

INHERITANCE OF HOPE

An Original Screenplay

Written by Shar Martin

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WGA/w

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "A good man leaves an inheritance for his
children's children. Book of Proverbs

Sugar Land, Texas 1997"

Used-up furniture, a pile of dirty clothes, and fast-food debris overwhelm the room. The only order appears on an old floor-model TV, where the HOST intently listens to his guest.

DR. HENRY VINES, Psychologist, appears beneath the mid-40s year-old man whose dangerous good-looks rival Idris Elba's.

DR. VINES

...I'm an ex-con, so I've witnessed
the annihilation of imprisoned teens
who otherwise could've been spared --

He's cut-off when the channel changes.

NATALIE, age seven, sits on the floor squinting at the TV. Her wisp of blond hair uncombed, the child's bony shoulders barely hold up her tattered nightgown. She points the remote that's held together with black tape and clicks to a cartoon.

GAIN BOLTON, age 18, enters with a brooding frown. Jock built and good-looking, he is dressed in a wrinkled shirt and questionably-clean jeans, and his shaggy sun-bleached hair could use a trim. Gain grabs a denim jacket off the hook.

Natalie turns her squint on him.

NATALIE

Where you goin'?

GAIN

Why?

NATALIE

Granddaddy's gonna sends mama's money
today.

GAIN

And?

NATALIE

She'll party it away 'n we ain't
got no food. And I'm hungry.

FRANCINE, 16, pretty and plump, strolls in looking like she just crawled out of bed. She holds a diaper-clad TODDLER, a cute tan-skinned black boy, in one arm.

Gain stares at erratic tracks along Francine's free arm.

Francine notes his attention and slings the arm behind her.

FRANCINE

Where you think you goin'? You
know mama's money comes today.

GAIN

Why you can't follow her to the
bank, Francine?

FRANCINE

She listens to you, Gain, come on.
If you don't I'll end-up havin'
to buy all the food.

GAIN

Then I guess you better go with her.
(bewildered)
Dog gone I want outta this place.
I gotta find a job.

He looks at Natalie, whose attention is on the television.

GAIN (CONT'D)

And yawl wash Natalie's clothes, so
she can take her tail to school.

FRANCINE

(sneers)
You got washin' money?

Gain gives her a look and walks out.

Their MOTHER, mid-30s, enters using the wall and furniture for support. Her hair is all askew, and her provocative party outfit appears to have doubled for bed clothes.

MOTHER

Natalie, you're sittin' too close
to that TV.

Natalie doesn't budge.

Mother zones as if her former concern is forgotten. She stumbles into the kitchen.

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

Call the bank, Francine. See if
daddy wired the money.

Francine flops down on the couch, sets the toddler loose, and snatches out a cigarette.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - SAME DAY

A tomato garden is the only maintained vegetation where rundown houses, two with huts-on-wheel trailers in front yards, are paced between small-parceled lots.

Gain is heading toward a group of old cars when he spots a newspaper in someone's yard. He sprints over and takes it.

An OLD WOMAN peeks out at him. Gain scowls at her. She quickly closes the curtain.

Gain spots SCOOT and JESSE watching him. Age 20 and equally hampered, they're loitering by a tree. Gain heads over.

SCOOT

Why you steal that ol' sow's paper?

JESSE

He wanna look at the pictures.

GAIN

Jesse, screw you. And when yawl start hangin' out this early?

JESSE

Scoot's mama, you didn't hear her? She woke up whole damn trailer park yellin' him outta the house.

SCOOT

It's that hairy cockroach she let move in. He's ridin' her to make me find a job.

GAIN

That biker? Do he gotta job?

SCOOT

Hell naw.

GAIN

Well, with all the construction goin' on, I headin' out to see what I can find. You wanna come?

Scoot looks at an equally amused Jesse--who drags on his cigarette and blows the smoke in Gain's face.

Gain shoves him then struts away, heading toward an

UNPAVED PARKING AREA

where he wades through chickens to his sun-faded car. He hops in. It won't start. He waits then tries again. Nothing.

Angry, Gain climbs out and slams the door with added force. Scoot and Jesse can be heard laughing. Gain flips them off and hurries toward the street.

EXT. URBAN CITY STREET--BUS STOP - SAME DAY

The small town borders Metropolitan Houston, lumping together this area of country and urban POOR FOLKS.

Waiting BUS PATRONS cleave tightly to all that they carry when Gain strolls into their vicinity.

Gain's flustered attention is on the newspaper he appears to be struggling to read. He looks up at an OLD MAN.

GAIN

Can you find the job section for me?

The old man moves away. A BOY, age 9, points to the classified section before his MOTHER draws him close. Gain pulls the section and tosses the rest in a nearby trash can.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SAME DAY

Gain takes in WORKERS and noisy equipment. He walks over and says something to a worker, who points to the trailer office...

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE--TRAILER OFFICE - SAME DAY

Gain hurries out looking dejected. The FOREMAN, 40s, steps outside staring after him. A rugged-looking WORKER walks up.

RUGGED WORKER

Why didn't you hire him? He looks like he can handle a digger.

The foreman hands him a job application with sparse scribble.

FOREMAN

Too many underground pipes to hire somebody who can't read warnings.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

Gain is near the street when a MAN cries out. He watches workers run over. Torn, he curiously follows.

A worker is on the ground; a gash in his thigh streams blood.

FOREMAN

Call an ambulance!

Gain grabs a shirt, plastic bag, and roll of tape off a nearby truck. He tears the shirt, places a piece of folded cloth on the man's wound and tapes the bag flush against it.

WORKER #1 (O.S.)
 (impressed)
 He must be a medical student.

WORKER #2 (O.S.)
 Yeah...

Gain looks flattered, then he meets the foreman's judgmental stare. Embarrassed, Gain hurries away.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME DAY

Gain nears the rundown manufactured dwelling to the sound of a violent altercation, that quickly spills outside.

The MAN, a mid-40's hairy-chested hustler type, is hitting Gain's mother. Francine jumps the man, but he slings her off and grabs their mother by the hair.

A fist slams into the man's jaw. He stumbles back, stunned. One look at Gain and he runs to his car.

Gain is right behind him when his mother jumps him.

MOTHER
 You bastard -- Bennie?! I love
 you baby, don't leave! I'll
 give you the damn money! Bennie!

The car tears out of there.

The battered woman furiously turns on Gain.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Bennie was gonna take me to Hill
 Town with him and you ran him off!

GAIN
 Mama, he was beatin' the crap out
 of you! What you expect me to do?!

MOTHER
 To stay the hell outta my business
 is what! I can't keep a man cause
 of you! You're eighteen now, your
 ass is grown. Get outta my house.

She runs inside crying while pining for Bennie (AD LIB).

Francine sadly gazes at her brother, who looks hurt. In the b.g., Natalie and the sobbing toddler stand by the door.

GAIN

My bag stay' pack. Just throw in
whatever I got out and sit it
outside. I'll pick it up later.

He walks away.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER, NIGHT

A duffle bag is outside the door. Gain picks it up and appears ready to knock. Torn, he eventually walks away.

A house over is a junk-filled canopy, where Gain flops down on an old sofa and lays back.

EXT. CANOPY - DAY

Gain is asleep on the old sofa. He awakens to a BOY and GIRL, age 8, looking down at him. Their belongings say they should be en route to school.

GIRL

He ain't a bum, he lives next door.

BOY

Looks like a bum to me.

Gain springs up. The startled children bolt.

EXT. SMALL MARKET - SAME DAY

Gain stares at a Help Wanted sign then looks at the KOREAN MERCHANT behind the counter. He rakes his hands through his hair, then goes inside wearing the same clothes he slept in.

INT. SMALL MARKET - CONTINUOUS

The merchant is busy, so Gain heads to the fridge. He grabs a soda, but a six-pack of beer gets his attention. Gain pivots to watch the merchant.

The merchant is ringing a CUSTOMER. His WIFE bags for him.

Gain heads for the exit.

EXT. SMALL MARKET - CONTINUOUS

The merchant runs out brandishing a gun--he blocks off Gain.

A COUPLE hurries past the merchant's frantic wife.

KOREAN MERCHANT

You people, you rob me blind!
(barks at his wife)
Go call the police!

MERCHANT'S WIFE

Just let him go away!

He ignores her.

GAIN

What, you wanna shoot me over
a damn six pack?

Gain's enraged glare remains on the merchant as he removes the beer from inside his jacket. He slams it to the ground.

A few cans bust open on impact, spewing foam.

The merchant's bravado transforms to fear. He cast a nervous glance at his wife, who hurries back inside. She can be seen through the window grabbing up the phone.

KOREAN MERCHANT

You-you raise your hands!

Gain is on the merchant in a flash grabbing for the gun. They struggle, then the sound of a gunshot.

PEDESTRIANS run screaming, followed by the progressive sounds of screeching tires and blowing horns.

Gain, with gun in hand, watches in horror as the merchant stumbles back.

A blood spot is growing on the right side of the man's shirt.

Gain flees.

INT./EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

An OLD MAN wearing a cowboy hat drives around slowing traffic. His passenger is a YOUNG MAN who wears a similar hat. Bales of hay are in the bed of the truck.

Suddenly, the old man slams on the brakes to avoid hitting Gain.

Gain opens the door and grabs the man.

GAIN

Get out, you ol' bastard!

YOUNG MAN

Grandpa!

He hops out dashing around the truck.

Alerted, Gain raises the gun on the young man.

OLD MAN

No!

Gain quickly drops his arm. Shaken, he stares at the merchant then backs off like he's ready to flee. A revolver kisses his cheek. Gain freezes.

The OFFICER relieves him of the gun.

A second OFFICER snaps Gain in a grip lock then slams him across the hood of a traffic-stalled car. Gain's resistance ends in concern when an ambulance stops nearby.

TWO PARAMEDICS hop out and dash over to the merchant, whose sobbing wife is beside him. He is conscious and responsive.

YOUNG MAN

Think he's on them drugs?

OLD MAN

Maybe, but he's gotta start makin' good decisions at some point.

Gain scowls at them while being manhandled into the cruiser.

INT. JAIL - SAME DAY

A noisy MALE CAPTIVE is dragged out as Dr. Henry Vines (the ex-con psychologist) enters. Wearing business casuals, he holds a 1997 StarTAC® cell phone to his ear.

INTERCUT WITH: INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

PELT, 45 and hardcore, with scary blue eyes, has a deep-voice Texas drawl. There are male conversations in the b.g.

PELT

You know that ain't how I operate.

DR. VINES

Pelt, would you just do it?

PELT

Look, Henry, I ain't spyin' for you or nobody else. Now you just have to deal with not likin' it.

DR. VINES

Fine. At least tell me if you've identified any new prospects?

PELT

Not yet. I'll let you know when I do -- Miss Tina get there yet?

TINA, age 22 and wearing business-casuals, enters and walks over to Vines. A pretty blue-eyed woman with short blond hair, Tina projects a tough yet sophisticated edge.

DR. VINES

Yeah, her late ass just got here.

Pelt chuckles, hangs up and walks away. INMATES, from various racial origins, break from groups and join him. Pelt's entourage continues to increase as he walks on.

BACK TO DR. VINES & TINA

She graces him with a pointed look.

TINA

Who was that?

DR. VINES

Your father.

TINA

Why didn't you let me talk to him?

Vines pockets his cell phone.

DR. VINES

He said he talked to you yesterday.

A THUG, 14, is brought to him. Vines slaps him upside his head.

TINA

Doctor Vines, you can't abuse him like this.

He looks at her like she's crazy.

DR. VINES

You call that abuse? It amazes me that you have any success with these kids.

TINA

Our methods work. Most of the time.

DR. VINES

Yeah, well, sometimes you gotta lay hands on 'em.

He pops him again then hustles the frightened thug past two cops, who are roughly showing Gain inside.

Struggling, Gain slams into Tina.

OFFICER

Watch it, boy! -- Sorry ma'am.

Gain cranks his neck to observe Tina's departure.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT--EVIDENCE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

OFFICER #1 lays a gun on the counter. The DESK CLERK writes on his log.

OFFICER #1

Attempted robbery, he shot the owner.

DESK CLERK

Dead?

Gain snatches away. Officer #1 slams him against the wall, removes Gain's handcuffs then get in his face.

OFFICER #1

Give me an excuse to plaster your dumb ass to the floor, boy.

Gain's wrenched nose says the cop has bad breath.

A STONED MAN is being hustled toward them.

STONED MAN

Gain? Hey, good buddy! They got you, too?! I hate these motherf-

His profanity is cut-off by the cop tugging him on.

STONED MAN (CONT'D)

Quit pullin' on me!

The cop kicks him in his butt, ending further resistance.

OFFICER #1

After we book you, you can have a reunion. Likely run into more good buddies in the tank.

He shoves Gain back to the evidence window.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT--HOLDING CELL - SAME DAY

MALE DETAINEES look bored. Gain sits on the floor. The stoned man sits above him on the bench.

STONED MAN

You know that asshole still called me a name? Yeah, I stabbed him.

Gain ignores him, so he turns to someone else.

STONED MAN (CONT'D)

Hey, amigo, you in here hidin'?
What'chu in for?

Nothing from this man either. The stoned man seeks out another detainee.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAIL--MEETING ROOM - DAY

Gain, who's wearing a jailhouse jumpsuit and handcuffs, looks warn and desperate. His young, harassed-looking ATTORNEY sits across from him.

GAIN

But I' ain't never been in jail this long. I'm goin' crazy in here.

ATTORNEY

(stands)

Attempted murder and thief. This isn't a misdemeanor, Mister Bolton.

GAIN

It was an accident, and his gun!

ATTORNEY

Let's hope the jury likes you a lot better than the prelim-judge. This time, wear some decent clothes.

The attorney exits. An OFFICER enters and pats Gain on his shoulder. Gain rises in exasperation.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Gain stands beside his attorney wearing a rumpled suit and dingy white shirt. In the b.g., SPECTATORS are sparse.

His weeping mother sits behind him. Provocatively garbed, she is being comforted by TWO WOMEN of equal age and dress. All three women look borderline drunk.

The tight-lipped Korean merchant sits among spectators, his wife at his side. His right arm is in a sling.

JUROR (O.S.)

We, the jury, find the defendant guilty.

The merchant and his wife react pleased, but their relief is quickly upstaged by Gain's mother, who advances into a fit of histrionics that drive away her two tipsy comforters.

Off Gain, who looks weary and embarrassed.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Nightfall is on the horizon at the semi-antiquated, high security structure. GUARDS are on lookout and patrol.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - NIGHT

Gain appears to be in the grasps of paranoia (a symptom of claustrophobia). He springs to a sitting position.

His CELLMATE, a thin man with several badly-applied tattoos, stands by the bars watching him.

TWO MENACING INMATES amble by, their impish gaze on Gain. Behind them OFFICER FRISK, stocky, mid-40s, also looks in.

MENACING INMATE

Officer Frisk, is that the new pretty boy? Bet you that cult done already scooped him up.

FRISK

Men United don't want him, he's ignorant. Keep movin'.

Gain falls back on his bunk and covers his face.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - DAY

Gain is on mop detail, and he appears to be in a struggle to stay focused.

Inmates are at bars with lustful stares and cat calls, the menacing inmate the closest.

MENACING INMATE

I hear Bekin's trackin' you, boy! He's gonna plug that ass for sho'!

Gain slams the mop into his face. Witnessing inmates hoot.

MENACING INMATE (CONT'D)

I'mo kill you!

Gain is on his cage reaching for him. The inmate backs off, his startled face dripping wet. Gain spots a guard and quickly gets back to work.

Inmates, surprised by Gain's aggression, fall silent.

DIFFERENT CELL BLOCK

Gain slops around the mop in this quiet area. In the cell beside him Pelt slowly emerges from a dark corner.

PELT

What'chu in for?

Gain turns and freezes.

Pelt, who's shirtless, and partially shadowed, looks scary.

PELT (CONT'D)

It's just a question.

GAIN

What's it to you?

PELT

Just tryin' to be friendly.

GAIN

I ain't the boyfriendly type.

PELT

You flatter yourself.

Gain gets back to work.

PELT (CONT'D)

I asked you a question.

Gain turns Pelt a glare but he's obviously uneasy.

GAIN

I'm here for being born, okay?

Amused, Pelt slowly backs into darkness.

PELT (O.S.)

See you around, boy.

Frightened, Gain hurriedly mopes the area then rushes away.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - DAY

Inmates are on the move. Gain, who looks more so depressed, is in the mix. He spots something and slows to a stop.

A PSYCHO INMATE is still inside his opened cell. A hillbilly type, the man is lost in an eerie role-play.

PSYCHO INMATE

Come here, sweetie. Don't cry, I ain't gon' hurt you none.

He suddenly starts beating his invisible victim then stops. The man stares down at the floor then drops to his knees. He gently comforts his invisible victim.

PSYCHO INMATE (CONT'D)

Shut-up! That's better.

He humps his invisible victim while his hands simulate strangling.

PSYCHO INMATE (CONT'D)

Yeah, aw yeah -- you lit'l bitch!

Gain looks horrified. JAMAICA, mid-20s and fat, stops beside him. A unity symbol is affixed to his shirt.

JAMAICA

He' done his time. Yeah, man, him be back on the streets next week.

INMATE #1

Jamaica-man, wait-up!

The inmate wears the same patch. He and Jamaica walk on while Gain's worried gaze remains on the psycho inmate.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - SAME DAY

Several inmates are in the middle of a drug transaction. Three have unity patches affixed to their shirts.

Gain looks at the drug dealers with disinterest then turns his attention on inmates playing basketball.

The players are good, and highly aggressive. A well-earned shot goes up.

Gain watches in mounting anticipation. Suddenly, a huge hand clamps around his neck. Gain is snatched from view.

EXT. PRISON--BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

BEKIN, who looks like Popeye's nemesis, hustles Gain to a semi-secluded pathway. LEATHER, a skinny man with big eyes and teeth, dances around them with THREE CRONIES in tow.

LEATHER

Come on, Bekin, let us have him.

Bekin shoves Gain into their waiting arms. They grope Gain, who slaps one of them down. The others back off.

BEKIN

Leather, let's break this fine buck.

Gain takes stock of Leather then shoves him into his dodging friends. Leather hits the ground.

The others stare down at him, their lustful intent defused.

Bekin looks ready to blasts them when Gain delivers a double-fisted blow to his jaw. He bends Bekin over with a gut-punch then slams down hard on the back of his neck.

Bekin is out cold. Leather scurries over, shakes him.

Gain struts away while the big guy's stunned cronies stare after him. A shuffling noise makes them spin around.

The silhouette of five powerful-looking inmates stand in the distance.

Scared, the cronies hustle up the big guy and hurry away.

Pelt breaks from the silhouette and saunters into the light, his gaze approving. A unity patch is affixed to his shirt.

INT. PRISON--VISITING ROOM - SAME DAY

The room bustles with VISITORS and inmates.

Gain is with his mother, who's borderline sober. Beside her, Francine looks like she doesn't want to be there.

MOTHER

But the toilet's broke. I asked daddy to send some extra money to get it fixed, but he didn't.

GAIN

Them guys Francine be hangin' out with, asks one of them to fix it. They ain't gonna let me outta here.

She pauses in frustration while Francine glares her objection.

MOTHER

We gotta get to the bus.

GAIN

Okay, mama. When you gonna come to see me again?

MOTHER

This ain't that close, you know?

GAIN

Whenever you can come'll be fine.

CORRIDOR

Gain and another inmate exit the visiting area.

INMATE

It's almost dinnertime.

Frisk grabs them, then he slams them against the wall.

The WARDEN, 50s, tall and lean, heads their way accompanied by Dr. Vines, Tina, and TWO POLITICIAN types--one who's a black man (named DR. BENTLEY, 40s). Two guards tail them.

Frisk projects machismo while pressing Gain and the other inmate harder against the wall. He smiles at Tina.

WARDEN

(quizzical expression)
Officer Frisk?

OFFICER FRISK

Warden. These new boys ain't got no manners. Just makin' yawl enough room to pass is all.

The warden's unpleased expression makes Frisk ease up.

Gain's anger vanishes in surprise when he spots Tina. He continues to stare until she detours from view.

OFFICER FRISK (CONT'D)

She won't even spit on crap like you.

Gain cuts him a glare.

OFFICER FRISK (CONT'D)
(disbelief)
You disrespectin' me, boy?

Gain shoves Frisk off him and walks away.

Frisk angrily pulls his night-stick, but OFFICER DILLARD blocks him off then Pelt walks up.

OFFICER FRISK (CONT'D)
Dillard, what the hell's goin' on?

OFFICER DILLARD
I'll see to Gain from here.

Pelt and Frisk exchange cold stares.

OFFICER FRISK
Yawl gettin' desperate. I saw his file, he ain't college material.

PELT
We recruit all kinds, just not your kinda stupid. Sorta puts you in a class by yourself, huh?

Duly offended, Frisk looks at Officer Dillard like he expects him to do something. Dillard just stares at him. Frisk stomps away.

INT. PRISON--COMMISSARY - LATER, NIGHT

Most inmates are broken up into groups; whites, blacks, latinosaurs, skinheads, and the ladies.

Bekin winces while he eats then he spots Gain in anger. Bekin's left jaw bares a bruise.

Gain, with food tray in hand, spies Bekin glowering at him. He turns down the big guy's row.

The room goes quiet.

Bekin prepares to attack, but Gain stops behind him. Bekin looks confused. Gain slaps him on his bruised jaw.

Bekin's pain-filled cry is hysterical to the inmates.

Gain heads back to the aisle. He passes Officer Frisk, who cold-stares after him.

Amused, Pelt watches Gain from his table of refine-mannered inmates, who vary in race and age. All are wearing unity patches on their shirt.

PELT

Hey, boy?!

Gain turns.

PELT (CONT'D)

Here's a spot right here!

Gain hesitates, looks elsewhere, then joins them. About to get into his meal, he glances down the table.

Two of the drug dealers (seen earlier) are suspiciously watching Gain. The third tries to hide his face.

PELT

Gain Bolton, right?

GAIN

Ah-huh.

PELT

(slides Gain a pamphlet)

Name's Pelt. That's for you.

Gain squints at 'My Inheritance to You Should you Accept It.' Business-dressed Wayne Jackson, 50s, is on the cover.

PELT (CONT'D)

Jackson has chapters in prisons all over the state. I run this chapter.

Uninterested, Gain resumes his meal.

PELT (CONT'D)

Gain, we've all been where you are.

GAIN

(annoyed)

And where's that? Look, I'm here for the meal. When I'm ready to deal dope, I'll let you know.

Angry murmurs from those at the table. Gain takes them in in confusion. He lingers on the withering drug dealers.

PELT

We ain't about that. We prepare ourselves to lead positive fulfillin' lives, hopin', one day, we can help others do the same.

Gain marvels in aggravation.

GAIN

Dog gone you're chatty.

Chuckles from inmates at a nearby table.

GAIN (CONT'D)

And why you tryin' to play me?
 (glances at the drug dealers)
 I recognize them patches, I saw
 what yawl about.

Pelt angrily looks at the drug dealers, who respond by vacating the table. He turns back to Gain.

PELT

There's men in here with some bad
 habits, that's just how it is.
 Like 'em, you gon' be here til it's
 time to let you go. Then what?
 You gotta job waitin' on you? If
 you did, you'd probably be there
 instead of in here with us.

Gain struggles back aggravation that's laced with shame.

PELT (CONT'D)

Look, I'm askin' you check us out.

GAIN

Why me?
 (it hits him in shock)
 Yawl that cult, no wonder you wanted
 me to sit here, to hell with this.

Gain starts to rise with his food, but Pelt places a hand over Gain's tray with a piercing glare.

PELT

I see you. Whatever hope you had
 got buried under all the shit you
 couldn't control growin' up.

Gain's shame-laced surprise disintegrates Pelt's anger.

PELT (CONT'D)

Yeah, I see you. Eat your dinner.

Gain tears his gaze off Pelt to take in the peculiar group, who's watching him. Unsettled, he tentatively eats his meal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - LATER, SAME NIGHT

An eeriness hovers in the darkened cell. Gain sleeps badly, jerking about as if trying to free himself from a nightmare. There's the sound of a pop then a BOY CHILD starts to cry.

MEAN MAN (V.O.)

I told you to keep yo' mouth shut,
boy. Tell again 'n I'll kill you.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

He's gotta start makin' smart
decisions.

YOUNG BOY (V.O.)

(scared)

No, stop. Leave me alone.

PELT (V.O.)

I see you.

MEAN MAN (V.O.)

(eerie semi-whisper)

Be quiet, boy...

The sound of the child's muffled, pain-filled cries.

Gain's eyes flash open on his cellmate, who is attempting to get in his pants.

Gain leaps on his cellmate and slams him to the floor. The man bellows while Gain pounds on him.

Officer Dillard and another guard rush in. Four guards finally pull Gain off his bloody, faltering cellmate.

CELL BLOCK

Gain continues to resist as guards cart him away.

Officer Dillard hangs back. Touching his bloody lip, he turns.

Pelt strains to look down the way, just catching Gain in a struggle with guards. His gaze shifts to Dillard, who shakes his head and walks on. Pelt turns away in concern.

INT. PRISON--WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Awards, and a lived-in atmosphere, says much time is spent on the job. The Warden glares across his desk at Pelt.

WARDEN

I said no.

PELT

He's been in that hole a week. Now, I pegged him for the program, you gotta let him out.

WARDEN

Pelt, he almost killed Metcalfe.

PELT

Metcalfe the pumper? You know the deal with that. You' gonna have Gain so turned off, he won't even try to reach for his inheritance.

WARDEN

Inheritance. There you go with that Jackson propaganda.

He takes note of Pelt's affronted reaction.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Okay, I was out of line. But Gain? Pelt, the boy can barely spell his own name. Why do you want him?

PELT

So he can claim his inheritance, then learn how to help kids who --

WARDEN

Yeah, yeah. Half the members who've been released are doing time for other crimes. You're one them.

PELT

You like throwin' that at me. You didn't want the program here in the first place.

WARDEN

I still don't. It dips into my budget and it rarely works.

PELT

You' talkin' about ex-cons, 'n I'm talkin' about kids who's a step away from doin' hard time. You know it, they brought a sixteen year-old in here yesterday!

He pauses to calm down.

PELT (CONT'D)

Warden, if we reach a few kids,
then the program works. Now
please let Gain outta that hole.

The warden wearily indicates that he gives in, then he signals for Pelt to get out. Pelt complies.

INT. PRISON--SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - NIGHT

Gain sits on the floor. A flood of light startles him, he covers his eyes. Two guards drag him to his feet.

INT. PRISON--SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

Gain, dirty, crazed-looking and wild-haired, is thrown to the floor. A rush of fire-hose water snaps him out of it.

GAIN

It's cold! Ouch, it's stabbin'
me, turn it off!

The water is shut-off. Officer Dillard saunters up and drops a bar of soap into Gain's lap.

OFFICER DILLARD

Here's the deal. You're out because
Pelt wants you to attend tomorrow's
meeting.

GAIN

(horrified)

Do I have to?

OFFICER DILLARD

Don't show and you're back in the
hole another week. Now, take a
shower or get another hosing.

Gain starts undressing where he sits.

Officer Dillard spots Officer Frisk and meets up with him.

OFFICER FRISK

He was suppose to be in the hole
two weeks.

OFFICER DILLARD

Take it up with the warden, Frisk.

OFFICER FRISK

This is favoritism. It ain't right.

Officer Dillard just stares at him. Frisk huffs away.

INT. PRISON--CELL BLOCK - LATER, SAME NIGHT

A young man sobs loudly in the wee-hours...

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

PACO, age 16, is on the top bunk. Distraught, he pounds on the wall. A rough-looking boy, Paco's gang-banger tattoos can be made out in the semi-dark.

PACO

I shouldn't be in here! I didn't
kill nobody, I swear! Let me out!

INMATE #1 (O.S.)

I can't sleep with that racket!

INMATE #2 (O.S.)

Why' he in here, they outlaw juvie?!

INMATE #3 (O.S.)

Fuckin' kid!

Gain furiously kicks at the top bunk.

GAIN

Paco, I said shut the hell up! I
swear you don't want me to get-up!

Paco tones down to a whimper.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Gain looks sleepy, his moody scowl on FIVE INMATES of various ages.

The inmates study from college-level books. Two write in their notepad. All wear unity patches. A guard hovers close to those with writing instruments.

Gain is surprised when Paco frantically latches onto him.

Leather, and two other inmates from Bekin's crew, run up. A look from Gain backs them off.

GAIN

Let go! And stop actin' like a
lit'l punk.

Paco stays too close for Gain, who shoves him away and turns his annoyance on the studying inmates.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Hey. Hey!

PLAYER, a tough-looking (South Asia) Indian, 20s, looks bothered by Gain's intrusion.

PLAYER

Player is how you may address me. What do you want?

Gain looks dumbfounded, and he recovers clumsily.

GAIN

Well you, yawl, you guys always got your head in some book. What yawl tryin' to prove?

PLAYER

We have finals coming up. Don't disturb us again.

He goes back to his studies.

Slighted, Gain is on the verge of retaliating when Paco rams into him to prevent being groped by Leather. Gain pushes Paco off him and socks Leather in the jaw.

LEATHER

Shit! Damn you, Gain! We know you ain't doin' him, he's open game.

GAIN

Pervert fuck, he's just a kid!

Both Leather and Paco look stunned, then they follow Gain's glare to Player.

LEATHER

Men United pay' for their schoolin'. They them college boys, uppity shits.

GAIN

College, what kinda crap is that?

Sharing Gain's resentment Leather blows off the studying inmates, slips Paco an air-kiss and walks away.

GAIN (CONT'D)

(snarls)

College boys.

Paco curiously watches Gain's indifference fizzle.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

There are rows of foldout chairs, and two panel-style tables at the front of the room. A podium separates them.

Thirty inmates quietly file in with notepads in hand. They take seats. Pencils are distributed by guards, and each recipient initials a log.

Dr. Vines walks in dressed-for-success. Applause follow.

SEVEN MEN, age 30 to 60 and also business-dressed, enter. Racially diverse, they join Vines at the tables.

Pelt sits on the front row staring back at the entrance. Two beats later, he looks pleased.

Gain has entered; he takes a seat in the back. An inmate beckons for him to stand, so he rises. The inmate tries to affix a Unity patch to his shirt, but Gain brushes him off.

PELT

Gain! If you don't want it, leave
it on the chair after the meetin'.

Gain looks embarrassed while being patched. He drops back in his seat as everyone else rises. Gain slowly stands.

THE MEN UNITED

By the Power of God, our destiny is
in His hands. For we are men created
for a purpose, the good of mankind.
We pray that we are proven to be
worthy warriors. Amen.

Everyone sits as Dr. Vines steps up to the podium. He dolefully raises his hands to silence their applause.

DR. VINES

Misters Bell and Tucker, Saul Garcia,
L. Jason, R. Fernando, K. Bovachek.
Mister Riley Smith and Morris Jones.
Please step out into the aisle
nearest you.

Among called inmates are the three drug dealers.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

You've proven as unworthy in this
program as you have in society.

ANGRY INMATE

Say what?! Man, we ain't your
kids!

DR. VINES

You're also no longer a part of this
program. Return the pencils, remove
the patch and leave. Now.

Guards collect pencils. The angry inmate rips the velcro-patch from his shirt, cast it to the floor and huffs out. The other ejects hand patches to guards and sadly leave.

Officer Frisk steps inside the doorway. He looks amused.

Vines gestures at Frisk, who chuckles and walks out.

Vines just stands there angrily staring at the entrance. His lengthy silence grows awkward.

PELT

Doctor Vines?

DR. VINES

One moment, Pelt.

TWO STATE COPS enter and walk up to BOGGS, one of the older business-dressed men at the table.

STATE COP

Lester Boggs, you're under arrest.
Your rights will be read outside.

Boggs spins to face Vines, who looks pained.

DR. VINES

What can I say, Les? The lure of
the old life has proven stronger.

The cops take hold of Boggs, who pulls away.

MR. BOGGS

But my family. Henry, help me.

DR. VINES

You made the big fall, I can't help
you. Les, you were under surveil-
lance long before I was notified.
Please, remove the patch.

Boggs angrily thumps the patch at Vines. His anger is replaced by distress when the officers haul him out.

While inmates erupt into troubled conversation, Gain takes in the men at the tables. Two look nervous.

Player sits across the aisle quizzically watching Gain.

LATER...

Inmates have broken up into groups, each headed up by one of the business-dressed men. Some inmates jot down notes.

Pelt walks up to Vines.

PELT

Having us witness these arrests,
it's a good call, Henry -- Oh,
did you see my new prospect?

DR. VINES

Yes. Check and see if he took
the patch.

Pelt goes to where Gain had sat. The chair is empty.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - SAME DAY

Gain walks alone in thought--the unity patch affixed to his
shirt. Player blocks him off and extends his hand.

PLAYER

Welcome. I'm Player, remember?

Gain just glares at him.

PLAYER (CONT'D)

Hey, I know I can be rude when I'm
studying. My apologies.

Gain remains unmoved. Player again extend his hand. Gain
gives in and shakes it then they walk on.

GAIN

That arrest blew everybody away.

PLAYER

No lie, and I bet you fifty bills
the two flips you were checking
out'll get pinched next time.

GAIN

Where you gonna get fifty buck
in here?

PLAYER

Damn, country, you need a job. Go
see Geek Boy, he hibernates with
the other trust fund murderers on
B-block. Mention Geek Boy to
the guard and he'll buzz you in.

Gain suspiciously takes note of his amused expression,
gestures appreciation then walks away.

PLAYER (CONT'D)

And hang onto my fifty bills!

Gain throws him up the bird. Player laughs as Mozart's
Vivaldi begins to play in the b.g...

INT. PRISON--B BLOCK - SAME DAY

Vivaldi continues to play as Gain ambles along in fascination while peering inside opened metal doors...

These larger cells display antique writing desks, chest of drawers, paintings, over-stuffed chairs, and HIGHBROW INMATES who gaze out at Gain like he's an anomaly.

Gain stops at the last cell, his horrid expression matching the abrupt end to the music.

GEEK BOY, age 33 and chubby, is laying in the midst of a hoarder's nest. Happy to see Gain, he rises.

GEEK BOY

Hi! I know, it looks bad. The guards are on me to get it cleaned up. Can you start now?

GAIN

This is worse than the dump I grew-up in, and I ain't cleanin' up your mess -- Those' Burger King wrappers. How'd you get Burger King in here?

Undaunted, Geek Boy casually sizes him up.

GEEK BOY

I'll pay you two-hundred bills.

LATER...

The cell is organized and trash free. Geek Boy pays Gain.

INT. PRISON--LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

A guard strolls past Gain, who pulls clothes from a dryer. Gain pushes the cart to a table.

Inmates separate and fold. Bekin and Leather are among them. Bekin's jaw has healed, but his temperament hasn't.

LEATHER

(snarly)

Saw you hangin' with Men United.

BEKIN

Yeah, 'n that bullshit about a' inheritance. They tryin' to recruit you into that cult, huh?

Gain ignores him and piles clothes on the table.

BEKIN (CONT'D)
You hear me talkin' to you?

LEATHER
You know one of them flips think
he's gonna be President?

All but Gain and Bekin hoot.

BEKIN
Crazy bastards. You better stay
away from 'em.

Gain gives him a look and pushes the cart to the dryers.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

Men United members counsel inmates, who are broken up into
groups throughout the room.

Pelt and Gain sit alone. Gain appears to tense when Vines
swings a chair in front of him and sits.

DR. VINES
Gain Bolton, right?

GAIN
Yes, sir.

DR. VINES
Did you finish our founder's book?

GAIN
I, no. I don't read so good.

Vines frowns and looks at Pelt.

PELT
He'll learn.

Vines refocuses on Gain with a hint of disenchantment.

DR. VINES
I work with kids who are in danger
of total annihilation. I need
tough men and women to help me.
That's where you can come in.

GAIN
Who, me? What can I do?

DR. VINES
Prove you're worthy to be among us.

Gain looks stupefied, which pisses off Vines.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

A plan, Mister Bolton. You walk through that door again, I expect you to have one for your future. Is that clear enough for you?

Vines stands, slings the chair aside and walks away.

GAIN

Man, fuck this.

Pelt, who's also angry with Vines, stops Gain from leaving.

PELT

I shoulda briefed you better, that's on me. Come on, sitdown.

Vines steps behind the podium, which alerts inmates to return the chairs to presentation seating.

DR. VINES

Our speaker today is an ex-con who walked out of prison with a plan. Now CEO of the Cordova Restaurant chain, please welcome Luis Cordova!

Inmates applaud and cheer as a well-dressed LATIN MAN, 60s, walks up. Projecting confidence, he shakes Vines' hand.

Off Gain, who's spellbound.

LATER...

Vines is heading out when Gain stops him.

GAIN

Ah, I, I just want you to know that I won't, you know, disappoint you.

Vines studies him in obvious disapproval.

DR. VINES

I'll be honest, I don't know what Pelt sees in you, but I find you unsuited for this program.

GAIN

I, I don't understand.

DR. VINES

You're illiterate, Mister Bolton. That tells me you lack the simplest discipline, but...it's Pelt's call.

Stunned, Gain steps aside. Vines walks out.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Gain spots Pelt and detours in another direction.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - LATER, NIGHT

Gain exits the commissary. Pelt stops him.

PELT

What's goin' on? Why didn't you
sit with us?

GAIN

Men United just ain't my thing.
Later for it and you.

Pelt slams Gain to the wall then chokes him, his madman
glare locked on a now terrified Gain.

His hands still clasps around Gain's neck, Pelt hustles him
to a less occupied area then releases him.

Gain falls to the ground spastic and gasping for air.

GAIN

You... you crazy --

Pelt angrily grabs him up.

PELT

I don't pick wrong.

GAIN

(scared, raspy tone)
Doctor Vines think' so.

Pelt's expression says now he understands.

PELT

Folks gonna always tell you what you
can't do cause they don't believe
in you, and they don't have to.
That's your job. There's no excuse
for bein' a quitter. Now, come on.

Pelt walks away. Gain is hesitant, then he catches up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - DAY

The room is well-organized. Book-related posters hang on
walls. A few inmates are about, reading. One teeters over
his book, asleep.

Gain squints at a row of books then turns and spots
FLAGSTAFF, lean, late-60's, with a head full of white hair.

Flagstaff has a small unity symbol affixed to his collar. A
sophisticated inmate, he weeds through a box of books. His
occasional murmurs indicate the early stages of dementia.

GAIN (O.S.)

Hey, ol' man!

Flagstaff is startled. He glowers then stomps over.

FLAGSTAFF

This is a library, you moron.
Keep your voice down.

Gain just stares at him.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

What do you want?

GAIN

Is these the medical books?

Flagstaff takes in the books. All are of the medical
persuasion. He studies Gain then gestures "yes."

Embarrassed, Gain pulls two books and brushes past him.

Flagstaff watches him go to a vacant table and take a seat.

Gain stares in dismay at Leonardo da Vinci's anatomic
drawing of a naked man, and the words encircling it. Giving
up, he slams the book and springs up to leave.

Flagstaff blocks him off.

FLAGSTAFF

Can't read?

Gain steps around him. Flagstaff hurries after him.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

No reason to be mad at me.

Gain stops and turns in humiliation.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

You look like you're trainable.

Inmates laughter has Gain proceeding toward the exit.
Flagstaff tails him.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

Come on, don't run out. Hey!

Gain stops and turns the annoyed man a pointed glare.

Flagstaff signals for him to wait then hurries to a shelf. He plucks a book, comes back and hands it to Gain.

Gain looks down at the third-grade children's book. Insulted, he tries to give it back. Flagstaff resists but Gain is insistent. Flagstaff socks him in the jaw.

GAIN

Aw, fuck!

FLAGSTAFF

Stop being an asshole and start reading. I'll help you.

Gain is furious, but everything about him says he wants to learn. He sheepishly peers at snickering inmates.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

Ignore them, they can't read either.

ANGRY INMATE

Screw you, Flagstaff! I got my Associate's degree.

FLAGSTAFF

Yes, in stupidity, which is why you've joined us in this massive utopia.

Inmates howl. Even Gain can't suppress a hurt-faced grin.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

What's your name?

GAIN

Gain.

FLAGSTAFF

Gain, I'm Flagstaff, and I'm going nowhere but in the ground. So if you wanna learn I'll teach you.

Gain considers this then goes and sits down. He opens the book. The read is a struggle. He looks up with a silent plea. Flagstaff walks over and takes a seat beside him.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Gain, Pelt, Player and Jamaica pump iron.

PLAYERS

Geek Boy says you're a swell guy.

Chuckles.

JAMACIA (CONT'D)

How'd you come-up with medicine?

PELT

Even Vines is impressed.

JAMAICA

I'm impressed. He can't even read 'n talkin' about bein' a doctor.

Annoyed, Gain grabs up heavier dumbbells.

GAIN

Ol' man Flagstaff say' I can do whatever I put my mind to.

PELT

What kinda doctor you wanna be?

GAIN

What kind is there?

JAMAICA

Brain surgeon. That way you can dig that nut out your head.

PELT

Enough, our brother's serious.
(to Gain)
Doctor Vines is a psychologist,
there's all kinda doctors.

GAIN

I know that, just name some.

Player and Jamaica exchange skeptical glances.

Gain spots an imposing dark-brown-skinned man (named WILLIS, 20s) watching him. Caught, the man quickly looks elsewhere.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - NIGHT

Reading Treasure Island appears problematic for Gain, who eventually throws the book against the wall.

Paco's on the top bunk flipping through photographs.

PACO

No offense, but ain't you kinda old
to be tryin' to learn how to read?

Gain shoots him up an emphatic bird.

PACO (CONT'D)

I'm funnin' with you. You can't learn overnight, and you ain't goin' no where. Relax.

GAIN

Paco, just leave me alone.

PACO

My girl sent pictures of my son. Take a look.

Gain takes them, absently flips through pictures of a one year-old boy wearing a cowboy outfit.

GAIN

He's cute. Lucky he don't take after your ugly ass.

PACO

Screw you.

Gain grows sad while giving more attention to the photos.

GAIN

Over half the guys in here's got kids. Guess they get to grow up to be just like good ol' dad...

His words appear to pierce Paco, who takes back the pictures and lays them aside in concerned wonder.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

AD LIB a group of inmates who improvise tough-guy banter. Gain is in the mix, his mind apparently elsewhere. Paco runs up.

PACO

Hey, Einstein?

Gain snarls at him.

PACO (CONT'D)

Just funnin' with you. We can use another player. Come on.

EXT. PRISON--YARD--BASKETBALL COURT - SAME DAY

Gain is successfully maneuvering the ball towards the hoop when he spots Player joining up with Men United inmates.

Gain's lack of attention causes the ball to be stolen away. A pissed off teammate shoves him to the ground.

Paco stops Gain from jumping the guy. The game resumes. Gain steals the ball and makes the basket, only to let his attention drift back to the group of Men United inmates.

LATER...

Gain and Paco are with the teammates, who AD LIB profanity-laced conversation.

Paco is watching Gain--who looks socially detached. He taps Gain on the arm and gestures for him to step aside.

PACO

Gain, these dudes, they ain't for you.

He gestures toward Men United members.

PACO (CONT'D)

They are. You're like them, ese, you want something in life. From the time you get up to the time you lay down, your eyes is on that big fuckin' prize. I like that about you.

(pauses to chuckle)

You don't give a rats ass that everybody know you can't read, you still say you gonna be a doctor.

(serious)

You make me proud. Make me wanna go after my own dreams. For my son. I gotta do it for him.

Surprised, Gain just stares at him.

PACO (CONT'D)

Don't you give-up, Gain, cause you feed my hope. I need you not to give up, okay?

Gain looks away in uncertainty, but he forces it down and gestures okay.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - DAY

Gain has Treasure Island in hand, but he appears uneasy. He slows and turns to Willis--who stops and looks about. Concerned, Gain walks on a little faster.

Willis hurries around the corner to Gain waiting for him.

GAIN

What the fuck you want?!

Startled, Willis springs back.

WILLIS

Hey, I don't mean you no harm.

GAIN

Then why you tailin' me?!

Willis shrugs, embarrassed.

Gain studies him.

GAIN

Who are you?

WILLIS

Willis.

(notes Gain wants more)

I just, I was -- you really think you can be a doctor?

Gain just glares at him.

WILLIS (CONT'D)

I mean, you reachin' on high 'n all is good. But you can't read and I, you know...I wanna help you.

GAIN

Why?

WILLIS

I use to see words backwards.

Gain looks surprised, and a tad interested.

WILLIS (CONT'D)

I, if you want, I can show you some exercises that helped me.

GAIN

(suspicious)

Ah-huh, and what's in it for you?

Willis looks confused.

WILLIS

Oh! I don't expect no pay or nothin'.

Gain just stares at him in agape wonder.

WILLIS (CONT'D)

I, I just, I just wanna help is all. You know, like...

(embarrassed)

Like a friend.

Gain steps aside, an indication that he wants him to leave.

GAIN
I'll think about it.

Willis hurries on like his pride is wounded.

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - SAME DAY

Flagstaff sits at the table looking aggravated. Gain sits across from him staring down at Treasure Island in dismay.

GAIN
I guess I'm too old to learn.

FLAGSTAFF
Listen, this place is infested with trifling useless maggots, who spend their days sucking up air and nothing else, and you're not one of them. Yet. Now I know what your problem is, I just need you to work with me.

Gain looks conflicted.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)
Son, you must keep your mind busy to mentally survive being inside.

Gain sits back with a give-me-a-break frown.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)
I know you heard the spill about claustrophobia, but it isn't the only by-product of isolation. Books can become your escape to the outside world. Are you hearing me?

Gain indicates that he does. He stares at the book for a long time then looks up.

GAIN
You really know my problem?

FLAGSTAFF
Yes, you're dyslexic. Did Willis introduce himself to you yet?

Gain's gestures "now I understand."

GAIN
You shouldah said you was gonna send some big scary dude. I thought he was gonna attack me.

FLAGSTAFF

(disheartened)

Which means he handled it badly.
I'm helping him work on his people
skills, and I need you to be kind
to him. Let him help you, alright?

Uninterested, Gain gestures a positive.

MONTAGE:

INT. LIBRARY

-- VARIOUS SCENES of Gain attempting to read, each ending in frustration. Finally, Flagstaff walks Willis over.

-- Flagstaff watches while Willis assist Gain through a figure-eight exercise on a posterboard. Inmates look on in the b.g.

-- Willis has Gain doing eye-coordination exercises, much to the amusement of a sparse group of inmates watching them. Gain looks embarrassed, but he continues the exercise.

END MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

The same inmates are rolling with laughter, because Willis has Gain doing kinesthetics. Gain appears more annoyed that their tainting is intimidating Willis.

GAIN

Yawl need to get yo' dumb asses
over here.

INMATE #1

I know James need to be over there.

INMATE #3

Shut-up, I can read.

INMATE #1

Man, what's that word?

The inmate looks at the word and shoves away the book. Everyone, including Willis, laughs.

EXT. PRISON -- YARD - DAY

Gain, who's among a group of Men United inmates, spots Willis off to himself casting him shy glances.

Willis perks up when Gain approaches.

GAIN

You don't have to hang by yourself, come join us.

Willis looks alarmed.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Willis, what's wrong?

WILLIS

(near whisper)

I can't go over there.

GAIN

Why not?

Willis' shrug is laden with shyness.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Come on, we've gotta meetin'.
You can go with me.

Willis follows him over and receives disapproving frowns from several Men United inmates. Gain's piercing glare shuts it down, fast. Introductions follow, AD LIB.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - SAME DAY

Willis enters with Gain--who signals over the inmate with Unity patches. A patch is affixed to Willis' shirt.

Willis happily takes a seat next to Gain.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Gain sits at a table reading a high school-level book with no strain. Pelt enters and meets up with Flagstaff.

PELT

Checkin' on our boy. It's been a year, Vines wanna know his progress.

FLAGSTAFF

Like I told you before, Gain is doing extremely well. It got easier once I realized he's dyslexic.

PELT

He told me he dropped outta school.

FLAGSTAFF

When he was thirteen. Nobody ever bothered to test him, and he'd seen a lot of words by then. They were all jumbled up inside his head, I've pretty much worked them out. And he's a whiz at math. Why the interest in this one?

PELT

Why you so interested?

FLAGSTAFF

I asked you first.

Pelt studies Gain with a hint of concern.

PELT

He's been movin' through life without a whiff of hope. I know what that's like.

Flagstaff quizzically studies Pelt.

FLAGSTAFF

Something's bothering you.

PELT

Yeah, him wantin' to be a medical doctor with an attempted murder rap. He's reachin' for the impossible.

Pause while Flagstaff ponders.

FLAGSTAFF

No, it's not impossible. It'll help if the man he shot comes on board, and they'll likely require his psychological evaluations be made public. Sure, most hospitals won't take him, but he'll get in somewhere. The rest is keeping him focused, and out of trouble.

PELT

I can shield him from the worst elements in here. Keep him on a good-behavior track.

FLAGSTAFF

Hopefully, it will be enough.

PELT

You're worried about him, too.

FLAGSTAFF

Just a little. I know a criminologist professor, he's an ex-con. I'm sure he can offer something we can use to keep our boy encouraged.

PELT

Sounds good. So, what's your interest in Gain?

FLAGSTAFF

My usual offer of assistance. Much to my horror he keeps coming back.

Flagstaff's demeanor says he doesn't mind one bit.

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - LATER, DAY

Gain is helping FLAGSTAFF shelve books.

FLAGSTAFF

You have to find ways to give. That's why it's called charity.

He attempt to put a book on the top shelf, winces in pain.

GAIN

I got it.

Gain slips the book in its slot.

GAIN (CONT'D)

I ain't never had nothin' to be charitable with.

FLAGSTAFF

And therein lies the excuse. How do you expect to receive if you've never given before?

Gain looks confused.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

When you're always in need, you can be so self-involved that you don't care about others who are in more need than you.

GAIN

Like people in poor countries?

FLAGSTAFF

Yes, but mostly people you encounter in life. Like the money you have for beer, when you know a neighbor can use those few bills to put a meal on the table for her kids. You sacrifice to be a blessing, even when all you can give is your time. Understand?

Gain absorbs this then indicates that he does.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

Gain joins Men United members in reciting the prayer.

THE MEN UNITED

By the Power of God, our destiny is in His hands. For we are men created for a purpose, the good of mankind. We pray that we are proven to be worthy warriors. Amen.

Gain catches Vines watching him and stares back in defiance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - NIGHT

The cell door is open. Gain's slightly-maturer deportment says a few years have passed. On his bunk reading War and Peace, he pauses to jot down a word then continues reading.

Pelt walks in.

PELT

Congratulations. Doctor Vines is gonna test you in the field.

GAIN

(excited)

He actually said yes this time?

Pelt hands him a document. Gain reads it, frowns.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Tina Rolands. Who's she?

PELT

She works at the detention center you'll visit. It's in Surgar Land.

GAIN

My old stumpin' ground.

PELT

Yeah, don't piss her off.

GAIN

Let me guess. Mean 'n ugly with a man grudge, right?

PELT

More like pretty 'n smart with a man grudge, so watch yourself.

GAIN

She sounds brutal.

PELT

Trust me, she can be. She's my daughter, so play nice. And use your head with Vines, he's expectin' you to fail. Surprise him.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER--OFFICE - DAY

Tina sits at her desk with an annoyed frown.

Dr. Vines sits across from her staring back.

TINA

I'm not letting you bring convicts around these kids.

DR. VINES

Tina, these kids are convicts. Now the state has approved this facility, so you're already on-board. And Pelt's pressing me to trial Gain Bolton.

TINA

Gain Bolton -- daddy's mentioned him. You don't seem impressed.

DR. VINES

I'm not, but your father's got good instincts and I know he'll get even less cooperative if I start overruling his choices.

There is a hint of challenge in their silent exchange before Tina indicates defeat.

TINA

Do I, at least, get Mister Bolton's file?

Vines tosses the file before her and stands.

Tina opens it and absently gestures for him to leave.

Amused, Vines walks out.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - DAY

Gain reads a poster that advertises the 'Family Day Planning Committee' while Dr. Vines signs him out.

EXT. PRISON - CONTINUOUS

Gain tails Vines to a black early-2000 model Suburban, accompanied by Officer Dillard and his partner.

GAIN

Dag gone, it's good to get outta there, even for a few hours.

DR. VINES

Is that what you think this outing's about?

Gain looks sheepish.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Mister Bolton, from this day on you're required to prove yourself. There's no room for screw-ups or set-backs, you got that?

Gain indicates that he does.

Vines glances Gain with a dissatisfied scan then turns to climb inside the vehicle. He pauses.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

One more thing. Officer Dillard's orders are to shoot-to-kill. I suggest you not raise any suspicion.

Vines disappears inside the vehicle.

Gain looks down at a holstered gun then up at Dillard, who gestures for him to get in.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER--MEETING ROOM - SAME DAY

Gain enters with Vines. Dillard and his partner hang back inside the entrance.

POLITICAL and POLICE OFFICIALS are seated around the table.

GAIN
 (mortified)
 That's the governor. Why bring me
 here in these prison clothes?

DR. VINES
 Because you're a prisoner. You're
 also part of their agenda, so chill.

Gain looks at Dr. Bentley, who he saw with the warden, Vines
 and Tina earlier on. Bentley gestures him a greeting.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)
 That's Doctor Earl Bentley. He
 oversees our state's prison system.

GAIN
 So you guys ain't just on the inside,
 huh?

DR. VINES
 Too bad I don't find that funny.

Vines points Gain to a chair in the corner.

Gain beats himself up while heading to the seat. He spots
 Tina in happy surprise, but it erodes to embarrassment after
 she graces him with tight-lipped perusal and looks away.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER - SAME DAY

Gain and Vines join MALE-TEEN DETAINEES in a seated circle.
 Gain is immediately up for scrutiny.

TEEN #1
 Hey, ese, check it out. He's got
 on your daddy's best suit.

TEEN #2
 But he's wearin' yo' mama's drawers.

TEEN #3
 Prison's overcrowded, convict?
 Gotta shack-up with the kiddies?

Chuckles from teens. The CENTER COUNSELOR claps her hands.

COUNSELOR
 Is that how you were taught to
 treat guests?

Footsteps. Gain looks up.

A YOUTH CENTER GUARD shoves a teen forward. HECTOR, age 10, looks hardcore and bitter. He scowls at Gain.

HECTOR
What you looking at?

Gain swivels toward Vines, who nods. Gain smirks.

LATER...

Gain sits with Dr. Vines and the woman counselor. Tina takes a seat next to Gain, causing him discomfort.

GAIN
Dog gone, you smell good.

TINA
Excuse me?

GAIN
Ah, Pelt said to tell you hi.

Her guarded reaction says she's aware of his attraction.

Looking demoted, Gain turns his attention to Hector, who sits in the corner sulking.

GAIN (CONT'D)
Doctor Vine, I'll be over there.

Vines hands him a file. Gain takes his chair with him.

Gain positions the chair in front of Hector and sits. Hector quickly rises but Gain grabs him in the collar and slams him back down in the chair.

Vines spies Dillard on the move and signals for him to stop, then he whispers something to Tina. They both stand up.

Vines picks up his and Tina's chair. They walk over and sit about four-feet behind Gain to observe.

(NOTE: Gain reverts to his former manner of speaking, whenever it's advantageous.)

Hector expresses bravado with Vines and Tina there.

GAIN
Hector, look at me. It says here
you hit your mama.

The boy just stares at him, but everything about Gain demands an answer.

Hector realizes no one is coming to his aid, so he blurts--

HECTOR

She attacked me! I like hangin'
with my buds, but she wants me
home to do all the stuff she
should be doin'.

Vines and Tina look blown-away.

GAIN

Go on...

Again, Hector toughens up, so Gain grabs his ear.

HECTOR

Ow-ow!

TINA

Hey, this is not --

Gain quickly releases Hector and turns her a look that shuts her up. His fierce attention is back on the boy.

GAIN

I don't hear you talkin'.

HECTOR

What? She lay-up all day
drinkin' and expect me to take
care of my brother, cook 'n
clean; she's useless, man.

His summation causes Gain to slip into strained thought for far too long.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Dude, get an attention span.
(under his breath)
Stupid pen rat.

Gain's reaction says he heard him, causing Hector alarm. The boy anxiously looks at Dr. Vines, who stands as if to intervene.

Gain springs to his feet for a face-off.

GAIN

Sits your ass down.
(beat)
I got this.

Vines quizzically gazes at him then complies.

This isn't lost on Hector, who looks more so scared of Gain.

GAIN

(sits)

What's the story with you and your buds. Yawl keep gettin' pinched, but I bet your main boy's never in the mix.

HECTOR

Hey, the dude's down.

Gain scans Hector like he's a joke.

GAIN

Ah-huh...look, a smart slick knows how to separate from the herd when his shit blows up.

(waves the file at him)

That includes leavin' your dumb ass to take the fall.

HECTOR

(hurt/angry)

Crew don't use me, he wouldn't do that.

GAIN

(reads file)

Crew...I see names 'n Crew's not one of 'em.

(stands, leans in close)

The best lackeys are the ones too stupid to know they're being used.

Gain peeks him a kiss on the cheek and saunters out.

Tina looks concerned for the shaken boy--who wipes at tears.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER--CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Gain seems worried. Dillard and his partner flank him.

DR. VINES (O.S.)

Good job.

Startled, Gain spins around to face him.

GAIN

It wasn't too much? I mean, I'm sorry I said --

DR. VINES

You made him open up, I see that
as a big win.

Tina walks out with Hector--whose face is downcast. She
graces Gain with a scowl as she passes.

Gain looks devastated.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Don't mind Tina, she thinks they're
her kids. You did good, Mister
Bolton.

He walks on. Gain follows.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - DAY

Gain is reading when Dillard enters.

OFFICER DILLARD

The warden wants to see you.

INT. PRISON--WARDEN'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Pelt appears annoyed with the Warden--who looks stressed.

WARDEN

With overtime and added security,
Family Day's gonna cost a fortune.
Hoochies and kids running amuck...
I never should've agreed to this.

PELT

Vines said you tried to back out.

WARDEN

Ruthless bastard, he threatened to
sic the governor on me if I did.

Gain enters.

WARDEN

Mister Bolton, have a seat.

Gain sits facing them.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Doctor Vines is quite taken with
you. He wants you assigned to
field duty. Before I approve it,
I have to know who you are.

The warden opens a file folder.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

You and your parents background,
I want some history. Other than
the fact that your mother's a
drunkard whore.

Gain flashes in anger.

PELT

Good, get use to it now, cause the
more you progress, the more your
past'll be thrown in your face.

Gain's anger dissipates. Somewhat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

A banner reads FAMILY DAY.

There are concession stands, rides for CHILDREN, and game
booths. Inmates enjoy the festivities with their FAMILIES.
All are wearing pastel Family Day tee-shirts.

Suddenly, an inmate starts beating his WIFE. Guards brush
past their THREE wailing CHILDREN to pull him off her.

Sounds of erotic moans and grunts have guards looking for
the culprits. An inmate and YOUNG WOMAN are found, so far.

Gain stands off to the side watching Geek Boy with his
equally chubby family. They're all over him with love.

Gain scans the crowd to Player with his INDIAN FAMILY.
They're like an entourage around him.

Gain takes it in with longing then he spots Flagstaff--
who's encouraging Willis to introduce himself to various
visitors. Willis' doofy awkwardness makes Gain smile.

Player runs up.

PLAYER

Hey, my mom wants to meet you.

PLAYER'S MOM, mid-40, is beautiful with a sophisticated yet
down-to-earth demeanor.

PLAYER

Mom, this is Gain.

PLAYER'S MOM

So you're Gain. Avi writes about you all the time. Your mother must be as proud of you as I am of my son.

Gain's discomfort causes her smile to wane.

PLAYER

I'm proud of you, dude.

Gain expresses appreciation then backs away to leave.

PLAYER'S MOM

Where are you going? Come here.

She engulfs Gain in a hug. He looks mellow when they part. She cups his face in her nicely-manicured hands and smiles.

PLAYER'S MOM (CONT'D)

Such a beautiful boy. You are going to do just fine. I will pray for you, okay?

Gain fawns in appreciation, much to Player's amusement. His mother chastises him then she draws Gain into their clan.

LATER...

Family Day is over. Gain, Player and Willis are off to themselves. Inmates sweep the well-littered grounds in the b.g.

(NOTE: Gain's grammar shows signs of improvement.)

GAIN

She wanted them to let me out to fix the toilet. That was five years ago, I ain't seen 'em since.

(envious)

Damn, Player, if I had a family like yours there's no way I'd be in here.

PLAYER

Family can't protect us for ourselves.

GAIN

Maybe not, but at least life dealt you a fighting chance.

PLAYER

The person I was, Gain...I don't see myself ending up any differently.

Long pause while Gain considers this.

GAIN
Yeah, me neither.

WILLIS
Mama would make me cookies and
sing to me at night.

Thrown, Gain and Player look at him.

WILLIS (CONT'D)
I, I saw him kill her. Mama's boy-
friend, he...after she was gone
I, you know, went into the system
because nobody wanted me.
(meekly)
Thank you for being my friends.

GAIN
We're more than friends, we're
brothers. We'll always be there
for each other.

Touched, Willis looks at Player who indicates agreement.

INT. PRISON--LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Gain, Bekin and Leather work together fetching and folding
clothes. Gain spots Player in the doorway staring at him.

Player's expression says something is terribly wrong.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - SAME DAY

Gain walks over to Pelt, Player, and several other inmates.
All look upset.

PELT
Wayne Jackson made the big fall.

GAIN
What? No way, he founded Men United.

PELT
Only so he could get outside access
to oversee his operation while he
was at Beaumont. That's where he
was today as guest speaker when the
feds walked him out. Vines is
headed here now.

GAIN
Damn.

Pelt looks defeated and this appears to cause Gain concern.

GAIN (CONT'D)
 You know, fuck Jackson. We're
 Men United, we got this.

PELT
 (perks up)
 And Vines can take over.

Frisk and a DUMB-LOOKING GUARD strut over. The three menacing inmates (one whose face Gain mopped earlier) join them. The dumb-looking guard grins, showing bad teeth.

OFFICER FRISK
 Heard bout yo' boy, Jackson.

Laughter from his group.

Gain and the others walk away.

OFFICER FRISK (CONT'D)
 I knew Men United was a sham!

Gain turns him a look that screams insolence as he walks on.

OFFICER FRISK (CONT'D)
 Damn boy ain't got no respect. I
 can't afford college for my kids,
 but scum like him can get it free
 of charge. It ain't right.

Frisk shares a sinister exchange with those in his company.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - LATER, NIGHT

Men United inmates sadly file out. Gain, Pelt and Vines remain. Vines looks tired.

PELT
 So, what now?

DR. VINES
 In time, someone'll take his place.

Gain and Pelt exchange confused glances.

PELT
 What about you?

DR. VINES
 Pelt, my ego is not that reckless.

GAIN
 But, Doctor Vines, you've earned it.

DR. VINES

Mister Bolton, Men United is a highly-sensitive operation with too many unsavory souls for the wrong person to have charge over, especially in the wake of Jackson's arrest. I'll keep it going. In time, a new leader will emerge.

Gain looks at Pelt, who appears to share his concern.

Off Vines, who is watching Gain with a quizzical frown.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - SAME DAY

Gain and Vines stroll toward the security exit. Officer Dillard follows some six-feet behind them.

DR. VINES

My parents were poorly prepared by their parents, all raising kids to be worser versions of themselves. Violence was all I knew, and I was very violent. Satisfied?

GAIN

You have any kids?

DR. VINES

No, and I never will. I'm also done with you prying into my life.

They stop, shake hands.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

See you in two weeks. In the meantime, keep an eye on Pelt.

He's buzzed out. Puzzled, Gain stares after him.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - SAME NIGHT

Gain, and Pelt who looks deeply troubled, are loitering.

GAIN

Pelt, are you okay?

PELT

What? Yeah, it's just...I had Jackson so high up there. It weakens you on the inside when they let you down.

A guard makes them move along.

They stroll in silence for several beats.

GAIN

Vines is good at stepping around questions about his past.

Pelt moves a little closer to Gain and speaks quietly.

PELT

Shame's why, it catches up to you. He had his own hit team.

GAIN

For real?

PELT

A syndicate hired him to do a job. The triad had territories they wanted locked down, and musclin' in meant a war.

GAIN

So Vines took 'em out?

PELT

Them is too great a number when it comes to the triad. He took out enough to destabilize 'em.

INT. PRISON--PELT'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

Gain sits against the wall on the floor, Pelt on his bunk.

PELT

The hits were clean, the triad had no way of knowin' who was involved. They were tipped off.

GAIN

By who?

PELT

The syndicate. They didn't wanna risk any blow-back findin' them.

GAIN

They used a hitman for a fall guy?

PELT

Arrogant and stupid are cut from the same cloth. Likely thought, with Vines not knowin' it was comin', he'd be a' easy target.

GAIN

Lucky for him they failed.

PELT

Failure was their second mistake. The first was not knowin' the habits of their mark. Henry's real cynical, he always got somebody watchin' his back.

GAIN

So they was spotted--were spotted.

PELT

Yeah, and quick. Vines led 'em into a trap but let 'em talk, then he talked. Afterwards, he told 'em he'd take care of it and let 'em go. The next day those territories were up for grabs.

GAIN

The doctor handled his business.

PELT

He wouldn't like you admirin' what he did, and you better keep what I told you to yourself.

GAIN

Done. So that's why he did time?

PELT

Naw, attempted murder for beatin' the crap out of some asshole.

Gain studies Pelt in growing excitement.

GAIN

You were part of Vines' hit team.

PELT

(shocked/angry)

You sonofa--you didn't peep that.

GAIN

Hey, chill-out. Man, you two were --

Pelt goes for Gain, who quickly maneuvers away.

GAIN

Okay-okay!

Pelt settles back down in confused wonder.

PELT

I knew Jackson, no way I would've thought his heart wasn't really in it. I watched him mold giants out of some of the most hopeless, destruction bastards you'd ever meet, and Vines was one of 'em.

Gain takes a moment to consider this.

GAIN

I believe his heart was in it. They were just two different missions, is all.

Pelt appears to consider this.

A line of inmates are walking by, then Frisk stops outside Pelt's cell. The looks on his face brings Gain to his feet.

GAIN (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow.

CORRIDOR

Gain passes Frisk without a glance and falls in line.

Frisk glares after him.

INT. PRISON--CELL CORRIDOR - DAY

Gain exits Geek Boy's cell slinging a clear plastic bag of trash over his shoulder.

GAIN

Thanks for the burger, G. See you in two weeks.

EXT. PRISON--BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Gain lays the bag of trash with others and turns into a fist slamming him in the face. Falling, he glimpses Frisk before the menacing inmate tears into him with his fist and feet.

While two other inmates join in, Frisk--with shotgun in hand--hovers nearby watching in intense satisfaction.

Dillard appears with three other guards--who pull off Gain's attackers, but the menacing inmate fights his way back and pounds wildly on Gain.

The warden grabs the man by the hair and drags him off.

The inmate spring up in anger that rapidly dissipate upon spotting the warden glaring at him.

Frisk, who looks trapped, springs his shotgun on Gain full-force. Officer Dillard shoves the gun as Frisk fires.

OFFICER FRISK

He was tryin' to escape, Warden!

The angry warden surreptitiously points upward.

Frisk looks up, frowns, then he spots it in horror--a hidden surveillance camera.

WARDEN

Take 'em to the hole.

MENACING INMATE

But he started it! Tell him, Frisk!

The warden looks down at Gain, who's barely conscious. He turns on Frisk.

WARDEN

Clean out your locker and report to my office.

Frisk sheepishly hurries away as two medics rush over with a stretcher. They collect Gain and enter the building.

DILLARD

Doctor Vines --

WARDEN

(tight)

I know, I'll call him. Dammit!

He stumps away.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

Seated, Vines' concern has a battered and bruised Gain in a surly mood. Vines looks up.

Flagstaff has come in. He takes a seat besides Gain.

FLAGSTAFF

Revenge will be sweet, son.

DR. VINES

Flagstaff?

FLAGSTAFF

Sorry, I digressed -- Gain, are you alright?

GAIN

They jumped me, it happens. It's no big deal.

DR. VINES

Mister Bolton --

GAIN

Just leave me alone!
(looks at Flagstaff)
I told 'em I didn't wanna see him.

FLAGSTAFF

He's here for you.

DR. VINES

You need to talk to me --

GAIN

About what? How I get slapped down if I even think about doin' better? And what about Men United? A cause you ain't got the guts to head-up.

Vines looks stung. Flagstaff gestures to Vines that he's got this.

FLAGSTAFF

You're the program, Gain, you accepted the inheritance. Surely, you are not going to throw away such a generous gift.

Gain's anger falters. He looks at Vines with expressed sorrow, but when he opens his mouth to speak a haunting cry of anguish escapes.

Flagstaff takes Gain into his arms and holds him close.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

It's alright, son, I got you...I got you, you're okay...

FLAGSTAFF gently rocks him.

SLOWLY DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Guards patrol the tower.

Below, a prisoner roams the yard under an armed guard. Suddenly, armed guards charge past and enter a building.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The menacing inmate is on a stretcher. He looks to have been savagely beaten, and stabbed.

INT. PRISON--LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Officer Dillard and three other guards rush in.

OFFICER DILLARD
Gain Bolton?

GUARD #2
Over there.

OFFICER DILLARD
He just report in?

GUARD #2
No, he came on this morning.

Dillard and guards hurry about. Gain emerges with a cart of dried clothes. Dillard stops the cart.

OFFICER DILLARD
Did you leave this room?

GAIN
It's not even lunch time.

OFFICER DILLARD
At any time has he gone past you?

The guard shakes his head.

GAIN
What's going on?

Officer Dillard studies Gain long and hard then signals the guards. They all hurry out.

Gain climbs on top of a dryer. He removes bloody clothes and re-attaches the vent cover. He hops down and tosses the clothes into a washing machine.

Leather quickly covers them with dirty clothes and starts the washer.

Gain grabs a cart, pushes it to a dryer and starts unloading. He meets stares of inmates, who silently express their approval and admiration.

Gain turns as if sensing something.

Flagstaff is in the doorway watching him. He indicates approval and walks on.

DISSOLVE TO:

STOCK FOOTAGE -- TO ESTABLISH

A series of HISTORICAL EVENTS that transpired from 2002 to 2006 reveals a span of time has passed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER - DAY

HECTOR is now a 14-year-old, urban-dressed teen. He's about to go inside when he's jumped from behind.

CREW, age 16, looks cholo tough, and he's liberally tattooed. He laughs when Hector shoves him off.

HECTOR

Dammit, Crew.

CREW

Didn't you get enough of this place?

HECTOR

Gain's here today; I'm gonna run in and say hi. Wait for me.

CREW

Stop sniffin' that convict's ass, man. Come on, I gotta job, it's sweet pay for a quick drop.

Hector spots TWO THUGS, age 10, inside Crew's fancy Chevy Impala low-rider. They look high, and they're watching him.

HECTOR

A drug drop? Crew, you know I can't get mixed up in that, and you shouldn't either.

CREW

(loudly)

Boy, don't tell me what to do. Whimpy motherfucker, you ain't down. Kiss my ass.

Hurt, Hector watches him hurry to his car and drive away while the snickering young thugs glance back at him.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION CENTER - SAME DAY

A (prison) guard strolls past Gain. His demeanor more refined, Gain is reading and taking notes from three opened books.

Hector sits across from him looking upset.

HECTOR

Gain, I'm talking to you.

Gain displays an attitude that says Hector is an intrusion.
(NOTE: Gain's Texas accent sounds more polished.)

GAIN

Look, Hector, I'm trying to get into the college program, and I have a little time to study before my next counsel.

HECTOR

You can't stop for one minute?

Gain shoves away the book in exasperation.

GAIN

Okay. What?

HECTOR

He just blew me off! We've been friends since we were kids.

GAIN

(weary/uninterested)

That was to show the young blood with him how easily they can be cut loose. Keeps 'em real loyal.

HECTOR

But he's always been there for me.

GAIN

How about being there for yourself? You're too damn needy, learn how to deal with shit. Now go home.

Hector is hesitant.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Go.

Gain is back into his studies, so Hector begrudgingly leaves.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - DAY

Inmates are at bars with outstretched hands for their mail.

Gain also waits. In the b.g. is a wall stacked with books.

Paco sits on the top bunk reading an academic book. Despite his many tattoos, he projects a maturer deportment.

An envelope comes Gain's way. He takes it and handles it with much care. It's from Fulton University.

Paco hops down.

PACO

Let's see it.

The envelope is unsealed. Gain removes his acceptance into the Bachelor of Science program. A Post-it note reads -- I saw it first. Congratulations! Warden.

GAIN

I got in.

PACO

You did it, Gain!

GAIN

I GOT IN!

HOWLS and CHEERS build as Gain eases down on his bunk, while staring at the letter in amazement.

GAIN (CONT'D)

I did it.

INT. PELT'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

Pelt's happiness over the cheering falters to concern.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Gain and Paco stroll past inmates. Gain appears stressed.

GAIN

Paco, I don't know. The subjects look really hard, and you saw how long it took me to get in.

PACO

I have faith in you.

GAIN

Thanks.

Pause as they amble on.

PACO

My girlfriend's bringin' my son.

GAIN

Dustin's ten now, right?

PACO

Yeah. I hate when they leave, I wish I could see him every day. Gain, when I get outta here I won't be comin' back.

GAIN

We'll stay in touch when you do. I wanna make sure you keep-up with your studies.

PACO

I'm countin' on it, ese -- I sent Dustin the books you got from Flagstaff. He loves them; that kid, he's real smart.

Sad pause.

PACO (CONT'D)

He deserves more. What I was doin' back then, it felt so right to be so wrong. I didn't kill nobody, Gain. I don't have that on my heart, but I was there. And I was far from bein' a good father.

GAIN

But you are now. Paco, there's a lotta guys on the outside who don't stand-up for their kid like you.

PACO

When I get out I'm makin' up for every second I wasn't there for him.

GAIN

I know you will.

They join a group of Men United inmates having a discussion.

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - DAY

College-level books cover the table. Overwhelmed, Gain looks up at Flagstaff.

FLAGSTAFF

This is basic bachelor curriculum.
All you have to do is study and
turn in assignments as instructed.

Gain indicates that he understands. Flagstaff walks away.

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - NIGHT

A SLOW PAN of the dimly-lit library to Gain. Alone, he's engrossed in his studies. Officer Dillard walks up.

OFFICER DILLARD

It's been three hours, let's go.

GAIN

Please, Officer Dillard, can I just sleep in here?

OFFICER DILLARD

No.

GAIN

But the lights are already out on my block. Just one more hour.

OFFICER DILLARD

You're obsessed, and it's time for me to go home. Get up.

Dillard helps a sulking Gain gather up books.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

On his bunk, Gain studies under a flashlight.

Officer Dillard lingers outside the bars wearily watching Gain.

OFFICER DILLARD

Don't make me regret this, and I want it back tomorrow, Gain, you hear me?

Gain is too engrossed to respond.

Officer Dillard gives up and walks away.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

A banner displays a 'freed parolee bird' with Gain's name.

Gain is clean-cut and handsome with a demeanor that exudes confidence. Pelt, Paco, Jamaica and familiar inmates and guards (including Officer Dillard) happily surround him.

The Jamaican grabs Gain in a bear hug.

JAMAICA

You're my shiny star, friend.
Willis is gone, and Paco's
hearing's in six months.

PACO

You're still gonna come, right?

GAIN

I'll be riding with Doctor Vines.

Flagstaff walks up, older, a little slower and actively mumbling to himself.

OFFICER DILLARD

What's the story on you getting
into medical school?

GAIN

I'm already applying. I'm
hoping I can get accepted
before I finish my Master's.

Suddenly concerned, Gain looks between Pelt and Flagstaff.

GAIN (CONT'D)

The store owner has always gone
against me being paroled. I
doubt he'll sign the letter.

PELT

A bullet can be hard to forget.

GAIN

(stung)

I was just trying not to get shot
in the back after I took off.

FLAGSTAFF

Pelt, you're not helping -- Son,
you've come too far to be denied,
and you've got some heavy hitters
on the outside who'll back you.

PACO

(pride-filled assurance)
You will get into medical school.

Gain gestures appreciation and looks at Pelt, who forces a smile.

Flagstaff spies Pelt's peeking anxiety and quickly guides Gain away.

OFFICER DILLARD

Pelt, are you okay?

Pelt hurries out.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Strolling, Pelt looks depressed. Footsteps. It's one of the drug dealers (thrown out of Men United). Sizing up Pelt, the man forces him into a face-to-face stance.

INT. PRISON--LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Gain and Flagstaff enter to inmates on computers, reading books and studying in much-greater numbers. All they pass extend Gain some form of congratulations (AD LIB).

Flagstaff looks around in dismay.

FLAGSTAFF

And they keep coming. This is your fault, you know?

GAIN

Just answer the question, and don't spin me some tale about your roaring twenties, gangster exploits.

FLAGSTAFF

Roaring--fuck you.

GAIN

Your story, ol' man. Spill it.

A moment of consideration, then Flagstaff guides Gain to a secluded area where they take a seat.

FLAGSTAFF

Madam Irene Flagstaff a.k.a. Conseula Munez. She was my great-great grandmother -- our Mexican heritage was a well-guarded secret. Being white was everything back then, especially for the wealthy.

GAIN

So you were a rich kid.

FLAGSTAFF

I grew up in the house she handed down. Massive place, I was always discovering something new. One day, I discovered a secret passage.

GAIN

For real?

FLAGSTAFF

It lead to a room filled with crates of gold bars, jewelry and other valuables.

GAIN

Whoa, you literally walked into Treasure Island. How old were you?

FLAGSTAFF

Nine, and it became my best kept secret. There was also a shelf of her personal journals. When I started reading them I learned her father had sold her to a rich gold prospector when she was seven.

GAIN

That sounds bad.

FLAGSTAFF

It was. When he got her home, it was Irene he slept with. His wife would beat her whenever he went away on business.

GAIN

Her husband laying up with a kid in the same house? Beating her must've been the wife's way of coping.

FLAGSTAFF

Yes, well, Madam Irene rose the victor. She's also the bane of my existence.

GAIN

How?

FLAGSTAFF

Genes. By the time she was sixteen, she was handling most of the lazy bastard's business affairs.

GAIN

Wow, she was smart.

FLAGSTAFF

And calculating. She killed them.

(notes Gain's surprise)

Yes, him, his wife and their three children. She had transferred most of his holdings prior to a cross-country move. Letting them live wasn't an option.

GAIN

Hostile territory, that would've been a good cover for murder.

FLAGSTAFF

That's exactly what she wrote, and the same was reported once they found what animals didn't eat up -- she kept the newspaper articles. And her fair skin helped when she rolled into town with bank and a fancy European title. But the family's crest was stamped in the gold bars, and they were well-known back then.

GAIN

So everything she feared could be recognized was tucked away in that secret room.

FLAGSTAFF

You have a good sense of story, son.

GAIN

What happened to the loot?

FLAGSTAFF

I waited until I had sole possession of the house, then I cashed out.

GAIN

You've always had it made. How'd you end up in here?

FLAGSTAFF

Greed, my overly-inquisitive boy.
I had substantially increased my
holdings, and not all by legal
means. When I found out some
jealous rivals were poking around,
I took them out.

FLAGSTAFF looks sad, Gain sympathetic.

GAIN

Must be hard carrying that around.

FLAGSTAFF

No, I enjoyed killing them, I just
didn't count on getting caught. I
have no idea how they fingered me.

Surprised, Gain just looks at him.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

What? It's the truth. And that
damn D.A. obliterated my alibi.
Fished up a young chippie I kept on
the side, used her to pit my wife
against me. I let the bastard
ride on his laurels for a few
years, then I had him capped.

Gain cautiously studies Flagstaff.

GAIN

Maybe it's good you're still in
here.

Flagstaff laughs, then he takes in Gain like someone who
delights him. It fades to a stare of serious contemplation.

FLAGSTAFF

Evil's always present, son, ready
to pounce in a moment of weakness.
It craves total consumption and it
never tires from its quest. You
understand what I'm saying?

Gain indicates that he does.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

Now, you wanna monitor yourself when
you get upset, because that's the
door evil steps through. Hone in
and shut-it down, then be smart
and get out of its path before it
circles around for another shot.

Flagstaff's expression turns chilling.

FLAGSTAFF (CONT'D)

And you're right. They should never
release me back into society.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - SAME DAY

Paco, Jamaica and another inmate spot Gain and meet-up with
him. Gain gives them a strange look.

PACO

What?

GAIN

Flagstaff. I love that ol' guy,
but he can be --

JAMAICA

Scary? He once told me my island
liver would make the most delectable
paté. Psycho motherfucker had me
terrified; I couldn't go to sleep.

Laughter.

GAIN

Where's Pelt?

INMATE

Check his cell.

When Gain walks off, Jamaica gives the inmate a seething
look.

PACO

What's going on?

INT. PRISON--PELT'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

The cell is open. Gain walks in on Pelt, who sits on the
bunk dazed, his movements awkward.

Gain's confusion erodes to disappointment. He surveys
Pelt's surroundings and spots partially-hidden heroin
paraphernalia near an opened Bible.

PELT

The valley of the shadow of death.

Gain tries to act like everything is normal.

GAIN

The twenty-third Psalms.

PELT

That valley's where we are, you 'n
me. They don't wanna let us go.

GAIN

Who are they?

PELT

The shadows, so many shadows...I
got out long enough to raise Tina.

Pelt's mood lightens, but quickly fades.

GAIN

How old was she?

PELT

When I got out? Six. She was so
scared of me. Shoot, she scared
me, too. She was...

(building emotions)

She was beautiful. I did that was
all I could think about. This
precise, sweet child came from me.

Pelt's merriment is laced with irony.

PELT (CONT'D)

It was the best fifteen years I'
ever lived on this earth.

(sorrow/confusion)

Gain, I, I tried...I dodged the
darts from the shadows. I ran
from 'em, hid.

Gain falls against the wall and slides to a sitting position
on the floor, his inner-grief surfacing.

GAIN

(more to himself)

One got through...

They mope in silence for several beats, each lost to his own
troubled thoughts.

PELT

Fifteen years. Gain?

GAIN

What?

PELT

Trouble's gonna look for you, it
thinks it owns you. You gotta
watch real hard. Watch out for
the darts fired from the shadows.

Scared, Gain stands and ambles out.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - NIGHT

Gain is asleep. Footsteps are followed by the sound of his
cell door. Gain springs from his bunk ready to fight.

Officer Dillard stands in the opening. He looks worried.

INT. PRISON--PELT'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

Pelt lays naked and trembling in a fetal-lock on the floor.

Horrified, Gain looks at Officer Dillard.

OFFICER DILLARD

I hear the same thing happened some
years back. You and him being close,
I'm hoping you can talk him down.

GAIN

Help me get him on his bunk.

When they lay Pelt down he flinches in terror, then he looks
at Gain. A sob escapes his lips. More follow, causing Gain
distress. He sits and pulls Pelt close to comfort him.

Dillard watches them for several beats then walks away.

LATER...

Pelt sits on his bunk with the covers wrapped around him.

Gain sits on the floor against the wall. He looks drained.

PELT

I never wanted you to see me like
this.

Pelt appears to drift into a shameful place.

Gain looks away as his own shame surfaces.

GAIN

I've always wished somebody had been there to stop him. I was eight when he moved in. Mama knew what he was doing, but she was scared he'd leave her, so she...she didn't even try to protect me. The years go by, but, in my mind, it always plays out like it happened yesterday.

He looks up and meets Pelt's pained gaze. Pelt gestures appreciation then lays down.

INT. PRISON--GAIN'S CELL - DAY

Gain enters to a letter on his bunk. It's from a medical school. Excited, he opens it. It's a rejection. Torn, he tucks the letter away.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

Gain looks good in civilian casuals. He also looks sad.

Vines walks in.

DR. VINES

Where's Pelt?

GAIN

He's not feeling too good.

DR. VINES

(crestfallen)

He's using again.

Vines notes Gain's surprise.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

I've known him along time. It comes and goes.

GAIN

He said trouble'll find me.
I'm thinking what's the use?

DR. VINES

Pelt's defeats have nothing to do with you.

GAIN

I know, I'm just --

Pause.

DR. VINES

Say it.

GAIN

I'm scared, Doctor Vines, I'm real scared.

DR. VINES

You should be, it won't be easy. You can make it, but you'll have to be self-aware at all times. And remember what I told you.

GAIN

No screw-ups, no set-backs?

DR. VINES

That's it.

INT. DR. VINES' CAR - SAME DAY

Gain is Vines' passenger.

DR. VINES

Here's the address.

GAIN

A youth center?

DR. VINES

Newest of five I've set-up throughout the state. You start tomorrow. Work it around your classes.

GAIN

I just appreciate coming out with a paying job.

Vines pulls over and stops. Gain climbs out.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Hesitant, Gain stares in confusion. The modular dwelling has greatly degraded. A towhead GIRL TODDLER plays outside the door.

PETE, mixed-race, age 15, is hanging out with THREE TEEN BOYS under the canopy. Pete spots Gain and frowns.

PETE

Hey, why you lookin' at my house?

GAIN

Pete? Is that you?

Distrustful, the boy nods. Gain smiles.

GAIN (CONT'D)
I'm your uncle.

PETE
My uncle's in the pen.

GAIN
I got out. You're practically
a man now.

The toddler is on the move. Natalie runs out. Now in her late-teens, she's still plain and thin. Wearing thick glasses, she scoops up the girl then spots him.

NATALIE
Gain!

She, with toddler, are soon in Gain's arms.

GAIN
Whose kid is this?

NATALIE
Mine -- Nikki, it's your uncle.

Pete walks over, so Gain extends his hand for a handshake. Natalie's emotions surface.

NATALIE
I'm glad you're home.

Gain hugs her again then takes the toddler, who likes him.

GAIN
How's mama?

NATALIE
She's in there. Jesse 'n Scoot's
been askin' about you. They
still hang out at Jilly's.

GAIN
I'm not interested in hooking up
with them. Natalie, don't tell
them I'm out, alright?

Natalie eyes him curiously.

NATALIE
You even talk different.

GAIN
Francine, she still lives here?

NATALIE
Ah-huh, she's in there, too.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gain walks in with the toddler in his arms. Pete follows.

PETE
You like basketball?

GAIN
Oh yeah. You?

PETE
Yep. I hope you make it.

GAIN
Make what?

PETE
You know, not go back in. Did
you kill anybody?

Gain, who scans the room in horror, indicates a negative.

Liquor bottles, soda cans and other debris are on tables and the floor. Piles of dirty clothes are everywhere.

His mother is in a drunk sleep on the tattered, sagging couch. She could easily pass for a derelict.

Gain catches Pete watching him, so he forces a smile, puts the toddler down and places a reassuring hand on Pete's shoulder.

NATALIE (O.S.)
Francine, come here!

Noises like someone getting out of bed, then footsteps.

GAIN
You were Nikki's age when --

He stops when Francine, late-20s, waddles in pregnant with circles under her eyes. Gain looks at Natalie.

NATALIE
(near whisper)
Pete's daddy, Stroy. Niggah got
her strung-out on that crack.

FRANCINE

Gain?
 (hurries over)
 You're out!

Gain appears lost for words and ready to leave. Ironically, his waking mother comes to his rescue.

MOTHER

My baby!

She's all over him. Gain reacts as if he's hugging a stranger, then he slowly absorbs his mother's warmth.

EXT. URBAN STREET - LATER, NIGHT

There are makeshift tent houses along the dirty street. STREET PEOPLE are about. Gain wades through with a duffle bag thrown over one shoulder. He enters a rundown hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Gain is shown in by an OLD MAN who could double for a farm hand. City noises are heard through the opened window. The man is about to follow Gain inside.

GAIN

I'm fine. Thank you.

Gain closes the door on him. Slinging his duffle bag onto the bed Gain sits on the springy mattress. He appears overwhelmed by depression.

Ticking from an old clock nailed to the night stand grows, exacerbating Gain's stress level. Then outside noises filter in. A WOMAN'S scream brings him to his feet.

Gain charges to the window and slaps away the wine bottle propping it up. The window slams as the bottle smashes against the wall.

EXT. URBAN STREET - SAME NIGHT

The seedy block is laden with slouchy PROSTITUTES, COWBOY-LOOKING HUSTLERS and STREET BUMS.

Strolling, Gain's mood matches the depression around him. The stoned man (from the day of his arrest) blocks him off.

STONED MAN

Give me a quarter, please, man,
 just a quarter, please?

Gain looks shocked. The man has degraded into a crazed-looking derelict. Gain drops him a quarter and walks on.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Muffled street noise greets Gain, who drags in. He hangs his clothes in the tiny closet.

Listlessly removing a book from his back-pack, Gain sits on the springy bed and opens it. The Holy Bible. While he silently reads the strain in his face begins to ease.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER - DAY

Gain enters. URBAN TEENS are involved in center recreation. THREE ADULTS are present. FELIX, black, 20s and preppie dressed, walks over.

FELIX

You must be Gain.

Gain indicates yes.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Felix, I'm the program coordinator.
Glad you're here.

GAIN

Kinda sparse.

FELIX

Funding's tight. That's where
you come in, I'm told.

Gain looks confused.

FELIX (CONT'D)

I'll give you a quick tour then
show you to your office.

GAIN

Office? I've got an office?

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER--GAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Gain is seated behind the desk, his perplexed frown on Vines sitting across from him dressed in golfer casuals.

GAIN

But I've never done a fund raiser,
and I don't wanna be responsible for
the cash in case something goes down.

DR. VINES

I hear you, but money isn't the only resource. Donations can be anything useful to the center.

GAIN

Oh, then I know how to beg-up stuff.

DR. VINES

There you go. Felix will train you in basic operational procedures, and someone's coming in to show you how to asks for needed items like a commercial refrigerator and computers. You also need reliable volunteers.

Somber pause.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Flagstaff passed away last night.

GAIN

No...He was fine when I left.

DR. VINES

I heard he went peacefully. They're shipping his body back east.

Gain sadly absorbs the loss.

GAIN

I would like to've hung-out with him one more time.

DR. VINES

He loved you like a son.

Gain sinks into a remorseful stupor.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Look, Tina is having a mixer at her house Thursday night. She asked me to invite you.

Vines removes a small leather-bound note pad and pricy-looking ink pen.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Here's her address. Charge the cab fare, and get a receipt -- How are things at home?

GAIN

Worse than when I left. My baby
sister's gotta kid now. It tears
at me, seeing them raised in that.

DR. VINES

Just stay available to them. You
being a positive role model may
prove beneficial, in time.

Gain looks uncertain but indicates his agreement. Vines
rises to leave.

GAIN

Wait, what do you wear to a mixer?

INT. TINA' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is large and beautifully furnished. Her hair
longer, Tina looks amazing.

Gain, Dr. Vines, Dr. Bentley and a few other familiar faces
are huddled with Tina. More GUESTS converse in the b.g.

Gain looks GQ handsome in his dark suit and charcoal polo
shirt. He sips beer, his curious attention on WALTER.

Walter, late-30s and snooty, is at the bar. The BARTENDER
hands him a cut-crystal glass of dark liquor. Walter downs
it fast and requests a refill.

Tina looks annoyed.

TINA

Walter?

Walter saunters up close to Tina with fresh drink in hand
and a sexually-charged leer. She moves closer to Gain.

TINA (CONT'D)

Walter's an attorney. He recently
started counseling our detainees.

WALTER

Some of the most jaded kids you'll
ever wanna meet.

Tina looks embarrassed.

COUNSELOR

Gain has also been a tremendous help,
we all miss him. Our young detainees
always looked forward to your visits.

WALTER
(much too loudly)
So you're the ex-convict, interesting.

Vines takes note of Gain's embarrassed reaction as guests in the b.g. turn to stare.

LATER...

Gain, Vines, Tina and Dr. Bentley are in a tense discussion.

TINA
Yes, but we must get more creative.

Walter rejoins them with a fresh drink.

Gain forces himself to ignore the man. It's not easy.

GAIN
Exposure.

TINA
Excuse me?

GAIN
Your older detainees. Some are from homes where no one has ever worked. Jobs that are out there, if they see some of them performed they might identify one that suits them.

DR. BENTLEY
Good point.

TINA
But can we get funding?

DR. BENTLEY
Yes, transportation, meals, security cost? Getting funding can be tricky.

GAIN
Look, it's all in the presentation. I'd tell 'em to give-up the funding now, or pay a lot more when they're adults committing worse crimes. Job or no job, they're gonna wanna eat.

DR. BENTLEY
You would make a formidable advocate, Mister Bolton.

Gain looks flattered while Walter broods in envy.

DR. BENTLEY (CONT'D)

You and I will get together. We'll write up a proposal, and I want you to present it to our state officials.

Gain looks at Vines, who indicates that he agrees.

GAIN

Sure, okay.

TINA

Don't look so scared. You'll do fine, I'll even coach you.

Gain grins his appreciation.

WALTER

What companies would risk giving them jobs?

GAIN

Some'll find work, but that's a good point.

(to Dr. Vines)

It might be good to start a service-based, entrepreneurial program.

TINA

It's certainly worth consideration.

DR. BENTLEY

There's a program that trains reformed teens in floral arrangements; mobile car wash service; graphic design. They have a list of opportunities.

GAIN

(excited)

That's good, because poverty and oppression can hide a lot of talent. Sure you'll have some slackers, but there's also some gems in the mix. They just have to be shined up. Now the way I see it --

WALTER

Why should we care how you see anything? -- What's wrong with you people? You've let this convict weasel his way into our lives --

Walter is startled when Gain snaps like he's going for him.

Alerted, Vines readies himself to stop him.

FLAGSTAFF (V.O.)

Shut-it down.

Gain instantly defuses and smiles.

GAIN

Excuse me.

Gain walks over and joins another group of guests.

LATER...

Gain is one of a few remaining guests. He walks over to Tina, who's glaring down at a dozing Walter.

GAIN

No way he can drive.

TINA

I'll have to get him home, because him staying here is not an option.

GAIN

Write down his address. I'll drive him home in his car.

TINA

(suspicious)

Are you sure? He did insult you.

GAIN

I'm a big boy, but if you think I'm gonna hurt or rob him --

TINA

Oh, no. Please, I would appreciate you getting him home. I can have a cab pick you up there.

GAIN

That'll work.

Gain helps Walter to his feet.

WALTER

Hey, I don't like you.

GAIN

I know. I'm gonna take you, okay?

WALTER

Okay. Can we stop for a drink?

GAIN

It's late. How about another time?

WALTER

Yeah, okay. Another time...

Amused, Tina hands Gain the address. He hustles Walter out. Tina closes the door in enchanted wonder.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Gain, who's preppie-dressed, looks happy. A car whips to the curb. He spots Scoot and Jesse.

Scoot hops out but Jesse takes his time.

SCOOT

Damn, Gain, you look good!

A hearty hug is exchanged.

JESSE

Nat said you got out months ago.

GAIN

Yes, I'm still getting situated.

SCOOT

(proud)

She was right, you do talk good. Said you gotta college degree.

JESSE

And that you wanna be a doctor. A convict doctor, you really stupid enough to think that's gonna happen?

Gain looks stung.

SCOOT

Jesse, ain't nothin' wrong with him havin' goals.

JESSE

(broken-hearted rage)

Scoot, you too dumb to see--he's the reason we was kicked outta school, and now he's some high-nose college fuck who avoids us like we' scum.

GAIN

Hey, that's not true.

JESSE

Bullshit, Gain, I know you. We was the bad influence, that's what you tell yourself when it was you who always got us in trouble.

GAIN

(guilt)

I know, Jesse, and I'm sorry --

JESSE

Don't play yo' reverse psychology crap on me!

Scoot tries to calm him but Jesse shoves away his hand.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You ain't never been about shit.
A doctor? Man, get outta here.

He climbs in the car without giving Gain another glance.

Scoot places a reassuring hand on Gains shoulder then gets in the car.

Gain sadly strolls on as the car drive away in the b.g.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER - SAME DAY

Gain enters in a stupor that vanishes when he spots Willis grinning at him.

GAIN

Willis, how long you been here?

They meet-up for a hearty hand shake and a quick hug.

WILLIS

I'm the new handyman, I know how to fix stuff. Doctor Vines say he's gonna get me a uniform.

GAIN

I'm glad you're here.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER--GAIN'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Teenaged girls put finishing touches on the space. The room looks youthful and fun.

Gain enters and frowns while taking it all in.

GAIN

Thanks, it looks nice.

Happy, the girls exit.

Gain takes a seat and goes through the mail. He sits aside two letters, takes a deep breath then opens them. Both are rejection letters from medical schools.

Gravelly disappointed, he unlocks a drawer and places them on top of a stack of letters. When he spots Tina in the doorway he quickly closes the drawer and stands.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Hey.

TINA

Are you alright?

GAIN

I'm just having a bad day, but seeing you just made it better.

Tina curts a smile that makes Gain laugh. She walks over and hands him a plant in a porcelain pot.

TINA

A gift for your office. It's very...cheerful.

GAIN

My decorators. Fortunately, I don't spend much time in here. It really is good to see you.

Tina acknowledges likewise with a slight blow.

TINA

Walter's mother was grateful you got him home safely. She thinks you're absolutely adorable.

GAIN

She's a nice lady; she insisted on feeding me.

Tina laughs. Gain sits the plant on the desk. He spots grinning teens watching them.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Let's go for a walk.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gain and Tina are on a stroll. He notes her worry.

GAIN

I sense you really came by to talk.

TINA

It's my father. He respects you, Gain. I worry about him getting out and ending up right back inside, or dead. I try not to let him see how angry he makes me.

She's fighting emotions. Gain touches her arm.

GAIN

I believe he'll make it this time.

TINA

You do?

GAIN

Any hint of trouble, you let me know and I'll be there. Okay?

That seems to help her. They walk on.

EXT. PRISON--YARD - DAY

Paco is showing photos to Jamaica and another inmate.

JAMAICA

Damn, Dustin's really a good-looking kid. You sure he yours?

PACO

(grabs the photo)

Yeah, I'm sure. And if he wasn't he is now.

JAMAICA

There you go. Claim 'em and name 'em.

Laughter, then something grabs Paco's attention. He has locked stares with a chilling LATIN INMATE around his age.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER - SAME DAY

The large room is now fully furnished and organized.

Hector, now age 17, is attempting to play the piano.

Willis, who's wearing a janitor uniform, helps EIGHT TEENS stuff envelopes. All look annoyed with Hector.

Undaunted, Gain sits at a desk keying into the computer with two opened books before him.

TOUGH TEEN #3

Hector, get off that thing!

Hector flips him off.

TOUGH TEEN #3 (CONT'D)

Boy, I'll come over there and dot
that head.

WILLIS

(to Gain)

You want me to get him off it?

GAIN

No. He's trying to learn, what
do yawl expect?

TOUGH TEEN #3

I expect him to stop makin' me
crazy. Why'd you get a stupid
piano in the first place?

Gain is already back into his studies.

The annoyed teens continue stuffing envelopes.

Three movers enter pushing carts with an assortment of hand-
me-down looking desktop computers and monitors.

GAIN

Line them on those four tables.

Teens are ecstatic.

TOUGH TEEN #3

You got 'em! Gain, you're the man.

Even Hector stops playing to help connect computers.

GAIN

Kevin? Tell Felix we need stamps.
I want those letters mailed today.

Gain is about to get back to his studies when a middle-aged
WOMAN walks over and whispers something to him. Gain
hurries to the phone.

GAIN

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH: INT. PRISON - CONTINUOUS

Pelt, who looks stressed, is on the wall phone.

PELT

Paco's dead.

Shocked, Gain recovers in confusion.

GAIN

Pelt, his parole hearing's in two months. What happened?

PELT

A rival gang member came in a few days ago. Gain, it went down before I knew it was comin'.

Devastated, Gain absently hangs up. The phone rings.

GAIN

(listlessly)

Youth Center....Natalie?....

Yeah, it's me, what's wrong?....

(concerned)

Where is she?

INT. STROY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Raunchy rap music plays, the room done-up in moron decor. STROY, 30, looks like a low-class country slick. THREE MEN are with him. He slaps down a card.

STROY

POW!

The card pops off the table and floats to the floor.

MAN #1

Damn, Stroy. Ol' wild-ass nigger.

Pounding.

STROY

Who is it?!

NATALIE (O.S.)

Natalie!

Exchanging irked glances, Stroy deals a new hand.

Natalie eases through the door.

STROY

Ugly fo-eyed heffa. If I hear you call me a niggah again --

Gain's appearance stops his words.

STROY (CONT'D)

Gain? Boy, I heard you was out.
You look good. How you doin'?

GAIN

I'm fine. Where's Francine?

STROY

Back there. Ass been in bed all
day. I told her to go home, but
she won't budge.

He glimpses his card hand.

STROY (CONT'D)

Shiiit, bring it on, bring it on!

The men are back into the game.

Natalie pulls Gain toward the hall.

BEDROOM

Gain stares down at Francine, who's partially covered with a
mystery-stained sheet.

GAIN

Francine?

No response. When Gain pulls her, she rolls like a stiff
carcass. Dull-eyed, her fingers are positioned like claws.
Rigor mortis has set in, her pregnancy a bloated horror.

Gain backs off in shock. The sound of laughter appears to
ignite fury in Gain, who spots several guns nearby. He
reaches for one, but stops. It's a struggle.

Natalie crumbles in tears over her sister's body. Gain
guides her from the room.

INT. HOUSE--LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

There is wailing. AD LIB a WOMAN'S slurred comforting
voice. Watching, Gain holds Natalie's dirty-faced toddler.

Pete sits at Gain's feet weeping.

TWO WOMEN struggle to contain Gain's mother. All three are
drunk, so they are a spectacle within themselves.

Gain pulls Pete up and goes outside, actively shielding the
toddler from the chaos.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOUTH CENTER--GAIN'S OFFICE - LATER, SAME DAY

A SLOW PAN of the dusk-lit room with its youthful decor, coupled with distant sounds of center activity, and music.

Gain stands at his desk looking void of emotion, his gaze tranced on the letter in his hand.

A few beats later he releases the letter and absently watches it float to the floor before walking out. Its words reveal another medical school rejection.

INT. HOTEL--HALLWAY - LATER, NIGHT

Gain looks drained, and his eyes are red like he's been drinking. Something causes him to slow to a stop.

A TIPSY BUM is sprawled across the floor near Gain's room. Startled, the bum looks up, his bloody face evidence of a beating. Frightened, he scampers away on all fours.

Gain eases toward his room. The busted door is ajar. He pushes it open. Hall light reveals a trashed room.

HOTEL ROOM

Gain clicks on the light and steps inside. The closet is empty, the hangers all askew. He's relieved to spot his books scattered about. He turns toward the night stand.

The busted clock says it's 7:43.

Gain pulls Dr. Vine's card from his wallet and flips it over. An address is written on the back.

EXT. VINES HOME--WALKWAY - SAME NIGHT

Gain climbs out of the cab and takes in the well-lit grounds to a stately mansion. Lights are on throughout. Gain looks unsure while he watches the cab drive away.

PORCH

Laughter filters out coupled with the sound of musical instruments being tuned. A scary-looking BUTLER opens the door, then Vines appears looking mellow, and happily surprised.

DR. VINES

Hey! Come in, come in. What brings you here this--wait, what happened?

GAIN

Relax, I was robbed. All I have left is in this grocery bag.

Gain steps inside, the door closes behind him.

INT. VINES' HOME--MUSIC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GUESTS consist of young and old adults. A CHOIR of eight people stand between the grand piano and five-person BAND.

Gain spots Player and his Mom among choir members. She throws him a hug and a beautiful smile. He goes over to chat.

MOMENTS LATER...

Dr. Vines beckons Gain over to him and Dr. Bentley. Gain receives Bentley's outstretched hand.

GAIN

Doctor Bentley, it's good to see you again. Is this a party?

DR. BENTLEY

It's Henry's bi-monthly gathering for the families.

DR. VINES

I like to maintain a connection. Having a wall of support helps when brothers are released.

GAIN

(alarmed)

I sure hope you didn't try to include my mother in this.

DR. VINES

I paid her a visit a week before your release. It's standard.

Gain looks mortified.

GAIN

Then you already know she wouldn't be a good fit.

DR. VINES

Believe me, that's the case more often than not. Besides, I think Player's mother wants to adopt you.

They laugh, then Gain spots Tina when she enters the room with a glass of wine.

Tina looks equally surprised to see Gain. She smiles a greeting then sits next to a gorgeous mulatto named JESTON.

Vines spies Gain's crestfallen reaction and guides him over. Jeston rises with an enamored stare. Vines whispers in his ear then kisses it. Jeston signals for Gain to have a sit.

Gain complies and watches them walk away.

TINA

That's Jeston, he's really sweet.

GAIN

He looks like he stepped out of a magazine. I'm glad he's with Vines.

Tina forces back a chuckle, then their eyes lock longer than she appears comfortable with. She looks away.

The band begins to play "Bless Me (Prayer of Jabez)®" then the choir starts to sing.

Gain becomes enraptured in the compelling lyrics. Watching him, Tina appears enamored...

INT. VINES' HOME - DAY

The song "Bless Me" continues through a POV of the opulent house while en route to the

KITCHEN

The song fades away as Gain enters wearing designer sweat pants and a silk tee-shirt. He spots Tina outside the window on her cell phone.

Dr. Vines and Jeston are eating breakfast.

GAIN

Morning -- This is some house --
Thanks again for these clothes.

JESTON

(French accent)

Bon jour and you're welcome. Ah!
I own apartment buildings, and one
has a furnished unit. It's yours,
Tina has the key. She'll take you
there when you finish shopping.

The MAID sits a plate of food before Gain. He gestures thanks, takes a seat and pours some juice before digging in.

GAIN

Shopping?

JESTON

Yes. Unless you plan to wear those sweats everyday.

GAIN

Ahh, got it, and I appreciate the apartment. How much is the rent?

Jeston chuckles.

JESTON

On your salary? You can't afford it. I keep it empty for tax purposes, but the center will be a better write-off.

Gain, who appears unsure how to respond, looks at Vines.

DR. VINES

You didn't tell me about your sister.
(notes Gain's surprise)
I left your mother my card. She called at four a.m. looking for you.

GAIN

Sorry. The distraction was nice after the day I had. And Paco... maybe if I'd still been there --

DR. VINES

Don't. His past caught up with him, that's just how it is.

While the maid refreshes their coffee, Tina walks up wearing jogging gear with a glass of juice in hand.

TINA

Good morning sleepy head.

GAIN

You're beautiful, you know that?

Tina looks caught-off guard, then embarrassed. She frowns and sips her juice.

Vines and Jeston do their best not to laugh.

Gain watches another MAID enter to assist with the clean-up.

GAIN

Do psychologists really make enough
to afford all this?

Vines flashes in annoyance.

Jeston emphatically turns to Tina.

JESTON

Time for our run.

They are out of there.

GAIN

Is that a touchy subject?

DR. VINES

Do you realize how nosey you are?

Unfazed, Gain just stares at him.

DR. VINES

My former line of work paid very
well. I had it invested and
stashed away long before doing
time, this house included.

(annoyed)

Don't be impressed, there's a lot
of blood on that money. I've been
trying to wipe it clean ever since.

Gain gestures understanding.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

Flagstaff said he had a hobby for
you? He mention anything to you?

Gain indicates no.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

He believed you have the gift to
be a writer; you're damn sure
inquisitive enough to be one.

GAIN

You mean like books?

DR, VINES

(while eating)

Ah-huh.

GAIN

(doubtful, blows it off)
Me an author?

DR. VINES

Yeah, well, you need to do something. God, loved ones, good friends, work, a sound hobby, recreation and charity. All are required for a full and happy life, and in that order.

GAIN

Jackson wrote about that and we both know what happened to him.

DR. VINES

Why do you do that? You always do that!

GAIN

What?

DR. VINES

Apply other's failures to your own life. You're an individual, think like one.

Gain sulks then gestures okay. He stands.

GAIN

I better go call my mother.

DR. VINES

Hey? Take a couple of days to help her with the arrangements. Call me if you need anything.

Gain expresses his appreciation and walks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

New life has been breathed into the old shop-lined street, with potted flowers and trees generously sprinkled about.

Gain and Hector stroll along with Big Red sodas in hand. Both look aggravated.

GAIN

What are you talking about?

HECTOR

You won't let me help out anymore.

GAIN

Because you half-ass your way
through everything. Look, Hector,
if you want better then do better,
cause life ain't gonna give-up
shit until your best start
showing up on a regular bases.

HECTOR

See, like that! You've gotten
mean, ese.

Surprised, Gain considers this in concerned wonder.

GAIN

I didn't realize --

His gaze intensifies while peering through a window.

The Korean merchant looks up. Shocked recognition.

Gain hurries away, leaving Hector to linger in confusion.
The Korean merchant rushes to the window with gun in hand.
Hector spots the weapon--the merchant hides it behind him.

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

Hector, come on!

Hector sprints away.

The merchant dashes to the phone.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Lunchtime CIVILIANS sit on benches and the grass. CHILDREN
and PARENTS are in the b.g.

Gain and Tina find a place to sit with their bagged meal.

GAIN

I just happened to look in a window
and there he was.

TINA

I'm sure he knows it was an accident.

GAIN

You didn't see his face. There no
way he's gonna sign the letter.

Now Tina looks concern.

TINA

Maybe you should talk to Henry.

GAIN

Doctor Vines? No way, he'll think I went there on purpose.

TINA

Still, it happened yesterday. If he reported it you would've heard something by now.

GAIN

You think so?

TINA

There are some important people who will vouch for you if he does. You're not alone anymore.

Gain muses --

FLAGSTAFF (V.O.)

You've got some heavy hitters on the outside who'll back you.

GAIN

Thank you for that -- I saw you and Vines at my sister's funeral. I wanted to come over but my mother --

TINA

Yeah, she was pretty emotional. You're a good son, Gain.

Gain looks grateful before suddenly appearing uncomfortable.

GAIN

Is it...possible you would give someone like me a chance?

TINA

I'm all out of chances.

GAIN

(withers)

I understand.

TINA

I don't think you do. Look, Gain, when it comes to relationships...let's just say I've made some mistakes. I can't let my feelings for you be enough.

He looks at her with deep longing, peeking the love for him she poorly hides.

GAIN

For the first time in my life I
can think about my future without
the usual jolt of dread.

He gently takes her hand and kisses it.

GAIN (CONT'D)

I love you. Now I know you're
scared and that's okay. I'll
just wait until you feel safe.

Tina looks torn and attracted at the same time.

TINA

Promise me you won't push.

GAIN

I promise.

She gestures appreciate.

INT. YOUTH CENTER--GAIN'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Gain enters, takes a seat and opens the drawer. He removes
the stack of rejection letters, tears them to shreds then
dumps them in the trash. He then gets to work on the

COMPUTER

Dear Governor,

Although it's been a few years since we spoke, I am hopeful
you will recall our discussion...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CITY STREET - DAY

Gain, Hector and Willis are wearing faded denim, button-down
shirt, a cowboy hat and boots. Willis appears euphoric
about his hat. They each have fast food bags in hand.

CREW (O.S.)

Hey, Hector?!

Crew, who's dressed in highroller casuals topped off with a
big gold watch and ring, is leaning against a luxury car.

Hector sprints over.

Gain and Willis quizzically follow.

HECTOR

So that's your new ride?

Crew nods, his cool gaze on the two men.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Oh! Gain, I told you about Crew.

Gain just looks at him.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

We, we've kinda been hanging out.

CREW

You gotta problem with that?

GAIN

Why would I have a problem?

CREW

(jealous edge)

Is he's that ex-con you been bragging about?

HECTOR

(uneasy)

Yeah, he's cool, so is Willis.

CREW

(leers in disgust)

Another ex-con, I suppose. Get rid of that cheap meal, let's ride.

Hector hands his meal off to Willis.

HECTOR

You're treating me to a better one.

CREW

You know I'll feed you.

Gain says something to Willis--who gestures understanding and walks on.

HECTOR

(to Gain)

I'll help out at the center tomorrow. Catch you later.

Gain goes humble.

GAIN

You're just gonna leave me on the street? Hector, that's rude. How come I don't get an invite?

HECTOR

You can come hang with us.

CREW

I ain't hanging with him.

HECTOR

Why not? I told you, Gain's cool.

GAIN

That's a major ride, and it looks brand new.

CREW

It is new.

Gain's compliment has an endearing effect on Crew.

CREW (CONT'D)

All right, but dump the food. I don't want it in my car.

Gain complies then climbs in the backseat.

INT. CREW'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gain's shrewd gaze toggles between Crew and Hector.

GAIN

Crew, you mind stopping by my mom's?

CREW

You gotta sister?

GAIN

Yeah, she's nineteen.

CREW

Sweet.

A venomous scowl crosses Gain's expression. It vanishes before Crew catches his reflection in the rearview mirror.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME DAY

A TV SOAP OPERA is heard in the b.g. Gain enters the tacky, unclean room with Hector, who takes it in in disgust.

Crew enters, and he looks mad enough to spit.

CREW

Man, your sister is ugly as --

Gain is in his face with a vengeance.

GAIN

You dissin' my sister?

Crew moves away, but Gain grabs him and pulls him close.

HECTOR

Gain, lighten up.

Gain backs off Hector with a look.

CREW

Hey, I was disappointed, I mean --

GAIN

Yeah-yeah, I got it.

Gain releases him, but his malevolent stare remains in tact.

GAIN (CONT'D)

How about some tea? Yeah, have some tea with me. Wouldn't want yawl to think I'm rude.

CREW

(eases toward the door)
No thanks.

GAIN

I insist.

Gain pulls Crew to the counter and opens a canister.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Get the cups.

Torn, Crew opens a cupboard. Roaches fly out at him. Crew screams like a punk and scurries back while fanning wildly.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Mama musta moved 'em. Look in --

CREW

Man, dance with your own damn roaches. I'm out of here.

There is danger in Gain's eyes as he blocks off Crew.

GAIN

Who you yellin' at, boy?

Crew reaches inside his coat. Gain is on him. He grabs away the gun and puts it in Crew's face.

GAIN (CONT'D)

This a nice piece. Yeah, how 'bout
I try it out on you?

Crew frantically shakes his head.

HECTOR

(scared)

Gain, come on. Stop playing around.

Gain chuckles then slips the gun into his own pocket.

GAIN

I'm just funnin' with him, the
safety's on.

(takes Crew's keys)

I'mo put that fancy ride of yours
on the road. Yawl can come, too.

Gain struts out. Crew gives Hector an incredulous look then hurries after Gain.

Perplexed, Hector follows.

INT. CREW'S CAR - SAME DAY

Hector is in-and-out of dozing in the backseat. Gain drives. An annoyed Crew pouts in the passenger seat.

CREW

It's been almost two hours.
Where these friends of yours
live?

Crew spots the prison. From the backseat Hector takes in the foreboding facility in confused wonder.

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - SAME DAY

Gain is with Pelt, Jamaica and THREE INMATES who look angry.

Hector and Crew sit off to the side looking out of place.

INMATE #1

He made up all these rules, and
he wouldn't let us deal.

INMATE #2

We both lost money.

They glare at Pelt.

GAIN

How much you get off 'em?

PELT

A grand each.

GAIN

Daaag. Yawl got that kinda bank?

PELT

They're grifters, that's why they're in here. I had Chico do all the dealin' cause they cheat.

INMATE #3

You didn't prove it.

PELT

Frat's your proof. You know what happened to him.

GAIN

What happened to Frat?

PELT

Bekin spied his tuck card.

INMATE #2

That boy squealed like a pig when Bekin slit him open.

JAMAICA

It was bad. He got to cleaned it up.

INMATE #3

Ugh, don't remind me. Motherfucker's insides stunk.

GAIN

What they do to Bekin?

INMATE #2

Like somebody told he did it.

PELT

Him 'n his boys pumped this newbie before he got in his cage good.

INMATE #3

Yeah, then they beat the shit out of him. Literally. I had to clean that up, too.

Laughter.

Hector and Crew exchange horrified glances.

JAMAICA

Bekin claimed this new piece. He's like a real woman with a dick, got tits and ass. I caught him alone and popped it good.

INMATE #2

Yeah, dumbass, keep braggin' about it. When Bekin finds out he'll roll-up your big Jamaican ass like a joint, smoke it then fuck it.

Laughter, then they fall silent for a moment of contemplation.

GAIN

I met Paco's son.

JAMAICA

Dustin?

GAIN

Yeah, he's an amazing kid --

CREW (O.S.)

Gain, how long you gonna be?

Gain looks irked, then they all turn and glare at Crew.

HECTOR

I, I have to, to use the bathroom.

Pelt beckons him toward the door.

Hector springs up and hurries out. Torn, Crew follows.

INT. PRISON--CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Four inmates are on mop detail. Two are Leather and another of Bekin's cronies. They all stop and stare at the boys.

Frightened, Hector and Crew rush to a guard. The guard points, Hector hurries on. Crew follows.

Leather sits aside the mop and slips away.

CREW

That convict brought us to a prison. And he gave 'em my gun! Hector, I ain't playing, get back my keys.

Hector is too distracted (by nature calling) to hear him.

HECTOR

He said the bathroom's this way.

He rushes on.

Flustered, Crew jogs to catch up. When he turns the corner, Hector is gone. There's the sound of shuffling inside an opened door. Crew enters.

STORAGE ROOM

Crew stops in shock.

Bekin is gripping Hector close, his hand muffling the young man's screams.

A fist to Crew's jaw slams him against the wall. The crony who hit him closes the door.

Hector goggles at a line of blood on the wall as Crew slides to the floor.

Bekin shoves Hector to his cronies.

Hector yells and is slapped across his face. He looks at Bekin, who unfastens his pants while sauntering over.

Leather springs away from Hector.

LEATHER

Damn, Bekin, the boy done pissed on himself.

HECTOR

Be--you're Bekin?

BEKIN

(surprised)

The boy knows who I am.

That gets Hector slapped upside his head by Leather, who looks disgusted by the urine growing around him.

BEKIN (CONT'D)

It's gonna be messy anyhow. Train time, boys. Pull 'em down.

A hand covers Hector's mouth. He twist and turns trying to keep his pants up. He's not successful.

The sound of a riffle being cocked.

Bekin and his cronies fan off Hector, fast. Officer Dillard and three fellow guards slam cronies against the wall.

Gain and Pelt rush in.

Crew comes to and gawks in horror at a distraught Hector, who frantically fights to get his wet pants up.

Pelt helps Crew to his feet.

Gain hurries over. Shaken, Hector fiddles with his zipper.

GAIN

Hey, you alright? Answer me!

HECTOR

Yeah-yeah. I, they didn't --

Hector bursts into tears. Gain tries to comfort him but Hector resists.

OFFICER DILLARD

Get these boys out of here. Find that one some clean pants.

(to Bekin)

We'll deal with you later.

Hector and a wobbly Crew are led out by the guards.

BEKIN

Hey boy?!

Hector looks at Bekin, whose lustful stare makes him hurry on.

Gain and Pelt are soon in a stand-off with Bekin.

Bekin's cronies draw close, prompting him to make his move. He latches onto Gain's arms.

GAIN

Thanks.

Bekin releases Gain and affixes a unity patch on his shirt, as does Leather. He and his cronies walk out.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER - LATER, NIGHT

Gain and Hector are barely out of the car when Crew peels out of there. Amused, Gain heads toward the entrance. Hector is slow to follow. Gain waits for him to catch up.

GAIN

Snap out of it. Stuff like that goes down all the time on the inside.

HECTOR

That don't make it right!

GAIN

What's right got to do with it? That's how it is.

Hector walks on ahead of him. Gain catches up.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Look, my friends aren't too keen on Crew, but they like you. Next time we go --

HECTOR

Next time, are you crazy? I'll never go back to that place.

GAIN

Keep running behind Crew and you'll end up there or worse, and, believe me, those guys got bullying down to a science.

Gain chuckles fondly. Hector gives him a look that makes Gain check himself.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Sorry -- Look, Hector, Crew is like a vampire, he feeds on your loyalty. Either you severe this hold he has over you, or hard time with men like Bekin is in your future.

Hector looks devastated. A few beats follow.

HECTOR

My grandpa wants me to come live with them in Atlanta. I can go to college and help him out with the yard business -- It's late, I'm going home. See you tomorrow.

Gain looks plagued by guilt while watching after Hector.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER--GAIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUES

Gain enters in a stupor that transforms to curiosity when he spots a large box on his desk.

The box label reads "From the Estate of Tate Flagstaff." Initialed seals are affixed at the seams. Gain breaks the seals and lifts the lid.

A hand-written letter lays on stacks of old journals. He opens a journal to the elegantly written name of Irene Flagstaff. Intrigued, Gain places it back with much care.

There is something large wrapped in black velvet.

Gain lifts out the weighty item and unwraps two gold bars with a regal crest in the center. Astonished, he sits them aside then scoops up the letter.

FLAGSTAFF (V.O.)

Dear Gain, your keen sense of story tells me a remarkable writer lives inside of you. Then again, it just might be my ambition to keep you inspired. A desire I refuse to relinquish, even in death. That's why I bequest to you Madam Irene's journals, trusting that you will one day write her life into nothing short of a masterpiece.

(beat)

P.S.: I thought you would enjoy having a few treasure island trinkets of your own... Stay safe, son. And, by all good means, stay free.

Deeply moved, Gain gently places the letter and gold bars back inside the box then retrieves one of the journals.

He settles into the chair behind his desk, opens the journal, and loses himself in Irene's writing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TEEN CENTER - DAY

Teens stand along the wall painting a "Job Fair" banner. Willis can be seen in the b.g. assembling a cabinet.

Hector practices on the piano. He still plays badly.

TEENAGE GIRL

Hector, give it a rest!

TOUGH TEEN #3

Yeah! No-playin' flip.

HECTOR

I got yo' flip right here.

Gain, Felix and teens are scribbling on poster boards. A tough teenaged girl cringes.

TOUGH TEEN GIRL

Man, that dude is awful.

GAIN

We need a piano instructor.

(to Felix)

The retirement complex, we might be able to find a volunteer. See if the manager'll let us post --

Gain stops in surprise.

The Korean merchant is rolling in cases of soda. Gain walks over. It's awkward for both of them.

KOREAN MERCHANT

I call' my attorney that day I saw you. He mention' your letter for medical school. I already sign' it for you.

GAIN

(happy disbelief)

Thank you...thanks.

KOREAN MERCHANT

He say you help trouble' teens.

GAIN

What I did to you --

KOREAN MERCHANT

No no, it's okay.

GAIN

(deeply ashamed)

No, it's not okay, you could've been killed. I am so sorry.

He stares at Gain for a long time then gestures acceptance.

KOREAN MERCHANT

I brought these for the center. We can talk more later.

The merchant heads out.

GAIN

Wait! You're leaving your dolly.

KOREAN MERCHANT

You bring dolly to my store, okay?

GAIN

But I can have it unloaded. It'll
only take a moment.

KOREAN MERCHANT

(desperate/deeply troubled)

Please, come to my store. I wanna
talk to you. About my son.

Gain just stares at him so the man bows slightly and walks
out.

MONTAGE:

-- YOUTH CENTER - Hector attempts to play a mellow song
under the tutelage of an ELDERLY INSTRUCTOR.

NOTE: Sound-only of Hector's continuous piano playing that
improves with each montage scene:

-- SMALL MARKET THROUGH WINDOW - NIGHT -- Gain, Dr. Vines
and the Korean merchant are with a tough-looking KOREAN
TEEN. The boy says something that gets him slapped upside
his head by Gain. Vines calms down the alarmed merchant.

-- INTERIOR - GAIN'S FAMILY HOME - DAY -- Gain helps his
family clean up the house. His mother, though tipsy,
assist. She also looks happy that he's there.

-- EXTERIOR - GAIN'S FAMILY HOME - DAY -- Gain and his
nephew paint the dwelling. His mother and sister plant
flowers.

-- YOUTH CENTER - DAY -- Teens are enjoying various center
activities when Gain enters. The Korean teen hurries over
to greet Gain and engages him in conversation.

-- HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY -- Speaking before a captivated
BUSINESS-DRESSED AUDIENCE, Gain projects confidence and
savvy. Vines, Tina and Dr. Bentley proudly watch.

-- PRISON STREET - DAY -- Pelt walks out with his bagged
belongings. Gain, Vines and Tina are there to greet him.

-- HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT -- Hector's (O.S.) piano
playing is now at a mastered level, and backed up by
orchestra music. Gain appears with TWO MEN and a WOMAN, all
wearing medical uniforms. A DOCTOR points at his chest then
at the chart he carries. As the music reaches its last
measure, we get a full view of Gain's name tag that reads
Gain Bolton, Intern.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. UNIVERSITY--THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Hector, who looks maturer, ends the song with the COLLEGE ORCHESTRA backing him up. He stands to an explosion of applause; his slick-backed hair, tux and untucked shirt an appealing statement. Hector takes a bow.

SLOWLY DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON--MEETING ROOM - DAY

A TWELVE-MAN panel, all business dressed, are seated at tables flanking the podium. Pelt and Player are among them, both looking a little older.

The room is so crowded inmates stand along the walls. More inmates are outside the door, where guards hold them at bay. All attention appears to be focused on one person.

Gain, who's now in his late-30s, is impeccably groomed. Seated on the front row, his presence demands attention.

Applause when Vines enters. Mid-60s and looking fit, he gestures greetings while en route to the podium.

The audience slowly falls silent.

DR. VINES

I take great pleasure in introducing today's speaker. A young man who didn't let me or anyone get in the way of the belief he had in himself. The day he walked out of this very prison he did so with a firm grasp on his inheritance. Let him be your evidence of all the possibilities that await you.

Vines looks at Gain.

DR. VINES

A medical professional and author,
I present Doctor Gain Bolton!

The room erupts with cheers and a standing ovation.

Some inmates flag books entitled Madam Irene, a True Story. Gain autographs a few books before taking the podium.

Everyone settles down in anticipation.

GAIN

Thank you. Before I get started,
I want all of you to extend a
warm welcome to Dustin Gomez.
Dustin recently graduated from
Texas A & M, with honors. A few
of you knew his father, Paco.

Applauds and cheers ring out.

The handsome YOUNG LATIN MAN stands and extends Gain then the audience appreciation before sitting back down.

GAIN (CONT'D)

Paco is proof that a father can
step-up regardless of his
circumstances. Our kids just
need to know we care. The rest...

His voice fades in annoyance.

A muscular, tattooed inmate is aggressively bullying the smaller inmate beside him. He stops when he finds himself the focus of attention. Near tears, the harassed man rises to leave.

GAIN

Please don't go.
(to a helper)
He needs a patch.

A patch is affixed to the inmate's shirt. Still, the inmate looks unsure. He finally sits down with much apprehension, causing his nemesis concern.

BULLY

I was just funnin' with him.

GAIN

Dammit, man, this isn't grade
school. Grow-up.

The embarrassed bully wilts.

Still annoyed, Gain takes in the room with fierce intensity, causing some to squirm.

GAIN (CONT'D)

We are brothers, bound together by an inheritance of hope. We claim it daily by our actions. Remember that -- Moving on, I want to share some of my own life experiences.

(deadpans)

You'll soon learn that you're in very good company, indeed.

Laughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Leaning against a luxury SUV Gain looks at peace, his eight year-old SON at his side playing a game on his Iphone.

Gain looks up at the Korean store that has grown into a large marketplace.

The Korean Teen is now a man. Well-dressed, he looks to be in charge. He spots Gain and waves, then the aging Korean merchant walks over and waves, as well.

PELT (O.S.)

Gain?

SON

Grandpa!

The boy runs over and raps his arms around Pelt, then he shakes hands with Dr. Vines.

Gain walks over, hugs both men then pulls his happy son close.

GAIN

Thank you for coming.

DR. VINES

Why did you wanna meet here?

GAIN

Twenty-years ago my life took a detour in this very spot. I can't even sense the person I was, thanks to you two. And especially to Flagstaff.

Pelt looks at Vines.

PELT

Him feelin' all sentimental, this
might be a good time to make your
pitch.

Vines gestures agreement then adopts a formal stance.

DR. VINES

Doctor Bolton? You have wisely
spent and generously shared your
inheritance. The Board took a
vote and it was unanimous. We
want to appoint you leader of
Men United. Think you can fit
us into your schedule?

Gain looks surprised.

Vines eases his severe stance and stares at Gain in
admiration.

DR. VINES (CONT'D)

I told you, in time, a new leader
will emerge. Remember? That
leader has always been you.

Grateful, Gain indicates his acceptance, then he kisses the
top of his son's head.

FADE OUT.

THE END.