. The jet is on final approach to land, so it's pretty low.

As the jet disappears, a single white feather falls softly and silently from the sky.

It lands on the bench next to Jason. He puts his book down on his lap.

He looks at the feather, then picks it up with his good right hand and looks up into the sky to see where it might have come from.

No clue.

Jason inspects the feather carefully, amazed.

It's perfect, not a bit damaged.

He runs it under his nose. It tickles, and he smiles, amused.

Jason takes off his fedora, and carefully puts the feather in the hat band, smiling.

He puts his hat back on, and takes one more look up into the sky. Smiles slightly.

He picks up his book and continues reading.

END