

THE GREAT QUEST

A screenplay based on the life
of the Buddha

by

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FADE IN:

INSERT - INDIA 623 BC

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Town folk bustle. Food stalls line the street. Vendors yell out, selling their wares. Ox carts ramble by.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

He was born over two thousand six hundred years ago. Though parts of India today may look similar, times were very different then.

Diligent workers build a dwelling. An untouchable, in rag clothes, scavenges for castoffs near the worker's supplies.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

As rigid as etchings in stone, the caste system was dictated by birth from which there was hardly an escape. The untouchables were below even the lowest caste...

A worker spots the untouchable, races over, beats him with a stick. The untouchable runs off.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

...who were the workers.

A well dressed merchant strolls past the workers. He admires the work, continues his walk.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Then came the merchant class, yet they did not enjoy much power.

With apprehension, the merchant stops and stares at regally attired, noble warriors riding magnificent horses.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

The nobility, headed by the Kings, were the official rulers. Yet in fact, they were not the top level.

The royal men dismount, approach an old Brahmin Priest, officiating a ceremony. They bow in reverence to the Priest.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

The true rulers were the Brahmin Priests, who kept the caste system intact for their own advantage.

As the royals sit, the Priest sprinkles water on a dead, bloody goat. A blood-drenched knife lies next to the goat.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Animal sacrifice was one of their methods. Sometimes humans, also. Subjugation of women was another. The thought of allowing a woman to be a Priest was sacrilegious.

A fair distance behind the ceremony walks TWO ASCETICS carrying their alms food bowls, their eyes downcast. KAUNDINYA, 40, serene, leads a younger sage, BASPA, 25.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

I am a member of a group outside the caste system. We are the spiritual ascetics, seeking the deepest answers to life.

The Brahmin Priests spot the ascetics, frown, turn their faces in disgust.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Since we denounce the caste system, the Brahmins see us as their enemies.

Kaundinya looks toward the ceremony, compassionately, shakes his head. The wind blows, many leaves fall on Kaundinya.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

I am Kaundinya. I have a grave responsibility. With the thirty-two marks of a Great Man, he's gifted beyond all. When the predictions come true, I will be his humble student, he will be my great teacher. My tale may not be perfectly accurate, but it is the best I can do today. This is the story of the Great Quest.

Kaundinya looks toward CUSTOMERS around a spice MERCHANT.

MERCHANT

They say he's better looking than the King.

CUSTOMER

Too bad we never get to see him.

The Merchant hands spices to the Customer, who walks away, passing two men building a house. A YOUNG MAN hands mortar to the OLDER WORKER.

YOUNG MAN

I hear he's very bright.

Royal Brahmin PRIEST ANUPANITA, 65, the King's personal religious "advisor", struts by with a haughty expression.

OLDER WORKER

But only what those Priests teach.

The young man spits in the Priest's direction.

YOUNG MAN

So he'll stay stupid like them.

The Older Worker stands.

OLDER WORKER

Maybe one day he'll meet the sages.

The older worker points at Kaundinya and Baspa walking past two SOLDIERS.

SOLDIER

Protect him, protect him... Think the King will ever let him out?

OFFICER

Not while he's alive. Eighteen years in a luxurious jail, girls, music, games, so what?

SOLDIER

They could lock me away for awhile in that. I wouldn't complain.

OFFICER

Easy to say, you know the real world. But him, he knows nothing of life. They say servants remove every dying leaf and flower so he never sees decay. Would you want to be that ignorant?

The Officer shakes his head.

INT. KING AND QUEEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

QUEEN PRAJAPATI, 40, gracefully beautiful, shakes her head as she sits on the bed.

Dismayed, KING SUDDHODANA, 45, handsome, mighty warrior's build with large earrings that signify nobility, paces.

KING SUDDHODANA

I will tell him when it's time.

PRAJAPATI

He's almost a man. What if the time comes and you haven't told him yet?

KING SUDDHODANA

Prajapati, please.

Prajapati stands, hugs the King.

PRAJAPATI

He'll never be able to follow you as King if he doesn't know about life... and death.

The King steps away, turns.

KING SUDDHODANA

My love, have I been a good husband? A good king? Am I not a good father? Siddhartha's destiny lies in my hands.

PRAJAPATI

But, Suddhodana, what if his destiny is not to become King?

The King walks out. A tear slides down Prajapati's cheek.

EXT. PALACE - DAY

PRINCE SIDDHARTHA, 18, tall, strikingly handsome, large royal earrings, flowing long hair, royal outfit, steps out into the sun.

He blinks in the light, looks up at a soaring golden eagle. He smiles, spreads his arms as if to fly away. He sighs, his shoulders slouch, his arms drop like heavy weights.

Five beautiful, young MAIDENS dance and play MUSIC in the gardens. One girl strokes her body.

YOUNG MAIDEN

Siddhartha, want to fly with me?

The girls giggle. With a blank face, Siddhartha looks at them, says nothing, walks off.

YOUNG MAIDEN

But Siddhartha--

He's gone. The girls console themselves.

YOUNG MAIDEN

He doesn't want us anymore.

EXT. HIGH PALACE WALL - DAY

Siddhartha wipes sweat off his brow as he stealthily creeps next to a sheer smooth wall. His hand slides along the wall as he regularly glances over his shoulder.

He reaches a Mango tree, loaded with ripe mangoes, twenty feet in from the wall. He looks in all directions, hoists himself up. He perches on a branch, looks over the wall toward rolling hills and a far off village.

He looks longingly at youths playing sport in a field. Sad, Siddhartha frowns, stands, reaches for a higher branch.

PRIEST ANUPANITA (O.S.)
Siddhartha!

Siddhartha grimaces. With angry defiance he climbs higher.

PRIEST ANUPANITA (O.S.)
Shall I call the guards?

Like a caged lion, he peers at his captor. Caught but pride intact, he drops down, confronts the Priest.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
So, you dream in your tree.
(he gloats)
Your father wants you.

Siddhartha glares.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
Now.

SIDDHARTHA
Enjoy your power while you can,
Priest. You will be tamed.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
Ha, upstart Prince, going to
conquer the world, eh?

Siddhartha strides off.

The Priest claps his hands. Two servants hurry over holding axes.

INT. KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

A knife slices a mango. King Suddhodana sits, eating. Siddhartha stands nearby.

KING SUDDHODANA
No, I did not call for you.

SIDDHARTHA

You are the King, why do you let
the Priest run--

KING SUDDHODANA

Siddhartha, you have the pride and
bearing of a future ruler. Good.
But you must understand the Brahmin
Priests are born the highest caste
to be our spiritual advisers and
appease the gods. That is how it is
and will always be.

Siddhartha walks toward a painting of a village.

SIDDHARTHA

When am I going to see the kingdom?

KING SUDDHODANA

Do not worry, Son, as soon as--

SIDDHARTHA

Father! I'm tired of being
cloistered here in the palace!

King Suddhodana stands, casually glances out a window.

KING SUDDHODANA

A king needs patience. Princes need
to learn this virtue, also.

Siddhartha stomps out. The King spins around.

KING SUDDHODANA

Siddhartha!

The King stares. Saddened, he drops his eyes.

EXT. MANGO TREE - DAY

The Priest laughs as servants swing their axes hard into the
tree. Woodchips fly. Mangoes shake and fall.

INT. PALACE STAIRCASE - DAY

Siddhartha tears down stairs two at a time.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Siddhartha steps out of the Palace into clusters of perfect
rose bushes. The CHOPPING echoes. He sprints to the Mango
tree as a servant takes the last swing.

SIDDHARTHA

Stop!

CRACK. An anguished Siddhartha watches the tree fall. He stands, dazed. The servants look at him with concern, but nod to the Priest and leave. The Priest sneers.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 Never, ever will you be able to
 stop my power. Do you understand?

A long moment as Siddhartha's eyes narrow on the Priest's angry glare.

Siddhartha P.O.V.

Everything around the Priest dissolves into blackness.

Siddhartha shuts his eyes, shakes his head.

He opens his eyes. The blackness is gone.

SIDDHARTHA
 No.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 I have told you over and over,
 little prince. I am the highest
 caste, a Royal Brahmin Priest. The
 gods' wrath will be on anyone who
 interferes with my wishes.

He moves close to Siddhartha, inches from his face.

Siddhartha sees fires in the Priest's eyes.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 You must remember who I am and who
 you are.

SIDDHARTHA
 I will remember.

The Priest struts away. Siddhartha walks close to the Mango stump. He looks over the fallen tree.

A male arm appears, the hand pats Siddhartha's shoulder.

SIDDHARTHA
 Ruchi, my only true friend, how can
 I get out?

RUCHI (O.S.)
 You know the walls are impossible
 to climb.

Siddhartha frowns.

RUCHI (O.S.)
And the gates are--

 SIDDHARTHA
Ruchi!

Siddhartha walks away from the arm. He picks up a mango.

 RUCHI (O.S.)
How many times have we gone through
this? You're just one person.
Rebellion isn't the answer. But if
you play their game and become
King, then you can break free from
the Priests and their tyranny.

Siddhartha turns, looks at his best friend, world-wise
RUCHI, 24, royal clothes, medium height, plain facial
features, shoulder length hair.

 SIDDHARTHA
I'd rather be a commoner with
freedom.

 RUCHI
Do you really believe they have any
more freedom than you?

 SIDDHARTHA
Fine for you to say, you've been
outside.

 RUCHI
Siddhartha... he's your father.

Ruchi walks off as Siddhartha looks at his mango.

INT. KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

King Suddhodana gazes out his window. He appears to be
watching someone walk from off in the distance to below the
window. The Priest CLEARS his throat. The King doesn't turn.

 KING SUDDHODANA
My love for him tears at my heart.
Do I keep him protected or do I
risk losing him?

The King looks down at Siddhartha.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Siddhartha holds a mango in one hand. With his other hand,
he reaches out to a rose bud, sweeps his hand to a rose half
open, continues to a rose in full bloom.

PRIEST ANUPANITA (V.O.)
A wife. If he falls in love, then
he'll stay and become King.

Siddhartha looks upward to darkening clouds. A storm brews.

KING SUDDHODANA (V.O.)
He's had lovely maidens around him
all day, for years.

PRIEST ANUPANITA (V.O.)
But not the right woman yet.

Siddhartha's hand moves from bud to flower and back again.

KING SUDDHODANA (V.O.)
Will there be a right woman?

PRIEST ANUPANITA (V.O.)
I am certain there is.

Lightning clashes. Heavy rain. Siddhartha takes no notice.

KING SUDDHODANA (V.O.)
Make an announcement, on the full
moon of next month, Siddhartha will
give gifts to all the maidens of
the Kingdom.

EXT. ROYAL GARDENS - DAY

Decked out in splendor. Hundreds watch as Siddhartha stands next to his personal servant, CHANNA, 18, who holds a basket of jeweled necklaces as the ROYAL MINISTER, 60, arranges hundreds of young women.

One radiantly beautiful young woman, YASODHARA, 18, sits peacefully while all other women fidget about.

The Priest stands behind the King and Prajapati who sit close by, watch the first maiden approach. Siddhartha takes a necklace from Channa, smiles politely, places it over her head. She steals a desirous glance at him. He looks away.

Another woman, the same. Another and another. Each nervous maiden meets with the same indifferent smile.

On the outer edge of the crowd stands a MAN in a black, full cape that covers his body and head, hiding his face.

EXT. ROYAL GARDENS - LATER

The King frowns, whispers to Prajapati. She strokes his arm, trying to comfort him. He glances at the Priest anxiously. Stone-faced, the Priest stares at Siddhartha.

Weary, Siddhartha places a necklace over another respectful maiden. Though beautiful, no spark of interest registers on Siddhartha's face. Only Yasodhara, sitting calmly, remains.

She rises, approaches Siddhartha. Her graceful, confident walk gives her a breathtaking elegance and beauty. Unlike the other anxious maidens, Yasodhara looks Siddhartha directly in the eyes. She smiles. Siddhartha smiles.

YASODHARA

Is there a gift for me?

Siddhartha can't take his eyes off her. A few moments pass as if it were an eternity. Finally he replies.

SIDDHARTHA

Of course.

He motions to a red-faced Channa who holds an empty basket.

CHANNA

Lord, I'm so sorry, I'll--

SIDDHARTHA

No need, Channa.

(to Yasodhara)

The necklaces are gone.

Yasodhara's smile stays radiant. Without breaking eye contact, Siddhartha undoes his jeweled belt and places it around her waist.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Whistling, Siddhartha picks red roses. Ruchi races over.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, great news, I know how you can escape the Palace.

SIDDHARTHA

Escape?

RUCHI

That's what you wanted, right?

Siddhartha looks puzzled.

RUCHI

Well, I thought you--

Siddhartha laughs, dances around a bush.

SIDDHARTHA

Before, Ruchi, before my lovely
Yasodhara! I'd be out of my mind
now. Listen, I've given more
thought to your other advice and--

RUCHI

You want to become King?

SIDDHARTHA

I must. Only the best for
Yasodhara, my beautiful, future
Queen. We're destined.

RUCHI

So you're content--

SIDDHARTHA

Content? Elated, thrilled,
ecstatic!

Ruchi smiles wide.

RUCHI

Wonderful!

INT. ROYAL BALLROOM - DAY

A majestic marriage. The loving couple shine. Proud parents
beam. Priests CHANT. Hundreds share in the joy. An elder
hangs wedding garlands over Siddhartha and Yasodhara.
Siddhartha breaks sweet cake and throws rice around.

The crowd cheers as Siddhartha and Yasodhara stroll off the
platform to be greeted by their parents.

MONTAGE - Siddhartha and Yasodhara in love. She always wears
his jeweled belt.

-- PALACE POND - Siddhartha and Yasodhara wander amongst
gazelles and peacocks grazing, as servants slink in the
bushes. Parrots and doves flutter from tree to tree.
Siddhartha tickles Yasodhara. They laugh and kiss.

-- BALLROOM - Musicians entertain while Siddhartha and
Yasodhara watch the merriment. He pops a sweet sensuously
into her mouth. Ruchi waves from across the room. Siddhartha
smiles broadly in return.

-- BEDROOM - In a flowing silk nightgown, Yasodhara surveys
the room, making a cute face. She peeks behind the bed
mischievously. Siddhartha springs from behind a couch, picks
her up and they fall into bed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Siddhartha lies next to a very pregnant Yasodhara. His face assumes a far away look. He nudges her awake.

SIDDHARTHA
My dear Yasodhara...

They kiss.

SIDDHARTHA
Your grace and gentleness exceed anything I experienced before we met. How did it come to be? Teach me of the world you came from. I wish to know about how you grew up.

YASODHARA
My life began with you.

SIDDHARTHA
I would love to visit your home.

YASODHARA
My home is here with you.

SIDDHARTHA
Please, my dear, tell me this time.

An anxious Yasodhara can't hold his gaze. She looks away.

YASODHARA
You know I can't. Your father--

SIDDHARTHA
My father!

Siddhartha springs up, storms out. Yasodhara's eyes tear.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - DAY

King Suddhodana and the Minister ride in, dismount near marbled chairs and tables under a canopy. Servants take their horses. The King's hair shows touches of gray. A frustrated Siddhartha steams toward them.

SIDDHARTHA
Father!

KING SUDDHODANA
Not yet!

SIDDHARTHA
So you want me to stay a little child even when my wife is--

KING SUDDHODANA
Siddhartha, listen--

SIDDHARTHA
To the same thing you've been
telling me my whole life. Why? Why
should I listen?

Unseen by the King, Prajapati approaches.

KING SUDDHODANA
We will get you more maiden
musicians, dancing girls--

SIDDHARTHA
For what reason, when you swear the
one woman I love to silence!

KING SUDDHODANA
The reason is because I say so!

SIDDHARTHA
Then I will listen no longer.

KING SUDDHODANA
Siddhartha--

SIDDHARTHA
What? What can you say that makes
any sense?

Prajapati steps between them, looks long at the King.

PRAJAPATI
Siddhartha will be a father soon,
he needs to know the world.

KING SUDDHODANA
I can not have this!

PRAJAPATI
Suddhodana.

KING SUDDHODANA
But Prajapati, what if--

Prajapati shakes her head.

KING SUDDHODANA
What... if...

She smiles compassionately. Resigned, King Suddhodana nods
to Siddhartha.

KING SUDDHODANA

Yes... it's, it's time.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Kaundinya and Baspa stroll past deer grazing. Birds land in Kaundinya's hand to eat grains.

KAUNDINYA

It's time, good.

BASPA

But the King's obsessed in his denial. There's nothing we can do.

KAUNDINYA

Wrong, we'll just bring some reality into his dreams.

BASPA

I don't like this. Maybe it's you who's living in a dream.

KAUNDINYA

Baspa, throw away your doubts. Has there ever been a time when old age, sickness and death did not rule over humans?

BASPA

But a Prince? How can he who has known only pleasure understand?

KAUNDINYA

Because his ignorance will make him even more sensitive to that which he has never seen.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSIDE THE PALACE - DAY

The King, his Priest and soldiers ride around, commanding everyone to clean up the run down Indian village. The King points at a dead tree and haggard bushes.

KING SUDDHODANA

Get rid of this mess! The Prince will visit in two weeks.

They pass by exhausted workers painting a building.

PRIEST ANUPANITA

Hurry, there are many buildings.

The workers vigorously slap on paint.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY (ONE WEEK LATER)

Villagers busily rip off dead flowers, gather leaves, spruce up gardens. Tired men flatten a road. The King canters up.

KING SUDDHODANA

Faster, it must be done in time!

Rakes speed along the ground, shovelfuls of dirt fly.

EXT. POND - DAY

Siddhartha and Ruchi stroll.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, you may not understand everything you see on the outside.

SIDDHARTHA

Don't worry. I'll be fine.

RUCHI

Well, just remember to heed my advice. I've been out there, I know what it's like. There's an explanation for everything.

SIDDHARTHA

You're right, of course. Thanks, Ruchi, my best friend, and you always will be.

Siddhartha puts his hand on Ruchi's shoulder. Ruchi smiles.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY (ANOTHER WEEK LATER)

Flower wreaths deck each door of the immaculate village. Flags flutter everywhere. The King and Priest ride along.

PRIEST ANUPANITA

Tomorrow the Prince visits. No sick people out, no one old, no dead. Keep them indoors. Do you hear?

The King eyes the village anxiously.

KING SUDDHODANA

May the gods help me if anything... anything...

INT. SIDDHARTHA AND YASODHARA'S CHAMBER - DAY

Yasodhara rests on a day couch, while Siddhartha dresses. He stops, smells a fully bloomed red rose in a crystal vase.

SIDDHARTHA

The Palace, my beautiful wife...
heavenly days of joy and wonder.

He strolls to the window, breathes in deep.

SIDDHARTHA

But today, I expand my horizons.
The Kingdom beckons. I am ready to
sacrifice some bliss to bear the
noble duties of my birth...

He walks back to Yasodhara, pats her nine-month belly.

SIDDHARTHA

...as you bear our child. Are you
sure you don't want to come?

YASODHARA

I will wait... for you to come
back.

Yasodhara smiles, puts her hands on his. They kiss.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - DAY

Siddhartha and Channa climb into a golden carriage, pulled
by two snow-white steers.

From his second story window, the solemn King watches Channa
guide the carriage out the gate. He swings around only to be
confronted by Prajapati with her hands up, indicating him to
stop. She gives him a hug.

EXT. PALACE GATE - DAY

Brightly dressed villagers cheer and wave thousand-colored
flags as Siddhartha and Channa emerge. Hundreds line the
road, toss flowers everywhere. A juggler dances before the
carriage while MUSIC plays.

VILLAGERS

Jai! Jai! Welcome, our Prince!

Siddhartha beams and waves to everyone.

SIDDHARTHA

My Kingdom, it's beautiful.

They ride along leisurely. Lovely girls skip forward, throw
flowers at Siddhartha. A beautiful maiden hands him sweets.
Siddhartha soaks in the attention and gaiety.

SIDDHARTHA

My subjects, so playful.

RUCHI (O.S.)
Hurray, Prince! Hurray, Siddhartha!

Siddhartha looks behind. A joyful Ruchi races up with others, all throwing flowers. Siddhartha laughs and waves at the group.

SIDDHARTHA
Life here is wonderful.

Face aglow, Siddhartha catches flowers from the girls and tosses them back, enwrapped in the festival frenzy.

Up ahead amongst the crowd, Kaundinya supports a very OLD SICK MAN, in torn clothing. The Old Man edges through the oblivious cheering crowd, to the road. Kaundinya slinks off.

The Old Man's bent over body, bald head, shriveled skin and missing teeth contrast vividly to the other villagers. He steps into the road and waves as Siddhartha gets closer.

SIDDHARTHA
Channa, stop!

Channa pulls the reins, glances anxiously at two soldiers.

Shaking, the Old Man looks up at Siddhartha.

Siddhartha P.O.V.

Everything around the Old Man dissolves into a murky blackness. Soft lighted figures seem to dart here and there around the Old Man.

Siddhartha shuts his eyes, shakes his head.

He opens his eyes. Everything is back to normal.

OLD SICK MAN
P-prince, wel-welcome.

He coughs, spittle slides down his chin. The soldiers race past the carriage, grab the Old Man and cart him off.

Siddhartha watches, frozen.

SIDDHARTHA
Channa, what? What was that?

CHANNA
Lord, I'm sorry, uh, I'm not sure.

SIDDHARTHA
It looked human, but it wasn't.

Maidens throw more flowers and distract Siddhartha. Ruchi comes alongside the carriage.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, don't worry about that now. Today's for having fun.

Siddhartha stares blankly at Ruchi, who smiles. Subdued, Siddhartha waves forward.

SIDDHARTHA

Continue.

The crowd cheers as before, but Siddhartha only half-heartedly smiles. Channa takes a turn. The crowd thins. Yet many gather off to the left, not giving Siddhartha any attention. Kaundinya sneaks away from the small cluster.

Siddhartha peers toward the group.

SIDDHARTHA

Channa, is my father over there?

CHANNA

I don't know, Lord.

Siddhartha frowns.

SIDDHARTHA

It must be him, otherwise they would cheer me, right?

CHANNA

Um, yes, Lord.

SIDDHARTHA

Stop, I wish to talk to my father.

Siddhartha alights, strides toward the group, smiling. A worried Channa follows. The villagers step aside.

SIDDHARTHA

Father! Father!

Siddhartha stops short, stunned. No father, rather a small funeral procession for a dead young woman who lies on a stretcher. Her vacant left eye gazes from her bloated face. The swelling forces the right eye shut.

Ruchi races up, grabs Siddhartha's arm, pulls him away.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, please come back to the carriage, the others want you.

Siddhartha looks questioningly at Ruchi who smiles gaily.

SIDDHARTHA
What is this?

RUCHI
Not now, later's fine.

Behind Siddhartha, Channa tries to move the funeral procession away.

CHANNA
Off, all of you, be gone.

Siddhartha turns, grabs Channa.

SIDDHARTHA
What is this?

Channa and the fearful villagers dart anxious looks at each other.

SIDDHARTHA
Channa! What... is... this?

CHANNA
Lord, I, uh, I don't--

Siddhartha grabs Channa, shakes him hard.

SIDDHARTHA
Tell me!

Trembling, Channa drops his head.

CHANNA
Lord, this is death.

SIDDHARTHA
Death? What is death?

Channa's eyes plead. Siddhartha rivets his attention back to the corpse. His hand moves towards her, stops an inch away.

He scans the villagers whose faces reveal their pity for his ignorance. He places his hand on the dead girl's face. His eyes open wide in shock. He pulls his hand back quickly.

SIDDHARTHA
She is no more.

Siddhartha turns to Channa for confirmation.

SIDDHARTHA
Is this death?

Channa nods. Siddhartha looks at solemn Ruchi, who nods, indicates he's going to the carriage, leaves.

Siddhartha turns back to Channa.

SIDDHARTHA
Is... is this for all of us?

Channa and Siddhartha's eyes hold.

SIDDHARTHA
Death will come to Yasodhara also?

Silence. Subdued, Siddhartha walks to the carriage.

SIDDHARTHA
Take me home.

Everyone watches. Even soldiers stand, confused. Siddhartha scans the crowd, waves solemnly as he gets in the carriage. Ruchi stands nearby.

RUCHI
It's alright, Siddhartha, I'll explain everything later.

Emotions numbed, Siddhartha nods to Channa. They ride back towards the Palace.

Another group huddles twenty yards to the side surrounding Kaundinya, teaching on a platform.

SIDDHARTHA
Who is that?

CHANNA
Kaundinya, Lord, a wise sage.

Channa stops. Siddhartha listens intently.

KAUNDINYA
When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to aging, illness and death, sees another who is aged, ill or dead, he must reflect that he, too, is subject to aging, not beyond aging, subject to illness, not beyond illness, and subject to death, not beyond death.

Kaundinya pauses, focuses toward Siddhartha.

KAUNDINYA
But there must be a way to transcend illness, aging and death.

SIDDHARTHA
Is there a way?

Siddhartha turns to Channa who shrugs. Siddhartha glances up at wispy clouds.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)
Siddhartha.

Siddhartha looks questioningly at Kaundinya approaching.

KAUNDINYA
Good luck on your quest.

SIDDHARTHA
My quest?

Kaundinya nods.

KAUNDINYA
And beware of Mara.

SIDDHARTHA
Who's Mara?

KAUNDINYA
Mara is the evil one who keeps us
all in ignorance. You must respect
Mara, he is within you. Yet you
must defeat him.

Kaundinya bows, walks away.

Siddhartha motions for Channa to continue. They pass an unknown saffron robed sage carrying his alms bowl. Siddhartha watches the sage as they ride by.

Siddhartha turns back at the crowd dispersing. He spots the man dressed in a full black cape, covering the head. His face in shadows, he stands tall, stares back at Siddhartha.

Siddhartha's P.O.V.

Around the man appear small fires. Fuzzy figures of people dance softly around the fires.

The man holds a thick cane horizontal in front of him. He snaps it in two, drops the pieces by his side.

Siddhartha shuts his eyes. Opens them. Everything is back to normal and the man is gone.

INT. SIDDHARTHA AND YASODHARA'S CHAMBER - DAY

Yasodhara naps. Siddhartha enters, plunks down in a chair. A yellow rose bud adorns the vase. He picks it up, scrutinizes the rose. Yasodhara stirs.

YASODHARA

Did you enjoy the outing?

His eyes stay focused on the bud.

SIDDHARTHA

It... expanded my horizons. Tell me, when I left there was a fully bloomed red rose. Every few days, we get new budding roses and the full ones are gone.

Siddhartha looks at Yasodhara. Tears appear, slide down her cheek. He puts the vase down, goes to her, wipes her tears.

SIDDHARTHA

Are the full ones dead?

YASODHARA

Your father told me not to--

Their eyes meet, she nods.

YASODHARA

Not yet, but soon.

SIDDHARTHA

Is there a way the rose won't die?

YASODHARA

I wish there was.

They embrace. Siddhartha strokes Yasodhara's hair.

EXT. HIGH PALACE WALL - DAY

Siddhartha's hand slides on the wall as he walks with Channa. He rubs his royal attire and pulls at his jewels as if they are uncomfortable.

SIDDHARTHA

Tell me about the sages.

CHANNA

Lord, uh, I can't.

Siddhartha pounds his fist into the wall.

SIDDHARTHA
Channa! Tell me!

Channa bows his head. Siddhartha tenderly raises Channa's jaw to see his glistening eyes.

SIDDHARTHA
I need to know their world.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Siddhartha sleeps unmoving, as Yasodhara tosses and twists.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - DAY (YASODHARA'S DREAM)

Yasodhara dashes through a deserted courtyard, screaming.

YASODHARA
Stop him! Oh, please stop him!

A splendid white bull with long horns and a bright gem shining on its forehead marches steadfastly toward the gate. She grabs the bull by the neck, tries to restrain it.

YASODHARA
Help me! Help!

CELESTIAL BEING (V.O.)
It must be.

A CELESTIAL BEING manifests in front of the bull. His translucent human like form glows a bright golden hue, his clothing and ornaments glitter. The bull raises his head, acknowledges the Celestial Being.

YASODHARA
Why?

CELESTIAL BEING
He has his destiny... as do you.

The Celestial Being and bull disappear. Yasodhara looks out the gate. The bull stands on a hill facing her. It raises its head, BELLOWS. It disappears down the other side.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Yasodhara screams.

YASODHARA
No! No!

SIDDHARTHA
Yasodhara, wake up, it's all right.

She opens her eyes, hugs Siddhartha tightly.

YASODHARA

Yes...

She pulls back, strokes his cheek.

YASODHARA

It's... it's all right.

They kiss. Then hug as tears run down Yasodhara's cheek.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS - DAY

Musicians play under an open pavilion as a very tipsy King dances with a young maiden. Seething, Siddhartha approaches.

KING SUDDHODANA

Siddhartha, join the fun.

SIDDHARTHA

Father! Why did you hide the realities of life from me?

Briefly stunned, King Suddhodana breaks out of it and covers his anxiety in joviality.

KING SUDDHODANA

Dine, drink, dance, my son. And one more...

(he laughs loudly)

But it doesn't start with a "d".

SIDDHARTHA

Don't you understand it makes everything more painful now? That my lovely Yasodhara and--

KING SUDDHODANA

Yes, painful. You're right. Pregnant wife - happens every time. You'll get over it once your son is born. Then you'll understand!

SIDDHARTHA

Father, listen! I must--

The King shakes off his drunkenness momentarily.

KING SUDDHODANA

Siddhartha, enough! Think of the greater pain Yasodhara has to bear to give you an heir. And our subjects whose welfare depends on us. It's time for you to grow up!

He relaxes again and slaps Siddhartha on the back.

KING SUDDHODANA

Do not worry, my son, it will all
be fine. Believe me, you'll rule
the Kingdom and have nothing but
happiness! More drink!

Siddhartha angrily strides away.

EXT. ARCHERY FIELD - DAY

Alone, Siddhartha paces the field.

SIDDHARTHA

I'll "have nothing but happiness."

He picks up a stone. His face tight, he hurls it at a
target. It misses. He picks up another stone.

SIDDHARTHA

"Dine, drink, dance, my son."

He hurls. It misses. He grabs another.

SIDDHARTHA

The fourth one is death, my father.

He hurls. It hits a perfect bulls-eye and remains stuck.

YASODHARA (O.S.)

Siddhartha.

Yasodhara approaches.

SIDDHARTHA

Dear, you should be resting.

She shakes her head lovingly.

SIDDHARTHA

Yasodhara, when I was out--

YASODHARA

I know.

SIDDHARTHA

I must--

She touches his lips, pats her tummy.

YASODHARA

We will be fine in the Palace.

SIDDHARTHA
I don't know how long.

YASODHARA
We are linked throughout time,
nothing can separate us. When we
met--

SIDDHARTHA
It was as though I'd known you for
all eternity.

YASODHARA
Keep your strength, my love. Stay
strong, stay balanced.

SIDDHARTHA
I will.

YASODHARA
It is a wonderful gain for me to be
married to one whose destiny is
bound for greatness. You must
discover the answers to life and
bring them back for all of us.

They embrace, kiss.

EXT. ROSE GARDENS - DUSK

Siddhartha walks amongst the roses. He spots one, which has
a single brown leaf. Anxious, he looks around, back at the
dying leaf. He touches it. It breaks, falls. He picks it up.

CHANNA (O.S.)
Lord, Lord...

An excited Channa sprints over.

CHANNA
Yasodhara's given birth, a son!

SIDDHARTHA
Are they both well?

CHANNA
Yes, Lord.

Siddhartha looks upward to a golden eagle soaring against a
sunset streaked sky.

SIDDHARTHA
Not much time left in the day.

CHANNA

But, Lord--

SIDDHARTHA

Tonight.

Siddhartha holds out the dead leaf, drops it to the ground.

INT. BALLROOM ENTRANCE FOYER - NIGHT

Music and laughter echo from the Ballroom where a jubilant crowd celebrates the birth. Alone, Prajapati paces, holding a rose. A solemn Siddhartha walks in. She holds the rose out for him. Focusing on the rose, he stops.

SIDDHARTHA

I know now that roses die.

PRAJAPATI

Your father and I have known it only too well. Please don't be upset with his overbearing love.

SIDDHARTHA

The burden of secrecy you've had to bear is over.

Prajapati's eyes tear.

PRAJAPATI

Whatever your destiny holds, from this moment on, it's your decision.

SIDDHARTHA

Thank you, Mother.

Siddhartha takes the rose, hugs her.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Siddhartha and Prajapati enter. The King's face beams.

KING SUDDHODANA

Siddhartha! Siddhartha, you're a father! Happiness will reign!

Siddhartha forces a smile as the King gives him a bear hug.

KING SUDDHODANA

More drink! More food!

Contemptuously, the Priest approaches.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 Congratulations, Siddhartha. Now
 you must provide for your son.

The Priest struts off. Siddhartha surveys the happy faces as he sits with the King and Prajapati. King Suddhodana whispers to Prajapati. Smiling to each other, they leave.

Siddhartha watches them depart. Maidens offer him sweets. He brushes them off, strides out, leaving everyone bewildered, with no royalty to entertain.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The full moon shines in from an open doorway as Siddhartha enters the room. Moonlight casts an aura around him. Yasodhara sleeps with her baby nestled against her breast. The sheet lies partly over him, hiding his face.

Siddhartha nears the bed, his hand moves towards Yasodhara's hair, stops an inch away. His eyes reveal his anguish.

He paces slowly around the bed and bows his head long near Yasodhara's feet. He rises, hesitantly reaches for the sheet hiding his son's face. His hand halts in mid-air. He nods.

SIDDHARTHA
 I will return with more than the
 riches of a Palace for both of you.

His face determined, he walks out.

Yasodhara kisses her babe, looks toward the open door.

YASODHARA
 God-speed, Siddhartha, my love
 throughout time.

EXT. OPEN PALACE FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Siddhartha exits the bedroom into the moonlight, spots Ruchi, waiting.

RUCHI
 I'll meet you at the river.

Siddhartha nods.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - NIGHT

Siddhartha and Channa lead their horses quietly to a GATE where GUARDS sleep. They stop, eye the Guards. Channa's horse NEIGHS, the Guards wake, jump up, draw their swords.

GUARD

Halt!

SIDDHARTHA

Sssh, it is I, the Prince.

GUARD

My Lord, but you can't--

CHANNA

Guard, we have urgent business.

Doubtful, the Guard eyes Channa over.

GUARD

My Lord, I have my orders.

Siddhartha draws his sword. The fearful Guards step back. Siddhartha raises it to his own throat.

SIDDHARTHA

If you do not allow us to pass, I will slit my throat right here.

CHANNA

Lord!

The Guards drop to their knees.

GUARD

Please, my Lord, you may pass. We will take your father's wrath.

Siddhartha hands each Guard a diamond ring.

SIDDHARTHA

Do not tell my father until morning or I shall die.

Stunned, the shaking Guards peer at the rings. Siddhartha and Channa lead their horses out. The gate closes.

CHANNA

Lord, would you really have slit your throat?

Siddhartha gazes long at the full moon.

SIDDHARTHA

No one should ever doubt my resolve.

They mount, gallop off in moonlight.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Siddhartha and Channa ride over a rise. They dismount at the water's edge. Channa opens a large bag.

SIDDHARTHA
Do you have everything?

CHANNA
I wish I didn't.

SIDDHARTHA
You've been a good servant.

Siddhartha takes off his royal clothes while Channa gives him saffron robes, a wandering sage's garb. Siddhartha fondles his long hair's curling ends.

SIDDHARTHA
Blade.

CHANNA
I'll do it for you.

SIDDHARTHA
No, after you're gone.

Channa gives Siddhartha a shaving blade and a large alms bowl, packs his royal clothes and jewelry into the bag.

CHANNA
You know without hair, people will recognize your royal earlobes.

Siddhartha shrugs.

CHANNA
What should I tell Yasodhara?

SIDDHARTHA
She knows.

Channa looks at him, questioningly.

SIDDHARTHA
The precious gems I seek will be for everyone.

CHANNA
And how will you discover the gems?

SIDDHARTHA
I must find an enlightened teacher. He will teach me the answers.

CHANNA

What if you don't meet one?

A long moment.

SIDDHARTHA

Then I'll find the answers myself.

Channa climbs up on his horse, takes Siddhartha's horse's reins. Siddhartha's horse nudges its head against Siddhartha. He gives it a good hug and stroke.

SIDDHARTHA

Now be off, I have much work to do.

CHANNA

Watch out for tigers.

SIDDHARTHA

The fiercest ones lie within.

Siddhartha watches Channa ride off, disappear back over the rise. Surrounded by moon lit trees and shadows, he holds the shaving blade in one hand. A wild dog HOWLS close by.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, tigers, wild dogs, snakes...

He looks at the moon. A cloud blocks the moonlight.

SIDDHARTHA

...and Mara.

On the rise where Channa disappeared, a whirlwind blows out of a cluster of trees into the clearing.

As the whirlwind stops, the bright light shows MARA, in his black cape. He drops the cape to the ground. His strong-built body is clear, wearing a regal, gold trimmed, purple outfit, as it will now always be. Shadows cover his face.

Siddhartha looks down from the moon, and up the rise. He spots Mara.

Mara spreads his arms wide with clenched fists. He shakes his arms, thunder BOOMS. Fires erupt around him.

He raises his arms high. Lightning strikes him. The fires disappear.

Mara is gone.

Siddhartha stares.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAWN

Siddhartha lies asleep on dew covered grass. His pristine silk robes wrap tightly around his body and over his head. A squirrel scampers in the tree above, shaking branches, which drop leaves over Siddhartha.

The squirrel jumps down, scours on the ground for breakfast. Another squirrel darts towards the first one, which zips over Siddhartha, the second one close behind.

SIDDHARTHA

Aggh!

Siddhartha's shaven head pops out to see the second squirrel leap straight at his face.

SIDDHARTHA

No!

He rolls over, breathing heavy as the squirrels scamper off.

Ruchi, shaved head, wearing tattered, patched rough hemp robes, holds a large alms bowl, leans against another tree, straw in his mouth. He laughs.

Siddhartha's expression changes from fear to mirth.

SIDDHARTHA

Oh...

He springs up, brushes himself off.

SIDDHARTHA

Guess I have some learning to do.

RUCHI

I'm glad you said it.

Siddhartha picks up his bowl.

RUCHI

Ready?

SIDDHARTHA

For anything.

They stroll to the road.

RUCHI

Good, first lesson, you don't have some learning to do, you have much learning.

Wide-eyed, Siddhartha takes in the countryside as they walk.

SIDDHARTHA

Fine, so what's my second lesson?

RUCHI

You've never walked barefoot
before. Be careful.

Siddhartha glances down but returns his gaze to the hills.

SIDDHARTHA

Pretty basic, you call that a
lesson?

He stumbles on a rock.

SIDDHARTHA

Oh!

He hops, inspects his bleeding toe. Ruchi laughs.

RUCHI

Lesson number three. The mundane is
important, even if your quest is
for ultimate wisdom.

Siddhartha smiles sheepishly.

RUCHI

Always take my advice.

Siddhartha nods. He points at Ruchi's robes.

SIDDHARTHA

Why such patched robes?

RUCHI

You'll find out.

They resume walking and come to a muddy area. An ox cart
with three rough young MEN jolts along toward them.

RUCHI

I have to relieve myself.

Siddhartha stops as Ruchi goes behind some bushes.

A huge bearded LEADER holds the reins. Seeing Siddhartha, he
sniggers, tugs the earlobe of a THIN FELLOW. He pulls up
close by. The Thin Fellow jumps off, swaggers to Siddhartha.
The others follow. The three surround him, fondle his robes.

THIN FELLOW

Nice new robes, eh? Benare's silk?

LEADER

Which palace ya come from? Not the King's who took our farmland, eh?

THIN FELLOW

Maybe he was the King.

Siddhartha takes a step away. The big Leader blocks him.

SIDDHARTHA

I... I don't know what you're talking about. Excuse me.

LEADER

Didja hear, he said "'cuse me"?

They all laugh.

LEADER

Stub ya pretty little toe, eh?

Siddhartha looks at his bloody toe.

RUCHI (O.S.)

Siddhartha, they won't let you go. Such men only understand force.

SIDDHARTHA

No.

LEADER

Never you mind, royal boy, we'll help ya look like a true wanderer.

Gleeful, the three men grab handfuls of mud, whack it onto Siddhartha's robes and smear it around.

RUCHI (O.S.)

Well, hit back!

The men push Siddhartha into the mud. He's had enough.

SIDDHARTHA

Stop!

He shoves one away, jumps up and throws the Leader down. The Leader puts his hands up, surrendering.

LEADER

Ha! Big peaceful sage, eh? At least now ya look authentic.

Laughing, they climb back on their cart. A dismayed Siddhartha watches them depart. Ruchi walks over.

RUCHI

Good, Siddhartha, you fought well.
Your father would be proud of how
well he trained you.

SIDDHARTHA

But I'm a sage now, I don't think I
should hit anyone.

RUCHI

Sage or not, if you aren't tough,
you'll never defeat Mara.

Siddhartha picks up his bowl, heads to the nearby river.

SIDDHARTHA

Do I defeat Mara with physical
strength?

RUCHI

Physical and mental, I will teach
you all you need.

SIDDHARTHA

But just who or what is Mara?

They stop at the river, Ruchi looks at Siddhartha, deadly
serious.

RUCHI

The worst, most horrifying enemy
you will ever have.

Siddhartha's eyes widen. He nods, bends down to the river,
splashes water on his face.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - DAY

Hands dip a rag into a water urn. A servant lifts the
dripping rag, wipes a wall near a closed door. A loud CRASH.
The servant jumps with fright, looks at the door.

INT. KING'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A vase lies shattered, roses smashed.

King Suddhodana holds a glass of wine, glares out the
window. He mumbles to himself.

KING SUDDHODANA

Why? Why did I let him out?

He downs the drink.

KING SUDDHODANA
He'll be a father, they said. He
needs to know, they said.

Nearby the Priest sneers at the Minister.

KING SUDDHODANA
But I told them not to have any
old, sick or dying people about.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
Sire, you will recall, I said years
ago the sages should be banished.

The haughty Priest gives the Minister a challenging stare.

KING SUDDHODANA
I should have gone. I should have
gone myself, and prevented anyone
coming close to the carriage.

MINISTER
Please, Sire, the people revere--

The King spins around, SCREAMS.

KING SUDDHODANA
It's Kaundinya's fault! I want
Kaundinya!

The Minister dashes off with others.

EXT. WOODED HERMITAGE AREA - DAY

A wild wind blows, leaves and small branches drop from
trees. With swords raised, soldiers charge out of woods into
the deserted area.

SOLDIER
Kaundinya! Kaundinya!

They kick open the door to a hut. Empty. They bust open the
second hut. No one. They run back into the woods.

The wind dies down. From another cluster of trees, Kaundinya
and Baspa emerge slowly.

BASPA
He wants your head.

Kaundinya remains unperturbed.

BASPA
This is all mad.

KAUNDINYA
 Baspa, listen--

BASPA
 I listened to you enough!

KAUNDINYA
 I will talk with him.

BASPA
 He'll kill you!

The wind blows. Kaundinya catches a falling leaf.

KAUNDINYA
 Wrong. Inside, he knows.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Anxious, King Suddhodana stands vigil at the window, with the scowling Priest close by.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
 He's nowhere, Sire.

The King turns with daggers in his eyes. Furious, the Priest charges at the soldier.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 Go again, he must be found!

Prajapati enters.

KING SUDDHODANA
 My lady, please no--

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 This is not women's work.

Prajapati glances at the Priest, shrugs disdainfully. She walks to King Suddhodana, as he turns to the Priest.

KING SUDDHODANA
 Leave us.

Indignant, the Priest strides out. The King flops in his Royal chair.

KING SUDDHODANA
 Oh, Prajapati, my love...

Prajapati sits at his feet and takes his hands.

PRAJAPATI
 We've known for twenty-nine years.

KING SUDDHODANA

I did whatever the Priest advised.
Was I so stupid to try to protect
Siddhartha from the pains of life?

PRAJAPATI

He's a noble warrior. He will
battle with the deepest questions
we all have, yet are afraid to ask.

KING SUDDHODANA

But he knows nothing about the
world. He's as naive as a two year
old... and it's my fault.

PRAJAPATI

Which proves his courage. He's
strong and smart. He'll return with
riches unknown, the answers to life
for all of us.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)

Sire.

King Suddhodana keeps his gaze on Prajapati, who smiles.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)

Sire, it's I, Kaundinya.

The King looks up at Kaundinya, standing with a dismayed
Baspa. The King tightens. He jumps up, threatens.

KING SUDDHODANA

Why did you give my son an
impossible dream!

Baspa pulls back, but Kaundinya stays, fearless.

KAUNDINYA

How can we as mere mortals argue
with Siddhartha's destiny
proclaimed by the gods?

KING SUDDHODANA

How can you, as a mere mortal, know
what the gods proclaim!

KAUNDINYA

So when he was born, why did you
seek the Sage's predictions if you
believe it is not possible?

Anger drains from the King.

KAUNDINYA

All of us see the signs that
sparked Siddhartha's flight. How
many of us can respond as he did?
Could you?

A rare humbleness appears in the King's face.

KAUNDINYA

Siddhartha has his destiny. I am
linked to his, as is Baspa.

KING SUDDHODANA

How long, Kaundinya?

KAUNDINYA

I don't know. It will not be easy.

Prajapati rises, hugs King Suddhodana. He nods to Kaundinya.

KING SUDDHODANA

Talk to Yasodhara first.

INT. SIDDHARTHA AND YASODHARA'S CHAMBER - DAY

Yasodhara sits, cuddling her son, as Kaundinya stands
nearby. On a side table Siddhartha's jeweled belt lies next
to an empty rose vase.

YASODHARA

Kaundinya, teach me before you go.

KAUNDINYA

I have never taught a woman.

YASODHARA

Is the spiritual life only for men?
You are a sage, not a priest. Do
you really accept the proclamations
of the Brahmins?

KAUNDINYA

I... uh, of course not. But I must
go and help Siddhartha.

YASODHARA

Kaundinya.

He avoids her eyes.

YASODHARA

You mustn't join him so soon. He
needs time alone.

Inquiring, Kaundinya looks back at her. She strokes her son.

YASODHARA

He's been overprotected for too long, treated like a baby. He must explore the world on his own, to gain strength and independence. And you must teach me. I need to be ready when he comes back.

BOY (V.O.)

Come back...

EXT. FIRST VILLAGE - DAY

A BOY chases straying sheep across a field.

BOY

Come back!

Siddhartha and Ruchi stand on a hill, look down at the Village. Life abounds as the sun shines from overhead.

Women, with urns on their heads, stroll to the river, where others wash clothes or themselves. Traders yell to draw buyers. Meat sellers endlessly wave rags to shoo off flies.

SIDDHARTHA

Are you sure?

RUCHI

Yes, you go alone, it'll be good experience. I'll meet you in the next village.

Siddhartha watches Ruchi leave.

Limping, he walks down, enters the village. A cane woven ball zooms past his head. Boys kick the ball to each other. Wide-eyed, Siddhartha stops, watches the bustling town folk. Two burly FARMERS pass him.

FARMER

You're late, friend.

A young SEXY WOMAN eyes him over. She smiles seductively and strokes his muddy robe.

SEXY WOMAN

Want me to wash your robes?

SIDDHARTHA

No, uh, thank you. Do you have some food?

SEXY WOMAN

Lots.

Uncomprehending, Siddhartha holds out his bowl.

SEXY WOMAN

Fool.

She slaps the bowl from his hands, and struts off.

An OLD MAN, bald and wrinkled, sits on a bench close by. He opens his toothless mouth, bellows.

OLD MAN

Ho, ho! Aren't you a new one! Come here, young fellow.

Siddhartha picks up his bowl. Head down, he ambles over. He raises his head and stops cold. A VISION of the Old Sick Man he saw with Channa flashes over the new Man's face.

OLD MAN

Welcome to the real world. First day, eh?

The vision fades. Siddhartha blinks, looks away, spots a family eating a meal.

OLD MAN

Humor, young fellow, humor.

The Old Man sees Siddhartha looking at the food.

OLD MAN

Didn't you hear the farmer?

Siddhartha licks his lips.

OLD MAN

Daybreak, right after sun's up. That's your time to come.

SIDDHARTHA

But, I--

OLD MAN

Now you look clever, you're well built, you really want to wander?

Siddhartha looks back at the Old Man's missing teeth.

SIDDHARTHA

Are you a man?

Stunned, the Old Man's mouth drops open further.

SIDDHARTHA

What happened to your teeth, your hair, your skin?

OLD MAN

Young fellow, you better go home.

Siddhartha rubs his stomach. Resigned, he limps away from the village. He stops, looks back at the bustling people.

SIDDHARTHA

Welcome to the real world.

Inquisitive villagers gather around the Old Man.

OLD MAN

Weirdest idiot, he won't go far.

Siddhartha turns, walks away.

SIDDHARTHA

It's only day one.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The sun hangs low. Siddhartha hobbles to a tree, collapses. He checks over his toe and blistered feet, looks wearily around. Despondent, he lies down, closes his eyes.

INT. PALACE DINING ROOM - DAY (SIDDHARTHA'S DREAM)

A lavish meal. Siddhartha, long hair and royal clothes, eats with Yasodhara, King Suddhodana and Prajapati. King Suddhodana offers Siddhartha cooked carrots.

KING SUDDHODANA

Here, Siddhartha, nice and soft.

SIDDHARTHA

Delicious, absolutely--

A loud tiger's ROAR. Siddhartha looks up to see the room empty. His face turns white. A huge tiger crouches in the doorway about to spring.

EXT. WOODS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Siddhartha jolts awake, eyes wide. Another loud tiger ROAR. He jumps up. Thirty yards away, a fierce tiger growls, stalking Siddhartha.

A man's shadow passes over the tiger. A deep, haunting voice.

MARA (O.S.)
Siddhartha!

The tiger changes into two.

The two tigers change into four.

The four change into eight.

A frozen Siddhartha watches the tigers edge toward him.

MARA (O.S.)
Die! Die!

Ten yards away, the tigers crouch, ready to pounce. The man's shadow crouches.

JATAKA (O.S.)
Nicch, nicch.

The shadow disappears. The tigers change to just one.

An old wanderer, JATAKA, in worn patched robes, strolls through the woods toward the tiger. The tiger spots Jataka, moseys to him. He pets the tiger, and gently sends it off. He approaches a stunned Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA
What you did... so hard to believe.

JATAKA
If we have hearts full of love and compassion, animals won't hurt us.

Jataka reaches into a small pouch.

JATAKA
Judging by your feet - here.

He hands Siddhartha a raw carrot.

JATAKA
Extra, I was going to feed the rabbits.

SIDDHARTHA
What is it?

Jataka walks back into the woods.

JATAKA
Bright, aren't you?

After a moment's hesitation, Siddhartha follows, gingerly biting the hard carrot.

SIDDHARTHA

Wait, who are you? How did you tame the tiger? Are you enlightened?

JATAKA

My name's Jataka. Enlightened? The Ultimate? Do you think freedom from greed, aversion and ignorance is easy?

SIDDHARTHA

Well, no, but you and the tiger--

JATAKA

Outward tigers are like kittens compared to inner ones.

They arrive at a CAVE that serves as Jataka's home.

JATAKA

Sit down, I'll look at your feet.

He enters the cave, returns with a pot and bandage. He takes balm from the pot and rubs it on Siddhartha's feet.

SIDDHARTHA

Jataka, your name means birth. What can you tell me about death?

JATAKA

Birth and death are inseparable. We live, die and are reborn. Over and over. To have one, we have both.

SIDDHARTHA

Can we ever be free from pain and sorrow? Is that enlightenment?

JATAKA

I can only tell you what I've been taught. If you purify your mind from greed, aversion and ignorance, you will go beyond repeated births and deaths to ultimate freedom. You will be free of all sorrow, all pain and have supreme happiness.

Jataka bandages Siddhartha's foot.

JATAKA

But you must defeat Mara. Do you know who he is?

SIDDHARTHA

No, not really. My friend says I'll probably meet him soon.

JATAKA

Well, Mara already knows you. And you must fight him all the way to the end. He'll try anything to stop you. He's devious and an imposter. We each have our own Mara, our most formidable enemy. But some say freedom's possible - I've been battling most of my life.

SIDDHARTHA

Is there anyone who is free?

JATAKA

Maybe Arada Kalama.

SIDDHARTHA

Where does he live?

Light dims as sunset begins.

JATAKA

East, two days, possibly three with your feet.

Jataka secures the bandage. Siddhartha gets up to leave.

SIDDHARTHA

Thank you so much.

JATAKA

Wait, it's late.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, it is.

Siddhartha hobbles off. Somewhere, the tiger ROARS. Siddhartha stops in his tracks.

SIDDHARTHA

Maybe it is... too late.

EXT. CAVE - DAWN

Morning birds sing as Jataka steps out. Siddhartha follows, rubbing his back.

SIDDHARTHA

Are all caves so hard?

Jataka laughs.

SIDDHARTHA
Are you going with me?

JATAKA
No, today's fast day.

SIDDHARTHA
Fast? Are some days slow?

Jataka grins at the naive Siddhartha.

JATAKA
Too much for now. Remember true sages accept whatever food is offered so don't fuss. And avoid the priests.

SIDDHARTHA
If only everyone could avoid the priests.

JATAKA
And if you get enlightened, you come back and tell me, right?

Siddhartha looks upward at a streaked sky. A VISION of Yasodhara lights up amongst the colors.

SIDDHARTHA (O.S.)
Yes, I'll come back.

Siddhartha lowers his head, smiles.

SIDDHARTHA
Your robes are very worn.

EXT. SECOND VILLAGE - EARLY MORNING

Wearing Jataka's patched robes, a smiling Siddhartha limps into the sleepy town. Roosters CROW and birds flutter about. A THUMPING sound, somewhere a cook beats herbs in a crock.

ANGRY WOMAN (O.S.)
Get up, ya sleepy fool!

Siddhartha glances toward a window of one house. Curtains open abruptly, showing the ANGRY WOMAN.

ANGRY WOMAN
And what are ya looking at!

Siddhartha drops his eyes, walks further to another house, stands near the door. Nothing. He takes a few steps away.

KIND WOMAN (O.S.)
 Patience is golden.

Siddhartha turns back. A KIND WOMAN holds a pot. He smiles.

SIDDHARTHA
 Day one was humor.

She removes her shoes, bows to Siddhartha. He holds out his bowl. She puts a huge spoonful of rice in it.

SIDDHARTHA
 Thank you.

KIND WOMAN
 No, no, what you do is very
 important. I thank you.

She shuts her door. Siddhartha looks at the rice. Ruchi strides up with his bowl.

RUCHI
 Nice robes.

Siddhartha smiles.

Ruchi looks in Siddhartha's bowl.

RUCHI
 Plain rice, eh? Getting food on
 alms round can be a tough lesson.

SIDDHARTHA
 There's more doors.

He walks to the next house. Ruchi follows. Siddhartha waits at the door. Nothing. Ruchi shakes his head.

SIDDHARTHA
 I just need patience.

A bleary eyed FARMER staggers out from next-door, passes by.

BLEARY EYED FARMER
 Nobody lives there.

Ruchi laughs. Siddhartha grins. Jovial, Ruchi puts his arm around Siddhartha's shoulders as they walk to another home. An old woman, bent over and wrinkled, steps out with a pot.

EXT. END OF VILLAGE - DAY

Leaving the village, Siddhartha and Ruchi carry their bowls to a tree and sit. Siddhartha looks in his bowl: ninety percent rice, pea curry, fried chicken feet, one banana.

Hesitant, he lowers his face, breathes in for a good smell. He pulls back, scrunches his face in distaste.

 RUCHI (O.S.)
Want some help?

 SIDDHARTHA
I can do it.

Siddhartha puts in his hand, rolls rice in a ball, rubs it into the curry and brings it to his mouth. He pauses.

 RUCHI (O.S.)
Fine, but it's fit for a pig.

The ball goes in his mouth.

 RUCHI (O.S.)
Give you diarrhea for weeks.

Siddhartha chews.

 SIDDHARTHA
Aggh!

He spits it out violently.

 LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
My mommy says I should always eat
my food.

Siddhartha wipes his mouth. He looks up to see a LITTLE GIRL in tattered clothing, holding a small water urn and cup.

 LITTLE GIRL
She says I should be thankful to
have something to eat.

 SIDDHARTHA
Yes, uh--

 LITTLE GIRL
There are other little children who
don't have any.

 SIDDHARTHA
I'm sorry, I--

 LITTLE GIRL
My daddy says rich people can't eat
our food, but we can eat theirs. He
says that's because poor people are
smarter than rich people.

Siddhartha smiles, gazes in amazement at his little teacher.

SIDDHARTHA
 Could I please have some water?

LITTLE GIRL
 Are you going to throw it up?

SIDDHARTHA
 Not ever again like I just did.

She gives him some water. He looks over at Ruchi, who nods approvingly.

EXT. END OF VILLAGE - LATER

Siddhartha and Ruchi walk away from the tree area. They reach a fork in the road.

RUCHI
 So, which way to Arada Kalama?

SIDDHARTHA
 I'll try south, and we'll meet
 wherever he is.

RUCHI
 Right.

Siddhartha heads left, Ruchi takes the other path.

EXT. ROADSIDE HOUSE - DAY

Siddhartha walks along, spots an OLD FARMER pulling his bull out of a fenced yard. With deep red lips, the man chews Betel Nut, not unlike a huge wad of tobacco.

SIDDHARTHA
 Can you please tell me, does Arada
 Kalama live around here?

OLD FARMER
 What you want him for?

SIDDHARTHA
 He's going to be my teacher. He's
 enlightened, right?

The Farmer looks Siddhartha over, spits out some red goo.

OLD FARMER
 Eh?

SIDDHARTHA
 He's going to be my--

OLD FARMER
I heard that.

Stuck, Siddhartha drops his head.

SIDDHARTHA
Maybe I should cut off my ears.

OLD FARMER
Then nobody would know why ya so
dumb.

Siddhartha smiles.

OLD FARMER
I like your smile.-- Let me tell
ya. Some folk are blind, some ain't
blind. Don't ya blindly believe a
single thing. Next town.

The Farmer walks off with his bull.

OLD FARMER
And don't ya blindly believe me
neither.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Water buffalo lie in a soggy field. Siddhartha perseveres despite a limp. Wiping sweat from his brow, his eyes squint at the blazing sun sinking lower towards the horizon. Dark foreboding clouds pass across the sun.

SIDDHARTHA
All right, cave time or bath time.

Siddhartha heads for a slope, climbs, passes through a thicket of trees. He finds a rock outcrop but the closest thing to a cave would only house a rabbit at best. To one side in the little cave, a hole tunnels deep in the ground.

A strong wind blows, leaves fall as the light fades. He rests his bowl down and wraps his robes around himself.

SIDDHARTHA
Maybe it'll blow--

Lightning strikes. Thunder BOOMS.

SIDDHARTHA
...over.

He crouches near the "cave". A frog jumps in front of him. Soft rain falls.

SIDDHARTHA

Not bad, only a--

A snake slides out of the hole toward the frog.

SIDDHARTHA

No!

Siddhartha jumps up, scoops the frog and steps away. The snake ignores him, slithers off as the storm escalates, lightning and THUNDER all around.

Siddhartha puts the frog down, he squats further from the hole. Soaking wet, he shivers. He grabs his bowl, puts it over his head.

MARA (O.S.)

How dare you challenge me.

Siddhartha takes off his bowl. He peers up at Mara who stands tall yet wears an executioner's head covering.

The woods blaze with fires.

SIDDHARTHA

So, you're Mara.

MARA

I have ruled forever. I will always rule.

SIDDHARTHA

Are you ugly, Mara? Is that why you're hiding your face?

MARA

You will soon know how ugly you are.

SIDDHARTHA

Show me your face, coward.

Lightning flashes. Siddhartha springs up, lunges at Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

Show me your face!

Siddhartha reaches for the head covering. Mara sidesteps, as Siddhartha stumbles. Mara guffaws. Siddhartha grabs Mara, locks his arms. Mara elbows Siddhartha hard, breaks loose.

A wild battle ensues, both skilled in all types of Martial Arts. Kicks, blocks, punches, dodges. To the head, to the body. Mara clearly shows the advantage. He rises up in the air, taunts Siddhartha.

MARA

Did your father teach you this one?

Siddhartha gazes, confused. Mara dives down at him, whacking him hard. He flies back up.

MARA

Ugly... ugly... you want to see
your ugliness!

Mara reaches for his head covering.

Slowly pulls it off.

His face - a perfect twin of Siddhartha.

Shocked, Siddhartha stares.

Mara SCREAMS.

MARA

Uggggglllllyyyy, Siddhartha!

Mara dives down, pounds Siddhartha again. Again and again, Mara attacks unrelenting. Siddhartha wearies as Mara belts him over and over. He wobbles. Mara laughs, kicks Siddhartha in the head. He's down on his stomach, defeated.

Siddhartha looks up at Mara who gloats.

MARA

Think you can overcome me?

Thunder ROARS.

MARA

Defeating a thousand enemies a
thousand times, single handedly, is
easier than defeating me!

Spinning in a flourish, Mara disappears.

The fires burn low and extinguish.

Dazed, Siddhartha staggers up.

EXT. ARADA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Siddhartha enters on alms round, looks all around at early risers and bustling activity.

DOG-MAN (O.S.)

Arrf! Arrf!

He spots a filthy, skinny, naked MAN who acts like a dog. On all fours, the Dog-man BARKS in front of a house. Siddhartha's eyes fixate on the creature.

DOG-MAN

Arrf! Arrf!

The Dog-man pants and wags his behind. The door opens. A HUSKY MAN throws out a bone. The Dog-man grabs the bone in his mouth, lies down, chews on it.

HUSKY MAN

You want food, too?

Siddhartha can't tear his eyes away from the Dog-man.

HUSKY MAN

You hear me?

Speechless, Siddhartha points at the Dog-man.

HUSKY MAN

Ask him, he talks.

The Husky Man shuts his door. Siddhartha crouches.

SIDDHARTHA

What are you?

DOG-MAN

Arrf! Arrf!

Springing up, the Dog-man gnashes his teeth, threatens. Siddhartha backs off.

SIDDHARTHA

The man said you can talk, I thought--

DOG-MAN

You thought, that's your problem.

SIDDHARTHA

What?

DOG-MAN

Arrf! Act, don't think. Act like me and you'll be free.

The Dog-man curls up with his bone. A GENTLE WOMAN comes out with curry.

GENTLE WOMAN

The poor man ate too many wild mushrooms years ago.

SIDDHARTHA

But he thinks he's enlightened.

GENTLE WOMAN

A lot of people think they're
enlightened doing foolish things.
Would you like some curry?

She spoons some in his bowl. As he heads to another house,
he spots FIVE SAGES, neatly dressed with long combed hair.
Their eyes rest downcast as they walk mindfully in line for
alms. Siddhartha rushes to them.

SIDDHARTHA

Excuse me, do you know Arada
Kalama?

The elderly leading sage, ARADA KALAMA, 80, smiles. He
points to the end of the line. Confused, Siddhartha
approaches the YOUNG SAGE, 12, at the end.

SIDDHARTHA

Are you Arada Kalama?

All the sages laugh, except for Arada, as Siddhartha drops
his head in embarrassment. Arada COUGHS, indicating
authority. Chastised, the other sages humble themselves. The
Young Sage points at Arada.

YOUNG SAGE

Please meet Arada Kalama.

Siddhartha's eyes go wide.

SIDDHARTHA

I... I'm sorry. I did not--

ARADA

What is your name, young man?

SIDDHARTHA

Siddhartha, Sir.

ARADA

Siddhartha, are you a hard worker?

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, Sir.

ARADA

Then you may join us. At the end,
please. Eyes down, walk slowly. We
are spiritual seekers.

Siddhartha follows the five on alms round. Walking as instructed, he looks more like a well trained Monk.

EXT. ARADA'S HERMITAGE - DAY

Disciples sweep an open courtyard in the center of many buildings. Others carry water urns to and fro. Arada, his four followers and Siddhartha enter.

KAPUL, 40, a senior student, respectfully takes Arada's bowl and washes his feet.

ARADA

We have a newcomer, Siddhartha.
Take him to the small cave.

KAPUL

Yes, Venerable Sir.

SIDDHARTHA

But Sir, I wish to know--

ARADA

What you cannot know if you do not
produce the right conditions. Go
with Kapul.

Kapul leads a disappointed Siddhartha through the courtyard. They pass by disciples sewing their robes. Others draw water from a well. Two shine the wooden floor of a hall with half coconut shells. They arrive at a small cave.

SIDDHARTHA

When can I talk to Arada?

KAPUL

When he decides. Don't be
impatient. It blocks deeper
learning.

MONTAGE - Siddhartha settles in the ashram.

-- Siddhartha sweeps leaves in the courtyard.

-- Some students show Siddhartha how to sew his robe.

-- Siddhartha and others clean the hall. Arada watches.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SMALL CAVE - NIGHT

Sitting on the ground, Arada teaches Siddhartha.

ARADA

It is far easier to be a victorious warrior or a World ruler. The spiritual path is not for lazy people. To uncover the human potential is the hardest thing in the world to do. Through meditation, you will find the answers you seek.

Arada helps Siddhartha sit in a meditation posture.

ARADA

Keep your back straight, but not too tight. Concentration is the key to wisdom. Focus on the sign as I've explained. If your concentration reaches the highest level, enlightenment will naturally follow. Now continue on your own. Tomorrow you will learn more.

Arada leaves. Nervous, Siddhartha closes his eyes, breathes deep.

BLACK. The sound of Siddhartha breathing.

A small white light appears. His breathing becomes short and erratic. The light disappears.

Siddhartha opens his eyes, frowns. He closes his eyes, breathes deep.

BLACK.

A soft light blinks.

Hundreds of skeleton bodies race around, SCREAMING.

Siddhartha opens his eyes in fright.

EXT. ARADA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Siddhartha follows Kapul and two others on alms round.

SIDDHARTHA

Kapul, do you ever have problems meditating?

KAPUL

Of course.

SIDDHARTHA

But you've meditated for thirty years.

KAPUL

Siddhartha, you have much to learn.

UNTOUCHABLE (O.S.)

Help! Help!

Siddhartha spots priests holding an UNTOUCHABLE MAN, while a FAT PRIEST beats him. Kapul and the others continue walking without looking. Siddhartha hurries to help.

SIDDHARTHA

Stop! Stop!

KAPUL

Siddhartha, no!

Siddhartha stops, turns to see Kapul pointing at him.

FAT PRIEST

Train your new ones well, Kapul, or you will suffer dearly.

Siddhartha looks back at the gloating Priest.

SIDDHARTHA

He is a man as we all are men. He feels pain as we all feel pain. Why are you beating him?

FAT PRIEST

He's scum - untouchable. Take heed, you impetuous minion.

KAPUL

Siddhartha! Back to the line.

Siddhartha bows his head, walks meekly back.

KAPUL

We cannot interfere with the priests. Their birth dictates that they can do as they wish, especially with the untouchables.

SIDDHARTHA

It's a human's duty to stop them.

KAPUL

We would all like that, but there is no way. They have always been in charge, that is how it will stay.

SIDDHARTHA

Arada could stop them, right?

Kapul pauses long, holding Siddhartha's gaze.

VILLAGERS (O.S.)
Sadhu, sadhu, Venerable Arada.

Siddhartha turns to see Arada surrounded by many VILLAGERS fifty yards away. He runs toward Arada.

KAPUL
Siddhartha, not now!

Siddhartha ignores Kapul, shoves his way through the crowd.

SIDDHARTHA
Arada, I just saw the priests
beating an untouchable. You can--

Arada raises his hand, shakes his head.

ARADA
Be careful. Are you judging what
you see outward as more important
than what you see inward? Come, you
must observe what happens when
ignorance and power unite.

They walk

OUT

of the village. Kapul and four other disciples follow. They approach a large gathering in a

FIELD.

Priests CHANT on a platform. A man's corpse, wearing rich clothes, lies on a pile of logs, next to a rock staircase. A wealthy looking WOMAN sits close by, lamenting. A HEFTY PRIEST towers over her.

HEFTY PRIEST
You will do as you must!

RICH WOMAN
No, please, please...

Siddhartha whispers to Arada.

SIDDHARTHA
What must she do?

ARADA
Do not interfere.

The Woman dashes off, only to be grabbed by the hefty Priest and thrown down.

HEFTY PRIEST
You are his wife.

RICH WOMAN
No, I was his wife, he's dead now.

HEFTY PRIEST
You are his wife, now and always!
You will go with him.

The Priest kicks her hard.

SIDDHARTHA
Arada, stop them!

ARADA
Time to go.

Kapul grabs Siddhartha who stares at Arada unbelievably.

KAPUL
Come, do as you're told.

Siddhartha yanks away, speeds to the Woman and Priest.

SIDDHARTHA
What is wrong with you priests? You
beat poor people, you beat women.

KAPUL
Siddhartha!

ARADA
Let him go.

Arada sadly shakes his head. The Priest glares at Siddhartha and yells to four thugs.

HEFTY PRIEST
Beat this fool.

They attack Siddhartha who fights back as a Royal Warrior. Punches fly, feet kick. Siddhartha knocks two out cold, but three others join in. They outmatch Siddhartha. Arada and his disciples can only watch. Arada's eyes water.

The thugs beat Siddhartha brutally, drag him off, away from the Woman who watches, astonished. They throw him on the ground. The sages go to him.

HEFTY PRIEST

Prop him up to watch! He must learn
who he is and who we are.

The sages support Siddhartha. Arada puts his hand on
Siddhartha's shoulder. They all look over at the ceremony.

Priests light the logs. As the fire consumes the man's body,
the hefty Priest pushes the Woman up the staircase. She gets
close to the fire, stops, looks over toward Siddhartha. She
bows to him. The Priest shoves her into the fire.

EXT. ARADA'S HERMITAGE - DAY

Kapul helps badly bruised Siddhartha to a resting spot under
a tree. Siddhartha sags to the ground.

KAPUL

No one can stop the priests.

SIDDHARTHA

One day it must change.

Kapul leaves.

Ruchi races up.

RUCHI

Siddhartha!

He gently touches Siddhartha's bruised face.

RUCHI

I heard. So sorry I wasn't there.
Use your father's army next time.

SIDDHARTHA

I had no idea.

RUCHI

If you want to destroy the priests,
let's return to the Palace. Become
King and invent another religion.

SIDDHARTHA

But I would have to quit my quest.

RUCHI

I really feel it's one or the
other. Conquer the priests or
continue, you can't do both.

SIDDHARTHA

Maybe.

RUCHI

I'll get some water and balm.

Ruchi runs off.

ARADA (O.S.)

Siddhartha.

Arada approaches, sits next to disillusioned Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

Why didn't you stop them?

ARADA

If only I could... Despite what we see externally, our biggest enemy lurks within. We must train our minds to find inner peace and freedom.

SIDDHARTHA

Freedom?

ARADA

Yes, freedom from anger, jealousy, fear, every negative thought. And when we think of the priests, can we be free of anger toward them? Can we have compassion not only for those who are oppressed but also the oppressors?

SIDDHARTHA

Is it really compassion to allow those who oppress to continue their harmful ways?

ARADA

Compassion wishes to help everyone. But as long as we harbor anger, we cannot develop the wisdom to know whether we can help or not. Siddhartha, if you wish to change the world, you will have to achieve more than I have.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SMALL CAVE - NIGHT

Siddhartha and Arada sit together in meditation.

ARADA

You are very restless tonight.

SIDDHARTHA

I've been thinking of my wife.

ARADA

I did not know you had one. I
imagine she is very lovely.

Siddhartha looks up as a cloud passes in front of the moon.

A VISION of Yasodhara fills the sky.

SIDDHARTHA (O.S.)

More beautiful than any precious
gem, with a heart and courage to
match. I mustn't fail her...

Siddhartha's face assumes a wistful expression.

SIDDHARTHA

...nor my son.

Taken aback, Arada looks long at Siddhartha.

ARADA

You two have probably been married
and helped each other develop
through hundreds of lives.

SIDDHARTHA

Throughout all time.

ARADA

Siddhartha, the heart becomes truly
courageous when motivated by
compassion. I believe you are ready
to master the meditation. Continue
with your practice.

As Arada leaves, he passes by a firm-faced Mara, leaning
against the cave wall, glaring.

Siddhartha adjusts a sitting cloth, sits in meditation,
closes his eyes, breathes deep.

BLACK. His breathing gets stronger.

A small white light appears. His breathing stops. The light
grows larger. A perfect circular disc.

The hundreds of skeleton bodies race around, SCREAMING.

Siddhartha opens his eyes, shakes his head.

SIDDHARTHA

No, just a vision.

He shuts his eyes.

SIDDHARTHA
Try again, try again.

He nods, breathes deep.

INT. UPPER CHAMBER - DAY

Yasodhara sits in meditation on the floor of a near-empty chamber. Siddhartha's jeweled belt lies on a table close by. She opens her eyes.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)
Always remember Siddhartha after
your meditation periods. Wish him
love and strength with his work.

YASODHARA
Will he know? Will he feel my
wishes?

Kaundinya sits opposite Yasodhara. He assents.

YASODHARA
It's so difficult... when I wake in
the morning, I... I long for him to
be here with me.

A tear runs down Yasodhara's cheek, which she quickly wipes.

YASODHARA
If only I didn't love him so much.

KAUNDINYA
And if only we were not subject to
death. No matter how perfect the
match, in time, we must all part.

YASODHARA
He will find the answers. I'll do
as you've taught me every day...
for as long as it takes.

Kaundinya rises, walks to a window.

KAUNDINYA
Good, good. We are all linked in
our destinies. I have no doubts,
you must not have any either.
Whenever doubts come, you must
think, he will light the way to
freedom, enlightenment for you, me,
your son, all of us.

Yasodhara's face ignites with hope.

KAUNDINYA

It won't be easy, but we must never give up. We must encourage him to the end.

YASODHARA

Kaundinya, go now, find him, support him. Give him my love. Tell him to continue for me, and for everyone. He must find the Truth.

Kaundinya bows long to Yasodhara. He leaves.

Yasodhara rises, strolls out to the BALCONY, gazes at an eagle soaring in the sky.

YASODHARA

Siddhartha, my love, you never knew any freedom, even as a child. Your longing must be so great. May it give you the courage and strength to soar to the highest peak.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

An eagle soars in the sky. Kaundinya glances up at it as he, Baspa and three younger, enthusiastic sages, ASVAJIT, BHARIKA and MAHANAMA, stride along. All dressed in sage robes, they carry their bowls.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SMALL CAVE - NIGHT

The full moon light reflects off an alms bowl. Siddhartha sits with Arada. Ruchi sits, meditating, ten yards away.

ARADA

Siddhartha, it's a perfect night. I'm sure you can penetrate the highest mental absorption now.

Arada gets up.

ARADA

Remember not to get lost in the colors and bright lights again. You must maintain the equanimity and go higher to the state of nothingness.

Arada leaves. Siddhartha adjusts his posture, shuts his eyes, takes a deep breath.

BLACK.

The hundreds of skeleton bodies start to appear.

SIDDHARTHA (V.O.)

No.

The skeleton bodies disappear.

The sound of breathing. His breathing gets stronger. A small white light appears. His breathing stops. The light grows larger. A perfect circular disc. Smashed into a horizontal oval. Stretched wide and thin like a rubber band.

Tall. Short. Back to circular. It breaks apart into five smaller discs. Each one takes a different color. They spin clockwise. Counterclockwise. They flip around like juggling balls. Faster. Faster. They stop.

They break apart into hundreds of discs. They rotate clockwise slowly. Quicker. Fast. Super fast. Lightning speed. Gone. Black. Nothingness.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SMALL CAVE - DAWN

Sunrise. Siddhartha sits motionless. He opens his eyes. His facial expression reveals confusion. He looks at his hands, shakes his head.

RUCHI (O.S.)

Do it?

SIDDHARTHA

It's gone.

RUCHI (O.S.)

But you did it, right?

Siddhartha nods.

RUCHI (O.S.)

Well done! You've achieved the highest inner happiness.

Siddhartha looks up, blinks. Ruchi steps in front of the sun, rays surround his body.

SIDDHARTHA

No.

RUCHI

No?

SIDDHARTHA

Amazingly serene. But as soon as I opened my eyes, it disappeared. It can't be the highest.

RUCHI

But blissful enough to go home and
teach Yasodhara, right?

Siddhartha looks questioningly at Ruchi. Ruchi shrugs.

RUCHI

I'll go fill the water.

He leaves.

ARADA (O.S.)

Siddhartha, did you do it?

Arada approaches.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes.

ARADA

Wonderful, you are now my equal. We
can teach together.

SIDDHARTHA

Arada, is this all you know?

Arada's face changes from joy to dismay.

ARADA

It is. And you have obviously
discovered what I've felt for many
years. There must be more.

SIDDHARTHA

The state of nothingness is very
calming, peaceful, but it's only
temporary, it's not deep wisdom.

ARADA

I am very old now.

Siddhartha stands up, bows low.

ARADA

Be careful in your quest. Many will
tell you things that aren't true.

SIDDHARTHA

Thank you, Arada. You have taught
me much. When I find the rest, I
will remember you.

EXT. FIRST VILLAGE - DAY

A streaked sky highlights Kaundinya and the other four talking with the Old Man sitting on his bench.

EXT. FOURTH VILLAGE - DAY

Siddhartha and Ruchi approach a spectacularly adorned village. Colorful flags wave everywhere.

OLD PRIEST (O.S.)

Out of my way, you swarthy menial
offspring of a Kinsman's foot.

An OLD BRAHMIN PRIEST rides up in a carriage behind them. Ruchi steps off the road. Siddhartha does not move.

OLD PRIEST

Did you hear or are you deaf, scum?

Siddhartha moves out of the way, looks up at the Priest.

A vision of a demon blurs over the Priest.

The vision disappears.

SIDDHARTHA

Are you busy today, Priest?

OLD PRIEST

Nothing that would interest the
likes of you.

The Old Priest charges past, creating dust, obscuring him and his carriage. Winds blow dust straight at Siddhartha and Ruchi, forcing them to shield their faces.

As the dust settles, they see three hefty thugs dragging a struggling young man down a hillside.

RUCHI

That doesn't look good.

Siddhartha frowns.

They enter the village. A drum BEATS somewhere. Many people bustle. Coming from a different direction, a MIDDLE-AGED PRIEST strides along with a YOUNG PRIEST.

SIDDHARTHA

Anything special, Friends?

YOUNG PRIEST

Why, the gall of--

MIDDLE-AGED PRIEST

Do not worry, hurry on.

Siddhartha watches them barrel off. He changes his direction to follow them.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, please!

Siddhartha takes no notice. Ruchi frowns, follows him.

Villagers speed by, as Siddhartha walks, determined. One man bumps Siddhartha and charges with others down a side lane. Siddhartha reaches a

FIELD

decked out for a ceremony.

Headless goat carcasses lie strewn around and goat heads on spikes surround the blood soaked sacrificial platform.

Six gagged men and women are tied to stakes. The men's faces contort with rage and fear. They strain at ropes that bind them and cut into their struggling wrists. Blood drips down their hands. The weeping women utter piteous muffled moans.

Priests stand on a platform. Royals sit in eager anticipation. Hundreds of villagers watch.

Siddhartha scans the crowd. Faces change into demons. Demons change back to the faces. Again demons. Again faces.

Siddhartha shakes his head.

The Old Priest speaks to the crowd.

OLD PRIEST

The Divine grants me the power to
appease the Gods. Trust in my word
and you will be saved. If not, the
God's wrath will be upon you in
this and all your future lives.

Siddhartha stands numbed. He sees fires in the Priest's eyes.

RUCHI

You still don't have an army.

SIDDHARTHA

This is worse than before.

RUCHI

We shouldn't be here.

They watch the priests cut one man from a stake, drag him up to the ceremonial platform.

The man struggles wildly, kicks at a Priest who whacks him across the head, throws him onto a table. Two other Priests hold the bound man down as he fights with all his strength. The Old Priest walks forward with a large dagger.

Siddhartha enters the area.

 RUCHI (O.S.)
Siddhartha, no!

 OLD PRIEST
Get rid of that fool!

Soldiers run to Siddhartha. Their nervous COMMANDER bows.

 COMMANDER
I kindly ask you, Sage, in the name
of my king--

 SIDDHARTHA
What about in your own name?

Taken aback, the Commander pleads.

 COMMANDER
I beg you, Sir, if you disturb the
ceremony, the Head Priest will have
you on the table.

Siddhartha glances at the Old Priest who smiles insanely, fondling his dagger. He motions to Siddhartha, as if inviting Siddhartha to join the tied men and women.

Siddhartha's eyes move back and forth between the priest and the tied men and women. He scans the bloodthirsty CROWD, which grows weary of him delaying their fun.

 CROWD
Sacrifice the wanderer! Kill him!
Hurry on, do it! Draw his blood!

Again, the crowd's faces change into demons. Demons change back to the faces. Again demons. Again faces.

Siddhartha shakes his head, defeated. He walks away.

 SIDDHARTHA
Ignorance is overwhelming.

Ruchi nods.

OLD PRIEST (O.S.)
Believe or be damned like that
wandering fool.

RUCHI
Hurry, they may come after us.

Ruchi darts down the lane. Siddhartha follows.

Fires erupt all around Siddhartha. Haunting spirits dart to
and fro. Siddhartha looks for a way out.

Mara appears, blocks Siddhartha and shoves him in his chest.
Siddhartha staggers.

MARA
The priests rule and will always
rule. You will never stop them.

Mara knocks Siddhartha down.

SIDDHARTHA
Mara--

Mara kicks Siddhartha in the face. Siddhartha rolls on his
stomach.

The spirits laugh uncontrollably.

MARA
I could give you to those priests.

Mara sits on Siddhartha, talks closely to Siddhartha's ear.

MARA
The priests rule the outward. I
rule the inward. You can not defeat
me, ever.

SIDDHARTHA
Not yet.

Mara whacks Siddhartha's head.

MARA
Never.

SIDDHARTHA
Not... yet.

Mara knocks Siddhartha unconscious.

The fires and spirits disappear.

MARA

Never.

Mara disappears, leaving Siddhartha lying on the ground.

EXT. ROADSIDE HOUSE - DAY

A priest walks by Kaundinya and the four, as they talk with the Farmer holding his bull. The Farmer spits out red goo in the priest's direction. Leaves swirl around them.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Leaves fall on Siddhartha, as he sits against a tree, watches stars. Ruchi rests next to him. Their hair lengths are two inches long.

SIDDHARTHA

I'm so tired and confused.

RUCHI

Did you think it would be easy?

SIDDHARTHA

I didn't really know.

RUCHI

Welcome to some wisdom.

SIDDHARTHA

The priests have such a powerful grip on everyone. People are so afraid. And... Mara is so strong.

RUCHI

Here's something to consider. Defeating the priests is possible. If we go back to the Palace, and you became king, I believe you could become a world ruling monarch. Then you can change the religious laws everywhere.

Siddhartha tosses a stone.

RUCHI

The inward victory is not possible without an enlightened teacher. Arada didn't have the answers. He's the wisest there is, so no one else knows either.

SIDDHARTHA

Maybe.

RUCHI

Ever think of Yasodhara?

SIDDHARTHA

You know I do.

RUCHI

She misses you deeply. And your son, you don't even know him yet. You might be trying to achieve too much. After you defeat the priests, then you can take on Mara. If you want, we can go home tomorrow.

SIDDHARTHA

But this is something bigger than all of us.

Siddhartha looks up to the sparkling sky.

SIDDHARTHA

Can you understand, Ruchi? This is higher.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, I watched you take your first step, helped you ride a horse, climb a tree--

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, you've always been there for me.

RUCHI

And I know you're destined, too, but I just don't think you're ready for Mara. Siddhartha, it scares me to think of what he may do to you.

Ruchi gets up, arms wide. The entire Milky Way shines behind him.

RUCHI

Yet to be a world ruling monarch is within your ability. You can bring peace to everyone. No more wars, no more hunger, no more cruel sacrifices. Everyone will be happy. You can do it.

SIDDHARTHA

Yet illness, old age and death will still rule over Yasodhara, my son and us all.

RUCHI

True, but if you can't find the deepest answers, then, even for a lifetime, wouldn't it be good to rule this earth with peace and goodness?

SIDDHARTHA

I may have to settle for that. But is it possible to rule the earth with peace?

EXT. HILL - DAY

SHOUTS, screaming men, CRASH of swords from behind the hill.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

A strong hand pulls a dagger out of a soldier's stomach as the man falls dead. KING BARISAMPA, 30, holds the dagger. He smiles a brutal, insane warrior's victory smile.

Dead bodies lie across the field. Defeated soldiers retreat up the hill. Coming from the other direction walk Siddhartha and Ruchi. Swarming over the crest, bloody swords flashing, enraged soldiers barrel towards them.

RUCHI

Run, Siddhartha. They'll kill us!

Ruchi runs off to the side, out of the soldiers' way.

Fear flashes across Siddhartha's face. Yet stoically he stands, braces himself.

RUCHI (O.S.)

Siddhartha!

The soldiers run around him. One angry soldier bumps him hard. Siddhartha falls. The soldier raises his sword, begins to lower it.

Another SOLDIER pulls the angry soldier away.

SOLDIER

Kill an unarmed sage, you'll burn in hell.

Siddhartha relaxes as the last of the soldiers pass.

Below the hill, in the body-strewn field, Barisampa raises his blood-soaked dagger in a victory cry.

BARISAMPA

Enough. We have won.

His soldiers CHEER.

SOLDIERS
 Long live Barisampa! Long live
 Barisampa!

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST rides down from another slope.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST
 Well done, true warriors!

Siddhartha walks over the crest. He sees the carnage.

A shocked Siddhartha's face displays his pain. Ruchi steps next to him.

RUCHI
 Take more chances like that and
 you'll never live to fight Mara.

Siddhartha points to the valley.

SIDDHARTHA
 Last night you said I could rule
 the world without bloodshed.

RUCHI
 Yes, you can do it.

SIDDHARTHA
 Yes...

With a firm face, he turns to Ruchi.

SIDDHARTHA
 I can... do it.

Barisampa mounts his jet-black stallion as his soldiers organize themselves, cheering and laughing. A LEAD SOLDIER rides off, up the road toward Siddhartha and Ruchi.

LEAD SOLDIER
 Out of the way, Sages. Our great
 King Barisampa approaches.

SIDDHARTHA
 What type of man calls killing
 great?

LEAD SOLDIER
 You sages do not understand the
 real world. He is famous, his
 empire grows!

SIDDHARTHA

King Barisampa, would he be the son
of King Ramada, cousin to King
Suddhodana?

LEAD SOLDIER

Indeed he is.

SIDDHARTHA

Tell your "great" King, his distant
cousin, Siddhartha, son of King
Suddhodana, would like to talk.

Siddhartha points to one of his pierced ears. The Soldier
gallops back to the army and to Barisampa.

LEAD SOLDIER

Sire, yonder is a sage with royal
markings. He calls himself,
Siddhartha, son of King Suddhodana.

Barisampa throws back his head in laughter.

BARISAMPA

Then he is my cousin.

His Priest frowns as Barisampa whips his horse up the slope.

Siddhartha sees Barisampa approaching.

SIDDHARTHA

Ruchi, I want to talk to him alone.

Ruchi nods, walks off twenty yards.

Barisampa arrives.

BARISAMPA

Siddhartha?

Siddhartha nods. Barisampa alights, removes his sword, lays
it on top of a stump. He takes his blood stained dagger,
stabs it into the stump.

He pulls a scarf from his vest, places it on the ground. He
indicates to Siddhartha his reverence. Siddhartha sits on
the scarf, Barisampa rests on the grass.

BARISAMPA

So it's true, your father spread
word, you've left his kingdom in
search of--

SIDDHARTHA

There's blood on your dagger.

Briefly startled, Barisampa regains his stuffed pride.

BARISAMPA

After I conquer the world, I will rule it with harmony and joy.

SIDDHARTHA

Do you think harmony and joy come from blood and fear?

BARISAMPA

My advisers say there's no other way.

SIDDHARTHA

You mean the priests?

BARISAMPA

I have heard you resent their power, but I believe in them. They understand this society and they ensure the gods--

SIDDHARTHA

Why do you blindly believe? Do you really think the gods enjoy the piteous tears and blood of defenseless animals and humans?

Inquisitive, Barisampa stares at Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

What if there is another way?

BARISAMPA

If there is, then let's do it. You and I, together. What do you say?

SIDDHARTHA

Peacefully?

BARISAMPA

If you join me, I will try it.

Ruchi strolls closer, within hearing distance. Siddhartha looks over at Ruchi, then back to Barisampa.

SIDDHARTHA

I've thought of stopping my quest.

Ruchi nods.

BARISAMPA

It was noble, you gave it a good try.

SIDDHARTHA

I will join you on one condition.

BARISAMPA

Name it, it's yours.

SIDDHARTHA

Guarantee you will never become
old, injured or ill.

BARISAMPA

You're jesting?

Ruchi's eyes go wide, he frowns.

Siddhartha glances back and forth at Barisampa and Ruchi.

SIDDHARTHA

Since you can't guarantee that, I
will give you another condition.

BARISAMPA

It's got to be easier.

SIDDHARTHA

Guarantee you will never die.

Ruchi shakes his head, walks away.

Barisampa bows.

BARISAMPA

Good luck, Siddhartha. Your quest
is greater than ruling the world,
nobler than my Priest's wishes. May
the gods be with you.

Barisampa's Priest and some soldiers ride up, watch.
Barisampa rises, walks past the stump to his horse.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST

Sire, you forgot your sword and
dagger.

Barisampa's eyes lock on his weapons of death. He mounts his
horse, turns back to Siddhartha.

BARISAMPA

Thank you, Siddhartha.

Barisampa rides away. His soldiers follow him.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST

Sire! Sire, what are you doing?

Barisampa pays no heed.

Fires appear in the Priest's eyes. He dismounts, charges at Siddhartha.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST
Who are you - you scum wanderer?

SIDDHARTHA
I know who I am, Priest. It is you
who does not know who you are.

Siddhartha walks off.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST
Stop, you.

Siddhartha keeps walking.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST
Stop him, stop him!

The Priest whirls around but the soldiers are gone with Barisampa. Wide eyed, his eye fires extinguish, his eyes turn fully black.

He SCREAMS at Siddhartha.

BARISAMPA'S PRIEST
You can't walk away from me!

EXT. FOURTH VILLAGE - DAY

A soldier rides past. Kaundinya and the four talk with the Commander in the Ceremonial field. The deep red-brown ground near the sacrificial altar contrasts drastically with the rest of the field's light brown dirt.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Siddhartha stands, eyes sad as he stares at Ruchi asleep.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Siddhartha strides along, determined. Ruchi races to catch up. A storm brews.

RUCHI
In a hurry?

Siddhartha keeps his pace.

RUCHI

I'm beginning to feel that I'm
wasting my time trying to help you.

SIDDHARTHA

You haven't been helping me. You're
trying to get me to give up my
quest and go back to the Palace.

RUCHI

Maybe the help I'm offering you
isn't what you think you want.

Siddhartha stays quiet.

RUCHI

You're the one who needs help, not
me.

Siddhartha halts.

SIDDHARTHA

I need help? I defeated King
Barisampa's priest without your
help. And you didn't even want me
to.

RUCHI

I believe you're getting a bit--

SIDDHARTHA

A bit wiser.

RUCHI

I would put it a different way.

Siddhartha strides off. Ruchi stays, hands on hips. A light
rain falls.

SIDDHARTHA

Because you're Mara.

Stunned, Ruchi's mouth drops.

RUCHI

Oh? So now who's going mad, like
that dog-man? I gave you more
credit for brains.

Siddhartha stops, turns back, points his finger at Ruchi.

SIDDHARTHA

Prove to me you're not Mara.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, your doubt is twisting
your mind. I'm your best friend!
Did you think I was helping you
just to become a raging idiot!

SIDDHARTHA

Prove it!

Ruchi shakes his head. Forlorn, he sits down on a log, drops
his head.

RUCHI

This is what I was scared about.
Mara's done this to you.

Siddhartha bites his bottom lip, his hand twitches.

SIDDHARTHA

Ruchi--

RUCHI

After all we've done together...

SIDDHARTHA

Ruchi, if I'm wrong, I'm terribly
sorry, but you must prove to me
that you are not Mara.

Tears in his eyes, Ruchi looks up at Siddhartha.

RUCHI

I'm not, believe me.

Lightning rips across the sky with a huge thunder roll.

MARA (O.S.)

How can he be me?

Siddhartha spins around. Nothing. A glow. Shimmering in the
mist, Mara manifests, his face hard.

EXT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

The environment changes into an endless ocean, with a pink
sky, soft rain.

They all stand on the water.

MARA

Foolish Ruchi. Even Siddhartha
thinks you're me. Ha!

Siddhartha turns back to Ruchi.

SIDDHARTHA

Can you prove it to me?

Ruchi stands, collects himself.

RUCHI

Alright, Siddhartha. Feel free to doubt the wind and the sun. Doubt the stars and the moon all you wish. But you don't have to doubt me.

Ruchi stands in between Siddhartha and Mara.

RUCHI

Mara. Now.

Mara and Ruchi lock eyes.

MARA

Ruchi, don't push me.

RUCHI

I said, now.

MARA

I'm not interested in you.

RUCHI

Now!

Ruchi raises both fists, he swings them down hard. His clothes change into royal attire, his hair changes to be shoulder length.

He throws one hand in the air. A huge fishing net flies out of his hand, over Mara. Mara stands still, engulfed. His eyes widen, he shakes, the net dissolves.

MARA

Enough!

A wild battle ensues. Mara spins, daggers fly from his body toward Ruchi. A sword appears in Ruchi's hand, he cuts every dagger down. He throws his sword up high. As Mara looks upward, Ruchi dives into Mara's gut, knocking him down.

The storm escalates, thunder and lightning everywhere.

Mara jumps up, knees Ruchi in the face, slams him into the water, kicks him in the side. Ruchi flies up twenty feet. Mara chases him. They fight in the air.

Ruchi kicks Mara in the head. Slams him. Slams him again, again, again. Mara falls to the water.

Ruchi dives down at Mara, who dodges, whips out a six-foot metal rod, swings hard at Ruchi. Ruchi catches the rod, transforms it into a soft rope, wraps it around Mara.

Mara shakes, the rope stays intact. He shakes again. Nothing. He's stuck.

The rain stops.

MARA

So you win one battle. I will win the war.

RUCHI

I won't argue with that if Siddhartha stays as foolish as he is right now.

Ruchi shoots a defiant look towards Siddhartha.

RUCHI

When you can match me, you might have a chance to defeat Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

Very entertaining battle, Ruchi-Mara, which proves nothing. I transformed Barisampa with words not fists, swords or magic ropes.

RUCHI

Siddhartha, it's me, Ruchi. Remember? You and me. I've stood by you for thirty years. Thirty years! How can you doubt me?

Ruchi hurls his hurt at Siddhartha who remains stoic.

RUCHI

Maybe you're not worth helping.

Siddhartha stays unmoved. Ruchi shrugs.

RUCHI

What more can I do to prove to you I'm not him?

A long moment as Siddhartha looks back and forth at the two.

SIDDHARTHA

Speak at exactly the same time.

Ruchi and Mara look at each other. Ruchi with an annoyed expression. Mara with a haughty face.

RUCHI
What should I say?

MARA
What should I say?

SIDDHARTHA
No! Say different things.

Ruchi's body shakes. The rope on Mara dissolves. Lightning strikes. Both of their bodies glimmer and slide toward each other. Ruchi's face changes to anger, his clothes change to be like Mara's. Thunder BOOMS.

They blend into each other, fully Mara.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The surroundings change back to the road area. Mara smirks.

MARA
Well done, Siddhartha.

Mara whirls and disappears.

Siddhartha stares for a short eternity. He looks upward, rain strikes his face.

He pulls his robe tightly around himself, resumes his walk slowly, contemplatively.

EXT. CHARNEL GROUNDS CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

A barren open cemetery, full of dead bodies in various stages of decomposition.

A FATHER, two sons and a daughter huddle around a stretcher with an old woman's body. They tremble in fear as a jackal, guarding a carcass, BARKS menacingly at them. SQUAWKING birds hover in the sky.

Siddhartha approaches.

SIDDHARTHA
Nicch, nicch.

The jackal stops growling, cocks his head toward Siddhartha. In awe, the family looks at Siddhartha. He smiles.

FATHER
Thank you, kind Sage, would you also please bless my wife?

Siddhartha squats.

SIDDHARTHA

Wherever your wife and your mother
is, may she be in a state of
happiness, with compassion and
love. May she find peace of mind.

He rises. The family bows to him.

The sons pick up the stretcher, carry it to one of many
piles of decaying bodies and skeletons. They rest their
mother on top. The father takes a water jug, scoops water
and throws it on his wife. The sons do similar.

After doing so herself, the daughter holds the jug out to
Siddhartha who completes the ceremony.

The sun sets as the three children leave. Siddhartha sits
cross-legged under a tree, rests his bowl next to him.

FATHER

Kind Sage, it's not safe here. The
priests have warned us - the
spirits will rip out your brains.

SIDDHARTHA

The priests make many mistakes. I
will prove them wrong. Spirits need
love, too.

The father bows and departs. Siddhartha closes his eyes as
SCREECHING vultures land on the corpse.

EXT. CHARNEL GROUNDS CEMETERY - NIGHT

Siddhartha walks back and forth in meditation. Silence other
than the jackal chewing on a bone. A loud RUSTLE.

Siddhartha looks around anxiously. A gloating Mara appears,
two feet in front of Siddhartha.

MARA

Spirits will rip out your brains.

He disappears. Reappears behind Siddhartha to the right.

MARA

Rip out your brains.

Siddhartha turns, Mara disappears. Reappears behind
Siddhartha to the left. Mara SCREAMS.

MARA

Rip out your brains!

Siddhartha shuts his eyes tight, slowly shakes his head, no. He opens his eyes. Mara's gone. Another jackal comes out of the woods, heads to the bodies. Siddhartha relaxes, walks.

A man's semi-visible spirit, face devoid of expression, rises from a corpse. Spotting Siddhartha, the spirit's eyes turn white, his face contorts, his form transforms into a demon. He lets out a bloodcurdling SCREAM.

Siddhartha stops dead in his tracks, his body shakes.

MARA (O.S.)

He'll rip you apart and devour you!

Siddhartha runs a couple of steps, stops, readies himself.

SIDDHARTHA

No.

The demon charges at Siddhartha, dives straight through Siddhartha's stomach, emerging out the other side. Siddhartha doubles over in pain.

SIDDHARTHA

Ahhh!

MARA (O.S.)

Siddhartha, run!

SIDDHARTHA

No, it's... it's all right.

Siddhartha gradually straightens himself.

SIDDHARTHA

Spirit, you're safe with me. And I am safe with you.-- Mara, you won't scare me this way.

Perplexed, the demon eyes Siddhartha. It converts back to the spirit. He floats up into a tree, watches Siddhartha who sits down and meditates.

A one-eyed woman's spirit rises from another pile. She holds a semi-visible, thick broom handle. With one leg longer than the other, she GRUNTS as she lumbers toward Siddhartha. He opens his eyes, sees her, closes his eyes.

SIDDHARTHA

May she be at peace.

The woman-spirit grunts louder the closer she gets. Stopping inches from him, she utters a DEAFENING SHRIEK, lifts the handle high above Siddhartha's head. She brings it down hard. Siddhartha's head jolts, his body lurches forward.

SIDDHARTHA

No.

Dazed but not hurt, he sits upright.

SIDDHARTHA

You have nothing to fear. And
neither do I.

Confused, the woman-spirit's face softens. She lies down in front of Siddhartha, puts her hand on his knee. The man-spirit floats down, puts his hand on Siddhartha's shoulder.

A three-year-old boy's spirit rises from a pile. Blank-faced, he ambles over and curls up in Siddhartha's lap.

The spirits of a young woman, an old man and others float, walk or crawl out of the corpses to Siddhartha. They seek to get very close. Those nearest touch his arms or legs.

The little boy in Siddhartha's lap looks up at Siddhartha's peaceful face. Tears flow down the boy's cheeks. He buries his face in Siddhartha's chest.

Mara appears ten feet in front of Siddhartha. Mara bows.

MARA

I am honored.

Siddhartha's eyes narrow on Mara.

EXT. CHARNEL GROUNDS CEMETERY - DAWN

Siddhartha sits motionless. The spirits are gone. Mara sits meditating close by. Millions of flowers adorn the cemetery.

Siddhartha opens his eyes, rises. He spots Mara. He views the new flowers. Perplexed, he grabs his bowl and departs.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

Siddhartha sleeps on the ground. Silhouetted by the Milky Way, Mara walks over, whispers.

MARA

The old wanderer, Jataka, had the
right path.

Siddhartha stirs, but doesn't wake.

MARA

Fasting, Siddhartha, fasting.

Siddhartha mutters.

SIDDHARTHA

Fasting...

MARA

And austere yoga postures. You must defeat the body.

SIDDHARTHA

Defeat the body...

MARA

It's the true way to freedom.

SIDDHARTHA

Freedom...

MARA

Do it for Yasodhara, she wants you to fast.

SIDDHARTHA

Yasodhara... fasting...

Mara walks away.

EXT. FIFTH VILLAGE - DAY

Siddhartha walks away from a woman after he receives alms. He leaves the village, heads to a tree, sits down to eat.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)

May I join you?

Siddhartha doesn't look up.

SIDDHARTHA

If you wish, but I eat quietly and mindfully.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)

Very good. And how is your quest?

A moment passes. Siddhartha stops eating.

SIDDHARTHA

Your voice sounds familiar.

Siddhartha looks up, eyes Kaundinya over. Kaundinya smiles. His four friends stand ten yards away.

SIDDHARTHA

I saw you on my outing. Are you my teacher?

KAUNDINYA

I was more hopeful you're ready to
be mine?

Siddhartha frowns, shakes his head. Kaundinya bows, sits.

KAUNDINYA

So tell me everything you've done.

EXT. ROAD PATH - DAY

The six men walk along, Siddhartha and Kaundinya in front.
They cut through some bushes.

KAUNDINYA

You've done well, Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

But it's just been concentration
bliss. I've reached the highest
states of consciousness, but my
mind is not yet fully purified.

KAUNDINYA

So what are your plans now?

SIDDHARTHA

An old wanderer I met practiced
fasting and austere yoga postures.
It might be the way. If I defeat
the body, the mind will be free.

KAUNDINYA

Excellent, we're with you.

SIDDHARTHA

Everyone?

Siddhartha glances at the other men. All but Baspa smile
broadly. Baspa smiles, but without similar enthusiasm.

SIDDHARTHA

Good, this way.

Siddhartha stops at a semi-wooded area near a creek. Lean-to
roofing rests against crumbling, mud-brick walls. Roses grow
amongst long grass. Siddhartha pats a Mango tree.

SIDDHARTHA

Like it?

KAUNDINYA

A royal palace.

EXT. HOME AREA - NIGHT

The six sit in meditation together. Siddhartha nudges Kaundinya, points off in the distance. They stroll out into an OPEN AREA below a clear sky. The stars sparkle.

SIDDHARTHA

Do you have any news of Yasodhara?

KAUNDINYA

She's fine, even more than fine,
she's very well.

Siddhartha's anxious face relaxes.

KAUNDINYA

She said for me to give you her
love, and tell you to continue for
her, and for everyone. You must
discover the Truth.

Siddhartha closes his eyes.

KAUNDINYA

She made me stay and teach her
meditation so she could be ready
when you come back.

Siddhartha looks up. A VISION of Yasodhara, sitting in meditation, fills the sky.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)

She's with you, Siddhartha, I've
never met a woman like her.

SIDDHARTHA

Kaundinya... thank you.

Kaundinya leaves. Reflective, Siddhartha paces.

SIDDHARTHA

I'll do it, you hear that, Mara?
Yasodhara supports me. Kaundinya
and the others will help. You will
lose, I'll do it!

A lightning bolt strikes a large boulder.

EXT. GARDENS - DAY

Night changes into day. Beautiful, park-like environment similar to the Palace rose gardens.

Mara appears, standing on the boulder, smiling wide. He jumps down.

Siddhartha backs away, ready for a fight.

MARA

At last, Siddhartha. This is what I've been waiting for. I've lost but now I can finally win!

SIDDHARTHA

I'm not falling for another of your tricks.

MARA

That's all right, because I'm out of tricks. I've done my best. You saw through my Ruchi disguise. I've conquered everyone with that illusion, but not you. And the cemetery - I told you, I'm so honored - the number of wanderers I've crushed there is countless, yet your heart is so full of compassion and your wisdom is so penetrating, I couldn't even scare you. Which is wonderful!

Mara's face sparkles. He bows to Siddhartha.

MARA

And now you've wisely chosen the true path, which no one can thwart, not even me.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, when you were Ruchi, I might have believed you but--

MARA

Yes, I know you have doubts about me right now. And you don't have to believe me if you wish. Yet what you've achieved releases me from my burden.

SIDDHARTHA

But... I have to defeat you.

MARA

Yes, which you've already done. And now, I am duty bound to aid you with the true way of fasting in order to find ultimate freedom.

Mara lowers down on one knee.

MARA

Siddhartha, the gods will strike me if I lie to you now. It's not within my power to interfere with your quest any further.

Siddhartha's spellbound.

MARA

From the beginning of time, I had to be the evil one. I've been the ultimate tester to ensure only the pure attain freedom. I'm so tortured inside with what I have done. Siddhartha, if you find freedom, I will be free, also, from my wretched work.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, I--

MARA

I was told one day I would meet a Great Man like you. May I stand?

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, please.

Mara rises.

SIDDHARTHA

You mean you've been bound to do harm?

MARA

Harm is how most understand my work. For eons my job has been to reveal the worst in humans and tempt them so it would not be hidden. And this means that at times I appear cruel.

Excited, Mara's tone perks up.

MARA

But where others failed, you passed my tests magnificently. Siddhartha, you're on your way to freedom now for the benefit of all beings, and I want to be there with you!

Mara's on the verge of tears of joy. Siddhartha smiles.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara... really?

Siddhartha laughs, overjoyed. They embrace strongly.

Unseen to Siddhartha, a fully bloomed, red rose shrivels and falls to the ground.

EXT. HOME AREA - DAY

Siddhartha and the other five men sit in a circle.

SIDDHARTHA

I'm too attached to the body. Look at me, handsome, strong. I have to beat it down into submission.

KAUNDINYA

Yes.

ASVAJIT

Agreed.

SIDDHARTHA

I'll start fasting one day a week.

MAHANAMA

We'll take care of you and when you're enlightened, you teach us.

KAUNDINYA

We'll help you all the way, no matter how long it takes.

The others agree, though Baspa's expression lacks the fervor of the rest. An elated Mara appears behind Kaundinya.

MARA

Yes! A Nobleman ready for victory!

Siddhartha's face beams in strong determination.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY

Wooded with boulders, fifty yards away from the creek. Siddhartha finishes a yoga posture. Mara sits close by.

MARA

Breath practice now.

Siddhartha YELLS to the others in the Home Area.

SIDDHARTHA

Ready!

Kaundinya and Mahanama hurry over. They all sit down. Siddhartha takes a long, deep breath.

The other two wait and watch. Siddhartha's breathing gets longer and longer, stronger and stronger. He stops.

MAHANAMA

One, two, three, four...

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - LATER

Kaundinya and Mahanama watch Siddhartha hold his breath.

MAHANAMA

Ninety-two, ninety-three--

Siddhartha exhales.

KAUNDINYA

Good for starters, good.

Siddhartha nods, glances behind Kaundinya to Mara who smiles back.

EXT. OPEN AREA - DAY

In full sun, wearing only a loincloth, a tanned Siddhartha, his hair four inches long, stands on one foot with the other leg folded up on his thigh. His hands, palms together, extend above his head.

Mara helps move Siddhartha's raised foot a bit higher.

EXT. HOME AREA - DAY

The five eat as Siddhartha walks by. They motion that he's welcome to join. He looks behind them at Mara who shakes his head. Siddhartha continues towards his area.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY

Siddhartha sits, holding his breath. His hair reaches his shoulders. His dark shriveled skin hugs his body, which has lost a good thirty pounds. Mahanama counts.

MAHANAMA

Three hundred-one, three hundred-two, three--

Siddhartha lets out the air, falls over unconscious.

MAHANAMA

Well done!

Mara sits on a boulder, calmly watches.

EXT. OPEN AREA - NIGHT

In the distance, Siddhartha sits in meditation, wearing only his sarong. The wind blows hard. Unheard, Mara bends over next to Siddhartha, yelling at him.

Two of the others huddle near trees, their robes pulled around themselves in the chilly night's air.

EXT. HOME AREA - NOON

Mahanama talks with Kaundinya who points through the woods to Siddhartha standing still.

KAUNDINYA

Hasn't moved since daybreak.

MAHANAMA

He's going to do it!

EXT. OPEN AREA - CONTINUOUS

An unrecognizable Siddhartha stands. His ribs protrude, collar bone almost rising out of his body. Black skin, eyes sunk in their sockets. His once strong arms look like sticks. His hair reaches halfway down his back. He chants.

SIDDHARTHA

Beat the body... beat the body...
beat the body...

Mara paces close by. His healthy looks contrast sharply with the emaciated Siddhartha.

MARA

Longer, Siddhartha, longer. You're doing marvelous.

Siddhartha collapses to the ground, babbling as if insane. Kaundinya and Mahanama rush over to him.

SIDDHARTHA

Not enough, not enough.

KAUNDINYA

You're doing fine.

SIDDHARTHA

I have to suffer more. I have to defeat this bag of bones.

MAHANAMA

You've already suffered greater than anyone alive.

Mara whispers in Siddhartha's ear.

MARA

Don't worry about them. They haven't any noble markings of a Great Man. Not enough courage. You must blaze the trail. Kill the body, kill it. Freedom awaits you.

SIDDHARTHA

Tomorrow - rice one hundred grains. Next day ninety-nine, next ninety-eight and on.

KAUNDINYA

But--

Siddhartha's face shows only madness.

SIDDHARTHA

No buts, kill the body.

Kaundinya and Mahanama look at each other in fear. Mara smiles.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY

Siddhartha sits, his hair swept up in a bun. He stares blankly. Bharika walks over with something in his hand.

BHARIKA

Siddhartha.

Siddhartha's face stays dazed.

BHARIKA

Eight grains today.

Siddhartha wearily looks up. He takes the rice.

MONTAGE - Semi-clear, swirling images of Yasodhara

-- She walks toward him when they first met

-- She throws rice at their wedding

-- She smiles as Siddhartha places a flower in her hair

-- He pops a sweet sensuously into her mouth

-- She laughs as he tickles her

-- In a silk nightgown, she walks towards him

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Siddhartha gazes vacantly at the rice. His head goes back against the tree. He passes out.

EXT. CREEKSIDE - DAY

Siddhartha squats urinating. Nearly exhausted, he falls forward on his face. He struggles to get up, staggers to the creek. With a serious expression, Mara watches.

MARA

Good, good, you're doing just fine.

Siddhartha semi-nods, wades carefully in, pulls his hair out of the bun, dips his head in, rubs his hair. A handful of hair comes out in his hands.

SIDDHARTHA

Oh, my...

He grabs more hair, pulls, it comes out.

SIDDHARTHA

What am I... doing?

Again hair comes out in his fists. His face remains blank. Mara wades out in front of Siddhartha.

MARA

Pull it out, Siddhartha! All of it!

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, beat this body. The body must be defeated. Out. Out.

Impossible to stop, he pulls. He rocks back and forth.

SIDDHARTHA

What... is... going... on?

MARA

Never mind, more, more.

He holds clumps of hair in each hand, only a little bit remains on his head.

MAHANAMA (O.S.)

Well done, Siddhartha, well done!

Siddhartha turns to the bank, spots Mahanama smiling broadly.

MARA

Get it all out, kill that hair.

Siddhartha eyes his handfuls.

SIDDHARTHA
Kill? Kill hair?

Siddhartha grabs the last hair, pulls it out. He swirls slowly back to Mara.

SIDDHARTHA
Or... kill... me?

He continues swirling and faints in the water.

EXT. HOME AREA - DAY

The five surround Siddhartha, lying unconscious. Kaundinya adjusts a pillow under Siddhartha's head.

KAUNDINYA
He's going to do it. I just know
it. We'll let him rest now.

They leave.

Fires materialize throughout the woods.

Mara appears, fires in his eyes. He gloats at Siddhartha.

MARA
Soon, so soon, Siddhartha, you will
die. Die as you must, so I may
continue to live.

He strokes Siddhartha's head.

MARA
I have ruled forever. I will always
rule. It's not right for you to
defeat me. You need me. Otherwise
you won't exist.

Mara stands proudly.

MARA
I must rule... The world will
collapse without me... The world...
needs... me.

Siddhartha stirs, rubs his hand over his head.

The fires disappear. Mara's eyes return to normal.

SIDDHARTHA
Mara, I... I'm not well. Maybe I
should eat.

Mara kneels down to comfort Siddhartha.

MARA

Don't worry, Siddhartha. You're going to get enlightened, I'm sure of it. Keep going, it's close.

SIDDHARTHA

I... I'm trying to go somewhere, I don't even know where. Am I mad?

MARA

What you did to your hair was brilliant. You have the thirty-two marks of a Great Man, destined--

SIDDHARTHA

For madness, I think.

MARA

No, don't give up.

SIDDHARTHA

But I've seen other sages mad, yet they think they're enlightened.

MARA

It's all right.

SIDDHARTHA

It's all right... to go mad?

MARA

Siddhartha, listen to me. Enough of this talk. Get up, meditate more.

Mara tries to lift Siddhartha, yet even just skin and bones, he's dead weight.

SIDDHARTHA

All right...

Siddhartha helps by pushing himself up.

SIDDHARTHA

Go mad, it's all right.

Unseen by Siddhartha, Mara grins.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAWN

Siddhartha wakes, looks around wearily. He slowly rises into the sitting posture next to a boulder.

MARA (O.S.)
 No food today. Keep fasting. Fast,
 fast, fast.

Siddhartha rests his head on the boulder, falls back asleep.

INT. PALACE DINING ROOM - DAY (SIDDHARTHA'S DREAM)

Healthy and fit, Siddhartha wears his sage robes. He sits down to join Yasodhara, King Suddhodana and Prajapati who enjoy a royal feast.

SIDDHARTHA
 Great. Please pass the curry.

No one acknowledges him. Perplexed, he shrugs his shoulders, reaches over for the curry. A hand grabs his.

BASPA (O.S.)
 You're fasting.

Siddhartha looks up at Baspa who has a firm face.

SIDDHARTHA
 But, I just--

Another hand materializes from the other side of the table.

KAUNDINYA (O.S.)
 No!

Kaundinya appears. The table stretches a few feet on Siddhartha's side pushing him away from the food.

SIDDHARTHA
 But--

ASVAJIT (O.S.)
 No!

Asvajit appears. The table stretches more. Siddhartha's body becomes thinner.

MAHANAMA (O.S.)
 No!

Mahanama appears. The table stretches farther. Siddhartha's body becomes even thinner.

BHARIKA (O.S.)
 No!

Bharika appears. The table stretches fifty yards long. Siddhartha's body is just flesh and bones. Yasodhara, the King and Prajapati eat without ever looking at Siddhartha.

MARA (O.S.)
You heard them!

Mara appears. Demons surround him. Angry, he charges at the table, upends it and knocks Siddhartha off his chair, onto the floor.

MARA
No!

SIDDHARTHA
But I think I need some--

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Asleep on the boulder, Siddhartha wakes with a start.

SIDDHARTHA
Food.

Groggy, he looks through the woods at the five eating.

He pushes on the boulder to get up. He grips his side, indicating excruciating pain. Thunder ROARS. He glances up at the darkening sky.

SIDDHARTHA
I'll have... I'll get... my own.

He stumbles toward the road, stops, grabs onto a tree.

MARA (O.S.)
No!

SIDDHARTHA
Right, it's... desire. I can't...
must beat the body. Beat it.

He collapses. A light rain falls.

SIDDHARTHA
I'm mad. That's it. I... am... mad.

MARA (O.S.)
Siddhartha! You are fine!

He pulls himself up.

SIDDHARTHA
No... It's mad... I need food.

He stumbles further toward the road, thirty yards away. A large cluster of bushes and briars separates him from the road. A waist high boulder rests near the bushes.

SIDDHARTHA
It's... all... mad.

MARA (O.S.)
Stop!

Siddhartha falls face down on the ground. Motionless. The wind blows, sending scores of leaves over him. A long moment as if he's dead.

He stirs.

SIDDHARTHA
No... The road... Get to the...

He crawls close to the thick cluster of bushes. Exhausted, he lies down next to the boulder.

In the distance a music duo dance along the road. A LUTE-GIRL plucks her strings and sings. Her BROTHER hits cymbals.

LUTE-GIRL
For the strings are one with me /
not too tight, not too loose /
otherwise my little song / will
sound like a silly goose.

From under the bushes, Siddhartha watches the Lute-girl intensely. Her face changes into Yasodhara.

EXT. ROYAL ARCHERY FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Siddhartha and Yasodhara embrace, kiss.

YASODHARA
Keep your strength, my love. Stay
strong, stay balanced.

SIDDHARTHA
I will.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Siddhartha nods.

SIDDHARTHA
Strong... balanced... I'm so sorry,
Yasodhara...

He attempts to push himself up, but can't. He calls weakly.

SIDDHARTHA
Please... help...

The Brother hits the Lute-girl on her arm.

BROTHER

Eh, you hear someone?

They stop, listen. Lightning flashes. Thunder BOOMS. Heavy rain falls.

BROTHER

Never mind, hurry.

They race away. Siddhartha tries to call. Words only form on his lips. A frog hops in front of his face. Siddhartha watches it, and passes out. The rain pounds over his body.

CRACK! Lightning strikes a close tree. It breaks, falls toward Siddhartha. SMASH. It hits the boulder next to him, coming to rest just inches above his body.

INT. UPPER CHAMBER - DAY

Lightning clashes. Dismayed, Yasodhara stares out at the foreboding sky. Her hands hold tightly to Siddhartha's jeweled belt, her eyes glisten. She looks over at her son RAHULA, 6, who sits drawing a white sheep with a black ear.

A tear rolls down her cheek. She wipes it quickly as he looks up and smiles. She gives him a tender expression. He returns to his drawing as Prajapati enters.

With no hope in her eyes, Yasodhara turns to Prajapati who warmly embraces Yasodhara with a motherly hug.

YASODHARA

I have this strange feeling he needs help or...

Her voice chokes on the words as though she can't bear to voice her innermost fear.

YASODHARA

...he's dead.

PRAJAPATI

No. He won't fail in his destiny.

RAHULA

Mother, do you like my sheep?

Yasodhara sits down with Rahula, gives him a loving kiss.

YASODHARA

Lovely, Rahula.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

BAAAA, BAAAA, the sound of sheep. A low caste SUDRA SHEPHERD BOY prods two white sheep along the road, as he dances through puddles. The rain ceases. He carries a lota, a round pot. One sheep with a black ear runs off toward Siddhartha.

SUDRA BOY
Blackie, come back.

He dashes after it only to find his sheep nudging Siddhartha. He stands transfixed.

SUDRA BOY
Dead.

The sheep BAAAAS.

SUDRA BOY
You think so?

Siddhartha stirs, his eyes open. The boy jumps back.

SIDDHARTHA
Do... you have milk in your lota?

SUDRA BOY
Yes, Sir, but I am a Sudra. I cannot give from my lota to you.

SIDDHARTHA
Sudra, what color is your blood?

SUDRA BOY
Red, Sir.

Using the last of his strength, Siddhartha digs a fingernail into his arm, blood spurts out.

SIDDHARTHA
And mine?

The boy's eyes go wide.

SUDRA BOY
But... but I am a Sudra.

SIDDHARTHA
And when you cry, are your tears the same as mine?

The boy pours milk in a cup and holds it close to Siddhartha's mouth.

EXT. SIDDHARTHA'S SITE - DAY

The Sudra boy strains as he supports Siddhartha to his area. The sheep trot behind. Siddhartha reaches for his bowl but the boy grabs it and hands it to him. Siddhartha smiles, pats the boy's shoulder.

SIDDHARTHA

Thank you, I feel stronger. For giving me strength, may you have strength all of your life and in all of your future lives. I will be fine now.

Elated, the boy skips off.

Concerned, Mara appears.

MARA

You're from the Noble Warrior caste. How can you accept defeat? Aren't you going to continue fasting? Aren't you going to get enlightened?

Siddhartha staggers toward the Main Area.

SIDDHARTHA

Fasting isn't the way.

MARA

Of course it is. Don't be ridiculous.

Siddhartha grasps onto a tree, pauses. The wind blows, a leaf falls into his bowl. He reaches in, takes it out and holds it toward Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

My mistakes... in whom to believe... are finished.

He drops the leaf, walks away.

Mara's body tenses, his eyes turn red.

MARA

Siddhartha, listen to me!

EXT. HOME AREA - CONTINUOUS

Baspa, Bharika and Mahanama sweep leaves. Siddhartha inches over with his bowl. Incredulous, the three look at him.

SIDDHARTHA
Please fill this with food.

BASPA
What!

Siddhartha looks wearily at the shocked men. Kaundinya and Asvajit approach with full alms bowls.

KAUNDINYA
What's going on?

BASPA
He wants to eat!

ASVAJIT
Eat? He's gone mad!

KAUNDINYA
Stop, stop.

Kaundinya restrains his agitated companions. He hands Siddhartha his own alms bowl.

KAUNDINYA
Here, Siddhartha.

Balancing awkwardly, Siddhartha walks back to his area.

KAUNDINYA
I haven't told you.

BASPA
Told us what!

KAUNDINYA
He's been talking about eating for some days.

BASPA
I said it before, once a prince,
always a prince.

ASVAJIT
He's not like us.

BHARIKA
We've been sages all our lives.
Born that way, grew up that way.

BASPA
He's a weakling! Lived twenty-nine
years the high life, tries this for
only six and quits.

Kaundinya steps in Siddhartha's direction, pauses.

KAUNDINYA

Men, please--

BASPA

Forget it, Kaundinya! I'm done with helping this failure. Anyone who wants to come with me, fine.

Bharika and Asvajit move next to Baspa. Mahanama looks at Kaundinya, joins the other three.

MAHANAMA

Kaundinya?

KAUNDINYA

Let me talk to him.

Kaundinya walks through the woods to Siddhartha. He stops, looks back at the men, then to Siddhartha. His eyes narrow.

He spots a four foot long, strong branch, picks it up, cleans one end with his hands. He swings it hard into a bush, smashing its leaves and smaller branches. He nods.

Holding the branch, Kaundinya approaches Siddhartha. He stays standing as Siddhartha eats. The four friends can be seen through the trees.

KAUNDINYA

So you're quitting on us.

Siddhartha looks up calmly at the disappointed Kaundinya.

SIDDHARTHA

No, are you quitting on me?

KAUNDINYA

The others are disillusioned.

SIDDHARTHA

And you?

KAUNDINYA

I, uh, but how can you do this?

Kaundinya loses his normal composure.

KAUNDINYA

Siddhartha! What are you doing!

SIDDHARTHA

Kaundinya--

KAUNDINYA

Ever since I was a young man I
believed you would light the way
for all of us. Now you give up, all
my hopes and faith in you are
smashed. I'm exposed as a fool.
It's... it's too much.

Siddhartha gets up slowly, holding his side. He walks over
to a rose bush. His hand touches a small bud, one opening,
one fully open, one dying and one without any petals left.

SIDDHARTHA

When I was a prince...

He reaches down carefully, his face tells the pain of his
side. He picks up a few decaying petals.

SIDDHARTHA

I never saw this.

KAUNDINYA

So how can you indulge again,
forsake us in the quest? We have no
great marks but you do.

SIDDHARTHA

I'm not giving up, I've gone too
far.

Kaundinya cocks his head in a sign of momentary doubt.

SIDDHARTHA

There must be a place between
heaven and hell. Since I've been to
both, I'll try a middle way.

KAUNDINYA

This is Mara speaking, not the
Prince with many marks. I'm sorry,
Siddhartha.

He taps the branch into his other hand, glances at
Siddhartha. Eyes glistening, Kaundinya offers the branch.
Siddhartha takes it. Kaundinya returns to the men. They
gather their belongings and depart.

MARA (O.S.)

Go with them, Siddhartha.

With fierce eyes, Siddhartha points at Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

You... go with them.

He picks up his bowl and robe, steps in another direction.
Mara grabs his arm.

MARA

You've gone mad! Even your most
devoted Kaundinya cannot penetrate
your foolishness. All your friends
are leaving you.

Siddhartha continues walking.

MARA

And you have failed Yasodhara.

Siddhartha pauses, then flares.

SIDDHARTHA

Enough! Six years I've wasted
thinking this was it. But it was
just another of your wicked tricks.

MARA

Yes, you're right. And I'll
continue to trick you until you
come to your senses.

SIDDHARTHA

You mean your madness.

Mara knocks weak Siddhartha down and stands over him. Mara's
eyes turn to fires.

Hundreds of laughing demons appear, jumping up and down.

MARA

Madness rules.

Siddhartha rises. Mara drives his fist into Siddhartha's
stomach. Siddhartha crashes down, clutches his gut.

The demons CHEER.

DEMONS

More! More!

MARA

And I will rule forever.

Mara slams Siddhartha across his head. He kicks Siddhartha.
Again.

DEMONS

Yes! Yes!

Again Mara kicks, but with all Siddhartha's remaining strength, he grabs Mara's foot and rolls over, which throws Mara down with a thud. Mara bounces up. Siddhartha holds up his palm.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, if you defeat me in my quest, you will continue to rule with no hope for me or others to find true freedom. Right?

Mara remains quiet, looks questioningly at Siddhartha.

The demons stop, stare at Siddhartha and Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

But if I defeat you, your power to rule over me will be gone forever. And I will be a lamp shining in the darkness of ignorance showing others how they can also be free of your tyranny.

Siddhartha slowly rises.

The demons disappear.

SIDDHARTHA

Right?

Mara's face sets in a combination of fear and determination.

SIDDHARTHA

We will have one last battle.

Siddhartha walks away.

MONTAGE - Siddhartha gets healthier. With each scene, he puts on weight and gains back his golden skin.

-- VILLAGE - Siddhartha hobbles with the branch as a cane, on alms round.

-- WOODS - He stops under a large tree, gently sits down.

-- VILLAGE WELL - He eats his meal.

-- ROAD - Without the cane, Siddhartha walks along.

-- VILLAGE - He's very healthy, on alms round.

-- NIGHT UNDER THE STARS - He does walking meditation.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Deer graze. Birds flutter in the trees. A squirrel jumps from branch to branch. Siddhartha walks down the riverbank, bare of flowers. He washes his bowl.

Mara squats on the other side of the river watching.

Siddhartha rises, holds up his arms, palms toward himself. He squeezes his fists. He looks over at Mara who stands, his face rigid. Siddhartha holds his arms up higher, nods.

EXT. LOTUS POND - DUSK

Siddhartha walks in meditation near the pond's edge. He stops, gazes at lotuses of all colors in various degrees of opening. His eyes focus on the tallest - an open white lotus, a foot higher than the others.

He walks over to a large Bodhi (fig) Tree, pats it. He looks west to see the last colors of the sunset. He looks east, the full moon is yet to rise. He adjusts some grass to sit on under the tree, sits down full lotus facing east.

Siddhartha shuts his eyes as daylight disappears and the shimmer of the rising moon casts over the horizon.

EXT. VAST EXPANSE OF WATER - DAY

An endless ocean, with a fuzzy pink sky, soft rain.

Siddhartha's Meditation Battle. Siddhartha sits full lotus floating above water. Lightning strikes in front of him with a huge thunder BOOM. Water splashes everywhere.

MARA (O.S.)

No!

Siddhartha sits motionless.

MARA (O.S.)

I said, no!

Lightning strikes behind Siddhartha with another thunder BOOM. To his right, BOOM, his left, BOOM, in front, BOOM.

MARA (O.S.)

Never!

Siddhartha opens his eyes. Mara stands defiantly on water thirty feet away.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, you will build this house no longer.

MARA

My house will always be my house!

Mara swirls and transforms into a gruesome demon.

MARA

You will get up, Siddhartha. Now!

Siddhartha rises slowly.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, but only to finish you off.
This is the battle I was born to
win.

He walks toward Mara.

MARA

Never! You're no warrior, you're a
failure!

Mara transforms into fifty hideous creatures. One charges at Siddhartha who stands unmoving. The creature slams Siddhartha in his face. Siddhartha falls. The creature tries to hit Siddhartha again, but somehow disappears.

Siddhartha looks up at the forty-nine creatures. Another attacks, bashing Siddhartha once, then disappears. Five attack. Ten attack. All but one attack and disappear.

Siddhartha lies in the water, blood drips from his face.

The remaining creature transforms back into Mara. He gloats.

Siddhartha slowly stands up.

SIDDHARTHA

You'll have to do better than that,
Mara.

Mara frowns.

SIDDHARTHA

My journey in time is nearly
complete.

MARA

You will cycle forever.

Mara waves his left hand. Out of the fuzzy sky, materializes a battalion of WARRIORS on horses. They chant.

HORSE WARRIORS

Death to Siddhartha. Death to
Siddhartha. Death to Siddhartha.

Mara waves his right hand. Another huge BATTALION appears on elephants, chanting.

ELEPHANT WARRIORS

Siddhartha is doomed. Siddhartha is
doomed. Siddhartha is doomed.

Both groups CHANT louder and louder, the sound becomes DEAFENING. Mara waves both arms. A deathly silence.

MARA

Do you yield, now?

SIDDHARTHA

My lifetimes of yielding to you are
over.

MARA

Attack!

The armies thunder toward Siddhartha. Crash down upon him in a cloud of vapor, SCREAMING and waving their swords. The vapor obscures everything. The screaming stops. Silence.

The vapor settles. Siddhartha, robes torn, stands unmoving.

Mara trembles. Siddhartha steps toward Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

It is time for you to yield.

Mara's eyes widen, blazing red, orange, red, yellow.

MARA

Never!

He spins, faster, faster, transforming into a huge, black tornado. The ominous winds suck up water, barrel towards Siddhartha and engulf him.

BLACK.

The fuzzy sky returns. Content, Mara relaxes in a large chair, floating in the air. Siddhartha is gone.

Siddhartha rises from the water, soaked, twenty-five feet away from Mara. Siddhartha stands tall, calm. He takes another step toward Mara.

SIDDHARTHA

You have caused me endless
suffering for eons.

Mara jumps off his chair, swings his arms up to the sky. A vast mountain materializes, larger than the Himalayas.

MARA

Now!

The mountain peak breaks off. The huge avalanche crashes down at Siddhartha. He clenches his fists, aims straight at the hurling boulders. They hit, shatter into thousands of small fragments landing at Siddhartha's feet as rice grains.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, your ancient throne is crumbling. Soon you will be gone and I will be free.

Siddhartha moves closer. Mara squats, does a back flip.

MARA

No! Kill!

Swords fly out of Mara's feet. Daggers whiz from his hands. Thousands. Siddhartha puts his palms together in front of him, fingers point at Mara. Miraculously pulled towards his fingers, the daggers and swords ricochet off left and right.

Mara gulps in air, sweats from every pore. He fakes a smile.

MARA

Right, right, let's talk.

Doubtful, Siddhartha cocks his head. Mara laughs.

MARA

Let's talk, let's talk, let's talk.
Now!

Mara SCREAMS up at the sky. Burning coals and red-hot ashes shower down. As they reach Siddhartha, they disappear. Siddhartha walks closer, fifteen feet away.

SIDDHARTHA

My fear is extinguished.

Mara's eyes turn red and stay that way.

MARA

I've ruled. I've always ruled!

SIDDHARTHA

Evil rulers always fall, Mara.

Siddhartha takes another step. Mara steps backward. He trembles, his cheek twitches, his hands shake.

MARA

You think you can defeat me?

Mara manifests into fifty identical bodies surrounding Siddhartha. They take a relaxed stance and all talk at once.

MARA

Try me now.

Siddhartha looks at his hands. He squeezes them tight.

SIDDHARTHA

If you multiply by a thousand, it will not matter any more. My confusion has ended.

He opens his hands as if throwing them at the Maras. Fifty Siddharthas appear in front of each Mara.

MARA

No!

The fifty Maras and Siddharthas disappear. Mara sits in his chair. He tries to look relaxed, though sweat soaks his clothes. Siddhartha's ten feet away.

Mara smiles, shakes his head.

MARA

I am not only impressed, Siddhartha, I am honored. This time, truly, truly honored.

Mara gets off his chair, lowers to the water, drops his head in a deep bow.

MARA

You have won. Please allow me.

Mara waves his hand, Siddhartha's robes become clean. The blood on his face disappears, no trace of beatings.

MARA

I must now bestow upon you the supreme rewards.

Mara WHISTLES. Three stunning young WOMEN appear beside him, beckoning to Siddhartha.

MARA

You have won my daughters, Trishna, Arati and Raga.

Soft MUSIC plays while TRISHNA dances seductively. Her fingers slide to her blouse buttons, undoing one at a time. ARATI and RAGA dance close to Siddhartha, each stroking their own luscious, flawless body.

ARATI

Father told us so much about you.

RAGA

A man beyond all men.

SIDDHARTHA

Stop.

RAGA

After you've had your fill.

SIDDHARTHA

Then stop when you've had yours.

Siddhartha holds out his arms. Two huge mirrors appear in each hand. The women step back.

SIDDHARTHA

Arati and Raga first. Please
titillate yourself.

The two giggle, and can't resist a mirror.

RAGA

You are unusual, aren't you?

They both preen themselves in the mirrors. Trishna watches, smiling. The mirror images age. The women pause, stare. The reflections grow old, 30, 40, wrinkles appear, 50, grey hair, 60, skin sags, 70, body bent over, teeth missing.

RAGA AND ARATI

No! No!

Shocked, they race to Trishna and all embrace. They SCREAM the most terrifying of all screams.

ALL THREE

Noooooooooo!

They disappear.

SIDDHARTHA

My lust is gone, Mara.

Mara jumps up, eyes wild, mouth frothing.

MARA

Enlightenment does not exist! You
cannot escape from my power, ever!

Siddhartha's grass sitting place from under the Bodhi tree appears floating. He walks over to it, sits full lotus.

The fuzzy sky changes into the Bodhi tree, back dropped by the dark evening sky.

SIDDHARTHA

If the escape from the cycle of
life and death was not possible,
then I would not sit here.

Mara stands with the full moon rising behind him. Frantic, he charges at Siddhartha.

MARA

By what authority can you sit here?

Siddhartha puts his right hand down, touches the earth.

SIDDHARTHA

Mara, my doubt is vanquished. For
lifetimes I have worked toward
perfection. Let the earth be my
witness.

MARA

No, you can't! Don't! Stop! I am
the ruler! I command you!

The earth trembles like an earthquake. A ROARING WIND. Mara's eyes roll backwards, showing only white.

MARA

Sidd... har...tha...

His head tilts left, back. His hands clutch his chest. He fades. Gone.

Siddhartha closes his eyes.

BLACK.

A brilliant flash. BLACK.

A wheel with four spokes appears. It rolls to the right three complete cycles. As it revolves, the four spokes change into eight, the eight change into twelve.

It stops. On the edge of each spoke, pictures materialize. On the top a blind man walks with his stick.

The wheel rotates showing a potter molding a pot.

It revolves through ten more pictures - a monkey swings in a tree.

Two people in a boat.

A house with five windows and one door.

A man and woman embrace.

A person struck in the eye by an arrow.

A woman offers a drink to a man.

A person picks fruit from a tree.

A maiden about to cross a stream.

A woman gives birth.

Two old men carry a corpse on a stretcher.

The wheel spins and spins. Stops. It spins in reverse. Again and again. Forward, reverse. Faster, faster, until it's impossible to distinguish anything.

It stops with just the house on top. The wheel disappears.

The house dismantles itself as if workers were pulling it apart. Roof pieces fly off. The walls fall down. The inside crumbles. The pieces lie scattered.

They gather into a center point of light. The light disappears.

EXT. BODHI TREE AREA - NIGHT

Dazzling, the full moon shines behind the Bodhi tree, only slightly above treetop. Two huge rainbow circles surround the moon, which give a spectacular sight.

Siddhartha sits motionless at the base of the tree.

INT. UPPER CHAMBER - NIGHT

The moon with its rainbow rings shines in. Yasodhara sleeps on a straw mat in the near empty room. On a table, Siddhartha's belt lies near a vase with a golden rose bud.

Restless, she stirs, looks around. Her eyes indicate a knowing which goes beyond words. She grabs the belt, puts it on. She walks to the window, gazes at the moon.

Opening the bay doors, she steps out on the PATIO, sits down in meditation. She smiles.

RAHULA (O.S.)

Mother.

YASODHARA

Out here, Rahula.

Rahula stumbles out, rubbing his eyes. He sits in Yasodhara's lap, rests his head on her breast.

RAHULA

I couldn't sleep. The moon's so strange.

Tears of joy flow down Yasodhara's cheeks.

YASODHARA

My precious, you're going to meet your father soon.

She kisses his head.

YASODHARA

And he's going to have special gifts for all of us.

EXT. BODHI TREE AREA - DAWN

Siddhartha sits motionless as day breaks. A squirrel rests on his knee. Birds sing. Wild deer graze nearby. A rabbit hops along. Siddhartha opens his eyes, nods. He strokes the squirrel, lifts it off, puts it on the ground.

He rises, walks to the river. Masses of wild flowers bloom along the bank. He looks over to the other bank. No one. Just another beautiful array of flowers. A deer walks up behind him. Siddhartha pets it.

He glances at the Bodhi Tree and up to the sky. Birds fly into the tree. One lands on his shoulder. Siddhartha smiles.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Rolling countryside. Trees in full bloom. Wildflowers adorn the meadows. The road winds over a hill. Peaceful, Siddhartha walks along, approaches the rise. A broad valley, villages and a meandering river stretch in the distance.

From the other direction rides his father's Royal Brahmin Priest Anupanita in a carriage. His old age and feebleness show. He does not recognize Siddhartha.

Siddhartha stays in the middle of the road, intentionally forces the Priest to stop.

PRIEST ANUPANITA

Out of my way, you--

SIDDHARTHA
 Royal Priest of King Suddhodana,
 what do you think, are you so
 worthy just because you were born a
 Brahmin?

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 Who are you to--

SIDDHARTHA
 I asked you a question.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 And I do not have to answer to the
 likes of you.

SIDDHARTHA
 Because you do not know the answer?

The Priest frowns.

SIDDHARTHA
 And I do?

Interest lights on the Priest's face.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 Who is your teacher who makes you
 so arrogant?

SIDDHARTHA
 Priest, I have no teacher, as there
 are none my equal.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 From your words, wanderer, you must
 be either a fool or a conqueror. If
 you are a fool, you are one of
 many. If you are a conqueror, then
 you are the priests' worst enemy.

SIDDHARTHA
 I am a conqueror.

The Priest's lips quiver, his body trembles. He regains his
 stuffed pride.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 All right, conqueror, now get out
 of my way.

Siddhartha stands still.

PRIEST ANUPANITA
 I said, get out of my way!

SIDDHARTHA

Priest, it is time for you to be tamed.

Incensed, the Priest grumbles, guides his carriage off the road, onto a rough area, around Siddhartha and charges off.

Siddhartha watches. His eyes take on a look of seriousness yet softness. He scans over the valley. A whirlwind spins up the hill, creating a small dust storm that blows onto Siddhartha. It passes.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, many may not understand me. But there will be others with little dust over their eyes.

Siddhartha looks up. A soaring golden eagle. He smiles, walks down the hill into the setting sun.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Siddhartha sits, teaching Kaundinya and the other four.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

I was very fortunate that Siddhartha, now our Lord Buddha, had compassion for me and my friends. He came to us first, and taught us even though we had been so rude to him.

Kaundinya's face lights up.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

His wisdom was so penetrating, his teaching so clear and precise, that I became enlightened quickly. The others, a little later.

INT. PALACE THRONE ROOM - DAY

King Suddhodana, Prajapati, Channa and more family members welcome Siddhartha, give him the high seat. Yasodhara is not present. They sit down, listen to Siddhartha teach.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Soon afterward, he returned to the palace and taught Yasodhara, King Suddhodana, Queen Prajapati and all his relatives.

INT. YASODHARA'S UPPER CHAMBER - DAY

Siddhartha sits with Yasodhara. She wears his jeweled belt. A fully bloomed gold rose adorns a vase. She smiles. He smiles.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Yasodhara, not only became enlightened, but she was one of the foremost women in Buddhism. Queen Prajapati, also. Much to the dislike of the Brahmins, the Buddha allowed them to start the first ordained women's order in history.

Rahula walks in shyly, bows to Siddhartha, sits down.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Rahula became a foremost Monk, enlightened when he was only twenty years old.

INT. ROYAL DINING HALL - DAY

King Suddhodana personally serves Siddhartha and other Monks.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

King Suddhodana stayed the King, yet before he died he became fully enlightened.

EXT. MEDITATION HALL - NIGHT

Siddhartha teaches many Monks, Nuns and lay followers.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Siddhartha, as the Buddha, lived another 45 years teaching the greatness of the human potential and the path to deep inner happiness. Inwardly, he taught new methods for understanding life's inevitable difficulties, overcoming all mental pain and purifying our hearts.

EXT. VILLAGE SLUM AREA - DAY

Siddhartha walks among the poor. The low caste Sudra Shepherd Boy follows, dressed as a novice Monk.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Outwardly, he changed the face of Indian religion with ordination for women, censure of animal and human sacrifice, and disregard to the caste system, allowing everyone, including untouchables, to become ordained.

EXT. BODHI TREE - NIGHT

Siddhartha sits motionless at the base of the tree.

KAUNDINYA (V.O.)

Though he died peacefully over two thousand five hundred years ago, his compassionate teachings continue today, and have led to a worldwide following which covers a quarter of the planet.

FADE OUT.